

Catrine Church History

Compiled by John G. McIlveen

SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Collins' Encyclopaedia of Scotland (Harper/Collins)
Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Literature (Collins)
Sir John Sinclair's Statistical Account
Memoirs of the Rev. John Brown
200 Years of Catrine and Sorn – A Cotton Tale (Catrine and Sorn Local History Group)
Minutes of the Presbytery of Ayr (researched by Hugh Poole and Terry Harrison)
Minutes of Catrine United Secession Church and the United Presbyterian Church
Minutes of the Board of Management of Catrine Chapel of Ease
A Collection of Verse from Catrine and Sorn (Catrine and Sorn Local History Group – edited by Mary Bunting)
The 1891 Census
Minutes of the Congregational Board and Kirk Session of Catrine Parish Church and Catrine High Kirk
Minutes of the Kirk Session of the Catrine Free Church, later the St.Cuthbert United Free Church
United Free Church Baptismal Register
Minutes of the Board of Management of the Gordon Memorial Church of Scotland
Centenary Brochure – Our Lady of Lourdes and St.Patrick's, Birnieknowe and Auchinleck (1867 – 1967)
Auchinleck Memories (Auchinleck Living Memory Group –1999)
Maureen Kiernan, St.Joseph's R.C.Church, Catrine
Jean Grierson, Catrine Congregational Church
Rev. M.Sullivan, Minister Emeritus, Cumnock Congregational Church
Kenny Baird – Catrine/Sorn website
The Cumnock Chronicle
B.F.G. Training Ltd., Cumnock

INTRODUCTION

The story of Christianity in North Britain begins in the fourth century during the Roman occupation. Shortly after defeating the Picts, the Emperor Constantius died at York, whereupon his son Constantine was declared as his successor by the Roman army in Britain. However, there were rival claimants – Maxentius in the west and Licinius in the east; and it was not until after Constantine had defeated both that he became sole emperor in AD313. Legend has it that before his battle against Maxentius in the previous year, Constantine had a vision of a luminous cross in the sky, and believing that the Christian God had assisted in his victory, he embraced Christianity and promoted it throughout his empire by the Edict of Milan (AD313). Many chieftains of the British tribes were converted from paganism and one such chief is reputed to have been the father of Ninian who was born somewhere along the coast of the Solway Firth.

Ninian (c.AD360 – c.AD432) – also known as St.Ringan – founded the first Celtic

Church in Scotland at Whithorn in AD397. The name Ninian was first used by Bede in the 8th century in his 'Historia Ecclesiastica', whereas Latin scholars referred to him as Ninianus. Others refer to him as Ninia; but modern scholars say that he should be properly called Uinniau, a name which is preserved in 'Kilwinning'. St Ninian had been trained at Rome; consecrated a Bishop by the Pope in 394 and became the first Bishop of Scotland. He evangelised the North Britons and Southern Picts and was followed by many other missionaries, notably, St.Brendan "the Navigator" who was active in the Firth of Clyde area around AD545; and St.Columba "the Dove" – also known as St.Colm – who was born at Gartan in Donegal in 521. Columba was banished from Ulster in 563 and settled in Iona from where he went on to convert the Northern Picts, the Western Isles and Orkney. He died in 597. Upper Nithsdale was evangelised by St Conal (AD612 – 652) – a Celtic cross bearing his name stands to the north-east of Kirkconnel about half a mile from the site of the former Roger Mine. However, as far as Catrine is concerned, Christianity had its origins in St.Cuthbert (c.635 – 687).

Cuthbert was probably born in Lauderdale around the year 635. It is said that, while shepherding near Orton, he had a vision which persuaded him to become a monk. He entered the monastery of Old Melrose and became a prior. He eventually became Bishop of Lindisfarne. The monks of Melrose evangelised much of Ayrshire and were especially active in Mauchline and the surrounding area. In his

contribution to Sir John Sinclair's Statistical Account, Catrine's first minister the Rev. Robert Steven wrote in 1796: "According to tradition, a Popish Chapel once stood a little to the east of the village, it was probably dedicated to St. Cuthbert, for the surrounding field...is called St. Cuthbert's Holm..." The association with Catrine is retained to this day by the street which bears his name, known by the locals as the "Culbert Howm".

In the 11th and 12th centuries, the Church in Scotland, influenced by St. Margaret and Alexander I, came under increasing direction from Rome and Papal authority. This continued until 1560 when it was overthrown by the Protestant Reformation. By the late 14th century the corrupted mediaeval order of Western Christendom was being challenged. The Lollards of Kyle who were followers of John Wycliffe (c.1329 – 1384), translator of the Bible into English; preached to the people against corruption in the Church and State. Thirty of them were arraigned by Robert Blackadder, Bishop of Glasgow in 1494. In the early 16th century, Murdoch Nisbet (fl.1520), possibly one of the Lollards of Kyle, fled his native Ayrshire because of persecution. He commenced a translation of the Wycliffe Bible into Scots, but it was never published as he died in hiding.

Around the same time Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) was active in Germany, and in Geneva John Calvin was founding a theocratic state of presbyters in 1541. In Scotland Patrick Hamilton (c.1498 – 1528) and George Wishart (c.1513 – 1546) became martyrs for the reformed faith and in 1547 the Lords of the Congregation, nobles opposed to the Catholic Queen Regent, subscribed a "Bond of Covenant" to reform the Scottish Church. By 1559 the Lords were in armed revolt and in May of that year John Knox (c.1513 – 1572) returned to Scotland after twelve years exile in Geneva where he had adopted Calvinism. As ordained minister of St. Giles in Edinburgh, Knox became chief inspiration and influence of the Scottish Reformation. Along with five others he produced the First Book of Discipline as a programme of Church government and social reform, including education – "a school in every parish" – and provision for the poor. Church organisation was to be based on the Geneva pattern, with elders, Kirk Sessions and a General Assembly. Protestantism was established as parliament abolished Papal authority, forbade the Mass and approved a Confession of Faith. When Knox died in 1572 his place was eventually taken by Andrew Melville (1545 – c.1624) whose Second Book of Discipline of 1578 completed the Reformation; and full Presbyterianism, approved by parliament in 1592, was established with no Episcopal hierarchy – Christ being the sole Head of the Church. Melville was Principal of the

University of Glasgow and before that, successor to John Calvin in Geneva.

In the 17th century, attempts by Charles I to anglicise the Church led to the National Covenant of 1638 and the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643. Charles II signed the covenant in 1650 but when he was restored in 1660 he reneged and the Covenanters rebelled, resulting in twenty-seven years of killing and warfare which ended in 1688 with the arrival of William of Orange. The last of the martyrs was George Wood of Tincornhill, Sorn – there is a memorial to him on the wall of Sorn Parish Church. In 1690 the Presbyterian Settlement established the Church of Scotland as the national Church; but the Cameronians rejected William as an “uncovenanted king” and remained as a separate sect, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, until 1876 when most, but not all, of them joined up with the Free Church. Presbyterianism was further guaranteed by the 1707 Act of Union.

SECESSION CHURCHES

Although established by law in 1690, the Church of Scotland was soon to experience further government interference in the shape of the 1712 Patronage Act which denied congregations the right to call a minister by vesting it in prominent landowners – lay patrons – who were the heirs of the original donors of ecclesiastical properties and lands. Patronage was accepted by the moderates, but an Act of Assembly of 1732 gave the power of election to heritors and elders when a patron did not choose to exercise his right.

The 1712 and 1732 Acts were opposed by a number of Church of Scotland ministers, four of whom, including a Mr Moncrieff of Abernethy and Ebenezer Erskine (1680 – 1754), minister at Stirling, declared themselves seceders from its jurisdiction. Among their grievances they listed: “...the sufferance of error without adequate censure; the infringement of the rights of the Christian people in the choice and settlement of ministers under the law of patronage; the neglect or relaxation of discipline; the restraint of ministerial freedom in opposing maladministration; and the refusal of the prevailing party to be reclaimed.” (the foregoing extract is from the memoirs of the Rev. John Brown who was born in 1722 in the parish of Abernethy). Mr Erskine was suspended from the Established Church in 1733 and in 1740 he was deposed when he formed his Associate Presbytery which was described as “...conservative in belief, but evangelical”. The Secession Church renewed the Covenants in 1743, but in 1747 it split over the Burgess Oath which referred to “affirm the true religion,

presently professed in this realm...authorised by the laws". The split – or 'the Breach' as it was called, produced two factions – Burghers and Anti-Burghers – the latter maintained that taking the oath affirmed the Established Church from which they had seceded. Each divided again into the 'Auld Lights' and the 'New Lights' during the years 1799 – 1806. The Auld Lights were orthodox Calvinists committed to the Solemn League and Covenant, whereas the New Lights were more liberal in their theology.

In 1820 the New Lights from both Burgher and Anti-Burgher Churches came together to form the United Secession Church which was the first denomination associated with the building in Catrine, built in 1837, and now serving as the Church Hall of Catrine Parish Church since 1955. Most Burgher Auld Lights rejoined the Church of Scotland in 1839. An earlier secession in 1761 over patronage had created the Relief Church which in 1847 joined with the United Secession Church to form the United Presbyterian Church.

Other secessionists, notably the Rev. James Morison (1816 – 1893), a Kilmarnock United Secession minister and three others formed the Evangelical Union in 1843 – a modified form of English Congregationalism which recognised Jesus Christ alone as the sole Head of the Church and founded by Robert Browne (c.1550 – c.1633).

THE DISRUPTION

In 1843 the question of patronage once again arose and led to Thomas Chalmers (1780 – 1847) leading a third of the Church of Scotland's ministers out of the General Assembly in Edinburgh to form the Free Church. One of them was the Rev. William Hutcheson who was minister at Catrine Chapel of Ease. Mr Hutcheson was associate to the minister of the Parish Church which was at Sorn. He was supported by about three quarters of his flock to form the Free Church in Catrine. They occupied the Chapel of Ease for a time but were eventually forced out and had to build a church of their own. In 1852 the Free Church was strengthened when it was joined by the Original Secession Church and again in 1900 when it merged with the United Presbyterian Church to form the United Free Church. The United Free Church rejoined the Church of Scotland in 1929 followed by a remnant of the United Original Secession Church in 1956.

Today (AD2000) in Scotland we have the Church of Scotland; the 'Calvanistic' Free Presbyterian Church which split from the Free Church

in 1892; the remnant of the Free Church itself, the "Wee Frees"; the Reformed Presbyterian Church (descended from the Cameronians); the Scottish Episcopal Church; the United Reformed Church; also Congregationalists, Brethren Assemblies, the Roman Catholic Church, Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons etc. The Congregationalists originated in England and like the Presbyterians were opposed to episcopacy and were evangelical. Each congregation was autonomous but banded together in the Congregational Evangelical Union. The now roofless and derelict Ballochmyle Hall, next to the old gasworks at Chapel Brae was the original Congregational Church in Catrine. Being cheaply built of brick, it was derogatorily referred to as the 'wash-house' by the more intolerant members of other denominations in the village. It opened in 1845 and remained in use as a church until 1926. The building was used thereafter by various organisations: the Christian Brethren who later moved to the old Woodside School in Wood Street; the Freemasons, the Salvation Army and finally by the local troop of Boy Scouts who previously had their Scout Hut at Old Coach Road near the foot of the old steps leading up to the War Memorial.

