

Source – History of Tayport by the late Sir James Scott. 1927

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THE PARISH CHURCH

The Parish Church was built in the year 1607, which is indicated by a stone built into the east gable of the Church at the back of tile vestry, about 11 ft. from the ground. The first mention we have of it is in 1630, during tile ministry of the Rev. Mr Cunningham. Mr Cunningham was then an old man and in need of an assistant, and the Rev. Alex. Henderson, Minister of Leuchars, recommended Mr Robert Trail, a young man who had just completed his trials for licence. The ladies of Scotsraig, the Misses Buchanan, kindly invited the young Minister to reside with them while he was acting as helper to Mr Cunningham. This was a very thoughtful act, because the accommodation of the manse was very limited, which can be verified by a visit to the building. This is still inhabited and stands in Rose Street; the gable abuts in the street. Here Mr Trail officiated for two years, until, in the faithful discharge of his duties, he reprovved the Laird for swearing, which caused a coldness and induced Mr Trail to leave. He afterwards became a man of note, and was present at the Assembly of the Church of Scotland, held in Glasgow in 1638, at which the Rev. Alex. Henderson of Leuchars was Moderator. Mr Trail became the first minister of the Church in Elie in 1639 and was afterwards translated to Grevfriars Church, Edinburgh, where the Solemn League and Covenant was signed.

By the year 1794 the old Church had become in such a ruinous condition that Dr Robert Dalgleish had it restored and improved. At the same time he also built a new manse, which, at that time, must have been considered a palatial building compared with the old manse in Rose Street which it had replaced.

Any visitor to the Old Burying Ground surrounding the Church will be surprised on reading the inscriptions on the tombstones to find that so many of the former inhabitants had been shipmasters. Nearly every stone testifies to this fact, about thirty distinct names and many branches of the same name, following the same calling, being easily traced. Most of these men were engaged in the continental trade, when ships were small and all under sail. The Church spire has a strong leaning towards the Church, caused by a weakness in the old Scotsraig vault underneath.