

THE KIRK SESSION RECORDS OF KINGARTH, 1641—1703.

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The subject of this lecture is a small quarto volume of 240 pages in its original yellow binding, containing the Kirk Session records of Kingarth from 1641 to 1703. The Marquis of Bute has had a transcription printed for private circulation, and copies have been placed in the National Library and the Library of the Church of Scotland. There is a gap of seven years from 1641 to 1648, and of thirteen years from 1651 to 1664. There is also in existence a small volume from 1669 to 1703, with pages sewn together, purporting to be the scroll minutes of the Kirk Session, containing often the same entries, but sometimes giving supplementary information. The records provide a liberal field of enquiry regarding the life of a country parish in Scotland in the closing years of the seventeenth century. Indeed, my greatest regret is that I am but an amateur antiquarian and not an imaginative novelist, who might have brought again to life the men and women of its pages. It is difficult to ascertain the population of the parish in these years, but there appear to be the names of almost nine hundred people mentioned in the records, some recurring over a long period and retaining with remarkable consistency their virtues and their failings. Great interest attaches to the records from the fact that during thirty-four of these years the Kirk of Kingarth was at St. Blaen's, whose ruins keep to-day so much of their ancient enchantment. It is interesting, too, to notice

how the names of the families have been retained at the old farms, and how the Stewarts dominated the parish. At the Kirk Session meeting of 23 July, 1649, three of the members were Ninian Stewart and three were John Stewart. I propose for the most part to allow the records to speak for themselves, leaving it to some student in the future to reconstruct the intimate life of the people as they step, somewhat unwillingly, for the most part, upon this stage of history.

(N.B.—Italics are the commentator's to emphasise the reasons for certain extracts.)

SEDERUNT.

The first minute begins "10 Januar yeir of God 1641. Session holdin at Kingarth." There is no record of those who were present.

In 1648, when the minutes resumed after the first gap, "Maister John Stewart, minister, and the elders of the said Parishone being present. *After incalling of the name of God.*" Sometimes we read, "The minister and whole elders present," sometimes "with diverse others," and often the names of the elders are given as those of the farms which they cultivated, e.g., "March 3, 1664. The quhilk day Mr Robert Aird conveined ane Session in Kingarth Kirk quhairin were present Askog, elder, Ardniho, Ambrismore, younger, Galachen, Lubas, with all the rest of the elders."

In 1666, for the first time, there precedes the Sederunt "*Prayers said,*" and this continues to the end of the volume.

Spelling was not of the first importance in the seventeenth century, as is shown in this minute of 29th May, 1667.

"Sessione haldene at the Kirk of Kingarth the 29 of May, 1667, Mr Johne Stwart, present: minister

and Ardineho, and Lowbas and Ambroouismore and Gallahane and Johne Hymand and John M'Cawe and Donald M'Fie."

16 june, 1650: "Quhilk day because of the paucitie of the elders that mett, ther not being a full quorum, ther was nothing done but the appoynting of the next Session to be upon the 22nd of this instant."

The Session appears to have met also in the farm houses of the parish at "Kilcatten Miln," at Quoohaig, at Langalcorade, at Ardnihoe, and the reason given in the minutes in 1667 is the remoteness of the Church, and the fact that the Kirk was ruinous.

From 1685, the minutes concluded, "*ended with prayers.*"

There is an interesting explanation of the gap in the minutes from 1686. The Minister explained that he was "under the afflicting hand of God, being taken with a grivous flux, the pain of the gravell, for the space of five years, and a half, so that he was not able to sit in Session all that time, but it pleased the Lord, Quho was infinite in goodness and showed pity and compassion on him and to have mercy upon him in restoring him to better health, and to the exercise of his ministry afterwards (how feckles so ever) and for quhich he is infinitely obliged to the all sufficient goodness of Almighty God and to be forever faithful, dutiful and obedient and diligent and faithful in his services."

When the Synod of Argyle visited Kingarth in 1699, they found that no minutes had been written up for 14 years, and they instructed the Minister to have it brought up to date. "Written and subscryvit at appointment and in the presence of the said visitation by Don M'Laurin Cls. Visit." The Minister, obviously not quite satisfied, added his own note, which still remains in the book. "There is a great mistake and

misinformation in this visitation, for there were several at this Kirk before this. The first was in September, 1668, of Mr Robert Wallace, Bishop of the Isles, at which time the Minister preached and was approven in doctrine, discipline and conversation, but not recorded here but in the Presbytery Book. The second was in 1677 . . . The third was in 1691, by the Presbytery of Coual, at which time those present would have the Minister depraved and the place cleared . . . for no other reason but because he being then under the afflicting hand of God . . . was not able for the present to serve the cure . . . but . . . by the good hand of God upon him, he was able to exercise his function and by the favour of the Government, continued in his charge and kept possession."

THE SCHOOL:

At the commencement of this period, the Kirk Session of Kingarth paid to the Schoolmaster of Rothesay "ten pund yeirly" for the education of the children in the parish, but they paid it with a grudge. Therefore, on the 15th of March, 1649, "it is ordained be the commone consent of the whole elders and heritours that ther be ane schole in the parish to be keiped in the most centricall part thereof," and they repudiated their obligations to the schoolmaster at Rothesay and desired the Minister "to look out for a scholemaister to our selves as soone as possiblie may be."

In December, John Frissell was appointed schoolmaster, and the Session resolved to search for any "*that hes a spaire house thereabout* to be a schole for a yeire." The fine hopes of the Session were scarcely realised, for a fortnight later, the records read:—"Quhilk day John Frissell, scholemaister, declared to the Session that he has waited on upon the schole this fortnight and that there came none to him but five or six bairnes, and that he would not attend longer except the Session took some course for causing these who

hade children to send them to the schole; which the Session considering and that the most part of these that hes children for the schole is illiterat and knows not the good of learneing, and that *ther was never a schole before in the parish*, they recommend to the minister and elders to exort these who hes children for the schole to send them, and that the minister the next Lord's day exort them publickly to the same."

The oversight of the school was entrusted to the minister.