The Wee Frees split again early in 2000 when twenty of its ministers, who had been accused of 'breaking ecclesiastical law', walked out of the Free Church's Commission of Assembly in Edinburgh to form the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) and in May of that year both held general assemblies in Edinburgh.

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND IN CATRINE

In the year 1787, Mr Claud Alexander of Ballochmyle, in partnership with David Dale of Glasgow, established the cotton industry in the hamlet of Catrine in the parish of Sorn. David Dale was a native of Stewarton and was also involved in the growth of New Lanark which rose to prominence under his son-in-law Robert Owen. A twist mill was built in Catrine and employed 300 workers; a further 200 found employment when the jeannie factory was built in 1790. By 1791 the population of Catrine had reached 800. The Parish Church at that time was situated in the village of Sorn about two miles away and it could not hold such a number of worshippers, so the inhabitants of Catrine set about establishing a place of worship in their own village.

On 30th March 1791 the Presbytery of Ayr considered a petition signed by Claud Alexander of Ballochmyle; the Rev. George Gordon, minister at Sorn and a great number of the heads of families in Catrine and in the Parish of Sorn representing that: "...owing to the great increase in

the inhabitants of that place, they the inhabitants intend building a chapel of ease and, in the meantime, request that the Presbytery would allow them to call a licentiate of this Church to preach to them. Which petition being read and considered, the Presbytery approved of the pious purpose of the said petitioners, but on account of some difficulties attending on this matter, they agree that it shall lie on the table until the next meeting..."

When the Presbytery met again on 4th May 1791 it was reported that Mr Alexander and a committee "...had agreed to raise the sum of £40 sterling as a salary to an assistant to Mr Gordon; to be chosen by them and approved by him to preach at Catrine for one year from the time of the time of the appointment...and renewed their request that the Presbytery would allow them to call a licentiate accordingly." The Presbytery duly agreed.

On 9th February 1792, there was laid before the Presbytery a petition from the inhabitants of Catrine as follows: "To the Reverend Presbytery of Ayr: From the great increase in the population of the village of Catrine and its neighbourhood; the inhabitants cannot nearly be accommodated with seats in the Parish Church of Sorn. The petitioners, therefore, humbly beg liberty...to build a Chapel of Ease in the village of Catrine for the accommodation of them and their families...In hopes of your approbation to build a the chapel; your petitioners being fully satisfied with the prudence, piety and usefulness of Mr Robert Steven, preacher of the Gospel; have unanimously made their choice of him as their minister and beg the Reverend Presbytery would take on trial the said Mr Robert Steven with all convenient speed so that he may be ordained to officiate in the said church according to the Laws of the Church of Scotland...". The petition was signed by seventy-seven inhabitants of Catrine.

A letter dated 27th February 1792 from Claud Alexander was laid before the Presbytery of Ayr; "To the Reverend Moderator and other members of the Presbytery of Ayr. Reverend Sir and Gentlemen, I have been desired by the inhabitants of Catrine and in the neighbourhood thereof, subscribers for building a chapel at Catrine...I am not myself one of the subscribers, but have promised them my assistance as far as the expense of the masonry of the said chapel will amount to my acquiescence not to drain any part of the sum or interest of the money so laid by me until their preacher receives from the seat rents £60 per year; and there is a clause in these articles of subscription that his salary has to be increased as their appointments can afford. From the plan of the chapel which will be laid before you,

you will see that only half of the seats are let. Their funds will be ample to pay the present salary or stipend agreed; but if the village increases as I think I have reason to expect it will, I have no doubt that every seat will be occupied. The manufacture of cotton is increasing and I expect in the course of the summer a great supply of inhabitants from all parts of the Kingdom, so that before the chapel is completely finished we may suppose that the number of souls in Catrine will amount to nearly two thousand. In consideration of this I have no hesitation in signifying to you that I acquiesce in what the subscribers have required of me...which I hope will be sufficient to convince you that the subscribers will have sufficient funds for the payment of a proper salary or stipend for their pastor, and which will be a means of preventing secession from the Established Church of Scotland, of which we have already too many and they seem to be daily gaining ground; and were the inhabitants of Catrine to convert their subscriptions to the building of a Burgher meeting-house which they had some intention of doing; it would be the means of depriving the poor of the Parish of Sorn of that assistance which they have reason to expect from the collection of so large a congregation as I expect it will be. Before I conclude this address, give me leave to mention to you that the choice which the subscribers have made of Mr Robert Steven meets with my entire approbation..."

(Note: Ironically, Mr Alexander's partner David Dale was one of the foremost seceders. His disenchantment with the Church of Scotland establishment and what he saw as its corrupt system of patronage led him to secede in the 1760's and become a founder member of the Old Scotch Independent Church, a strongly missionary sect, later absorbed into the United Presbyterian Church. Even Mr Alexander himself reluctantly left the Church of Scotland at the time of the 1843 Disruption.)

In February 1792, Matthew Miller, mason, contracted for the building of the chapel which was completed and open for worship in the first week of July 1793. During the erection of the building, worship was conducted in a tent which was a square wooden erection, possibly with a canvas roof and a portable pulpit.

The Presbytery appointed a committee in February 1792 "to meet at Catrine on 12th March 1792 at noon with the nine managers of the chapel now building... to converse with them on the subject of the said petition". The committee consisted of the Moderator of Presbytery who was Dr. Millar; the Rev. John Shepherd of Muirkirk ('Muirlan Jock' in Robert Burns' poem 'The Kirk's Alarm'); the Rev. William Peebles, Clerk

of Presbytery and minister at Newton-on- Ayr ('Poet Willie' and 'Peebles shaul' in the same poem) and the Rev. William Gordon minister of Sorn Parish. The committee reported back to the Presbytery on 28th March..."the said committee did meet according to appointment and after conversation with the managers agreed that the security of the minister's stipend is to be the mortgage of the seat rents of the chapel supposed to amount to, at minimum £100 per annum; and at maximum £200 per annum – the minimum of the minister's stipend to be £50 per annum and intended to be augmented to £100... that the collections for the poor have to be applied to the poor of the Parish of Sorn in general and that the Session has to be on the same footing as other Chapels of Ease...the Presbytery, having considered the said report, agree that the inhabitants of Catrine should conjunctly and severally give a bond to Mr Steven for the sum of £60 per annum for his stipend to be paid to him during his encumbency (sic) and to be augmented as the funds of the chapel permit, considering a reasonable sum for communion elements; which salary is to be paid to him two terms in the year by a treasurer appointed by the managers...and that the money collected for the poor at the said chapel shall be under the management of the Minister and Kirk Session of Sorn; and that Mr Steven in consequence of his ordination shall have no right to act as judge or member of the Presbytery of Ayr until he has been chosen as a presbytery elder of Sorn; or exercise any part of Church discipline but with the approbation and direction of the said Kirk Session; and further, that the said bond was to be laid before the Presbytery as soon as extended to be placed in Presbytery records and when the said bond to the satisfaction of the Presbytery shall be laid before them, they will proceed to take steps to the ordination of the said Mr Steven to be Minister of the Chapel of Ease at Catrine."

On 2nd May 1792..."was laid before the Presbytery of Ayr a bond from the inhabitants of Catrine for the payment of Mr Robert Steven's stipend... Mr Steven being present declared his satisfaction of the said bond the tenor whereof follows: 'We, Claud Alexander of Ballochmyle; Robert Strachan, merchant; James Taylor; Matthew Hunter, labourer; Robert Bryan, labourer; George Hutchison, innkeeper; Andrew Cowan (Snr), Andrew Cowan (Jnr); Andrew Purdie, William Blackwood, house carpenters; Thomas Underwood, James Hunter, jenny spinners; Alex Taylor, Alex Niven, and John Brown, spinning masters; Matthew Millar, mason; William Rennie, taylor (sic); John Hamilton, porter; Thomas McIlwraith, carding master and John Mackie, labourer, all in Catrine; John Begg, mason and Andrew Walker, labourer, both of Bridgend; James Bryan, mulester of Woodside; John Richmond of Carleith;

Alexander Jamieson, weaver, Howford Bridge; James Richmond, Montgarswood; William Wallace in Montgarswood; Andrew Mitchell in Ballochmyle; John Mitchell, farmer, Oxenshaw; John Gibson, farmer, Catrineshaw; John Pagan, mason, Blackdyke; James Sim, farmer and John R****, labourer in Townhead, Catrine; Andrew Fisher, farmer in Montgarswood (note: William Fisher of Montgarswood featured in "Holy Willie's Prayer" by Robert Burns); James Wilson, farmer in Clews, all subscribers with others for building a Chapel of Ease in Catrine...to their (i.e. the Presbytery's) having declined to ordain Mr Robert Steven till such time as security was given by the subscribers to the satisfaction of the Presbytery and him (i.e. Mr Steven) for the punctual payment of the sum of £60 sterling yearly stipend or salary beside the whole expense of the communion elements, we do, therefore, conjunctly and severally bind us and our heirs and successors to make payment to the said Mr Steven...which shall be increased as the funds of the said chapel will allow for his serving as curé (i.e. the office or function of a curate) in the chapel and also the whole expense of the communion elements and that during the whole of his encumbency (sic) two terms in the year, Martinmas (11th November) and Whitsunday (15th May) by equal proportions beginning the first term payment Martinmas first 1792 and so forth in terms thereafter...by the hands of the treasurer chosen by the management of the said Chapel of Ease..."

On the same date the Presbytery expressed their "satisfaction on the prudence, piety and usefulness of Mr Robert Steven and their unanimous choice of him as the minister, therefore agree to take Mr Steven on trial in order to be ordained minister of the Church at Catrine and for this purpose appoint him for a lecture and exercise an audition for an exegesis under theology to be delivered at the next meeting."

On 13th June 1792 Mr Steven delivered his exegesis on the question under theology which was approved and sustained as part of his trials after which he was examined on the subject of his thesis with which the Presbytery was satisfied.

On 22nd August 1792 Mr Steven read, analysed and explained a portion of the 23rd Psalm; also part of the Epistle to the Hebrews and a portion of the New Testament in Greek. He also answered questions on theology respecting the last part of the fourth century; submitted the Formula 1711 and finished his trials...all of which to the Presbytery's approval.

ORDINATION OF MR ROBERT STEVEN

The Presbytery of Ayr met at Catrine on 12th September 1792... "After prayer, the execution of Mr Robert Stephen's (sic) edict was called for and duly returned and executed by Mr Thomson. (Note: I have tended to use the form 'Steven' for his name but it appears variously as Stephen, Stephens or Stevens; Steven being the most popular). Then their officer was ordered to go to the most patent door of the congregation and thrice to call aloud if any person or persons had any objection to the life or doctrine of Mr Robert Steven or why he may not be ordained Minister of the Chapel of Ease at Catrine, that they should come and give them to the Presbytery now sitting in Mr Robert Strachan's Inn. The Presbytery having on the return of the officer and being informed no objections are to be made, they desired Mr Gordon (Minister of the Parish of Sorn) to proceed to the ordination of Mr Steven when they adjourned to the place where the congregation had assembled for that purpose."

