

THE KIRK SESSION RECORDS OF ROTHESAY, 1658-1750.

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In the previous lecture we considered the Kirk Session minutes as contained in the first volume, 1658-1661. Our object was to present a view of these three years in fairly minute detail in order that we might have a general idea of the work of a Kirk Session in the seventeenth century. Between the first and second volumes there is a gap of $13\frac{1}{2}$ years except for the minute of an appointment of a schoolmaster in 1680. This hiatus, greatly to be regretted, is easily explained, as the Restoration of Episcopacy in Scotland is dated 1662, and although we have little knowledge of its repercussion in Bute, and practically no trace of Covenanting zeal, it would appear as if the Kirk Session was shorn of its authority by the very presence of the Bishop's throne in the Burgh. At the same time, the first minute of the second volume contains a reference to the "occasion when the Session assembled last with the Bishop of the Isles." The system in Rothesay so far as the Kirk Session was concerned would seem to have been Presbyterianism within an Episcopacy. In any case, the most interesting feature is that the second volume commences on 3rd March, 1685—seventeen days after the accession of James II., whose open design was the overthrow of the reformation (five years before the Revolution Settlement) and that during this time Session business was carried through without any reference to the Bishop. We now propose to examine the records on more general lines—to present not a view in detail so much as to follow through one particular subject in minutes either close together or widely separated, allowing as far as possible the Records to tell their own story.

The first reference to the LORD'S SUPPER is on 24th May, 1687. "This day the minister made known to the elders that (the Lord assisting) he was resolved to minister the holy Eucharist to his congregation on Sunday, the 5th day of June next, and that he had very good hopes all of them longed spiritually for so blessed a refreshment and were endeavouring to dispose themselves for that heavenly communion, therefore he desired to be informed how the elements and other necessary expenses for that holy occasion were usually served."

There is no further record of celebration until 1703, when the same question of the provision of the elements arose, and was again solved by the generosity of the "Sheriff of Bute, who recommended to provide the elements for this time and he would see them payed when he came home." It is significant that, except in this first minute, there is no reference to the "Holy Eucharist;" until the close of our study in 1750, it was the invariable practice of the minister to acquaint the Session "that he proposed to celebrate the Lord's Supper" on a certain date, which seems to have been infrequent and by no means uniform.

I have been unable to discover when the change was made to read as in the last minutes of the old Parish Church of Rothesay, "The Kirk Session resolve to celebrate the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper on such and such a date," thus transferring the appointment from the minister to the Kirk Session.

8th August, 1745. " . . . Then proceeding to other particulars relative to this occasion and ordinance, the Session unanimously determined anent all in the parish whom they thought fit to partake or be refus'd whether such as formerly admitted or now offer'd themselves to the Lord's table; the order of the service being agreed on and the treasurer appointed to provide duly and timeously the elements."

During the ministry of Mr Dugald Stewart (grandfather of the famous philosopher) much was done to bring order into the affairs of the kirk,

12th July, 1715. "The minister reports that he had caused James Stewart, Wright, to make a right set of tables which might be joined and put asunder without any trouble and kept in all time coming for that occasion, the expense quherof came to 20 lbs. Scots."

12th June, 1718. "The minister reports that his wife had impowered him to signify to this session that she willingly gave linnens to the ensuing Communion occasion and mortified the same for that use in this parish in all time coming. . . . The session having viewed all the same linnens were fully satisfied . . . and appointed Killmorry and Old Bailie Wallace at the rising of this meeting to wait on the minister home and in the session's name heartily to thank his wife for her said gift and gratuity . . . and accordingly appointed the treasurer to employ a seamstress to mark each of the tablecloths and servets with these words at length, Church of of Rothesay, and to cause make a box or little chest for keeping them."

The most important gift was that of the COMMUNION Cups, which are still in use in the church.

21st June, 1711. "The minister reports that upon the 26th day of May last, he received at Edinburgh from the Right Honourable Christian, Countess Dowager of Bute, an obligation granted by the deceast James, Earle of Bute, her husband, in favours of the parish Rothesay and the poor of the island of Bute . . . the tenor whereof follows:—
. . . to witt the sum of thirty pounds Sterling mony thereof to be applyed for paying the said two Communion cups at the sight and by the advice of Christian, Countess of Bute, our well-beloved spouse, and James, Lord Mount Stewart, our eldest son."

There was considerable delay before the work was finally carried out. By 1714 progress had been made.

8th June, 1714. "The session taking this affair into their serious consideration . . . have agreed that four cups should be made, and that the whole 30 lb. Sterling for that

effect, and that each cup should bear the Sterling mark, be well polished and not with a shallow but deep bowl, and that each cup should have a little below the lip on the outside this inscription in capital letters, Donum Nobiliss: Jacobi Comitiss De Bute Parochiæ Rothesaiaæ Anno 1710, and that an hansom wain scot box should be made to contain them with four divisions in it, one for each cup, and that each division be lind with green base where the cup might touch the timber, and that the box should have a good lock and key."

30th July, 1714. "The cups being come, the session finds the instructions they sent for making them duely observed . . . then they did proceed to consider the said Archibald Stewart's accompt, which is as follows:—

DISCHARGE.		£	s	d
Imprimis Paid to Alexander Kincaid, Goldsmith, at Edinburgh for two pairs of Communion Cups weighing nyntie seven ounces at 3 lb. 14 sh. per ounce		358	18	00
Item To him for engraving them with the inscription above written		003	12	00
Item to his servants of drink mony		001	04	00
Which three articles are instructed by the said Mr Kincaid's receipt.				
Item Paid to David White, wright in Canongate, for the wainscot box with all its furniture conform to the said David's receipt		007	04	00
Item To carriage of the cups from Edinburgh to Glasgow		000	12	00
Item To incidents to workmen at making of cups		000	18	00
Total discharge		£372	08	00
Balance due to the Session by Archibald is		£009	12	00

Note.—The figures in this discharge are Pounds Scots.