6 November, 1650. "Quhilk day the Session appoynts the minister and any one of the elders that can reid to tak tryell of the profit the bairnes that are at the schole make and how the scholemaster waits one and to report to the next Session. Report being made of the proficiency of the scholars and onwaiteing of the scholemaster is that the children profitts very wele and that the scholemaster does his duetie in his attendance."

The same year, the schoolmaster had to complain again that the parishioners were not sending their children to the school, and throughout the minutes there are frequent resignations.

14 February, 1671. "Quhilk day the Session ordains that John Graham, scholmaster, be payd off and dismiss in respect they cannot get him a frequent schole nor sufficient maintenance, he being a stranger."

7 January, 1686. "Quhilk day John M'Kinlay, scholmaster, complaind to the Session that he cannot be to subsist or live and to wait on the school by reason severalls in the parish refuse to pay him the school dues quhich is appointed for his maintenance."

His salary was paid from the fees for baptism and for marriage with "*20 merks out of the Session box if it bees*," and "*40s Scots evry quarter for each child, both lade and lass*," and in 1703, "the Session ordains that the

boy that teaches the school to go along to the several houses that have childreen to be schoold for his dyet."

In 1667 we make the acquaintance of a man whose influence in the parish, in one sphere and another, it would be difficult to overestimate. "Quhilk day the heritors and elders present do pitch on Manus Oconochar to be ther scholmaster to teach the childreen within the parish for the space of an year to come." "Quhilk day Manus Oconochar was receaved to be scholmaster to teach the children to read and write, to read the scriptrs before sermon, to proclaim mariages, to book childreen to be baptisd, and is to enter to the schole imediatly and to wait punctually on the schole."

"Quhilk day its appointed that each elder within his own bounds take notice quhat childreen are capable of teaching and represent it to the Session that each person may be made to send ther childreen to school quho may spare them under the penalty of 40s Scots evry quarter for each child, both lade and lass."

Manus would appear to have been one of the few people in the parish who had a knowledge of the three R's. That he was not a perfect schoolmaster seems to be proved by the fact that, in 1670, John Graham, of Rothesay, was invited to take over the duties, "Mr Archibald Graham, minister of Rothesay, shall be cation for his good behavior and for his staying the full time agreed on if he be sufficiently incouradgad." But whenever the Session were in difficulty, Manus returned, "to be ther scholmaster for an year from May and longer as they sall be satisfied. He is to have the dues as John Graham, late scholmaster, had with this diminution of the baptism money, quhich is to be twa groats equally betuixt him and the beddel, as also the marriage money to be equally divided and 10 lib. out of the Kirk box *if it beis*." We shall meet Manus in other roles before our examination is over.

In 1675, there was still no school house.

"Quhilk day it is appointed that the school be at Birgadalchief from Hallowday till Candlemes and from thence at Langalcorade, and that Ambrismore furnish a schoolhouse for that time that the school is there, and that Mr Robert Stewart furnish a schoolhouse from the time that its kept at Langalcorade, otherwise that it remain at Birgadalerief."

The schoolmaster was often the Session Clerk. 18 June, 1682. "Quhilk day John M'Kinlay, schoolmaster, is admitted to be Session Clark, and is ordaind to have a register to book all the childrens names that are to be baptisd."

The difficulty in finding scholars (partly perhaps because children were of such service on the farms) seems to have persisted to the very end of the volume.

8 January, 1700. "Quhilk day the Session finding severals backward and unwilling to send ther children to school to be taught and instructed (in the christian faith) therfor its thought fitt that the former act anent the schol be renued and in force, that quhosoever may and is able to send ther children to schol be oblidged to send them, one or moe, otherwise that they be compelled to pay the quarter wages quarterly, and this to be intimate next Sabbath. Ended with prayrs."

NAMES.

The names of the farms bear a remarkable resemblance to those of to-day, e.g., Kilspocks, Garrachties, Largizean, Keremenoch, Birgidall Knock and Crieffe, Ascog and Bayheid. But there are some of which I can now find no trace, e.g., Sandhouse and Townazill and Langallhumaig.

The Town of Rothesay (or Rosa) is not always called by that name, 29 March, 1649, "Christian

N'Kaw, wife to Finley M'Phersone is delated for being drunk in the Towne of Boote the last day."

THE GLEBE.

On the appointment of Mr John Stewart as Minister of Kingarth, on Whitsunday, 1665, it was "appointed that the 20 lib. land of Kingarth shall plow and harrow the gleib yearly and the 5 pund land yearly about, in all tyme coming," and that the "leiding of his peits" was entrusted to the rest of the parish, which was divided into four quarters for their cutting. The 1st, the 20 lib. land, the 2nd, Sculag, Kerecroy and Askog, the 3rd, Kerelamount, Bruchaig, Keretonlay, Keremenoch, two Kilcattens, Culevin, Langalcorade, Quechaig, and the 4th, Langallhumaig, Stravanan to Kerecrosach.

At frequent intervals throughout the Minutes, the Session reminds the farmers of their duty.

1671. "The Sessions ordains the 5 pund land of Largezain to plow and harrow the gleib."

1675. "Ordains the quarter from Askog till Kerelamount to leid the Minister's peits this year."

There is evidence of friction in the Minute of 1681. "Quhilk day the heritors being desired by the Minister to pleugh his gleib, quhich was refused to him, contrary the act." There is no further reference to the plowing of the glebe until 1696, when everything seems to have been going smoothly once more.

THE BEADLE.

The Beadle probably thought himself the most important man in the parish. It was his duty to summon people to the Session meeting, to collect fines, to see the penalties carried out, to warn those who were to plow the glebe, or to lead the minister's peats, and on occasion to whitewash the Kirk or to carry out duties

at the Manse. The first Beadle in the records was Donald Reach M'Kirdie.

24 April, 1649. "Quhilk day Donald Reach M'Kirdie is chosen Kirk-officer and is to get for his fiell yeirely 4 li. out of the penalties; more out of every pund of penalties that he brings in 1s; more out of every marriage 4s; more out of every baptisme 2s; more from every person that desyres him to warn ane other to the sessione 4s; more from every one that stands in the pillar 4s. His entry was at the 22 of December last and hes served since."