After answering the normal questions satisfactorily... "he was solemnly ordained to the work of the ministry of Catrine by the placing of hands and solemn prayer; the Brethren thereafter giving him the right hand of fellowship, and the congregation of Catrine, the elders of Sorn and the heritors of the parish...receiving him as Minister of the Chapel of Ease at Catrine..."

From Sir John Sinclair's Statistical Account (1791 – 1797) we learn that the Rev. Robert Steven took up residence in Catrine in 1791 in preparation for his ordination and he was responsible for the report of the village in that publication.

Concerning the Chapel of Ease, he records that it was ... "begun in the spring of 1792, and finished the following spring." He also tells us that... "The house measures 80 feet long by 52½ feet over the walls. It also has a large projection in front for stairs to the gallery and for the steeple when they shall be erected. Many of the subscribers failed to pay the amount of their subscriptions. There was not more than £80 sterling of the whole collected. Mr Alexander therefore advanced above £750 sterling on security of the seat rents, but has not, as yet, received a single farthing of either principal or interest." (This was in 1796 when Mr Steven wrote his report). The report continues; "Had feuing gone on as briskly as it did in 1793, it is presumed this gentleman would have been reimbursed in a few years for his great

outlay; but the scarcity of hands all over the country has put an end to feuing. Indeed, the population of the village has decreased considerably since that period...the seats erected in the area of the chapel have never yet been completely filled. When the galleries are put up, the chapel will contain above 1500 sitters. It is beautifully situated on rising ground which commands a view of the whole village and surrounding banks. It is esteemed a great ornament to the village. The author of this report was ordained by the Presbytery of Ayr to serve the curé on the 12th of September 1792. The living is only £60 annually without manse or glebe; a sum perfectly inadequate to the necessary expences (sic) of a clergyman. The slender funds of this infant establishment cannot admit of an augmentation of stipend. If properly represented, the Company (i.e. the owners of the Cotton Works) would probably allow a free house."

On 28th June 1793, the pews were numbered 1-67 to hold 754 sitters, valued from one shilling and eightpence to three shillings and sixpence annually per sitting, amounting to £100.2s.6d for one year.

On 10th December 1793 the Presbytery's minutes record that; "A petition from the Managers of the Chapel of Ease at Catrine was produced and read stating that a number of persons in the country part of the Parish of Sorn who are constant therein and proprietors of the same, wish to have the services of Mr Steven extended to the country part of the parish. The Presbytery, having considered the said petition, found it incompetent and dismissed it accordingly.

The Rev.Robert Steven left Catrine on 19th April 1798 after accepting a call from Dalrymple; and on 15th January 1800, the Rev.Andrew Harley of Glasgow wrote to the Presbytery of Ayr expressing a willingness to accept a call from the people of Catrine, and on 29th January the Presbytery agreed to his settlement to the Chapel of Ease at Catrine with his ordination fixed for 15th May 1800. The Presbytery duly met in the house of John Hutchins, vintner of Catrine, on 15th May and proceeded to Mr Harley's ordination.

When Mr Harley left Catrine in 1804, there was no settled minister for a period of eleven years. During the long vacancy, worship was led by neighbouring ministers and probationers. The charge was supervised by the Rev.Lewis Balfour, Parish Minister at Sorn. Mr Balfour was married to the daughter of the Galston minister whom Robert Burns referred to as 'Cessnock Side', namely the Rev.George Smith. The Balfours were the grandparents of the author, Robert Louis (originally 'Lewis') Stevenson. The chapel being without a minister, the

management made a new arrangement in July 1815 to give the minister £100 per annum during his incumbency, and that the ordinary chapel-door collections be paid to the Kirk session of Sorn for behoof of the poor.

The Rev. James Currie was elected minister at Catrine on 28th August 1815 and was ordained with the consent of Mr Balfour on 5th March 1816. Earlier, in 1807, Mr Claud Alexander had offered to accept £1000 for the chapel from the feuars of Catrine, to be paid over a period of ten years; but the feuars were unwilling to pay more than £800, so the deal fell through. This was during a period of dissension in Scotland. Many feuars in Catrine were dissenters from the Established Church and belonged to the Reformed Synod, Burghers and Anti-Burghers and Independents, commonly called 'Tabernacle Folks'; all of whom were at liberty to use the chapel for divine service on weekdays and on the Sabbath if vacant. The management was in the hands of eleven feuars, elected annually, and the seats were let by auction twice a year. On 24th November 1815, Mr Alexander agreed to let the chapel to the feuars for the purpose of having the ordinances and sacraments of the Gospel regularly administered. The feuars accepted and agreed an annual rent of £35 for a period of five years. The contract came into effect on 1st January 1816.

Mr Currie's ministry gave such satisfaction that in 1817 the managers recommended four special collections in the year for his benefit, his basic stipend being £100 per year.

In October 1818 Mr Alexander was willing to extend the lease for a further ten years with the land around it to be kept in grass; the rent to be increased to £40 per year. The offer was rejected, the feuars being of the opinion that they would rather build a new chapel. The 1815 lease expired on 6th November 1820.

By 1824 the chapel was in an unsatisfactory state: expenditure was considerably in excess of income; doors and windows all required attention. At that time there was no wooden flooring; the floor was of earth with a bar for a foot-rest under each seat. The place had a damp earthy smell and the roof leaked so much that the parishioners, as a protest, would often sit with their umbrellas up.

In March 1826, Mr Alexander again offered to sell the chapel to the feuars, but owing to the unsettled state of the country, and all kinds of trade suffering severely, they could not make an offer, but would give £28 a year as rent, provided the building was put in a proper state of

repair. (This was as a result of the long period of recession which followed the end of the Napoleonic War resulting in mass unemployment, short-time working and reduced wages for workers.) By 1828 the half-yearly rousing of seats conducted by John Urquhart, auctioneer, since 1815 was so greatly affected that income continued to decline.

In 1828 Mr Currie proposed to discontinue tent-preaching on the Sabbath of Sacrament. The tent had continued to be used on sacramental days when a minister preached from a tent-pulpit to the people on the brae in front of the chapel, while communion was being dispensed by another minister inside the chapel. (Robert Burns refers to this practice in his poem 'The Holy Fair' which gives a graphic depiction of a Communion Sabbath in the neighbouring village of Mauchline.)

In November 1828, Mr Alexander intimated his willingness to sell the chapel to the feuars and requested them to fence the ground. A meeting of the feuars was called from the precentor's desk on the Sabbath previous to the meeting, and also through the village by 'tuck of drum' on the day of the meeting, 4th December 1828, to consider the offer. As a result, the chapel and churchyard were purchased for £400 and came into the feuars' possession at Whitsunday 1829.

The Rev. James Currie retired in June 1836 and was succeeded by the Rev. William Hutcheson who was ordained on 28th December of that year. Two members of the church and congregation agreed to become security for the minister's stipend of £80 on the understanding that, in the event of the chapel being endowed, it would be discontinued; the minister to have surplus to make up his salary to the same amount as that of Mr Currie, i.e. £80 and £20 from seat rents, and four quarterly collections. During Mr Hutcheson's incumbency, galleries were put into the chapel at a cost of £583.18s.3d and the chapel was re-opened on 10th December 1839. On 14th June 1843, the Rev. Mr Hutcheson having joined the protesting and seceding party following the Disruption of 1843; the Presbytery, acting on the instructions of the General Assembly, declared that he had ceased to be a minister of the Church of Scotland as by law established; and that his charge had become vacant. Mr Hutcheson declared his intention to continue to preach in the chapel. It continued to be occupied by the seceders until 19th February 1844, at which date they were indicted from the further use of the chapel. The Free Church of Scotland Congregation, as the seceders became known, were granted the use of the United Secession Church (now the Parish Church Hall) on 26th

February 1844. Their own building (now Catrine Congregational Church) was completed in February 1845. In the meantime, the Chapel of Ease being without a minister, was served by a supply preacher provided by the Presbytery every alternate Sabbath; and the Rev. John Rankine of Sorn and some of the neighbouring ministers agreed to preach on the afternoon of the Sabbaths not covered. Mr Claud Alexander of Ballochmyle worked hard to avert the consequences impending over the Established Church to which he belonged; but, in the event, he felt he had to secede and he was joined by many of the management of the chapel, namely: John Barclay, William Lees, William Wallace, William Niven, James McMaster, Andrew Cowan, George Wilson and James Nimmo. After the Disruption Mr Hutcheson left Catrine for Johnstone.

In October 1845, the remnant of the chapel congregation, being desirous of having a settled minister, made application to have a Mr Watson appointed as an assistant to the Parish Minister, the Rev. John Rankine of Sorn, at a salary of £60 per annum but Mr Watson declined the appointment. On 3rd April 1846, the Rev. William Blackwood was appointed as Mr Rankine's assistant at twenty-five shillings per week. He remained at Catrine for about a year and the curé was vacant until the Rev. William McRobie was ordained in 1851. During the vacancy, services were held in the chapel every second Sabbath, or as regularly as possible. On 7th November 1853 Mr McRobie was informed that his services would no longer be required at Catrine; so once again there was no settled minister until the Rev. James Bell Biggar was ordained on 17th May 1855 at £80 per year. It was during his ministry in September 1858 that the first steps were taken for the endowment of the chapel. Mr Bell Biggar remained at Catrine for fifteen years but had to resign for health reasons in 1870 and died at Annan on 8th October of the same year. He was the first to occupy the house in Ballochmyle Street acquired as a manse in 1862. (The manse was disposed of after the union of the Gordon Memorial Church and the High Kirk in 1955. It is now known as 'Kirkdene'.)

The Rev. Pearson McAdam Muir was ordained on 22nd September 1870. During his ministry the chapel was endowed and called Catrine Church with Catrine erected into a Parish 'quoad sacra' under a decree dated 30th October 1871. In June 1871, the feuars of Catrine had agreed to convey the chapel to trustees for behoof of Catrine Church. The first meeting of the Board of Management of the Church and Parish of Catrine Quoad Sacra (now called the Congregational Board) was convened 26th December 1871 with Archibald Buchanan, Catrine Cotton Company Manager, in the chair. The other appointed managers

were: Robert Dunsmuir, John Hood, George Parker, David Sloan M.D., James McClemment (sic), (probably McClymont) with David Miller as Secretary and John Mackay as Treasurer. Thomas Sawers (or Sayers) was appointed Precentor at a salary of £10 per year; Peter McWhirter was appointed Beadle at £5 per year. Thomas Sayers remained as precentor until the pipe-organ was installed in 1883. On 10th February 1872, a sub-committee was formed to minute the history of the church from 1792 to 1871. The Draft Deed of Constitution and Decree of Disjunction were copied and inserted in the Minute Book. Hugh Morton (Jr) and William Stevenson were appointed Auditors and an account opened with the Royal Bank of Scotland.