14th June, 1638. "Determin'd of all who were to get tokens . . . (The elders) have ther severall stations and offices enjoined assigned them, and the treasurer is to provide the elements."

24th June, 1747. "The minister acquaints the Session they were cald this day as usual before the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the place to give ther opinions anent the persons fit to be admitted to or debarred from the Lord's Table, quherin he exhorted all the members to faithfulness and caution and, likewise to candour and charity and read over the list of all former partakers or new offerers; and the several elders gave their opinion of all such as were to be debar'd for ther ignorance, bad lives, variance, etc., and columniators . . . All are exhorted to the duties of solemn preparations of themselves for this occasion."

The minutes regarding the PROCLAMATION OF MARRIAGE disclose the human problems of all generations.

15th January, 1694. "The Session ordains that no persons be buiked in order to marriage till they bring a note under the thesaurers hand to the schoolmaster that they have consigned."

10th February, 1696. "Katharine Brown in Balynakyle in this parish being proclaimed in order to mariage with James Crawford in the parish of Kilmodan, John M'Inuyer, merchant in the parish of Kilfinan, came to Mr Monro, minister, on the 3rd of this instant, with a designe to stop the said mariage, alledgeing he had a promise of the said Katherine, which she (being then present) denied."

8th June, 1703. "The treasurer reports that James Smith in Tavinshaid and Elspeth M'Connochie, daughter of John M'Connochie in Stuck, were booked in order to proclamation and mariage together with consent of both parties, . . . but the said Elspeth since hes recalled her resolution and came to the said thesaurer and declared her aversion to the said match . . . in regard she wold by no means ever condescend to mary the said James Smith."

13th November, 1728. "Donald Broun in Kilmichael and Elizabeth M'Lea in Lenichail were 2 times proclaimed in order to marriage and before the 3d proclamation the said Elizabeth returned and stopp'd the further proclaiming them

together and now is in a way of marriage with another; quherof the Session declares their consignation crowns are forfeited."

A complaint was received from William Auld, cordiner, against the treasurer that he had not returned the dollar consigned to him eight or nine years before at the proclamation of his daughter Jean.

10th December, 1703. " . . . Whereupon the Session inquired at John M'Neill, thesaurer, what truth was in this affaire? To which the said John answered that he did indeed detain the doller but that the said William Auld was resting him some accompts which wold balance the said dollor, which was the reason why he detained it. But the Session rejected this reason given by the tresaurer in regard he came by this dollor onlie as the Sessions servant and had no allowance from them to detain any such money for his private debts and he was instantlie appointed to deliver forthwith the said dollor to the complainer." Whereupon John M'Neill ceased to be treasurer!

The REGISTER OF BAPTISMS was kept by the Session Clerk.

20th November, 1693. "The Session ordains that persons who have children to be baptized do first come to the minister and get a ticket from him to the schoolmaster that their names may be registrat in the Session books and that the childrens names be written in a paper which is to be given up to the minister at the baptisme."

21st June, 1711. "The treasurer presented to the Session the book he was appointed to bring home (being a new fair large book in folio) for the Register of Baptisms and Marriages, for which he charges 4 lb. 6 sh. Scots.

The Session calling for the old Register of Baptisms and Marriages and considering the same find it very unsufficient upon sundry accounts, and therefore appoint the clerk to transcribe the same in this new book, and resolve to consider him for his pains therein."

Those contracting irregular marriage were fined and the fines used for behoof of the poor. Katharine Allan was delated on the ground that "people suspect she is not clad with a husband as she gives out." She answered "that they were afraid to be divulged . . . to have been married irregularly and so to be obliged to pay a severe fyne because they were married privatly by ane episcopal minister." (16th January, 1698.)

12th January, 1744. "The Session hence leave to the civil magistrate these as marry irregularly (*torn*) and as generally an abanded pack in the world's account and of whom little satisfaction can be expected."

The Kirk Session provided "THE COMMON CHIST AND THE MORTCLOTHS" for the use at funerals.

3rd December, 1700. "John Glase of Boganie reports that conforme to appointment he has agreed with Archibald Sharp, wright, to make a good strong common chist of double dales all over with all the iron bands and cleiks and other furniture requisite for the same, and promised to give 8 lib. Scots for the same; off which the Session approves and appoints John Kelburn, Robert Muir, and John M'Neill to receive the said chist from Archibald Sharp when it is made and providing the said chist please the forsaid persons the Session appoints their tressaurer to pay the workmen."

4th February, 1701. "John Kelburn and John M'Neill reports that they have received the common chist from Archibald Sharp and were satisfied therewith and accordinglie payed for it. The Session desiderates yet the want of ane engyne to convey the coffin convenientlie into the grave with the corps, therefore they have appointed John M'Neill, thesaurer, to agree with a smith to make and joyn to the said chist, a loose iron cleik fit for receiving a man's hand, one at everie end, and to pay the workmen for the same . . . the Session appoints Robert Muir and John M'Neill to cause make a spade and two shod shovels for digging the graves and the thesaurer to pay for them. They doe likewayes hereby appoint that the

and spade and shovels be committed to the care and custodie of the Kirk officer, and enacts that the sole priviledge of digging graves should belong henceforth to him, and allows him to exact 4 sh. Scots as the minimum quod sic for each grave he diggs, he always digging for the poor gratis."