One of his first culprits was Gabriel Waker. 29 April, 1649. "Gabriel Waker compeireand, denyed the samen, but the wittnesses being examined and sworne it was found that he hade spoken the words and poynts of the claime. The Session knowing the woeman to be honest and free of all suspition and brute ordaines the said Gabriel to stand three Sabothes, and the last day to come doune of the stoole and *sitt doune upon his knees before pulpit and tak the said Katherine be the hand* and crave her mercy, and because he is poore his penalty is forgiven."

This may have made Gabriel more sympathetic when later he was himself appointed Church officer. But what officer would not envy him his Archangelic name! What earthly summons was ever given with such a heavenly trumpet note?

25 April, 1665. "James Frissell his wife compeired and was reproved for scolding hir husband and flyting and was appointed to pay *Gabriell, the officer*, ane shilling, and if evir shoe wer found in the lyke againe to stand in the gogs and pillar."

13 May, 1666. "Ordains that Gabriel Waker, officer, discharge all that bring horse with them that they suffer them not to feed on the gleib, otherwise to pay sixpence."

The officer's duties were not altogether plain sailing.

29 May, 1683. "James Stewart, being summoned and called, compeird not. Instead of giving obedience he fell on the officer and abused him and reflected on the judicature saying that he card not for the minister and Session."

1 July, 1683. "As for striking the officer, in respect that he is young foolish and ignorant of the hasards of Church judicature the Session is inclined to free him for his fault that he *be a good bairne* in time comeing and not do the like again, but if ever heireafter he do the like that he sall be severely punished."

23 Oct., 1692. "Delated Jonat Waker that she is a person that walks very irregularly and disorderly. Ordains to summon pro lmo."

30 Nov., 1692. "Jonat Waker compeird not. Ordains to summon pro 2do."

23 Dec., 1692. "Compeird not . . . Summon pro 3tio."

20 Jany., 1693. ". . ." and the Session ordains that for her contumacy and disobedience she be enjoyned to *remove from the parish* and that none from this time harbour her . . ."

As might have been expected, there were disputes between the schoolmaster and the beadle regarding the apportionment of dues paid to the Kirk.

23 December, 1679. "Quhilk day the Session ordains that Manus Oconachar book all the childrens nams and give account to Gabriel Waker of his part and that he medl not with it."

17 November, 1680. "Ordains Finlay M'Worarthie, James Rodger, Allexander M'Kinnie to hear the accounts betwixt Manus Oconochar and Gabriel Waker and to clear them and agree them."

But Gabriel Waker died and Manus Oconochar was appointed beddal in May, 1682, and "to continue at the same time to be schoolmaster till another be settled." It is therefore rather strange in August, 1684, to find the Session ordains "Manus, officer, to bring the lime and sand to the kirk and to serv the man that points and casts the kirk and to be payd for his service." Beadle or not, Manus was again summoned to the Session for "herring fishing on the sabboth day," but after careful enquiry, the Session could find no ground for the scandal. In 1696 Manus was sent to Inveraray to bring home "the Irish Bibles (and Psalm books) bestowed on this parish." In February, 1699, Manus was again restored to his position as schoolmaster. 2 February, 1699. "Manus Oconochar to be schoolmaster for ane year to come to teach the children, and to continue longer as they think meet and convenient, allowing him the dues as they were formerly possess by the late scholmaster; ordaining him forthwith to enter and take up the school and teach the children." But he probably continued to be Church officer at the same time, for in October, the collection distributed included 12s to Manus for serving at the kirk dressing. He died in December of that year and the elders "did nominate and pitch upon James Oconochar, son to Manus Oconochar, now deceased, late schoolmaster at Kingarth, to be and continue schoolmaster here."

THE CHURCH.

The first reference to the Church is on the 29th April, 1649. "Donald Dow M'Imertine was delated for *taking one of the stooles out of the Kirk* and appropriating the same to his use, who being present was judicially challenged for the same and found guiltie. Therefor the Session ordaines him to stand the next Sabaoth and to confesse his fault before the congregatioun people ingeneouslie and withall to restore the samen."

We can see, however, that the Church itself was in great need of repair.

8 October, 1667. "Quhilk day the Session ordains that each heritor within the parish beamfill the couples on the wall head of the kirk for securing the roof above his own seat and that the commality and tenantry beamfill above the buiks in the church and quier before Hallowtide next, and that under the penalty of 12s Scots from evry tenant and the pew to be taken from evry heretor or ether half a crown; and this to be intimate publickly the next Lords day."

Gavan Gilpatrick, William Hunter, Thomas M'Carture and Robert Milline were all paid in turn for dressing, slating, mending or repairing the Kirk.

14 August, 1670. "Quhilk day the Session agreed with James Rodger to repair the kirk both in slating, casting and helping the couples, by the days work for 16s Scots per diem.

"Ordains James Rodger to sight the timber for the manse and to give account. Ordains him also to agree with Galachan for a ladder to the kirk for its use."

9 November, 1671. "Ordains that James Rodger buy a tree to be set under the sparrs of the kirk to secure the coupls and that he be payd for his work as shall be thought fitt."

At this time also—"the Session agreed with Galachan for a ladder to the kirk at the price of 8s Sterling."

The climax came on the 19th December, 1675, when all their patching had been of no avail.—

"This year upon the 19 day of Decembr by an horrible and great storm of wind the roof of the kirk was blown off in the night time. It was a remarkable and singular providence of God that it fell not out on the Sabbath quhen the people were assembled for

Divine worship but that it came to passe on Saturdays night."

They decided immediately to take action.

"Session at Langalcorade, December 23, 1675. Prays said.

Present: Ambrismore, Kilcatten, Lubas, Galachan, James Rodger, Keremenoch.

Quhilk day its ordaind that the pulpit be taken down out of the place quher it stands and set into the Quire and that sermon be there quhen the weather is seasonable.

Ordains likewise that the heretors convaen at the kirk that evry one secure his own seat and pew."

And during the next year the Minute had better speak for itself.—

9 April, 1676. "This year *in respect the kirk was ruinous* and no certain place quher Divine worship might be constantly performed, but being in a fitting condition here and there as the weather wold permitt, somtymys in the cove at Ardniho, somtymys in a barn in Langalcorade and at Kilcatten Milne therefor ther were few Sessions kept and many of the minutts lost."