The following are extracts from the Deed of Constitution for the proposed new Church and Parish of Catrine in the Parish of Sorn and County and Presbytery of Ayr:

1st: That the following persons shall be Trustees of whom three shall be a quorum for the purposes after mentioned viz. Robert Lee Esq., Advocate, Procurator for the Church of Scotland; the Rev. John Cook D.D., Principal Clerk to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and the Rev. William Smith D.D. Minister of the Parish of North Leith, Convener of the General Assembly's Committee on the Endowment of Chapels of Ease; the Moderator of the Presbytery of Ayr; the Clerk of the Presbytery of Ayr; the Minister of the Parish of Sorn and their respective successors in as Trustees ex-officio and Colonel Alexander of Ballochmyle, Archibald Buchanan of Catrine Cotton Company and Charles Howatson Esq. of Daldorch and such other person or persons as shall in terms of Article 18 hereof be elected as Trustee or Trustees in the room of any Trustee or Trustees, not being a Trustee or Trustees ex-officio, resigning or dying.

2nd: ...(inter alia)...to mark out and designate a district Quoad Sacra from the Parish...to which the same...may have belonged...and to erect such district into a Parish Quoad Sacra in connection with the Church of Scotland...

3rd: ...the said Trustees shall take such steps as shall be necessary to have a portion of the sittings...set apart as free seats for all persons frequenting the same and the remaining sittings the Committee of Management...shall let and appropriate and the pew or seat rents shall be expended ...in terms of the aforesaid Statute ('Statute of ...Victoria, Chapter 44')...and it shall be lawful...to apply the surplus revenue in supplementing the Stipend of the Ministers thereof beyond the endowment to be received.

4th: ...that the said Church...shall be used only as a place of worship in connection with the Church of Scotland...it shall not be competent to elect any Preacher or Minister...except as a Licentiate or ordained Minister of the Church of Scotland.

5th:...(deals with special collections)

6th: ...The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be dispensed...at least twice in the year at such times as the Kirk Session may appoint, expenses including Communion elements £10 shall be allowed annually.

7th: ...the said Trustees other than those ex-officio...shall be members of the Committee of Management...the Chairman shall have deliberative as well as a casting vote. Four shall be a quorum.

8th: Trustees other than those ex-officio shall choose six seat holders who along with themselves shall form the Committee of Management...also shall appoint one of the said Trustees or other competent person to act as their Clerk and Treasurer.

9th:...(inter alia)...the two...at the top of the list of elected members shall retire at the end of one year...(and so on)... but be eligible for re-election.

10th: ...the Committee...shall appoint a Precentor, Beadle and Doorkeeper or other officials and fix their salaries to take charge of the Church and appurtenances, to keep the same clean and in good order and repair...to superintend seat letting and Church Door Collections and generally manage the affairs of the Church.

11th: ...(deals with the duties of Clerk and Treasurer and the two auditors)

12th: ...(deals with the Annual Meeting to be held in January)...new members to be elected for three years...Clerk and Treasurer to be re-elected.

13th; ...new members may be co-opted at any time to replace those resigning or dying.

14th: ...Committee voting shall be per capita...Chairman shall have a deliberative as well as a casting vote.

15th: ...(deals with Patronage which shall be vested in...foresaid Committee... and with vacancy procedures)...not less than four members or not less than two-thirds of the Members then present shall vote for (such) Minister...to be Presentee to the...Church and Parish.

16th: ... pulpit supply during a vacancy shall be the responsibility of Presbytery.

17th: ...(deals with annual attestation of accounts by Presbytery)

18th: ...(concerning Trustees)

Extracts from Decree of Disjunction and Erection of the Church and Parish of Catrine quoad sacra:

In petition; Colonel Alexander and others....30th October 1871 at Edinburgh...

The said Church was built in 1792...in 1862 a house in...Catrine was acquired as a manse...the district proposed contains about 2500 inhabitants...(aim) to secure a permanent endowment or stipend...of at least £100 per annum (excluding Communion elements)...with a manse...

PARISH BOUNDARIES:

"The district...designated as the new parish quoad sacra...Commencing at the basin formed by the River Ayr beginning on the east from the weir on the Ayr and following the river downwards to the Bleachworks Bridge following the road therefrom crossing the turnpike road (now the B705 to Auchinleck) where said roads join, and proceeding through the adjacent wood (i.e. Shawwood) until it reaches the top of the scarp behind Townhead gardens; proceeding along the top of this scarp until it reaches the accommodation road leading to Catrineshaw Farm thence following said road [across the turnpike (i.e. the B713 at Whiteflat Wood) and onwards till it reaches the lands of Catrine Holm thence along the March betwixt the lands of Catrine Holm and Auchinleck Estate until it reaches the top of the scarp again which following along the march of the farm of Catrine Holm until the river to the west is reached thence following the river upwards to Burnfoot Bridge]"...(the foregoing section was replaced by the following amendment to exclude the lands of Catrine Holm)... "till it (i.e. the Catrineshaw road) reaches the bridge over the Whiteflat Burn thence down the Whiteflat Burn till it joins the Ayr, thence down the Ayr to

Burnfoot Bridge...thence following the Wealth o' Waters Burn to the point marked 'waterfall' on the map, thence across the holm and turnpike road (i.e. the Mauchline Road) to the gardens of Cowan Place and thence along the head of the scarp till the turnpike road (i.e. Chapel Brae) is reached behind Catrine Church thence along the road till the top of the gardens at St.Cuthbert Street is reached thence along the fence by the head of these gardens crossing the Radical Road near the style and thence descending to the weir all as delineated, laid down and coloured red on the map produced...in extent about one mile in length from east to west by about a third of a mile in breadth from north to south. It contains a population of about 2500 persons and there is at present a congregation of about 400 in connection with the said Church. The number on the Communion Roll is 260...to disjoin...from the Parish of Sorn...to be called the Church and Parish of Catrine."

June 1872: Statement of income and expenditure anent the endowing of Catrine Parish Church:

To sundry subscriptions:	£1121.6s.10d.
By circulars and subscription sheets:	£0.7s.6d.
G.B.Wilson for endowment:	£1016.13s.6d.
Menzies, Black and Coventry, Lawyers, Edinburgh	£89.19s.10d.
Treasurer for stamps etc.:	£0.6s.11d.
Cash in Royal Bank	£13.19s.1d.
 Total:	 £1121.6s.10d.

Mr Muir was called to Polmont in 1872 and the Rev.Thomas Phillip was ordained on 21st November 1872. During his ministry, the church was repaired and completely renovated with installation of new flooring, pews and pulpit, lighting and heating; and the ceiling was timbered; all at a cost of £643. It was re-opened on 17th May 1874 with 1100 sittings. At the re-opening, a harmonium was introduced. It was a gift from Mrs W.A.Howatson of Daldorch House. Miss Parker was appointed organist at a salary of £8 per year increasing to £10 the following year. She remained as organist until 1877 when she moved to England and was succeeded by John Beveridge. Mrs Howatson had offered the harmonium to the Kirk Session in a letter dated 1st April 1874 which read: "Gentlemen, Being most anxious of the prosperity of your Church, I beg your acceptance of a harmonium to assist its psalmody. It is my desire that it only be used in the Church and if the congregation should ever think fit to abandon its use, it will then become my property and revert to me or my heirs. I sincerely hope

and trust that your Church may long continue in its prosperous condition. I am, Gentlemen, Yours very truly (signed) W.A.Howatson, Daldorch House, 1st April 1874." The Kirk Session unanimously agreed to accept the gift on the conditions stated. Mr Howatson promised to pay £5 per year for five years towards the organist's salary. (The Howatsons later moved from Daldorch to Glenbuck House. The headwaters of the River Ayr were dammed at Glenbuck to form a reservoir to supply water-power for the Catrine Works.) It was agreed to defer the introduction of the harmonium until the re-opening of the Church in May 1874.

In October 1874 a letter was received from Mr Buchanan of Barskimming and laid before the Session: "Catrine 29th October 1874. Dear Sirs, I beg to place in your hands for the use of Catrine Church on sacramental occasions, a communion service consisting of two flagons, four cups and two salvers. Now that the Church has been remodelled and so much improved, I look upon the present as a fitting occasion to presenting these to the Church which I trust they may serve for many generations. I remain, Yours faithfully, Archibald Buchanan. (Mr Buchanan was manager of the Cotton Works.)

The Rev.Thomas Phillips died on 24th July 1876 and the following year a memorial stone was erected for him at a cost of £21.12s. He was succeeded by the Rev.James Buchanan who was ordained on 4th January 1877. Mr Buchanan was called to Eaglesham in 1881.

On 20th November 1880 it was discovered that there was an error in the Deed of Conveyance dated 19th, 21st and 23rd June 1871. The feuars agreed to have it adjusted, and the trustees assumed six of the feuars to be members of the committee for the management of the churchyard. The duly adjusted deed was signed by Claud Alexander MP and Archibald Buchanan as trustees of Catrine Church; and by Messrs Hugh Ewing (of Catrine Brewery), Wm.P.Fleming and Andrew Cowan on behalf of the feuars of Catrine and was dated 28th May and 6th June 1881.

Mr Phillips was followed as minister by the Rev.James Gilmour Baillie who was ordained on 9th March 1882.

The pipe-organ which is still in use today (AD2000) was installed by Harrison and Harrison of Durham in 1883 and was inaugurated on 7th December of that year – it cost £300. Major-General Claud Alexander MP. presided at the inauguration and the Kirk Session was represented by the Rev.James Baillie, Moderator; John Beveridge, Session Clerk;

John Monie, Schoolmaster; James McClymont, James Gilmour, John Auld, Peter Duff, Samuel Frazer and David Scott, Ruling Elders. Managers were Dr David Sloan, Preses; James B.B.Morton, Clerk and Treasurer; James McClymont (Jr), George Parker, John Hood, Robert Meikle and William Pettigrew. The organist was Richard McCrae who had succeeded John Beveridge in 1880, and Thomas McKinnel of Bridge Street was Church Officer. The Rev.James Baillie died on 21st May 1893 and was succeeded by the Rev.Hugh Callan who remained until January 1899 when he was translated to Montrose. During Mr Callan's term the fabric of the Church underwent various repairs, alterations and additions. On 5th October 1896, the Board of Management "agreed that the lighting of the Church be improved and that steps be taken to obtain the necessary funds"; and at the next meeting... "other repairs such as re-slating of roof north-side; re-arrangement of heating apparatus; white-washing and varnishing the interior; re-laying lobby and front door-steps should also be attended to if sufficient funds can be obtained." On 11th December the following donations to the repair fund were minuted:

Sir Claud Alexander, Bart., Ballochmyle	£80
James Finlay and Company	£50
A.M.Brown of Gryffe Castle	£10
Charles Howatson of Glenbuck	£ 5.5s.
James M.Thomson of Catrine House	£ 3.3s.
Rev.H.C.Begg of Sorn	£ 1
Messrs J.B.Campbell	£ 1
Surplus from previous year	10s.

Mr Tennant, Architect of Glasgow, was invited to examine the Church and report on proposed repairs – estimated cost was £609. The repairs went ahead during 1897 and in the meantime services of worship and other functions were held in the Wilson Hall in Bridge Street and carried on there until 4th March 1898. (The site of the Wilson Hall is now occupied by a Day Centre for Senior Citizens.) With further donations of £1 from Lady Alexander, £10 from James M.Thomson and 2s.3d. surplus from the repair fund it was possible to complete repairs to the paths and lead a supply of gravitation water to the manse.