11th June, 1740. "John M'Gilcheran furnishing a new common chest for the old one of the Session poor he thrust into the grave with a dead person is allowd 2l 8s only."

The MORTCLOTHS required frequent repair and renewal and there are many minutes dealing with them.

28th March, 1706. "James and Robert Stewarts, bailies, and Robert Wallace, late bailie, report that according to appointment they did narrowlie sight John Glasse's mort-cloath and did converse with him anent the price thereof and what was the lowest price he could allow himselfe to quite it for the Session; and they apprehend the Session needs not complain but it may be pennyworth enough . . . the cloath is trulie good and find velvet with the fringes in good order. They think it not fourth part worn and is bare nowhere but a little at the corners, and after a whiles conference with John Glasse about its price now he at last offered it to them in name of the Session for fourscore pound Scots; quherwith the Session rested satisfied and resolved to take the same. . . . And the method according to which the Session agrees the said mort-cloath should be let out is for fourtie shilling Scots per night to any within the twentie pound land of Rothesay, and for four shilling Sterling per night to any in the countrey of Bute; and if at any time it was imployed without the Isle it was to be for a dollor the first night and fourtie shilling Scots per night thereafter."

This cloth was still in use 19 years later.

12th July, 1725. "The Session appoint that of the mort-cloaths the new one be rented at 1l 10s each 24 hours in the countrey and 1l 7s in the town; the best at 3l in the countrey, and 2l 14s in town; the one cald Boganys at 12s per day."

12th July, 1715. "The treasurer reports that the mort-cloths, especially the best one, need to be adverted to and somewhat repaired."

29th July, 1718. "The treasurer reports that conform to appointment he had now provided a new mort-cloth which he presented, and being viewed was only found to have a few bare spots in it and it with the poek are charged at 234 lib 18s 6d as by the particulars of the maker's letter appears. The Session allowed John Campbell, boatman, 12s Scots for his care in bringing it from Glasgow and appoint the treasurer to pay the price and procure a sufficient discharge from all concerned."

The following three extracts throw light upon the character of the members of the Kirk Session and of the Parishioners.

14th November, 1734. "None truly poor are to be ask hire for mort-cloths to their poor deceas'd friends."

10th November, 1737. "Large fun'ral charges are henceforth to be no precedents as in Janet Bantyn's case."

2nd May, 1748. ". . . also Ann Frazer is allowed 3/ to pay her mother's coffin or funeral expenses, and Janet M'Curdy, William Bantyn's relict, is appointed pro tempore 3/ to help defraying some of his juneral charges, she requesting for no more tho' very poor and her family necessitous. The Session also allow the treasurer not to charge the mort-cloth."

THE SCHOOL was under the supervision of the heritors and the Kirk Session; the master's emoluments were small and were expected to be increased by his duties as reader, precenter, and session clerk. He uplifted the fines and fees for proclamation and baptism and marriage and sometimes his salary was conditional on these being available. Sometimes the schoolmaster was a divinity student, and Dugald Stewart who was schoolmaster in 1695 became minister of the parish in 1700. The Synod of Argyll meeting at Inveraray in 1695 "favours the granting of sixtie merks yearlie of encouragement to the school of

Rothesay out of the bishopricks of Argyle and the Isles . . . and that they use all diligence to get a fit man to teach the school from tyme to time."

30th July, 1691. "It is also upon the schoolmasters application to the Session appoynted that the minister and some of the elders whom he shall think fit visit the school once in the quarter."

The presence of another school is witnessed by a rather tragic little minute of 15th November, 1721. ". . . also they think themselves concerned to inquire anent settling the Grammar School (this while bygone neglected) the which they presently understand was given up by the late incumbent's manifold discouragements, particularly the want of a sufficient school house to teach the children in for 2 or 3 years, the withholding of publick salaries near two years, and the magistrates, David Glass, provost, and John M'Neil, bailiff, signifying ther inclinations to allow none hereafter. The Session resolves to interpose ther good offices in these things wherein God's glory and the good of both the present and future generations is so much concerned and to apply to the magistrates anent the same that such unprecedented neglects of the burgh may not lie at ther door."

A great part of the Kirk Session's work was the OVERSIGHT OF THE POOR. Funds for this were obtained from church door collections, legacies and donations, fines and penalties, the poor box and the hire of the mort-cloth. Treatment seems generally to have been most sympathetic, and on occasion there is even a note of regret at the meagreness of the distribution. Throughout the minutes there are many lists of regular recipients of relief. In the first volume we noted the assistance given to Mathew Bannatyne, "a leper man," and the treatment of the sick poor seems always to have been as generous as possible. Much of this was almost routine—the same names occur in minute after minute for 20 years. But there are some particularly interesting cases, of which I have chosen a few.

3rd December, 1700. "The Session considering that there are two poor distressed widows, Kathrine N'Thomash and Kathrine N'Ochellan, who use verie honest and lafull shifts and endeavours to train up their children at school and are mightielie straitned in so doing, their children being hopefull, the Session has thought fit to encourage them by buying some books for their use and have appointed the thesaurer to give to Kathrine N'Thomash 27 sh. Scots towards the buying of some Latin books for her son, Robert Rosse, who is considerable advanced in his grammar, and designes to encourage him with as much again the nixt session, as also they have appointed the thesaurer to buy a course Bible for Kathrine Ochellan her son, John Walker."

6th May, 1701. "The Session appoynts the next Lords day collection to be given wholly to Margaret N'Ewn and her two children who lye all three in a separate house at the Miln of Attrick very ill of ane unclean disease."