26 December, 1676. "He is ordaind to confesse his fault publickly in the congregatioun *quher it snail be next Lords day*" Surely we will have sympathy with the delinquent who appeared for penance at Dunagoil and found the service at Ardinho!

Steps were taken immediately towards "the biging of a new kirk" and they sought to make arrangements with a merchant in Glasgow regarding timber and dails, "to try on quhat condition he will demand payment, *either a trust or ready money.*" The church was completed in the next year.

15 November, 1677. "About this time or some

time before we had the new kirk to preach in and to exercise acts of discipline."

It was some three years later before the arrangements for seating accommodation were completed.

2 October, 1680. "Quhilk day the heretors, fewers and others of the parish after advertisment in order to the dividing of the kirk, being mett so that convenient seats and pews may be set up therein, they did appoint that evry seat to be set up be made pew-ways (except those that goes next the gavills) haveing ther entry from the middle of the kirk, as also that the pews on both sides come no farder out than six foot and an half of the rule, as also that the Sherreff Bute for himself and his tenants have the whole isle on the north side of the kirk, high and low, allowing him if he pleases to loft the said isle for to make it convenient for him and that he come no farder out than the side walls of the kirk; as also that the pulpit stand quher it is upon the south side of the kirk betwixt the door to the west and the west cheek of the window next thereto, and that ther be left for an elder and reader seat two foot and eight inches of the rule round about the pulpit, and that ther be no seats set up for against the pulpit to the south but only a seat for the women quho cary children to baptism; as also that ther be room for *two pews to the minister* and his family and his successors on the west side of the pulpit, *but only with this caution* that John Stewart in Galachan and his spouse set there if they please, and the minister and his family to sit in his seat and pew to be set up be him; and that Kilcatten enjoy the room and place quher his seat is for the present and to come out the length of the door cheek; and that Askoge have the room betwixt the north door and the west end of the kirk; and that Ambrismor have the room of two pews, to wit five foot and a half from the east nook of the isle over against the window next the pulpit, and next to Ambrismore to the east end of the

kirk that ther be the room for a seat to Cuthbert Stewart in Ardniho.

"Next after that the room for two pews to Largizean, after him for Gilnow M'Kaw of South Garachtie and his neighbor for a singl pew, after that Kerelamount for two pews at the east end of the kirk on the north side at the gavil. For John Stewart in Galachan two pews next the ministers seat, Keremenoch M'Kirdie for two pews next after Galachan, next after that Ambrisbeg at the west gavil on the south side of the kirk for twa pews. For North Garachtie a pew, Keretonlay, Mid Askog, Barnail, each of them a pew to the west of Ambrismore on the north side of the kirk, appointing an entry to be left betwixt Ambrismore his second pew and the other pews aforesaid for an entry from the bodye of the kirk to the isle."

It was not long before even the new kirk was giving them concern.

10 November, 1680. "Quhilk day the Session agreed with James Rodger to *secure the glass windows with wire*, to wit all the low windows in number seven, for quhich he is to have sixteen merks out of the readiest of the stent or kirk fine."

27 July, 1684. "Quhilk day the Session finding that the kirk is too long delayed in being casten with lime and that the wall is in hasard of being spoild with rain therfor ordains Ninian Stewart of Largizean, collector of the Kirk stent, to give James Stewart in Kilcatten 4 lib. Scots for half a chalder lime to cast the kirk withall. Ordains also to give John M'Kinlay, schoolmaster, tua s. Sterling."

In 1686 they resolved to get a bell and to provide a seat for the parents of children to be baptised.

31 October, 1686. "As also that a *bell* be sent for to *Edinburgh*, if it can be found there, *if not to Holland*, for

the Church and upon the common expense of the whol heretors and liferenters within the parish, of the weight that the B.B. (Bishop) and the shireff sall appointt. As also that the kirkyeard upon the common expenses be built and a *loft for the commons and seamen* at the west end of the kirk be built; as also that a seat be made round about the pulpit to hold both the elders with the *parents of the children to be baptised* and without that seat a place for the *women quho cary children to baptism*; as also that the *pulpit* be decently erected and fixed."

By 1691 they needed a new ladder. "Quhilk day they have agred with the said James Rodger for an ladder to the kirk for quhich they are to give him an full dolour."

And in 1699 the glass windows, which had been protected by wire, were "ill shatered and broken with the storm, quhich being very inconvenient for the peopl."

THE MANSE.

It is impossible to tell where the Minister of Kingarth lived, as he complains that the Manse was unfit was unfit for habitation. 4 July, 1650. "Quhilk day Mr John Stewart, minister, haveing represented unto the Session how inconvenient it was both for him and the people that he duelt so farr from the kirk, quhilk he was forced to do in respect the houses at the kirk were pairtly altogether doune and the rest ruinous, the Session knowing the same to be of veritie and considering that if the chamber of the Kirk house were built up of new he might for the interim duell their untill the parish would tak some course for the repaireing of the rest of the houses."

The Kirk Session and heretors sent representatives often "to sight the manse" and "to see what timber would be requisite for repairing the chamber of the

manse." But whatever repairs were carried out seem to have been done at the minister's expense, as after the death of the Rev. John Stewart, "Minister at Rosa," his widow made a claim upon the parish for the money which he had "warded on the manse" while minister at Kingarth. In any case disaster befell the manse as it was later to befall the kirk—26 October, 1673. "It was thought fitt to be recorded here that about this time the chamber of the manse quher the minister was studyng did fall down on a sudden at once so that by the admirable providence of God the minister was preserved, he being at that time within. He only stept in to a little study, hearing some cracking, not suspecting the house but thinking that it had been some drops of rain droping on his books, so that the top of the study saved him from being crushed to death, for quhich he and all concerned are ever oblidged to be thankfull to God and bless him."