In 1897, a notable addition to the Church building was the erection of a belfry and the installation of a bell to call the people to worship. This was to mark the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The bell bears the following inscription in Latin: "AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM(?) HANC CAMPANEM IN ECCLESIA PAROCHALI(?) CATRINENSI POSITAM DICAVIT UNA CUM CONGREGATIONE CLAUDIUS ALEXANDER EQUES

AURITES. JOHANNES C.WILSON SOCIIQUE GLASGUENSIS FUDERANT A.D.MDCCCXCVII 'O VIRI AD VOS CLAMITO ET VOX MEO(?) AD FILIUS HOMINUM'."...which translates as: "Claud Alexander, Gilded Knight, together with the congregation, dedicated this bell placed in Catrine Parish Church to the greater glory of God. John C.Wilson and Company of Glasgow founded it in 1897 'O men! I call to you and my voice is to the sons of men'". (The Biblical text is from Proverbs ch.viii v.4.) The bell was first rung by Master Wilfred Alexander, grandson of Sir Claud and Lady Alexander.

An interesting anecdote relating to the bell concerns a stone carved effigy of a man's face which was sited above the main entrance to the Church and just below the belfry. The origin and significance of the face are unknown, but it was known locally as 'Hosey' or 'Hosie'. It is reported that mothers used to threaten their children with Hosey if they misbehaved; and the children used to shout the following rhyme as they passed it:

Hosey, Hosey, peep, peep, peep,
Here's the man with the cloven feet,
Here's his head, but where's his feet?
Hosey, Hosey, peep, peep, peep.

It is said that Hosey fell down at the first peel of the bell! It has since been replaced by the 'burning-bush' emblem of the Church of Scotland with its motto: 'nec tamen consumebatur' – 'Nevertheless, neither was it consumed'.

"Ah! There's nae Hosie noo, wi' his queer face and broo,
And the lang han'less arms he kept swingin.
He gaed aff the folks say, on that very same day
When the chapel new bell started ringin."

The above lines were included in the Chairman's address at the Catrine Re-union held in Clydebank in 1913 and are quoted from a poem by Aitken who was known as the 'Railway Poet'. The poem continues:

"Nae mair when it's dark through the windows he'll peep
Wi' his great glowerin een of ill omen;
Nae mair will he cheep when the weans winna sleep,
Or chase the boys hame in the gloamin.
Up the 'Radical Road' I could dance wi' my load,
Or speil the 'Scaur Brae' clean and clever,
I could scurry awa roun and up Pyat Ha',

But the Stairs or the Chapelbrae never.
Hosie's first eerie glower I could never get ower,
My side he seemed always a thorn in,
Staring down on the toon where the drum aye gaed roon
At half-past five in the morning."

(Note on the population of the village of Catrine: In 1791 the population of the recently built village of Catrine was only 800. Within two years it had doubled to 1601 and within a hundred years by 1891 it was 2458. It reached its highest point in 1846 when it was 2989, comprised of 1379 males and 1610 females at an average of 5.1 per family. By 1891 the average family size had fallen to 4.33. The figures from 1851 to 1891 are contained in the 1891 Census which was enumerated for Catrine by James Struther, Robert B.Conner, Hugh Gemmell and Thomas Aitken. During the last two decades of the 19th century, the roll of Catrine Parish Church fluctuated between 490 and 520 – about three quarters of the original members seceded from the Established Church at the time of the 1843 Disruption.)

The Rev.Wm.John (1871 – 1972) was ordained in May 1899 and he remained at Catrine, his only charge, until he retired in 1947. With the induction of Mr John and the dawning of the 20th century, Catrine Parish Church entered the most settled period in its history despite the upheavals of two world wars (1914 – 1918) and (1939 – 1945). The minutes of the Board of Management and of the Kirk Session include the following information:

25th Nov 1901 – James B.B.Morton of Broomknowe and Manager of the Bleachworks was assumed as a trustee of 'Quoad Sacra' Catrine Parish Church of Scotland, to join Dr David Sloan of Mansfield.

27th Jan 1902 – At the end of 1901 the Church Roll stood at 510. During 1901 there were 22 baptisms, ten marriages and ten deaths. The management committee comprised; Hugh Gemmell, James Duncan, John Scott, Thomas Aitken, John McDonald, John R.Hood and James B.B.Morton (Chairman).

During 1902 the roll rose to 520 and 218 children attended Sunday School which was served by 21 teachers. On 1st November 1903 the Kirk Session sederunt was: The Rev.Wm.John, Moderator; Messrs James McClymont, John Monie, David Scott, Samuel Frazer, John Auld and John Beveridge, Ruling Elders. By the end of 1903 the roll had risen to 526 of whom 318 communicated at least once during the year.

25th Jan 1904 – It is reported that the Temperance League had recorded a membership of 100 adults and 300 juveniles.

2nd October 1904 – It was decided that the Boys' Brigade Company should be resuscitated and a lieutenant in the original company was asked to investigate the condition and whereabouts of the guns used in drill parades. (Note: The Boys' Brigade was founded in Glasgow in 1883 by William Smith – at one time they used wooden guns for rifle drill, a practice which was later discontinued as it was considered too militaristic.)

27th Nov 1905 – John Monie, Schoolmaster, resigned as Secretary to the Congregational Board and also as Church Treasurer. He was succeeded by Mr Beveridge of Ford House.

29th Sept 1908 – Death noted of manager James Duncan; Thomas Nimmo was elected in his stead on 25th January 1909.

10th Apr 1910 – The Kirk Session petitioned the Licensing Authority at Kilmarnock opposing a proposed pawn shop in Ayr Street...“on the grounds of lowering the moral tone of the community”.

By September 1910 the Boys' Brigade had been in abeyance for about a year. Miss Farquhar of Gilmilnscroft expressed a desire to have set up, a Boy Scout Troop for Catrine and Sorn. At the beginning of 1910 the Church roll stood at 556 but by the end of the year it had fallen to 544.

10th July 1911 – Concern was expressed that children were getting into the Churchyard by climbing over the wall; the police were informed. (As I recall from my childhood in Mull Mull Street, we were still doing the same in the 1930's. Much of the Churchyard was a veritable jungle until it was taken under the responsibility of the Local Authority.)

29th Jan 1912 – The police were again involved when the window beside the pulpit was broken by stones during choir practice. (Of course, as older generations keep telling us: “There was never any vandalism when we were young!”)

6th Feb 1912 – Agreed that the supplement to the minister's stipend should be replaced by a fixed salary of £100 plus the cost of four days pulpit supply. Also agreed that afternoon services should be discontinued and that Sunday worship should be at 12 noon with an

evening service once a month at which Hymnal and Scottish Hymnary would both be in use.

9th June 1912 – Concern about ice-cream shops in the village led to a call for their being closed at 10pm on weekdays and all day on Sundays.

27th Jan 1913 – John Scott resigned as manager on being ordained elder and was replaced by Robert McDonald.

28th Sept 1914 –Death of manager Hugh Gemmell noted. Complaints were received that the ringing of the Church bell for fifteen minutes on Sundays was disturbing worship in other churches. Agreement was reached that the ringing should be reduced.

29th Mar 1915 – Reported that Council employees were no longer undertaking work related to burials in the old Churchyard.

17th Jan 1916 – William H.Campbell of Daldorch agreed to become a trustee – Thomas Deans was appointed manager in his place. (Mr Campbell was my first employer. His Head-Gardener John Craig, who was the leader of the Brethren Sunday School which I attended from the age of three until fourteen, recruited me to work in Daldorch House Gardens when I was on holiday from school during the summers of 1942 and 1943, for the princely salary of fifteen shillings per week paid four-weekly in crisp new ten-shilling notes – a real fortune for a boy of 12 or 13 years and a most enjoyable experience to work in the company of real characters like John Craig, Bob Harrison and Will Henderson who were the full-time gardeners, and the chauffeur-butler Mr Fraser who was redundant as chauffeur because of wartime petrol rationing, and helped out in the garden and grounds when required.)

(An apology – the compiler of these notes is beginning to digress with increasing frequency as his own memories are being stimulated by various names and incidents which are appearing in his sources.)

In July 1916, Church Officer Thomas McKinnell resigned because of ill-health and Maxwell Stobbs was appointed in his place. (I remember Maxwell Stobbs as living in Bridge Street. He and my father were signalmen with the L.M.S. Railway Company at Brackenhill Junction where the Catrine Branch of the railway joined the main line.)

19th Sept 1916 – It was decided that individual communion glasses should be introduced with clips being provided on the pews to hold them. The necessary glasses etc. were gifted in January 1917 by Mr Campbell of Daldorch.

9th Jan 1917 – Treasurer John Beveridge resigned because of ill-health. His immediate successor, Thomas Deans was also unable to carry on, so Robert McDonald was appointed temporarily.

28th Jan 1918 – Gilbert Park and John Carson were proposed as managers but the former declined and John Carson was also unable to accept as he was to be ordained as an Elder.

8th Sept 1918 – The Kirk Session resolved to petition the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Lord Advocate and the local Member of Parliament anent the Education (Scotland) Bill 1918... "that provision ought to be made for religious instruction to be given at all public schools, primary, intermediate and secondary".

Remarkably, the records of both the Kirk Session and the Congregational Board make little reference to the fact that the United Kingdom had been at war with Germany and its allies from 1914 until 1918, but the Board's minutes for 4th July 1919 do mention that Thomas Dean had returned from war service and resumed as treasurer.

13th Jan 1919 – Thomas Nimmo, now an ordained Elder, resigned as manager and was replaced on 31st March by James Allan.

12th Jan 1920 – Dr David Sloan of Mansfield retired after fifty years service. (Mansfield is now the Presbytery of St Joseph's R.C.Church and the church itself is situated behind it.)

22nd Feb 1920 – Mr John Beveridge retired after fifty years as Session Clerk and was succeeded by John Carson at a salary of five pounds per year. Mr Beveridge died the following year.

The deaths of James Allan and Thomas Aitken were noted on 18th July 1921 and 9th January 1922 respectively.

16th Apr 1922 – A gift of two communion chairs from the ladies of the Church was acknowledged.

18th Mar 1923 – Mr John Thomson, Headmaster of Catrine Public School, was admitted to the Kirk Session. He had previously been Headmaster at Sorn and a member of Sorn Kirk Session. (Mr Thomson was my first Headmaster when I started school at Catrine in January 1936.)

28th July 1926 – Death of John Hood recorded.

21st June 1927 – Richard McCrae, who had been organist continuously since the pipe-organ was installed in 1883, had to resign owing to ill-health. He was succeeded on 28th July by Mr Harvey. In January 1928 the young John Thomson, who was later to serve as organist for fifty-six years, was refused the use of the church organ for practice.

In 1929 the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church were re-united after eighty-six years following on the 1843 Disruption. On 10th March 1929 the Kirk Session of Catrine Parish Church said that they were in favour of re-union, and on 1st September 1929 the Session recommended that the Parish Church would be known as Catrine High Kirk. The former United Free Church, now rejoined to the Church of Scotland was to be renamed the Gordon Memorial Church of Scotland as a mark of respect to the Rev. Aeneas C.Gordon, its minister for many years. On 9th September 1929 a joint meeting was held in the former Free Church with the following sederunt: the Rev. James Fullarton, Minister of the Gordon Memorial Church, Alexander Faulds, William Buchanan, Alexander Gillies, John Thomson(Sr), John Thomson(Jr), Alexander Cairns, James Cairns, Thomas Nimmo and John Carson. A joint service was proposed to celebrate the re-union, to be held in the Wilson Hall with praise led by the united choirs of the two churches accompanied by Charles Parker's Orchestra. A joint social evening was also proposed for 7th October 1929.