17th July, 1701. "Jenney N'Connachy in Ambrisbeg presented ane address to the Session holding out her sad losses by having her house burnt down last week by ane accidental fire wherein she lost all that she had, and begging the Session to commiserate her sad condition and grant her some supply."

5th November, 1717. "Donald Gealie in Baron gave in a petition to the Session representing that his daughter being seizd with a scrofulous ulcer in her foot whereby that part was not only rendered useless but the rest of the body endangered he had taken her to John Campbell, chirurgeon, who upon viewing and considering the sore was content to undertake the cure on condition he might have security for his pains and expenses in performing the same. . . . The Session considering the petition . . . advise the said Donald to agree with John Campbell as reasonably as he can and when they find all endeavours used for making the cure effectual they shall not be wanting to assist with their charity as they shall see cause."

31st December, 1717. "The Session having considered an address from Robert Bannatyne in Edinmore representing that his wife having lately brought forth twins . . . they appointed the treasurer to give him ten merks Scots."

29th June, 1720. "John Gaiely's son being represented as very needful and to be cut of the gravel is appointed to get half a crown of present supply."

15th November, 1721. " . . . item 1 lib. to Elspeth N'Taylour (which Dugald M'Kinlay is appointed to see employed for buying of shoes and to assure her never to expect more encouragement of the Session on her disposing them for drink and to have a careful eye over her)."

By 1734 the Kirk Session found that some parishioners were seeking relief who were not in need of it and they decided that no one should receive help until they had signed a declaration "disponing all effects at their decease after defraying the necessary expenses of decent interment for behoof of the poor of this parish."

From that time we find money being returned to the treasurer by those who refused to subscribe such a declaration.

By 1741 conditions in the parish were grievous.

5th June, 1741. "The Session appoint a distribution to the several indigent persons (increased now in ther number and straits very great)."

16th June, 1745. "3/ to Donald Choskrie's family's great straits for the time."

Help was given furth of the parish. 14th June, 1743, "to Robert M'Curdy a native now in miserable circumstances at Glasgow."

21st October, 1695. "The minister produced a receipt under John Spreul, merchant in Glasgow, collector for the slaves in Barbarie his hand for the 14 lib. that was collected in this congregation for the relief of the said slaves."

11th October, 1702. " . . . To send in a dayes collection towards the building of a bridge upon the Water of Lechan which water is verie dangerous to travellers."

6th November, 1711. " . . . Contribution to the presbyterians at Newcastle to help the purchase of a burying place and building of a house for public worship."

2nd May, 1748, is a typical entry of the treasurer's accounts:—

	L	S	D
By Andrew McNeil's coffin,	3	00	00
Six bibles to poor boys,	7	04	00
Beade's 2 years salary,	6	00	00
Ann Martin's coffin,	3	00	00
Presbytery Clerk's '46 and '47,	6	00	00
Synod Clerk's 1 year's salary,	3	00	00
Mending kirk windows by John Muir,	4	07	00
A sneck to the West Door and bell tongue by J. Toish,	1	00	00
	<u>L33</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>00</u>

A composite entry on 6th June, 1746, runs:—"Reparations of mort-cloths and church coffins (to the poor) severall charges for deceast poor relief to others with cloaths to them and other occasional demands ... L83 08 02."

The treasurer's task was not made simpler by the "bad happens" which found their way into the collection.

2nd July, 1726. "The Session . . . desire the minister to caution the people against giving bad copper or money (quherof the treasurer has now 6/ 16s 2d by him) . . . into the collection and so cheating the poor."

13th June, 1731. "(Besides bad money since July 15th, last)."

15th July, 1730. " . . . 8/ 15s 3d got for bad happens."

It will be seen that the treasurer's task was no sinecure, and, on 24th March, 1685, Robert Stewart and John Kelburne,

the treasurers, "represented to the Session that for many years they have the trouble of keeping the Church Box and that now they will give up that office." The Session had great difficulty in finding a successor, and as a temporary measure the minister agreed "to be treasurer and disposer of the charities." The result was more tragic than anyone had anticipated. Less than three months later the minute tells the following sad tale.

16th June, 1685. "The minister acquaints the Session that in the last month when Argyle and the rebels were here in the countrey that Argyle's Ministers and some others of the rebels lodging themselves violently at his house, among many other injuries done by them to him they sacrilegiously broke up the poors box and took away all the charities; and this being a knowne truth its appointed that at taking an account of the poors money nothing being enacted before Sunday last, June 14th. May 30 we were forced to leave the Island when the rebell entered and did not return till June 12th."

Sometimes money was given to the poor on special occasions. 13th November, 1729. " . . . Including the 3 guineas the Hight Honourable The Countess of Bute, on the marriage occasion of her daughter, Lady Mary, to Sir Robert Menzies, sent by Robert Wallace to the poor."

21st November, 1723. "The minister acquaints the Session that Jo, son to the deceast Jo, Bannatyne in Makenoch, seaman, gave 3s sterling for the use of this parishes poor on his deliverance from distress acoming from America."

Sometime there were legacies in money and in kind. In 1718 Alexander Bannatyne in Kilmachalnog mortified to the poor of the parish 50 merks Scots.

6th December, 1744. " . . . The minister acquaints the Session that Elizabeth, daughter to Ninian Bannatyne of Kames, and Isobel Stewart, grand-aunt to the present Earl of Bute, vulgo the Lady Dunoon, having appointed that on her decease ther should be a distribution of eight boolls of

oatmeal to the poor of this parish at the discretion and by the proportions the Session of Rothesay should see proper and that the said meal will be ready against January 8th next, the Session agree the donation forsaide be at Atrick Miln." Two elders were appointed from the town and two from the country "to weigh out the said victual to the several poor on the said day (quherof the minister is desired to intimate from pulpit."