There was great difficulty collecting the stent for the repair of the manse, and on the 19th July, 1674, they resolved "*to let the house be ruined and not at all repaired.*"

But in October, 1675, they ordained "several tenants to cast riggin turf and divet for the manse and to theik the same." By October, 1686, they appoint "*the oken couple* in the old manse to be taken down and *laid in the isle of the new kirk* to be reservd for a new manse." By the 30th August, 1691, this would appear to have been carried out! "The couple of the manse was laid in the isle of the new kirk *quher it lys.*"

Alas, for the minister's hopes and the good intentions of the Kirk Session, for the glass windows which were broken by the storm in 1699, were repaired by William Bryce, Glasier in Glasgow, and they gave him for the same "4 lib. Scots 7s 6d, being part of the price of *the firr yeast that lay in the kirk*, which Donald M'Cirdie took with him to be a boat mast." After thirteen years!

THE KIRK SESSION.

The Kirk Session had the oversight of the parish, not only in things which we would to-day call religious, but in those which are the province of the civil authorities. The offender was summoned to the Kirk Session meeting, and if he failed to attend he might be called for a second and for a third time. If found guilty, fines were imposed and punishments, such as standing in the place of public repentance, making acknowledgment of their faults before the whole congregation, or being put in the pillar or the jouns.

In cases of recalcitrancy, the help of the "CIVIL MAGISTRATE" was invoked. The duties of this Magistrate are rather indeterminate, but it would appear that he was expected to be present at Session meetings.

22 June, 1650. "Quhilk day the heritours being for the most pairt present considering that Ninian Stewart of Ascog, magistrate to the parish, cannot in respect of his distance from the kirk be so frequently present at Sessiones as neid were, and the said Niniane desyreing for this cause to be freed of the said charge, they did choose Ninian Stewart of Kilkatten ther magistrate and he to exercise the samen charge according to the Acts of Parliament."

It is evident that the office was no sinecure and that they had difficulty in persuading anyone to hold it for long.

27 July, 1684. "Quhilk day the Session finding discipline neglected and vice growing rife for want of due punishment by reason of the want of a justice of peace in the Session therfor the whol Session unamously vote John Stewart in Galachan to be ther justice of peace, and that an supplication be presented to the Sheriff Bute to comissione him to exerce the said office in the Session of Kingarth."

25 June, 1699. "Quhilk day the Session being sensible of ther loss in the want of a civil magistrate and justice of peace to sitt amongst them, therfor its appointed that the *hail elders* meet at the kirk against Munday the 3d of July at ten houres, under the *penalty of paying 14s quhoever is absent*, that they may choose one of ther number to be civil magistrat according to the Act of Parliament, for modifieing fines and helping to punish delinquents and keeping good order."
 "Quhilk day the minister and hail elders present do nominate and make choice unanimously of Robert Bannatyne, younger of Lubas, to be civil magistrate and justice of peace in the Session."

The most frequent cases were those of irregular intimacies, usually before marriage. But there is no reason to suppose that these offences were more frequent than at later times, or even to-day. In the earliest records, there are cases of suspected witchcraft and alledged charming for the recovery of lost property and for the cure of sickness in men and in cattle. Sabbath breaking was looked upon with grave displeasure, while cursing, swearing, flyting and drinking received heavier penalties if they were committed on the Sabbath day. It will be seen, therefore, that the Kirk Session combined in itself the duties not only of a church court, but of an education committee, a public assistance authority and a magisterial bench.

It has been suggested that the elders were often over-anxious to probe the private lives of the parties, but to a serious observer, there seems little doubt that only by their strong sense of justice were the unfortunates of that time able to obtain any redress whatsoever.

20 May, 1666. "Quhilk day delated Alexander M'Niven and John Simme for conversing too familiarly

with their future spouses before marriage, ordains they be summoned before the next Session."

27 May, 1666. "Alexander M'Niven and John Simme confessed their fault in conversing too familiarly with their betrothed wives, whereby they gave offence. They are appointed to stand a day."

10 June, 1666. "Alexander M'Niven and John Simme having satisfied for their scandalous carriage before marriage, were absolved."

28 January, 1674. "Patrick M'Kaw is ordained to stand in his seat on the Sabbath within six weeks and to acknowledge that if his sporting with Agnes N'Kaw gave her, or any other, offence, he is sorry for it."

21 March, 1641. "Ordains Robert Glasse for his sin with Mary N'Conichie, *to stand bare-headed and bare-legged in sack cloth at the Kirk Dore from the 1 bell to the third and afterwards in the pillar during the tym of divine service* and that for the space of tuell Sabbaths. He is also to pay tuentie lib. of penultie."

21 May, 1671. "Donald M'Intyre denies that he gave a promise of marriage to Elspa N'Pherson, quhich she herself cannot make out. Therefore the Session ordains that after the child is brought forth and she hes nursd it ane quarter he take the child and cause nurse it or content her for nursing the child and see to her quhill she lys in."

Account was taken even here of "previous convictions."

14 December, 1671. "Quhilk day Patrick Glass confest his *trelapse* in fornicatoun with Jonat Fisel. The Session ordains to satisfy publickly in *whyte sheets six Sabbaths* only *provying he mary the woman* and to be unlauwed in 10 lib. Scots, but *if he mary not the woman* to satisfy publickly in *sackcloth* both at the Kirk door and on the pillar and to pay 20 lib. Scots.

21 February, 1692. "Quhilk day delated James Frisel in Kelspog, and James Hyndman, Miller, for making bargain and change of their wives and geir, which is thocht a very fulish and scandalous bargain. Ordains to summond to the next Session to know the truth of the said business and the reality of it."

28 February, 1692. "James Hyndman confessed that there was no bargain made but in sport offering to make change of their geir but not at all of their wives. James Frisel being summoned and called, compeirt not."

Drinking was a frequent offence and seems to have been most common on the Sabbath.

10 August, 1650. "Quhilk day being represented to the Session that upon the Sabbath day, coming from the church, some goes in other houses by the way to drink and sits down and tables thereat. The Session ordains that no oslerwife in this parish shall sell any drink or suffer any sit at table upon the Sabbath day, except to those that are lying sick and ane standing drink a pynt if there 3 or 4 and a quart if ther be many, they not tableing and that under the paine of 40s and two Sundayes standing *as wele to the drinkers of the said drink as to the oslerwife* who either sells the said drink or permitts the same to be filled."

29 January, 1671. ". . . delated several young persons for drinking late on Saturdays night at Craig house in a scandalous manner."