On 27th October 1929 the Catrine High Kirk Session suggested that there should be a monthly united evening service in the Wilson Hall. The Parish of Catrine was now shared by two churches.

Mr Harvey resigned as organist on 4th November 1929 and was succeeded by Miss Hight on 13th January 1930.

The Kirk Session of the renamed Catrine High Kirk met on 27th April 1930 with sederunt: Rev. Wm. John, Moderator; Messrs Chalmers, Hillditch, Dalziel, McDonald, James and Alexander Cairns and John Carson (Clerk).

15th May 1930 – The system of using free-will offering envelopes was adopted. Robert McDonald, Church Treasure, resigned on his removing to Prestwick.

27th July 1930 – The McMaster Bequest – refers to a bequest by the late Alexander McMaster, Banker at Catrine, died 17th July 1921... "to invest in the name of the then (1921) Ministers of the United Free Church and Church of Scotland, their Session Clerks and their successors in office, the sum of £500 sterling...in all time coming for the respectable and deserving persons in reduced circumstances of, or in any way connected with, Catrine, whether resident there or not...to be administered by Minister and Session Clerk...at their discretion". The legacy was invested in Consolidated Stock.

In 1931 the original 1871 Deed of Constitution was annulled and replaced by a similar deed relating to...'the Church and Parish Quoad Sacra of Catrine High'...and in June 1932 the Congregational Board was set up under the new constitution – the board consisted of the Rev.Wm.John, Chairman, and eleven Elders plus Mrs William John, George Park, George Neil, William Scott, Robert Meikle, David Meikle, James Miller, Robert McDonald and Robert Aitken with James McCallum as Secretary and Treasurer; David Meikle as Minute Secretary; John Thomson as Finance Convener and James Chalmers and David Meikle, Auditors.

1st Feb 1932 – John Thomson was appointed organist in succession to Miss Hight and remained so until his retiral on 29th March 1987.

In April 1932 electricity was installed in the Manse – this was well in advance of most houses in the village which were largely lit by gas.

In January 1934 it was confirmed that custody and control of the Churchyard was now in the hands of Ayr County Council and its management the responsibility of the District Council. The relevant records kept by the Kirk Session since 1881 were handed over to the Local Authority.

In 1934 a Girls' Guildry Company consisting of 126 girls was formed under the leadership of Mrs John. The Communion Roll contained 474 names in 1935. Electricity was installed in the Church in 1936. In 1937 the Women's Guild asked to meet the Kirk Session to discuss the possibility of raising funds to provide a church hall rather than the practice of hiring the use of the Wilson Hall for meetings and functions. In February 1938 the Session's attention was called to... "a rupture in the choir" which was amicably settled in April. In October 1939 the

Kirk Session resolved to end Church Door collections and use salvers instead during worship from the first Sunday in 1940. Three months after the outbreak of the Second World War, reference was made to a reduced sederunt because many members were engaged in war-emergency work. Also at this time the Women's Guild sought permission to collect one penny per week for members serving in the armed forces. In October 1940 John Carson demitted from office as Session Clerk because of ill-health – Mr Carson died a few weeks later and was succeeded by the local Scoutmaster James Cairns. In 1941 A.R.P. (i.e. Air Raid Precautions) equipment consisting of a stirrup pump and pails of sand were placed in the Church in case of attack by incendiary bombs. In June 1942 Maxwell Stobbs resigned after serving as Church Officer for twenty-six years – he was succeeded by George Park. At the same time Ian Bell was appointed as organ-blower. George Park resigned as Church Officer in 1944 and was replaced by Bill Thomson – Bill was also Caretaker at the Wilson Hall which was used three days a week as a cinema and was also the venue for dances and other social functions. On 24th December 1944 the Kirk Session decided to discontinue evening services because of poor attendances, largely due to black-out regulations which made people reluctant to venture out on dark evenings. The Minister's stipend in 1945 was £375 per annum. On 9th October 1945 a proposal that women should be considered for the Eldership was unanimously approved by the Kirk Session; this was a forward looking decision at that time – very few Sessions approved without some dissent. However, it was to be a further forty-three years before the first women were ordained in 1988. The Rev.Wm.John retired in 1947 after forty-eight years as Minister at Catrine and the Rev.H.R.Taylor of the Gordon Memorial Church was appointed as Interim Moderator early in 1948. In 1948 a site was sought for a temporary church hall in Ford Street on ground adjacent to the present Chemist's shop and owned by Aitken and Girvan at that time – in 1953 the ground was bought by Antonio Sisi who was proprietor of the Central Café in Mill Square – with Sir Claud Alexander as feudal superior.

The Rev.Robert Campbell was ordained on 4th May 1949 and served until 1954 when he was translated to Speymouth. Mr Campbell died at Kinghorn in Fife on 14th February 1997. (Mr Campbell was Minister when I joined the Church and also officiated at our wedding in the A.M.Brown Institute in 1953.) In June 1949 a temporary wooden church hall was obtained from a source in Dundee and was opened on 1st October 1950. By 1950 the Minister's stipend had risen to £450 plus manse. In the same year, having had no Guardian since the departure of Mrs John, the Girls' Guildry was disbanded, but a company of the

Girl Guides was started in the village. By 1954 the stipend had risen to £520 per annum plus manse. Mr Campbell left Catrine in 1954 having been called to Speymouth and Garmouth in Moray.

With the departure of Mr Campbell, the Presbytery of Ayr took advantage of the situation and proposed that Catrine High Kirk and the Gordon Memorial Church should be united as one congregation in spite of strong opposition from the members of the Gordon Memorial. On Sunday 13th February 1955 the last Annual Business Meeting of Catrine High Kirk was held immediately after worship, and on 18th May 1955 the Rev. Chris Jack of Muirkirk was appointed Interim Moderator to oversee the difficult and sensitive task of attempting to unite the two congregations in face of understandable dissent. The Presbytery seems to have been ignorant of the long tradition of dissension and secession from the Established Church in Catrine, forgetting that the Gordon Memorial Church was the offspring of the Free Church which originated in the 1843 Disruption, and also of the earlier secessionists. The Presbytery had met at Straiton on 18th May 1955 to formalise the proposed union. The Presbytery minutes state: "It is hereby certified, by the order of the Presbytery of Ayr, that the congregations of Catrine...the Gordon Memorial Church and Catrine High Kirk were united this day to form one congregation to be known as Catrine Parish Church Congregation. Signed by J.G. McCallum, Presbytery Clerk."

The first meeting of the Kirk Session of Catrine Parish Church was held the following day with the Rev. Chris Jack as Interim Moderator. Elders present were: Alex Gillies, Robert Liddell, Hugh Poole (Jr), William Reid (Catriona), William Reid (Daldorch), William Reid (Ayrvale), John Chisholm, Thomas Melrose, James Park, James Nelson, Samuel Hillditch, Hugh Poole (Sr), John Stevenson, David Bryan, William Carson, Francis Chisholm and James Buck. James Buck was appointed Session Clerk. Other office-bearers were: Keeper of the Roll – John Stevenson, Joint- treasurers – George Park and Thomas Melrose; Sunday School Superintendent – George Park; Organist – John Thomson. The number of communicants on the roll was 792 with 32 on the Supplementary Roll. John Stevenson resigned his position in October 1955 as he was severing his connection with the Parish Church – as did most of the former members of the Gordon Memorial. On 14th December 1955 the Rev. James Dickson, formerly of Greenock, was inducted to the united charge as its first minister.

Having agreed to rejoin the Church of Scotland in 1929, the former members of the St. Cuthbert United Free Church became members of

the renamed Gordon Memorial Church of Scotland and, as a result of this agreement, all property of the United Free Church was transferred to the trusteeship of the Church of Scotland – this included their Church building, manse and their church hall which was known as the Gordon Hall. The Gordon Hall was the original United Secession Church which became the United Presbyterian Church and later the West United Free Church. Because of this transfer of property, those members of the Gordon Memorial dissenting from the union of the churches applied to join the Congregational Union but had no place of worship. To begin with, they continued to meet in the Gordon Hall, but they were eventually forced out and moved to the A.M.Brown Institute with the Rev. C.J.Innes as their first Minister. They eventually moved back to their former church building in 1960 having purchased it from the Church of Scotland for the nominal sum of £850.

1955, therefore, turned out to be a year which brought ill-feeling between the two congregations in the village, only ameliorated after the passage of several years. However, attempts were made to effect a successful union, and on 20th June there was a joint meeting of both Boards of Management in the Ford Street Hall with the Rev.Chris Jack, Interim Moderator in the chair. This meeting agreed to appoint George Park of the former High Kirk as Treasurer and Clerk to the new Congregational Board. By 27th June, dissension within the Board led to the resignation of some former Gordon Memorial Board members, namely: Mrs Thomson, Miss Begg and James Steel who were replaced by Alex McIlvean (my brother), Mrs Kyle and Mrs Beveridge. The rest of the sederunt was: Mrs Girvan, Mrs Gemmell, Miss Mary Poole, Miss Mary Carson, G.Thomson, John Stevenson, Hugh Poole(Sr), Hugh Poole(Jr), Thomas Melrose, William Carson, James Nelson, William Reid(Sr), William Reid(Jr), Charles Gemmell, Samuel Hilditch, John Chisholm, William Gibb, Robert MacDuff, Ian Bell, Andrew Hall, John Thomson, James Buck and George Park. Members not present were: Alex Kerr, Mrs Patrick, James Thomson, James Park and Robert Liddell. It was decided that the organist's salary should be £35 per annum with the organ-blower being paid £10. On 28th August the organist's salary was increased to £50. It was also noted that the Title Deeds of the Gordon Memorial properties had not been handed over to the new trustees and were being held by Solicitors Maclay, Speirs & McIntyre – it was to be another four years before the deeds were in the hands of the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland. The board decided that the Gordon Memorial manse would be retained as the manse for the Parish Church and the High Kirk manse (now known as Kirkdene in Ballochmyle Street) would be sold with the Gordon Memorial Church building being sold, not gifted, to the Congregationalists. By

September 1955 only eighteen members of the former Gordon Memorial Church were attending the Parish Church, the majority of the remainder, about 250, having joined the Congregationalists. At the same meeting, two applications for the use of the Gordon Hall were refused – one from the Catrine Branch of the Ayrshire Christian Union which was inter-denominational and consisted of members of both congregations; and the other from former Gordon Memorial Guild members. Towards the end of 1955 the Congregationalists took possession of the hall, claiming it was their property.

In October 1955 it was agreed that seat rents in the Parish Church should be five shillings per year and also that a Fabric Committee should be formed consisting of Mr Francis Chisholm (a local Joiner), Mrs Gemmell and Mrs Beveridge.

On 23rd April 1956 two offers were considered for the former High Kirk manse in Ballochmyle Street: David McKerrow of Croftfoot Farm offered £1265 and Gordon Memorial Congregational Church offered £1250 – the higher offer was accepted. On 26th June 1956 the Church Officer's salary was fixed at £17 per annum.