In his testament making provision for Communion Cups, James, first, Earl of Bute, directed his "chamberman to pay 20 lb. Sterling, to be distribute among the poor of the island of Bute." In 1717, Colonel Robert Stewart, a son of Mr John Stewart of Ascog left £100 for the poor of Rothesay, and Mr Dugald Stewart had great trouble with the Colonel's executors. During the next 30 years, we have frequent minutes running as follows, "no word of Colonell Stewart's legacy," "there are no fresh accounts of Colonell Stewart's affair"; so far as appears from the minutes until 1750 nothing had been achieved, although a list of the parish poor had been prepared in 1730 and sent to the Colonel's lady.

A most remarkable disturbance took place in the vicinity of the kirk in 1707. It is difficult to understand the genesis of the dispute, but it would appear that Elizabeth Robisone, Lady Ascog, was at variance with The Countesse of Bute, and that the trouble had spread to their servitors. Coming out of the church on the last Sunday of April, 1707, James Stewart, servitor to the Earle of Bute, went to speak to Lady Ascog "without any ill-intention"; he met with "ane unkind and rude reception," one word seems to have borrowed another until the servants on both sides were ranged one against the other in "horrid and impious tumult." David Glasse, son of the late Provost of Rothesay, related the scene to the Session, as follows:—" . . . observing evil was designed by drawn swords, he was resolved to prevent it as fare as he could, and when he attempted to hinder James Allan, servitor to Ascog, from doing violence to James Stewart, Grissall N'Lachlan (the Lady Ascog her woman) took hold of him by the hair of

his head and held the same fast untill some who beheld her relieved him, whereat he was much exasperate; and observeing James Allan verie loud and insolent in his talk he confest he gave him a stroak on the head; and when he heard the Lady Ascog indiscreet to the Countesse of Bute, calling her ". . ." and sundrie opprobrious names, he answered the Lady Acog foolishlie and called her a bitch." James Allan was delated for the part he had in the disturbance, ". . . observeing James Stewart at a distance from him (after the tumult seemed over) wold be at coming rudelie upon him with his staffe untill he was held by severalls, and after he was a litle up the brae that leads to the Busse in his way home to Ascog he was heard frequentlie with a loud voice challenge David Glasse to come up the brae and fight him if he, a cowardlie dog, durst, and to encourage him he wold come down halfe way to meet him." Lady Ascog obviously presented a difficult problem, and the Session sought the advice of the Presbytery, who instructed them "to inquire cautiouslie and in the native and orderlie way." The Kirk Session appointed two members to wait on the Lady Ascog. ". . . Donald Campbell of Auchawillin and John M'Neill of Kilmorie report they were fullie resolved and had consorted to goe together to discourse the Lady Ascog conforme to appointment but being verie assuredlie informed that the said Lady had conceived not only a displeasure but a verie great indignation that the Session should meddle with her or James Allan, and that she had told severalls she wold give them a warm reception and harsh entertainment should they come to converse with her upon the head, they thought fitt rather to omit goeing than encounter her idle humor." John Glasse of Boganie ("who has most frequent accesse to be at Ascog") was appointed "to converse and deale with the said Lady to submit to discipline and endeavour to convince them that the Session designs nothing else but ther souls good by this processe," but on 17th July he "desired to be excused from giving any account of his diligence therein at this occasion, and moved that affaire might be waved at this time, which the Session acquiesced in."

A year later, on 17th June, 1708, no further progress had been made, and "considering the present humour they appeared to be in . . . and for some other weighty and prudent considerations, the Session thinks fitt to surcease all further process herein for some time untill it please the Lord to bring them to some sense of their hazard and danger and appoints the same to be read from the pulpit next Lord's Day in the afternoon."

During the ministry of Mr Dugald Stewart the condition of CHURCH, MANSE AND CHURCHYARD demanded frequent conference with the heritors. The stones from the buildings had been left lying in the graveyard, and it was decided to have it cleared and the walls repaired.

17th July, 1701. " . . . for which end they appoynt all the men able to work in the whole parish to contribute their assistance, the country sending two-thirds and the town one, . . . but in regard this season is not thought convenient, the most and ablest men being at sea, they think fit to delay the same till Winter." Three years later the conditions do not seem to be improved, and five years after that a payment was made for the levelling of the churchyard.

15th November, 1721. " . . . On the minister's representing the whole congregation's loss by the broken clauighans hindring people's attendance on the ordinance in stormie and especially rainy weather with other bad effects." At the same meeting the minister "represented the hazard the manse was in thro' want of straw to thatch it, which he could not procure even for money, the Session unanimously agreed a proportionable number of shaves should be laid on all the towns of the parish by the merk lands." A new church was built in 1692, but there is no record of it in the minutes. There are frequent conferences with the heritors regarding the repairs it required at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

18th February, 1704. "That the church, especially all the south side of it, is not watertight, and if it be neglected but a little time it will marre the rooffe greatlie."

On occasion the Session provided furnishings for the church.

21st January, 1702. "The Session appoints two bands be got for the door of the pulpit seat, and the treasurer to pay for them."

20th January, 1703. " . . . to buy three snecks for the church doores."

13th April, 1691. " . . . 12s Scotts for ane halfe hour glass."

30th April, 1724. " . . . appointed to provide a new church plate and half hour sand glass." (Note.—The sand glass now in use was purchased in 1751.)

29th April, 1713. " . . . The Session taking to their consideration how much women who attend children at baptism are incommoded through the incivility of such as take up the place proper for them to have, do appoint that seats at the Sessions charge immediately next to the elders seat be built for that purpose."