19 February, 1671. "Ordains that the persons who were drinking in Craig house shall be admonished the next Lords day publickly in the congregation and so passed, because the like was not before herd of."

20 January, 1684. "Robert M'Kamie compeird; could not deny his drunkennes but excusd himself that *a little thing maks him drunk*, but his aggravatioun was that it was on the day Ambrismore last was buried,"

This seems to have been a recognised excuse in the 17th as in the 20th century.

12 May, 1695. "Angus M'Niven confessed that he was somewhat overtaken with drink because a little will distemper him . . . James M'Niven denied that ever he was seen drunk either in Bute or Larges but that at that time having fasted long he was *overtaken with a swarf that opprest his heart* but was not drunk, having neither ear or drink that day. Therfor the Session think fitt to admonish him that he take heed to himself in time coming that he be not overtaken with drunkenes."

Gossip and slander would appear to be no less common then than in later times.

20 May, 1666. "James Stewart complained on Bryce Ligart that he called him a lyar, diver and thief, therfor craved justice."

24 January, 1667. "The Session ordains Bryce to stand on the pillar one day to confess his fault publickly and to crave James Stewart pardon and the said James to take him be the hand and to forgive him."

2 November, 1671. "Quhilk day Mr John Stewart, Minister at Kingarth, complaint on Patrick M'Kaw that he had most grossly traduced his name in calling him a common lyar, a tale teller and not worthy to be believed or trusted in a word he spake."

9 November, 1671. "Patrick M'Kaw being examined concerning the claim given in be his Minister he denied all. But after evidence had been led he confessed that he had spoken it 'out of prejudice' and the Session enjoined him to acknowledge his fault here before the Session and to crave pardon for it and *to take his Minister be the hand whilk was done presently*."

29 April, 1649. "John Hyndmans wife, a claim against Gabriel Waker for calling her a witch. Gabriel

denied but it was found that he had spoken the words. "The Session knowing the women to be honest and free of all suspition and brute, ordains Gabriel to stand three saboths and the last day to come doune of the stoole and sitt doune upon his knees before the pulpit and tak the said Katherine be the hand and crave for mercy and *because he is poore his penalty is forgiven.*"

17 July, 1678. "Quhilk day Patrick M'Pherson being sumond and calt, compeird. *Denyd that he beat his wife on the Sabbath but on Monday morning*; Giles Stewart, his wife, is injoynd to satisfie publickly for her cursing and swearing and provocking him to beat her."

One of the most interesting parts of the Kirk Session records concerns the use of charms.

In 1649 Robert Hyndman confessed that while he was sick, Margaret N'Kirdy had given him a charm for his recovery and he was ordered to stand for four Sundays.

27 May, 1649. "Quhilk day compeired Margret N'Kirdy who was delated for charmeing Robert Hyndman and confessed that she used the *charme for ane evill ey*; and being asked severall questiones about her useing of the charme wold give no satisfactory answer. She repeitted the charme as followes:

Cuirrith mi an obi er hule
A hucht phedir is phoile
An in ob is fear fui na yren
Obi yia o neoth gilar, etc.

The Session ordaines Kerelamount and John Wallace to speik to her more particularlie to see quhat farther they can learne of this or other poynts of witchcraft and to report to the next Session. The whole elders are admonished to enquire of her cariage."

I am indebted to Professor W. J. Watson, of Edinburgh, for a translation;

"I place this charm to mine eyes
A charm from the bosom of Peter and Paul
A charm of God which frees from any sickness."

On 17th May, 1650, Archibald M'Neill confessed the using of the following charm in Yrish:

"Eolus chuir shiag obi er bhrissadh er chilseadh er shiachadh er att er ith er anibhais nach deachie fomo dhume no mo bheach acht fo leadhas dhia nan dule."

"The said Archibald confessed that he maks thes *charme in tallow and applyes the same to horses for a wristed legg*, and that he practised the samen to Johne Wallace horse and to a horse of M'Ilchenyes."

The translation would appear to be:

A charm sent forth against breaking, against withering, against swelling, against "ith," against "anibhais," which left not my hold nor yet my beast, save by the healing of the god of nature.

("Anibhais" probably means a sudden violent death and "ith" some frequent disease of which I cannot think at present.—Prof. Watson).

Another charm for the recovery of stolen property was called the "charme of the ridle" and this was considered of such grievous a nature that the Session referred the case to the Presbytery.

23 July, 1649. "Quo die compeired Margaret Moore and confessed that she and Geills Frissell did practice the *charme of the ridle* in Loubas and that they did it ignorantly and knew not at that tyme the evill of it, she being at that tyme but about ten yeires of age. And being asked who taught them the charme answered that she only heard how it was done and that it took no effect with them, and that she never did it nor saw it done before or sinsyne."

25 December, 1649. "Quhilk day Alester M'Kaw, who hade denyed formerly at severall Sessionall meitting the charme of the ridle, did confesse the samen and that

he held up the riddle with Lachlane M'Kirdy. The Session referres him to the Presbytery with the rest who hes confessed this charme."

A case of suspected witchcraft occurs in 1650.— "Quhilk day Finwell Hyndman is delated to the Session as suspect of witchcraft and that she uses to be away from her service about 24 houres every quarter, and that nobody knowes quher she goes to nor will she confesse it, and hes beene often trapped in a ly in saying that dureing the tyme of her absence, she hade been in such a place." John M'Kaw, her master, stated that when she came back from two such excursions she "hade such a wyld smell that none could come neire her, and that she was all craised and weary as if it were one after a farr journey." . . . "The Session finding this a great presumption against the said Finwell and she being still *bruted for a witch* or (as the commone people calls it) *being with the fayryes*, they appoynt Ninian Stewart of Largizean, John Wallace to apprehend the said Finwell."

5 July, 1674. "They heard Mary N'Conochie say to Agnes Hyndman 'Witch go home to your house and see if yee have the devil in the kist or your master in the cove'."

15 February, 1702. Finlay M'Cirdie slandered Jonat Frisel in saying "I was forsaken of God and given over to the devil and that I was in the hills and the minister and elders drawing me out of the hills and that by witchcraft and the devils help it choacked his kow in the bog."

