

Pirnmill Church of Scotland
- closed on 29th January 2023

Closing words by Dr John Adam
– Deputy Session Clerk

“As we say goodbye to worship in Pirnmill a few words on the History of our “Tin Church”

Built in 1920 this is one of the few remaining examples of 'tin' churches that were popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

These corrugated iron buildings were manufactured in kit form in Edinburgh and Glasgow and widely used in Scotland, overseas and in remote communities due to the material's inexpensive qualities and quick and easy assembly features.

A glance at the previous history of churches in Pirnmill is interesting. In 1845 Lord Rossmore, an Anglo Irish peer who had in 1820 married Ann a daughter of 8th Duke of Hamilton, built a church between Catacol and Pirnmill for the Free Church and Church of Scotland worshippers of these villages.

The Church of Scotland meeting was in the morning, the Free Church service in Gaelic was in the afternoon. The former Catacol Bay Hotel was the Manse.

In due course the Church of Scotland folk of Pirnmill built their own sandstone church in the village which was opened and dedicated in 1912.

In the early 1990s Presbytery decided to close Pirnmill Church on the grounds that it was too expensive to maintain and suggested that the congregation should move to Lochranza.

Locally such a prospect was deemed unacceptable.

A determined group of villagers and their Minister, Rev. Andrew Barrie, resisted the change. A maintaining lease with The Free Church was agreed for this building, the Free Church Hall.

The Church of Scotland Presbytery agreed that both Lochranza and Pirnmill congregations should account for everyday expenses and that Pirnmill should maintain the building.

And so it was that the "Tin Church" remained the centre of worship in Pirnmill.

The bell outside our church always raises interest. For this we may thank Elspeth Macdonald.

With the approach of the Millennium celebrations Elspeth felt that there was a need for an appropriate recognition.

A bell was found and mounted outside here on a structure designed and fabricated by Simon Horne of Pirnmill.

Later on we will hear a little of those 17 dedicated Villagers who, in the early 1990s, made it possible for Pirnmill people to worship in their own Church.

Happily one of that strong band is with us today and will shortly give us her reflections on Pirnmill's Tin Church."