18th February, 1704. " . . . Donald M'Cowaig, beddal, gave in a petition to the Session craveing the Session wold reimburse him for some money he payed to a glasiar for dressing three glase windows in the church which a dog (that was inadvertantlie locked in the church) broke. The Session having removed the said Donald and considered his petition after some reasoning at length resolved that the wold pay the said Donald his accompt when they came by a fond to defray it, but with this certification that if the like fall out hereafter through his neglect he must repaire the losse and never expect any relief therefore."

SABBATH BREAKING was a frequent fault, and was often linked with Sunday drinking.

14th June, 1692. " . . . In regard ther is representation made to the Session that ther are many idlers upon the Sabbath day who in tyme of sermon and after the same walk in companies together and have ther worldly discourses in the streets and about the shore and other places, therefore it is

enacted that two elders search the streets and the shore upon the Sabbath days both for men, women and children so walking together."

27th June, 1692. " . . . It is enacted and ordained that no hostlers or innkeepers shall sell any drink in tyme of sermon except to sick persons, and this act to be intimated the next Lord's day."

6th June, 1717. Two elders are appointed " . . . before the afternoon's sermon dismiss goe thro' the burgh of Rothsay and advert that none be allowed to drink beyond what may be thought a necessary refreshment." John Johnstone was fined 40s Scots "for drawing his boat upon the Lord's day and ferrying over a stranger to Cowal." John M'Gowan of Rothsay, and Donald M'Fie in Acholter, were delated for bargaining together after the forenoon's sermon "anent to fothering of a cow." Five parishioners were summoned for "breaking Sabbath by fraighting and employing goals to transport rum-liquors. An interesting case was that of Thomas Heman of Greenan, a farmer who came to the minister confessing "his own and his whole families great mistake in going about their ordinary work on Sunday never remembering what day it was until they observed the neighborhood flocking to the church." Some were repairing a breach in the barnyard dyke, some threshing, and Thomas himself thatching his house when they saw their neighbors on their way to church. The Session considering his "blameless reputation and honest life" rebuked him and dismissed him. (26th October, 1710.) A case in which the Kirk Session seems to have been harsh in its judgment was that of William Tyre, groom to the Sheriff of Bute, who had brought his master's horse from Cowal on the Sabbath. He had arrived at Ardyne late on Saturday night in a storm, and, "could not for money or moyen procure provender or a stable for his horses, and withal that the scab was rageing in that country . . . therefore he looked upon it to be a work of necessitie, yea and mercy too" to prevent the infection coming to Bute. Nevertheless, he was rebuked and exhorted to guard against drawing such a necessity upon himself for the future.

DRUNKENNESS was a common complaint, wife and husband beating were not unknown, gossip and slander were as common then as now.

28th November, 1692. " . . . In regard the sin of drunkenness is very rife in this place, the Session ordains that publick intimation be made to the congregation that all persons scandalously drunk shall be cited before the Session and underly what censure shall be imposed upon them for the same."

11th April, 1692. " . . . John Gaylie and Donald M'Nicol delated for drunkenness and beating ther wives are ordained to be cited to the next dyet."

27th June, 1692. " . . . Delated Alexander M'Cunnochie and Cathrine N'Arthure, spouses, for beating each other."

3rd June, 1693. " . . . Delated that Bryce M'Neill and his wyfe are at great variance and that his mother stirs them to discord."

18th December, 1707. " . . . The Session taking to their consideration that Elspeth N'Intylor, spouse to James Stewart, wood-keeper, is a person because of her furiosity unfitt to be dealt with according to rules of discipline, and that she is very subject to drink which leaves, beside the scandal of it, very bad and lasting effects both to her body and mind to the great prejudice of her husband, squandring his substance even to the giving away his and her own body cloaths," forbade all brewers and retailers of ale within the parish to supply her with liquor under pain of being considered themselves scandalous persons.

29th July, 1686. " . . . That day Geilles Crawford, wife of William M'Kirda in Eskchrangan, gave in her lybell against Margaret N'Lachlan, Alexander Glass his wife in that town, containing many unchristian revilements she had said of her selfe and her dead father such as that she was the devills childe and that her father was so too, that she and her father had Satans image and resemblance, that the soul of her father

was in hell and that her black soul would be there too." N'Lachlan at her trial confessed that "she was now very much ashamed of her very unchristian abuse of the memory of the dead and reputation of the living." The Session considered the scandal to be exceeding odious and delivered her to the judge civil to be punished and to make public repentance for her sin before the congregation.

WITCHCRAFT AND CHARMING were common in Bute, but were not much noticed in the minutes.

13th February, 1706. " . . . Bessie Nicol, daughter to Duncan Nicol, weaver in Rothesay, delated for imploying Elspeth N'Taylor, spouse to James Stewart, thatcher, by charmeing to find out ond recover a gown that was lost and for that end to have given the said Elspeth a fourtie pennie piece with a little salt in a clout to performe the charme. The Session appoints the said Bessie Nicol to be summoned to the next Session."

14th June, 1733. " . . . The elders are recommended to discourage all consulting speymen, etc., fear'd here."

28th March, 1706. " . . . The Session represented to her the unseemliness of the fact what construction soever she put therupon and what a horrid and scandalous sin charmeing was, and however light she thought of it, it was on her part a real consulting of the devil and a desireing and consenting to the use of unlawfull charmes to find out what was hidden and was of verie evill example."