There was one long-suffering man in the parish, on his own testimony:

15 October, 1699. Robert Smyth desired to "clear himself by oath that he did not beat his child on the Sabbath day nor yet his wife did draw his hair . . .

confest that he said that quhen he took his daughters lug in his hand on Sabbath his daughter cryd and his wife came in and took him be the hair, he said *that tho she wold draw out all his hair he wold not put hand against her.*"

Gaelic.

Gaelic would seem to have been the common tongue of the people in the Parish, and services were held in both languages.

18 May, 1684. "Quhilk day the Session thinks fitt that there be half an houre preached in Irish and half an houre in English and that the Irish sermon be in the afternoon that the people may convene before because most part withdraws when its in English."

21 February, 1692. James Oconochar was summoned for being in Katrin Frisels house late at night "in a rampaging way," and when he had been publicly rebuked, he was appointed "to repeat the questions in Irish on the Sabbath day between sermons with his father, Manus Oconochar."

In July, 1696, there was bestowed upon the Parish "by the honourable, pious and learned Robert Boyle, son to the Earl of Coreck, ane big Irish Bible in the proper character for the use of the present Minister and all the ministers who shall succeed him in the Parish, and also 20 Irish Bibles in the Romane character" (which Manus had brought from Inverary), together with "20 Psalm books in Irish metre bestowed by King William for the benefit of the Parish." A list of those who received them is given in the Minutes, and it may be that in some neglected corner of Ardniho, Askog, Lubas, Keremenoch, Kerelamont, Keretonlay, Ambrismore or Garachtie, a stray copy may yet be found.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE.

The Church attendance was no better at the close

of the 17th century than it is to-day, even although the elders were instructed to take note of the peoples' irregularity and to note those who stayed away "from laziness or negligence," those who "were slow in gathering," and "those who came in late," and "such as go out of the Kirk before the blessing." The families of what we now call the West Road, from Kerecrasich, and Barnauld who go "to Rosa ilk Sabbath" were ordained to pay 6d Scots for each absence for the poor of Kingarth.

24 April, 1649. "Appoints ane elder by course every Lords day to remark all persones who shall be found without the Kirk in tyme of the English sermone."

10 June, 1666. "Quhilk day the Session considering peopls negligence in coming to church, ther contempt of the ordinances, have enacted that such as may come and does not or withdrawes from the ordinances be fined in 20s Scots *toties quoies*; and this act to be intimat the next Sabbath that none pretend ignorance."

17 March, 1667. "Mary N'Intyre promises to keep the kirk more frequently and to pay her fine."

There are many cases of Sabbath breaking. On 1st April, 1641, Katrine N'Finlie was convicted "of carying of burdeins upon the Sabbath." In 1649 three fisherman "scaireing upon Sunday at night."

Mary N'Murchy confessed that "she was herding the ky upon Sunday and took up the litt in her hand and brocht it home."

In 1666 "several idle vagabond ladies did profane the Sabbath day," and in the same year "the ferryman who had taken people to Larges and Cumbræ."

Elsa Muir was "publickly rebuked because she took up a rock on the Sabbath but did not spin."

In 1668 "several young men and young lassies for playing together on the Sabbath day at the Markland."

1673. Two men for playing at the Coppiehole on the Sabbath were fined 10 groats apiece.

But it could be broken in word as in deed.

15 January, 1678. "Intimation be made that no person use their worldly talk or business on the Sabbath."

18 May, 1679. "Patrick and James M'Kaws . . . confest that they struggled about a sheep drawing it one from the other till they killed it and went presently on the Sabbath day and bought another instead of it from Elspa Frisel."

1679. "Janet N'Conachie confessed her sin in gathering nuts on the Lords day."

1649. "John Glasse for carrying turf (peat?) on the Lords day in a scow to Rothesay."

Even the grinding of snuff was an offence.

The elders appear to have forgotten the words of the Master Himself about works of mercy on the Sabbath, not less than those of the old prophet who foretold his compassionate heart. It is difficult to reconcile Isaiah xl., 11, aand Matthew xii., 11, with this:—"14th April, 1678. Prayers said. Present: Ambrismore, etc. Quhilk day Finlay M'Phie, being summond and called, compeird, confest he helped to cary home ane sheep on a tedder on the Sabbath that was alambing and did it unwillingly. He is ordained to give publick satisfaction the next Lords day and to confess his fault and pay 4s."

Penalties were imposed for plowing on the Fast day (1699—1701).

26 March, 1699. James M'Kaw was summoned "for flyting and craving for his debts on the *Fast day* and he was admonished on his declaration and confessed his ignorance not knowing it was a fault and promised by Gods strength he would never do the like."

In 1700 Isbel N'Intyre was delated with her children "for irregular walking and that her children are very irreverent and disobedient to her. Ordains to sumond them to the next Session." She did not appear, but on a second summons she declared that one of her children is unruly and disobedient and that she cannot get him kept in command. Two of the elders were instructed "to correct him and threaten him to see if he be bettered."

Weddings being a time of country rejoicing seem also to have given the elders cause for concern.

20 February, 1669. "Quhilk day the persons formerly sumond for *scandalous cariage at bridels* compeirt and denyd any guilt. They are rebuked and admonisht to cary christianly in time coming; and because ther was no clear presumption they were dismiss."

5 February, 1682. "Quhilk day the Session considering the profane cariage at weddings especially by profane pipers ordains that none imploy or make use of Patrik M'Pherson or James Waker at weddings as pipers within the parish afterwards or give them moneys for playing, and that under the penalty of losing ther dollars."

The funds at the Session's disposal were not large, consisting for the most part of the collections in church and the fines imposed which they were able to collect. The collection was given to the poor of the parish, and there are many distributions recorded.

7 March, 1641. "The collection this day extends to 6s 8d which by the direction of the Session is giffin to a poor woman called N'Ilchomie. Done."

Other instances are:—

1666. 10s to John Campbel "broken by sea."

1674. Ane s. stirling given to Mary Frisel "a young lass of a strange disease."

1675. "3s for the winding sheet put on Michael M'Ilmichel."

1675. "8s Scots to John Brown, a stranger beggar with a tree leg."

18s scots to Mathew Campbel "quho had his house brunt."

1676. "6s to the blind lass." 2s sterling to Robert Dunlope, a poor man of Kilmairs.

