

## **A Brief History of the Church in Tarves 1597-1998**

### **From the Presbytery of Ellon Records 1597**

“On the 29<sup>th</sup> Nov 1597 all barons and gentlemen from Ellon and surrounding districts are charged to attend a meeting to hear an edict from the Provincial Assembly sanctioned by the General Assembly for the erection of a Presbytery of Ellon”

This officially replaced the Roman Catholic Church (which had been the church from earliest times - a thousand years) with the Protestant Presbyterian Church of today and the taking over of the Catholic churches and manses.

Their first piece of business was to ordain that Sunday was no longer to be market day as had been the custom. This had to be changed to Wednesday.

The churches and manses were in a neglected and in many cases ruinous state as this take over had been expected for many years. The church here in Tarves had to survive for another 200 years.

From the records we read “In the year 1753 the venerable old church of Tarves, so often before subjected to drastic treatment to prolong its existence had to undergo extensive repairs at a cost of £22 sterling. With these repairs the fabric had been left apparently to await its doom. That came 44 years later. In September 1797 the Presbytery had to meet in Tarves on account of the ruinous state of the church. Lord Aberdeen’s factor, Crombie, submitted a plan of a new one with a contract duly executed. The Presbytery gave approval.”

The old church building was demolished leaving the Tolquhoun Tomb, which would have been at one end. The building of the present church commenced in March 1798 and received its first congregation just seven months later on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1798.

It has been described as a simple preaching house and indeed is lacking in architectural features seen in churches built in the following century.

During the following two centuries alterations appear to have been carried out on several occasions as listed in old records. The most noticeable are the roof tie bars which were fitted to prevent the weight of the roof bursting the walls and bringing down the roof.

In 1892, after much fund raising, the present organ was leading the singing replacing the last precentor, Mr Sam Davidson, Northseat of Auchedly.

The vestry and entrance porch were added in 1904 bringing the church up to a modern standard for that era. Major repairs and alterations were carried out in 1953 when the roof had to be re-sarked and re-slatted.

The Presbytery of Ellon, established in 1597 continued in that capacity for this area until 1929. A photograph of the last Presbytery hangs in the vestry with the Rev James Murray as the Tarves member. New geographical areas for the North-East were drawn up at that time and Tarves became part of the Aberdeen Presbyter. Following the reorganisation of Local Government in 1975 when Gordon District was created the Presbytery of Gordon was established and Tarves is a member of it.

It was decided, as funds were available, to mark the bi-centenary of Tarves Church in 1998 in a major and meaningful way. After much discussion it was left to the fabric convenor, Lindsay Cook, ably assisted by Dawson Henderson and members of the fabric committee to progress and inform the congregation of the plans and to oversee the changes to the interior of the church. The old traditional pews were all removed, necessary repairs were carried out to the flooring and a new entrance from the west vestibule made a better entry and exit of the church. A kitchen was built in one corner and a storage cupboard in the opposite one creating a semi-circular design to the church interior area. Alterations to the pulpit area included a better access stair. The original water central heating piping was removed and replaced by an electric heating system. The roof, walls and much of the woodwork was repainted. A new speaker system was installed and extensive re-wiring was carried out.

The floor area was re-carpeted throughout and new style individual seats with the facility for storing hymn books and bibles were arranged in a semi-circle in keeping with the new floor area.

All the work was carried out to a very high standard. This new look to a 200 year old church can be regarded as revolutionary but has been highly praised.

Tarves Kirk will welcome the new Millenium in the full knowledge that it is in good heart for another 200 years

Arthur Watson  
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