SEXUAL IMMORALITY occupies a large part of early Kirk Session records, but is no more marked in the case of Rothesay than of other parishes. There are many straightforward cases where by confession and public repentance the parties are absolved; cases of "antenuptial fornication" were usually dealt with charitably and considerately, but where the parties were inclined to be stubborn or intractable the case might be continued for many months. Sometimes the reasons given were not lacking ingenuousness, nor in ingenuity.

21st March, 1697. F—— M—— "acknowledged that he was heartilie grieved that the divel got such advantage over him first to make him fall with that woman, and again to deny that he was father to her child, which now he owns to be his." (1697) A—— O—— gave as his reason for failing to appear when summoned "that he was much in the wrong, but that he was out of countenance and could not prevail with himselfe to face any person, much lesse a Session." (1701) Sometimes there is a touch of almost Rabelaisian humour. One witness depond that finding the accused in a compromising situation "she gave him a stroak in the back with the tongs, but whether they were base or immodest she could not tell, her own modestie not allowing her to view them narrowlie." A few days afterwards, however, meeting the man, he said to her, "shame faw yow woman, ye hurted me verie sore with the tongs." (1706) A witness in another case does not seem to have the same modesty. He confessed that "though he watched them narrowlie looking in at the window all the while they were together he could not discern Cuthbert so much as to offer her a kisse." Nevertheless, Cuthbert was rebuked "for tarrying so late abroad and alone in company with a woman, and so was dismissed."

John Butcher, who was in service with the Earl of Bute, confessed his guilt with Issobell Bell, who was in the same service, but she refused, and persisted in all denial of her guilt. She offered to take the oath of purgation although John entreated the Session not to give her the opportunity. "Whereupon she rose from her knees as in a chaff and sitting down cuttedlie upon her seate uttered these words, Though ye should deliberate until doomes-day ye'll get but my oath at last, and ye may as weill take it now. John interrupted her, saying, Sir, for the Lords sake doe not let her sweare, for she will perjure herselfe." The sequel to the story is unexpected and dramatic. "Isobell Bell was discovered to have used false keyes in the Earle's lodgings, and by means of these to have purloined sundrie things in the familie, and the said John Butcher was also found to be airt and pairt with her therein, whereupon they were both cast into prison, but separate one

from another, out of which prison they have found a way to convey themselves privatelie away and have retired out of the Island, so that the Session knowes not what is become of them or whither they are gone."

On occasion there was difficulty in bringing the delinquents to the Session meetings. James Stewart was "advertised to compere, and the beddall returning told he spoke with him but could not tell whether he wold come or not; and the beddall being ordered to call him at the door, he entered in rudelie, beating the beddall with his fists. Being interrogate what he meant by that rudenesse and incivilitie, answered what meant the Session to call him openlie at their door . . . to which it was answered it did not belong to him to come there to ask questions."

28th March, 1706. " . . . John Glase of Boganie reports that he has conversed with James Stewart conforme to appointment and that hes quite altered his temper and resolution with respect to his miscarriages and declares much trouble and sorrow of heart that he should be so fare left to himselfe, and promises cheerfull submission to the Session and their appointment about him."

On occasion the Session could be considerate, as in the case of a man who acknowledged his fault, put pleaded "that he was but a hyred servant at the herring fishing," that he might be allowed to delay his satisfaction "untill the usuall time of the fishing be over."

There was no discrimination of rich or poor, except perhaps that the former were more contumacious and had to wait longer in consequence before they were finally absolved.

8th May, 1693. "I—A— being interrogated who was father to her child, replied the Laird of Kames. . . . Robert Muir and John M'Neill are ordained to speak to the laird of Kams discretly and meekly and to desire him to appear the next diet." The laird of Kames acknowledges the child and desires it to be baptised, but he does not appear at the next diet. He is cited time after time, but does not come,

6th December, 1694. "The Laird of Kames in regard he refuses to give obedience to the Session though he hath been long dealt with is referred to the presbytery."

21st October, 1695. "Kames to be summoned to the presbitrie, which is to be in this place the 13th November next." He refused to obey the presbytery, but by 8th June, 1703, ten years after his offence, he "professed much grief that he should have been guilty of such wickedness and of so long obstinate and neglecting to satisfy church discipline . . . and accordingly he is come to the toun to wait upon this meeting . . . being judicially rebuked for the said scandal he was absolved and dismissed." At the next meeting of the Session the minister was instructed to converse with the laird of Kames to see "if he can be prevailed with to accept the office of elder."

The records provide some interesting material regarding civil life in Bute in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

14th June, 1692. " . . . in respect that the Island of Insharnock doth neither properly belong to the paroch of Kingarth nor Rothesay but to the paroch of Saddel, yet seeing the paroch of Saddel is too remote from the Island of Insharnock and that they cannot go thither conveniently to make ther appearance in order to repentance and seeing likewise they of Insharnock do commonly come to Rothesay for marriage, baptisme and other ordinances . . ."

An interesting sidelight on this same Island of Insharnock is found in a minute of 27th April, 1718. " . . . The minister reports he had the other day received a letter from Alexander M'Donald in Inchmarnock bearing that lately when his house was a building the masons without his knowledge had carried away sundry stones out of the Chappell and put them in the walls of the house, and when the same came to his knowledge he was highly displeased and caused a mason value what stones were so misapplied, and in consideration for the said stones taken out of the Chappell to build his house he sent ten pounds ten shillings Scots to the Session to be by them applied to the behoof of the poor."