"5 groats to Archibald Davidson who was distressed by sea at Colonsa in a bark."

1681. "Quhilkk day its appointed there be a collection for Cirstin N'Intyre to help her to pay the chirurgion for cutting a child of hers with the gravel and that there be three or four Sabboths collection given to her." On the following Sunday the collection was 50s 4d Scots "but in respect it was but small," another days collection was appointed to be given her.

1684. Three days collection for Alexander Hunter, "an cripple, to help him to some cloaths."

1691. Part of the collection to Finlay M'Phie, "being a poor leprous man."

1 January, 1696. "3 lib. 9s Scots collected for the Barbarie prisoners."

1697. "20s to help to buy a coffin for Mary Fleeming."

1699. "Paid for William Stewarts coffin 16s 8d."

1699. "18s to pay for a winding sheet to Mary N'Ilmartin."

The Session had even wider interests in the affairs of the parish.

In 1667 they recommended to Mr Robert Stewart that "a bridge be set over the burn at Kilcatten for the children to pass over," and it is interesting to find

among the acts of the Kirk Session that against "the not conveyeing of buriells," against "praying upon the dedis grave," and for those who know the churchyard at St. Blaane's and its story, there will be special significance in that "against separate buriells."

In 1649 the Session gave a shilling to "ane poor man who wanted help to carry him to the maine shore."

There is a reflection of the troubled times in the country in 1649 when Ninian Stewart of Askog, John Stewart of Ardniho, and John Stewart of Largizean, and others, were challenged for having taken part in the "late unlawful engagement" under Duk Hamiltone. This Duke of Hamilton had been a Royal Commissioner to the General Assembly in Glasgow in 1638, and was a commander of the King's fleet. When the Covenanters sent an army to assist parliament, King Charles suspected Hamilton of treachery and he was imprisoned in 1643. He was afterwards released, and opposed the surrender of the King to Cromwell, and himself levied an army, badly equipped, of 15,000 men with the sanction of the Scottish Estates. This army was defeated by Cromwell at Preston in 1648, which may be the "unlawful engagement" referred to. The Duke fled, surrendered, and was imprisoned at Windsor. He escaped a few hours after the execution of the King, but was recaptured, sentenced for treason on the 6th February, 1649, and beheaded on the 9th March, 1649. The Kirk Session minutes dealing with the matter are dated two days before his trial, and it is interesting to notice that by the month of April the men who had been accused were made elders of the kirk.

Here is a busy but apparently not very unusual Sunday at the door of Kingarth Kirk in 1664:—

"Reported that John Glasse and Mary Nickonnochie continues still standing upon the pillar of repentance.

"Reported that William Boyle continued still standing upon the pillar of repentance.

"Reported that John Simme and Jonett Rodger continued still standing upon the pillar of repentance.

"Reported that Issobell Nichonnochie continued standing upon the pillar of repentance.

"Reported that Mary Hyndman had begune hir publike repentance.

"Bessie Nickerrell appointed to be sent for from Killfinen and to entir hir publict repentance.

"James Frissell his wyfe compeired and was re-proved for scolding hir husband and flyting and was appointed to pay Gabriell, the officer, ane shilling, and if evir shoe wer found in the lyke againe to stand in the Gogs and pillar."

There are many interesting SIDELIGHTS upon the occupations, interests and customs of the time.

1649. Robert Wallace confessed fornicatioune five or six years since "quhen he was a *sojour*."

1651. The Session remitted the penalty of two who were accused of flyting upon Sunday on the grounds that "they haue nothing but *as they begg heire and ther*."

1665. They arrested a servants "*fies in Ambrismores hand*."

1671. A witness excused his behaviour because he was struggling with Giles Frisel "for a *snuf of tobacco* and some others rose against him to help her."

Donald M'Intyre was a *weaver*, Bryce Stewart "*went to sea and never returned*." Charles Martin and Mary N'Phie were prohibited "to cohabite any longer together unless they marry." But they were not to be summoned "till the man return from the *herring fishing*." (1677).

Alexander Wetherburn was a "*shoomaker*."

Robert Crawford and Isobel Moor were seen "together late in the *Kiln*."

Ninian Stewart was a carpenter who had given a promise of marriage to Annaple Hyndman which he "would not deny but which he had no mind to fulfil." "In respect she is to return in haste back again to Glasgow to her service, the Session permits her to stand before noon and after noon but find no clearness to give him way to any other till he satisfy the said Annaple and quit him of his promise to her. This is ther minde and judgment."

John Stewart was a "*boat wright*." (1693.)

James M'Nivin ran a ferry from Skoulag.

William Bannatyn is "but a half-witted man and *not throw naturally*."

James Hunter and his wife were summoned for "Flyting, squabbling, fighting and casting fire turfs at each other on the Sabbath day."

16 October, 1670. (Appointment of John Graham as schoolmaster). "The rest of the *heritors that cannot subscribe* give power to the minister to subscribe for them."

At the end of the volume, and turning the book upside down, there is entered a number of marriages and baptisms in the years 1648-49 and from 1672 till 1685. The numbers compare very favourably with those of to-day:—

1648	...	...	...	4 marriages
1649	...	...	...	5 "
1672	...	...	...	8 "
1673	...	...	...	9 "
1674	...	...	...	10 "
1675	...	...	...	11 "
1676	...	...	...	10 "

1677	...	...	...	16 marriages
1678	...	...	...	18 "
1679	...	...	...	5 "
1680	...	...	...	7 "
1681	...	...	...	8 "
1682	...	...	...	7 "
1683	...	...	...	11 "
1684	...	...	...	11 "
1685	...	...	...	5 "

In 1648 there were 4 baptisms, and in 1649, 14.

Scribbled on the fly leaf are four tags (one of them from Scripture):—

"In Tyme of neid runne thow with speid unto thy leiving Lord
Who will indeid send sum remeid according to his word."

"The feir of the Lord is the begining of wisdome."

"In tyme despone, Death comes alone and nothing with it brings."

"In my defence God me defend and bring my soul to ane good end."

There follows the signature of J. Campbell, and this may have been the Rev. John Campbell who was Minister from 1640 until he died in 1643.