In September 1956, since James McEwan of the Congregationalists had failed to hand over the keys of the Gordon Hall, entry was forced and new locks fitted. In the meantime the former High Kirk underwent major renovation during which Sunday worship took place in the Gordon Memorial. Messrs Hay and Steele, Architects of Kilmarnock, were commissioned to design the new interior; joinery work was done by Innes and Anderson; and James Meikle & Sons were contracted to do the paintwork. The old gallery-type pulpit situated at the centre of the long wall of the Church was removed and replaced by a smaller one at the west end of the new chancel which was made of oak. The communion table was moved to the centre of the long wall on the chancel. It had originally been gifted to the Gordon Memorial Church by the Gordon family and was removed to the Parish Church along with some communion chairs. Also on the chancel, a baptismal font was put in front of the pulpit and a lectern at the east end next to the choir. The old communion table was resituated in the vestibule. To match the chancel and its furnishings, the pews were light varnished and grained, giving the whole interior a much brighter appearance. At the same time an electric motor was installed to drive the pump for the organ. The Church was reopened on 8th January 1960 when the building was re-dedicated; the service of worship being conducted by the Rev. Stewart Mackie, Lecturer in Ecclesiastical History at the University of Glasgow. Mr Mackie was assisted in the service by the

Rev. James Dickson and the Rev. Wm. John. Several gifts to the Church were dedicated on 21st February 1960: a new lectern gifted by the Women's Guild with velvet falls gifted by the Men's Guild; a pulpit-fall from the Sunday School and bookmarks for the pulpit and lectern from the Rosebuds and Speedwells of the Girls' Guildry. Having no further use for the Gordon Memorial Church building, it was vacated on 31st December 1959 and it was disposed of to the Congregationalists for a nominal sum of £850 to become Catrine Congregational Church; so the former members of the Gordon Memorial were now 'back home' and the healing process moved forward to improve relations between the two congregations.

At the end of 1960 George Park retired from his positions as Treasurer, Clerk to the Congregational Board and Sunday School Superintendent, and was succeeded by Hugh Poole, Heath Dalziel and myself (John McIlvean) respectively. In 1962 the Women's Guild moved from the Ford Street Hall to the Gordon Hall, as did the Primary Sunday School; also the Junior and Senior Sunday Schools moved from to the Gordon Hall from the Church. The Ford Street Hall was then sold to the local Brethren Assembly for £150.

In 1966 a stained glass window, the "Girls' Guildry Window", was installed overlooking the chancel in memory of Mrs Sara T. John who died in 1961 – Mrs John was the founder of the Catrine Company and its Guardian for many years. The window was unveiled by Miss E. Reid, Guardian of the Guildry, on 27th November 1966 and dedicated by the Rev. James Dickson. Exactly one year later on 26th November 1967 a second window to match the first one was unveiled by Sir John Muir, Bart., a director of James Finlay and Company. Both windows were designed by George Maile of Canterbury. The second window was dedicated in memory of the men of the parish who died in the two World Wars of the 20th century. The names of the fallen were recorded in a Book of Remembrance with calligraphy by Thomas Meikle; and the book was displayed in a glass topped wooden casket made and gifted by local carpenter, Robert McIlvean (my brother). In June 1993 both the casket and the book were stolen from the Church – the damaged casket was recovered and repaired by Robert McIlvean, but the book was permanently lost and had to be replaced. Mr John Faulds of Sorn did the calligraphy and the book was dedicated on 13th November 1994.

The Rev. Wm. John who had been Minister at Catrine, his sole charge, from 1899 until he retired in 1947, died in December 1972 at the age of 101. A wooden cross made by Robert McIlvean and gifted by Mr

John's family was erected in his memory centrally between the two chancel windows – the cross was unveiled by Mr John's daughter, Mrs Kathleen Parry and dedicated on 12th May 1974. Another gift dedicated on 6th April 1975, was a large wooden salver designed to receive the offerings. It was also made by Robert McIlvean and was donated in her memory by the family of Mrs Nan Hood. At Easter 1977, the new Church Hymnary (Third Edition) was introduced having been purchased with a legacy from Mrs Smith, formerly of St.Cuthbert Street.

Early in 1978 the Rev.James Dickson fell ill and was unable to continue his ministry – the Rev. Charles Johnston of the Peden Kirk in Auchinleck was appointed Interim Moderator. Around the same time, the Rev. D.Reid, Minister at Sorn, died so the way was open for the Presbytery to propose linking the two parishes – the Catrine congregation was quite agreeable to this step as it would halve ministry and some other costs; but with the proviso that Mr Dickson could retire with a satisfactory settlement. This was duly agreed so Mr Dickson retired on 31st August 1978 and moved to a house in Sorn. Sadly, Mr Dickson did not live long to enjoy his retirement as he died on 9th April 1979.

The two charges were linked at a service of worship held at Sorn on 3rd September 1978. The address was given by the Rev.G.Grant, Moderator of Presbytery, assisted by the Rev. Charles Johnston, Presbytery Clerk, and the Rev.D.Robertson, Interim Moderator and Minister at Auchinleck.

At the beginning of 1978 there were 449 names on the Communion Roll at Catrine. A vacancy committee was set up and on 27th February 1979, the Rev. Alex Welsh was ordained to the charge of Catrine linked with Sorn.

In May 1979 Heath Dalziel resigned as Clerk to the Congregational Board, having held the position since 1961. As the manse at Catrine was in need of extensive repairs, it was decided that it should be sold and a more suitable property purchased or built – in the meantime the Minister and his family would occupy a house rented from the Local Authority at Fourfields in Catrine. In 1980 the bungalow on the Catrine – Sorn road, known as 'Rowanlea', was purchased as a temporary manse at a cost of £27,050. Mr Hugh Poole and Mrs Mason undertook the duties of the Clerk to the Board until the end of 1979 after which the position was taken by Mrs Lorna Rae who would serve for four years – in fact, Lorna was to serve for twenty years. In February 1980

it was decided that seat rents should be discontinued. I, John McIlvean resigned as Sunday School Superintendent in March 1980 and was replaced by Mrs Welsh, the Minister's wife – I continued to represent the interest of the Sunday School in the Kirk Session. On 11th May 1980 an offer of £24,500 from Mr and Mrs Rennie of Ayr was accepted for the former manse adjacent to the Church Hall – it was renamed 'Mansefield Lodge'. On 2nd June 1980 the Congregational Board agreed to accept a suggested gift of praise-boards from Mrs Dickson in memory of her late husband. The boards were made by Robert McIlvean and being suitably inscribed "To the glory of God and in memory of the Reverend James Dickson", were dedicated on 19th April 1981. In September 1980 a pulpit-fall and Bible were dedicated in memory of Mrs Moncur – a gift from her family. On 6th October 1980 the Congregational Board decided to abandon any further attempt to build a new manse at a site in Institute Avenue. It had been hoped to replace the temporary manse of 'Rowanlea' at Sorn Road but the cost was prohibitive, so it has remained there until this day and will continue to serve as the manse until the linkage between Catrine and Sorn is broken when the present Minister Mr Chalmers retires in a few years time. Early in 1981 Mr James Buck retired as Session Clerk owing to ill-health and he was succeeded by me (John McIlvean) in March of that year, with Roy Hume becoming Keeper of the Roll; sadly, Mr Buck died a few months later. On 4th May 1981 the Board and Session agreed that all funds held in various small accounts by the Royal Bank of Scotland should be combined and split equally between the Sunday School and the Youth Group. Oil-heating was installed in the Church in 1981.

Angela Cairns was appointed as Treasurer in March 1982 and, at the same Annual Congregational Meeting, Jack Dunsmuir and John McIlvean became Auditors. Angela resigned after one year and was replaced by Mrs Linda Kerr. In 1984 oil-heating was installed in the Church Hall. For several years the finances of the Church were inadequate to meet its needs and it had become aid-receiving; so, in November 1985 it was decided that a Finance Committee should be set up in an endeavour to restore financial independence – the committee consisted of: the Rev. A. Welsh, Sam Peden and John McIlvean. As a result, a planned-giving campaign was initiated in March 1986 to increase giving by members and to encourage giving by Deed of Covenant so that the Church could benefit from tax rebates. The campaign succeeded and within two years the Church had become self-supporting. In March 1986 the Church was re-wired.

In May 1986 the Rev. Alex Welsh was translated to Dennistoun, Glasgow and the Rev. A.K. Ridland was appointed Interim Moderator. On 19th November 1986 the Rev. William Clement Robb, previously Minister of Kilberry linked with Tarbert in Argyll was inducted to the charge of Catrine linked with Sorn. In December 1986 it was decided that a public address system should be installed in the Church at a cost of £800. In March 1987 John Thomson retired as organist after serving for fifty-five years – he was succeeded by Donald McElroy of Sorn who served until 1989. On 7th June 1987 the Colours of the Catrine branch of the Royal British Legion were accepted by the Church for safe-keeping and were placed on the wall of the chancel just behind the Moderator's chair and below the Cross. In November 1987 Mr Robb re-introduced the 'Little Entry' of the Pulpit Bible to mark the beginning of worship. Around the same time, Mrs Annie Brown gifted twenty-five hymnals to the Church in memory of her husband John and their son Ron. In January 1989 Mrs Lorna Rae offered to compile a Cradle Roll, back-dated to 1967, to be framed at her expense and displayed in the vestibule of the Church – the calligraphy was done by Mr Robb, the Minister's father.

The state of the churchyard in 1989 was becoming unsatisfactory – it was increasingly being subjected to vandalism which was causing damage to railings and headstones. A letter was received from the Church's Legal Department anent the maintenance of the churchyard: "...the responsibility rests with the District Council. Provision was made in the Local Government (Scotland) Act of 1894 for heritors to transfer the ownership and responsibility...to Parish Councils and the Church of Scotland (Property & Endowments Act of 1925, by a blanket provision, transferred to Parish Councils all the churchyards held by the heritors, not voluntarily transferred under the 1894 Act; and the 1925 Act specifically provided that any road or path through a churchyard transferred to the Parish Council had to be kept in good order and sufficient repair by it. Parish Councils were superseded in 1929 by Town and County Councils and more recently...by District Councils...Section II of the Church of Scotland (Provision and Endowment) Act of 1933 provided for quoad sacra churchyards (i.e. like Catrine's) to be transferred to Local Authorities. Intimation was given to Ayr County Council on 29th November 1933 transferring the responsibility for the Catrine Churchyard to the County Council..."

In October 1989 Linda Kerr resigned as Treasurer. She was succeeded by Dougal McMillan but Mr McMillan became ill and died before he could take over, so Hugh Poole agreed to step in and become Treasurer for a second time.

In January 1990, two keystones which had formed part of the aqueduct supplying water for the 'Big Wheel' which at one time powered the Cotton Works, were placed in the Church for safe keeping – the aqueduct ran parallel to the steps leading up to the Church.

In 1990 Alex Kerr undertook to record Sunday worship on audio-tape so that housebound members could share in the services. When Mr Kerr was unable to continue this task owing to ill-health, Dr Philip volunteered to take over.