The habit of calling farmers not by their own name but by the name of their farm is shown in many of the minutes. In the sederunt of 15th September, 1685, we have "Lochly, Kilmorrie, Kinwhinlick;" the names of many other farms are found throughout the volume, e.g., Ardmoleiss, Boileuray, Lenchail, Kilmachaluing, Bailainly, Baileuray, Bailithraik." Some of these names are easily recognised in their modern form, but some seem to have disappeared altogether. The names of the people show a striking change in less than 300 years. In few cases are the same names associated with the lands then and now, while such names as "M'Comash, Gillmore, M'Curry, Braiden, M'Cloy" seem to have vanished altogether. Of christian names Grissel, Finwhal or Finual, and Rhoda seem to have disappeared from Bute, while "Ninian, Lachlan and Bryce" linger but too seldom in old families. Most disquieting to the local patriot is the fact that even where the old names remain they belong usually to families of recent standing in the Island.

We see something of the DIFFICULTIES OF COMMUNICATIONS.

22nd April, 1722. " . . . The minister not being appriz'd quhen occasions offered to Glasgow got not writing to the Reverend Mr Gray anent John M'Alaster but resolves to write with the first."

In the evidence of John M'Nabe and Mary Ocheltry we have an account of a journey from Cowal to Ireland. "They did cross the ferry of the Cloch . . . went together to the Old Kirk of Innerkip . . . parted . . . he going to Irvine whence he transported himself to Ireland . . . she travelled along the coast alone till she came to Saltcoats quher she got an occasion to Belfast . . ." (7th January, 1719.)

We discover a habit of dating things by the festival occasions of the year with such phrases as the following:—"She entered service with his father and Whitesunday was a year," "About Patrickmass," "a little before Lambas," "six weeks after Candlemas," "14 days after Hallowday," "At St. Bruxe's Day the 2nd day after the fair," "St. Columb's Day

and he could prove by witnesses and elders now present that he was along with them at the fair of the Larges that whole day."

We have insight into the CUSTOMS OF THE DAY.

16th August, 1706. " . . . In the latter end of Aprile or beginning of May when she was watching linens at the water side with the other lasse, Katherine Morisone, she came and watched a while of the night with them untill Katherine Morisons fell asleep, and then he and Issobell arose and went to a little distance to the loaning side that leads up to Little Buroan." Does this refer to the belief that linen bleaches whiter in the moonlight? It seems rather to speak of the lint from which the linen was woven. Lint was extensively grown in Bute, and had to be soaked in water to prepare it for manufacture. This was usually done in the waters of a loch, and Loch Ascog seems to have been a favourite place.

19th October, 1718. " . . . She went to the next town to do some business with a neighbour, and returning about eleven or twelve of the clock quhen the cows were coming in he stood at his own barn end . . . the horses being all the while feeding about the door, and can attest all his neighbours, yea some of the elders present, that it never was the custom in the town to feed the horses in the afternoon on the brae quhere she alledges he had them."

30th October, 1718. " . . . Immediately on her going up the brae she came in to Archibald Glasse's house in Achimore, as the said Archibald's wife began to milk the cows at 12 of the clock, and sat down very unconcerned there and spun a little wheel untill the milking of the cows being over she gat her share of the family's dinner."

11th September, 1715. "As soon as she had finished her shearing." (Note.—This seems to mean cutting the harvest.)

12th May, 1743. " . . . All heads of families to (*torn*) from their houses to the next Elspeth M'Curdy a thoughtless lassie."

1st February, 1721. "The minister reproving her unbecoming levity in her womanhood."

22nd April, 1722. "Patrick M'Nab being cited from the pulpit and not compeiring is declared a fugitive from discipline."

28th May, 1728. "The minister reports he encouraged the printing the Confession of Faith in Irish and advanced the money for 60 copies."

17th July, 1701. "Appoynts Donald Campbell of Achawolling ruling elder to attend the several dyets of the Presbyterie ay and while the next Synod."

10th November, 1737. "William Stewart of Hartwood is attested ruling elder to be commissioner to next General Assembly."

27th April, 1718. "Robert Wallace, late bailie of Rothesay, having presented a comission from the magistrates and town council of the Burgh of Rothesay to him to represent the said burgh at the next meeting of the General Assembly of this Church and requiring the Session's approbation thereof and concurrence therewith, the Session did and hereby does approve of the said nomination and concure therewith and appoints the same to be attested in communi forma."

Sometimes the Session compounded mercy with their judgment.

4th February, 1701. " . . . And in regard Archibald Stewart, sheriff depute, has imprisoned the said Anna N'Ilmun with design to put the act of Parliament in execution against her by imprisonment and shaving her head in the public mercat place, she being poor and not able to maintain her selfe all the time appointed by law for persones guiltie of a relapse the Session appoints John M'Neill, thesaurer, to give the officer a peck of meales price towards her maintenance."

20th February, 1717. " . . . Being further interrogate whether he lodged at any time in Isobell Millar's house he decined giving any satisfying answer thereto untill he was particularly interrogate where he lodged ev'ry night and then confessed he lodged yesternight, being Twesdays night, in the tolbooth by order of the magistrates."

6th May, 1701. " . . . The Session appoynts 1 lib. to be given to John Fraser, late beddel, as the last of his wages for ringing the Tolbooth bell."

24th November, 1744. " . . . She gives him as the only father to a child she pretends herself pregnant with, the most people are said to take all as a wheddle to noose him into marriage."

6th December, 1744. (Next minute). "The Comitee anent Barbore's affair report the women found no tokens of pregnancy quhatever."

An interesting reference to what appears to have been a familiar proverb occurs in the minutes of 24th May, 4th and 11th June, 1702, when William Blair, ferrier in Kilmichael, complained of a scandal which had been raised by Christian Stewart, wife to Patrick Campbell, against his wife:—that she said "A cow will return boldlie to her old byre."