In June 1990, Mr Venning of Harrison and Harrison, Organ Builders of Durham, visited the Church to view the pipe-organ which had been built by his grandfather and installed in 1883. Mr Venning, a Director of the firm, and organist in Durham Cathedral was enthusiastic about the organ and carried out some tuning and adjustments. A great deal of work had been done on the organ by David Neill of Coylton, Captain of the Paddle Steamer 'Waverley', and a pipe-organ enthusiast. Mr Neill was a friend of Mr Robb who served on the 'Waverley' when he was on holiday, and he was also a member of Catrine Parish Church. In his work on the organ he was assisted by temporary organist David Edwards. Regular tuning of the organ is carried out by Messrs Rushworth and Draper – at that time the organ was valued at £70 000 and would cost £150 000 to replace. Extensive repairs were completed at the Church Hall in 1990 at a cost of £1877.

In May of 1991 the Church was burgled and two pewter communion flagons, four cups and two pourers were stolen and have never been recovered. The flagons were of especial interest because of hidden inscriptions expressing sympathy with those in America who had rebelled against British rule; and wishing success to the young republic which arose out of the Declaration of Independence of 1776 – similar flagons can be seen on display at the People's Palace in Glasgow. In June 1991, a painting of Catrine Church by her cousin was gifted to raise funds for the Church by Mrs Dorothy Houston and in October of the same year, Alex Kerr donated an electronic organ for use in the Church Hall – the latter was a timely donation as the hall was to be used for worship while the Church was undergoing extensive repairs during 1991/92. The repairs involved the restoration and treating of the stonework and the re-roofing of the building including the belfry which had to be removed while the work was progressing. The cost of the project was £339 345 an amount which could only be covered thanks to several generous donations and grants from various sources:

Cumnock and Doon Valley District Council for Phase 1	£23 100
Cumnock and Doon Valley District Council for Phase 2	£16 079
Dalrymple Trust	600
Gemmell Bequest	150
Robert Potter and Partners, Architects	2 650
Miss Meikle Bequest	2 000
Historic Scotland	£184 000
" "	6 700
Ferguson Trust	5 000
Church of Scotland General Trustees	15 000
" " " " "	10 000
Baird Trust	4 000
Renfield Street Trust	2 000
Enterprise Ayrshire	40 000

The repairs to the Church were completed in time to mark its bi-centenary in September 1992. A special service was held on 14th September 1992 when the address was given by the Right Reverend Hugh Wyllie of Hamilton and Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. The service was conducted by the Rev.Clem Robb and was broadcast on West Sound Radio. A plaque was presented to the Church as a memento of the Moderatorial visit and is displayed in the vestibule of the Church. Also, to mark the occasion, four bookmarks were gifted by the Women's Guild.

On 6th December 1992 a Service was held in the Laigh Kirk, Kilmarnock to mark the dissolution of the Provincial Synods under an Act of Assembly of May 1992. On 14th March 1993 a service of praise was held in Sorn Parish Church to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the establishment of Presbyterian Church government in the Parish of Sorn which included the hamlet of Catrine at that time. In April 1993 protective metal grilles were fitted to the windows at the church hall in response to an outbreak of vandalism. In May 1993 the Rev.Clem Robb was translated to the charges of Balmaclennan and Kells linked with St.John's Town of Dalry. Mr Robb received a parting gift of £200. Sadly, Mr Robb did not enjoy a long relationship with his new congregations as he was sentenced to seven years imprisonment for earlier sexual offences involving young males. The Rev.D.Robertson of Auchinleck was appointed Interim Moderator of Catrine linked with Sorn and the Rev.Effie Campbell, formerly of Cumnock's Crichton West Church, became Interim Pastor during the vacancy.

The Rev.George A.Chalmers, M.A., B.D., M.Litt., previously minister at Banchory Ternan West was inducted at a service held in Sorn Church

on 7th September 1994 with officiating ministers: Rev.George Heron, Moderator of Presbytery; Rev.James Crichton, Clerk of Presbytery; and Rev.Gordon Kennedy of New Cumnock. The induction social followed in Sorn Village Hall and introductory services were held at Sorn and Catrine on Sunday 11th September. The stipend for 1994 was £14 481 per annum, plus 20% to Pension Fund and 10% for National Insurance together with manse and communion elements. The new Book of Remembrance, with calligraphy by John Faulds of Sorn, was dedicated on 13th November 1994 – Remembrance Sunday – and then put on display in its restored cabinet in the vestibule of the Church. Around the same time, the book of praise “Songs of God’s People” was introduced to supplement CH3, the Church Hymnary (Third Edition). In May 1995, the church bell was rung at 8.40pm to mark the end of two minutes silence commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war in Europe (V.E.Day). Mr Hugh Poole, Elder and Church Treasurer, died on 25th November 1995 and in memory of him and his late wife Stewart, his family gifted a set of “Songs of God’s People” which were dedicated on 11th February 1996. Mrs Louisa Boyd took over as Treasurer. In May 1996 the use of fortified wine for communion was discontinued and non-alcoholic beverage was used in its place.

By mid-1996 it was becoming obvious that the Church’s financial position was deteriorating; so in the autumn of that year a planned-giving programme entitled a ‘Campaign for Survival’ was embarked upon under campaign director Jim Barnes of Springside and the convenership of John McIlvean, Session Clerk and Stewardship Promoter. The initial steps lasted from October to December of 1996 and involved visiting all members and adherents to obtain pledges on giving and encourage them to give by Deed of Covenant whereby the Church could claim Income Tax rebates from the Department of Inland Revenue. The campaign was most successful and after the first year achieved an increase of 120% in giving. Having a much sounder financial base, it was hoped that more time and effort, hitherto spent on raising money, would be available to strengthen the Church spiritually by means of a follow-up visitation to encourage improved attendance at worship by approaching lapsed members and eventually to reach out to the whole population of the parish with the Christian message by AD 2000.

On 14th February 1997 the Rev.Robert Campbell died at Kinghorn in Fife where he had spent his retirement. Mr Campbell was Minister of Catrine High Kirk from 1949 until 1954. A painting of the Church by Mr Campbell was gifted by his widow, Catherine, and is displayed in the

vestibule. During 1997 Mr Chalmers became ill and was unable to carry out his duties for several months during which time the Rev. John Paterson of Old Cumnock was Interim Moderator. In December 1997 a new public address system was installed in the Church involving a 'loop' system for the benefit of people with hearing aids. On 15th March 1998 two sets of 'The Good News Bible' for use in the pews were presented and dedicated in memory of my brother, Robert McIlvean; and of John and Annie Brown. Later the same year a Pulpit Bible was gifted by the McVean family in memory of George and Elizabeth Park, parents of Mrs Elizabeth McVean.

On 13th December 1998 an inter-denominational service was held in Catrine Village Hall, formerly known as the A.M. Brown Institute, to mark the centenary of the building. It was conducted jointly by the Rev. George Chalmers of Catrine Parish Church; the Rev. Canon John Flannery of St. Joseph's R.C. Church; and the Rev. Thomas Gordon of Catrine Congregational Church. On the actual date of the centenary, 16th December, a celebration was held in the Institute. Mr Chalmers led a prayer of dedication, an address was given by John McIlvean, and music was provided by Auchinleck Academy Brass Band.

A questionnaire issued by the Church of Scotland's Board of National Mission in 1998 concerning the number of baptisms carried out over the previous twenty-four years revealed the following figures:

1964 - 1975	172 children and 18 adults
1976 - 1985	66 " " 5 "
1986 - 1997	51 " " 8 "

The Statistical Return for 1998 contains the following figures:

Number on Communion Roll at 31 st December 1997	316
Admitted by profession of faith	0
Admitted by certificate of transference	0
Admitted by restoration	2
Number removed by death	11
Number removed by certificate	4
Number removed to Supplementary Roll	15
Number on Communion Roll at 31 st December 1998	288
Number on Supplementary Roll	43
Baptisms (all children)	4
Number of Elders	23
Number on Congregational Board (excluding Elders)	6

Mr Alex Kerr, Senior Elder and former Presbytery Elder, died on 27th December 1998 and Mr Robert 'Roy' Hume, Ruling Elder and Keeper of the Roll, collapsed and died while preparing to attend Communion on Sunday 25th April 1999 – Roy was succeeded as Keeper of the Roll by Mrs Mary Bunting. Mr David Muir, Ruling Elder, died on 1st October 1999 after several years of poor health despite which he remained active to the end having served nearly forty-one years as a member of the Kirk Session. Another Ruling Elder, Mr John Gillies died on 27th November 1999 – John served on the Fabric Committee for many years. Within a period of eleven months, the Kirk Session had lost four valuable members.

AD2000

The Church bell was rung at midnight on Hogmanay by Terry Harrison to welcome the year 2000, the final year of the Second Christian Millennium. He was joined in the celebration by a small group of members who enjoyed refreshments and shortbread.

At the A.G.M. of the Congregation the Session Clerk said that the Communion Roll had been examined and that it now stood at 190 members with 127 on the Supplementary Roll.

A gift of £250 was received in memory of the late Agnes Lyons and her sister Mrs Elizabeth Biggans of Auchinleck. It was later decided that the gift should be used to purchase a runner for the Communion Table. The runner would be blue with gold trimmings and possibly embroidered, depending of cost. The runner was dedicated during Sunday worship on 20th May 2001.

A spate of vandalism at the Church during May and June caused the breakage of forty panes of glass. As a result of this, it was decided to fit metal grilles to the windows at a cost of £5000.

In anticipation of the vacancy at Auchinleck when the Rev. Dan Robertson would retire at the end of May, the Presbytery of Ayr proposed that the existing link between Catrine and Sorn be broken and deferred linkages formed of Catrine with Auchinleck, and Sorn with Muirkirk; to become totally effective when the Rev. George Chalmers becomes due to retire. Catrine and Sorn Parish Churches both protested against their linkage being broken, but although the majority of the members at Catrine and Sorn voted against the proposal, they were outvoted by Auchinleck and Muirkirk. On 13th August the Electoral Register for Catrine was attested, and in October a joint Vacancy Committee was selected to seek a new Minister. First attempts failed to find a suitable nominee so the position had to be re-advertised.

In August, Ballochmyle Hospital closed after forty years, having been built as a Military Hospital in 1940 during the Second World War. After closure, a Bible which had been donated to the hospital by Dr. Richmond, a member of the hospital's medical staff and also of Catrine Church, was given to the Church for safe keeping. The Bible was placed on the chancel lectern.

In November, Mrs Lorna Rae was unable to continue as Clerk to the Congregational Board because of a serious illness: the Session Clerk was asked to minute the Board's proceedings pro tem. Sadly, Lorna died on 21st December 2000, having been Clerk to the Board since 1980 and a Ruling Elder since her ordination on 17th April 1988.

With the expiry of current Deeds of Covenant at the end of the year 2000, covenanted members were approached to sign up for the new Gift Aid Scheme, whereby all their recorded givings would be eligible for refund of Income Tax of twenty-eight pence for every pound given.

In December 2000, the Kirk Session rejected an interim report from SCIFU (the Scottish Churches Initiative for Union) involving the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church in Scotland and the United Reformed Church. The Elders were against any form of episcopacy as proposed in the report: the Presbytery was informed accordingly.