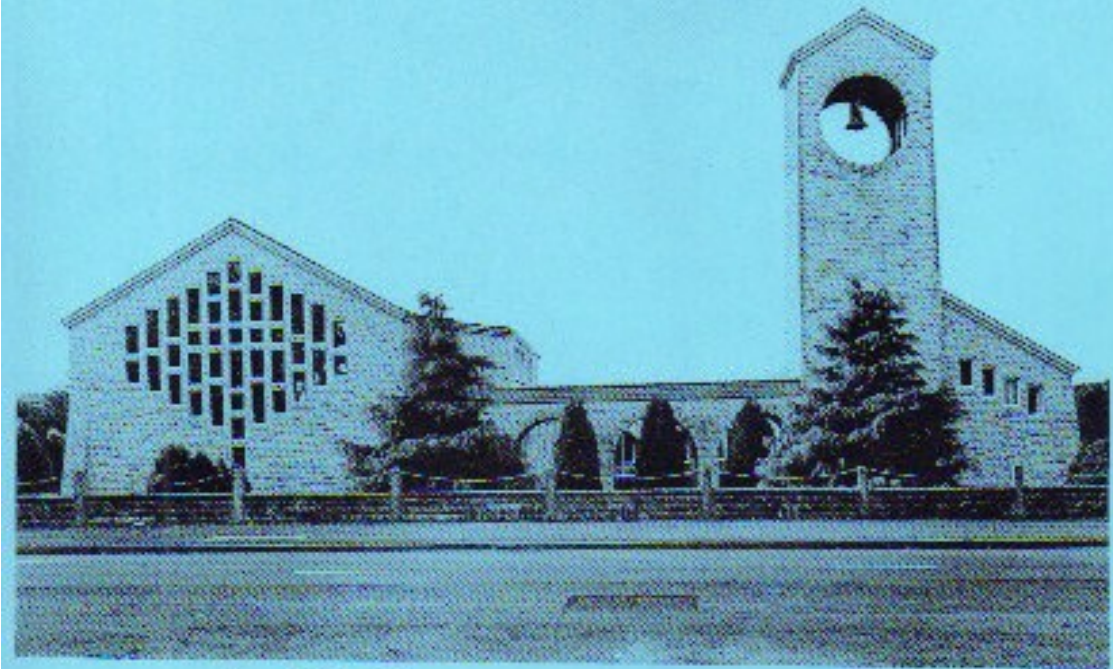


# FIRST GARVAGH Presbyterian Church



## Glimpses of the Past

1641 - 1991

## FIRST GARVAGH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The earliest records of this congregation have been lost, but the foundation of the Church has traditionally been associated with the year 1641. After the rebellion of 1641 the parishes of Errigal and Desertoghill were taken over by the Rev John Law from the Rev Robert Montgomery, MA who had been the parish Rector. After Oliver Cromwell's death in 1660 the Rev Law was ordered to deliver up the parish to the Rev Montgomery and was finally ejected by Bishop Jeremy Taylor for failing to attend a convocation called by him in 1661.

After their ejection from the parish church the Presbyterians of Garvagh met at Ballinameen Green across the Agivey river where, it was claimed, their singing disturbed the service in the parish church, then the private church of the Canning family. To overcome this problem the Presbyterians were granted a piece of land by George Canning adjacent to the river some distance further north. Here a shelter was erected for the minister who addressed the people standing in the open. The Presbyterians of Garvagh had found a permanent site in the parish of Errigal for their Church and they remained there for over three hundred years.

The Canning family's connections with these parts began in 1614 when George Canning came over here from Barton in Warwickshire during the plantation of this part of Ulster as

agent for the Ironmongers, a London company. He built a castle on the Ironmonger's estate at Agivey but, finding the site difficult to defend against attacks by the native Irish, he moved to Garvagh taking over a native freehold estate formerly owned by an O'Cahan. From that pioneer has descended the English Prime Minister, George Canning (1827) and the present Lord Garvagh. Garvagh House, demolished in 1964, was the family home until 1922 when the estate was sold and the family returned to England.

Rev John Law, although deposed, continued to preach but at length went to Scotland where he was imprisoned for holding conventicles. He was installed in Kirkcaldy in 1691. His next charge was Creich, where he died on 9th June 1691, after six months' ministry. It was agreed in February 1673 that the congregation was vacant, as Mr Law had demitted the charge and there was no hope of his returning to it.

Rev Robert Landish (or Landess), who was ordained by the Route Presbytery in January 1674, appears to have been Mr Law's successor. Mr Landish removed to Scotland at the time of the Revolution, and in 1691 the Synod wrote to him asking him to return to his charge, but without effect as he had become minister of Blantyre - a place to become famous in later days as the home town of David Livingstone.

We hear nothing more of First Garvagh until 1700, when we find Rev James Woodside as minister. He died or resigned in 1719.

Mr Woodside's successor in First Garvagh was the Rev Francis Ross, who was ordained on 7th May 1723. He died in the charge on 4th March 1751.

In 1756 the Rev William Callendar, minister of a new erection at Ardstraw, was called, but on the day fixed for his installation he failed to appear, having been induced to remain in his charge at Ardstraw.

The next minister was Rev Robert Elder, who was in charge from 1761 until his death on 18th May 1781.

After much disputation, Rev Brice Millar was ordained on 21st December 1784. His ministry was of short duration, as he soon afterwards went to America.

On May 13th 1788, the Rev Henry Henry, a native of Gortygran, near Articlave, succeeded Mr Millar. He was looked upon as the most faithful minister in the Synod of Ulster. He left Garvagh to take over the charge of Connor, near Ballymena, in December 1788, where he remained until his death in November 1840. It is told of him that he was one of the first persons to use an umbrella locally. On one occasion he left it in the session room and purposely kept it open to dry. Having forgotten it when going home, he sent a messenger for it, who, never having seen such a portable tent, could not get the umbrella down and as it would not go through the door, had to bring his reverence to his aid.

The next minister was the Rev Gideon McMullan, who was ordained in February 1790. His ministry lasted just three years, when he died.

At a meeting of the Presbytery held in Coleraine on the last Tuesday of April 1795, the congregation of Garvagh supplicated for a hearing of Mr James Browne for the month of May,

at the end of which time there appeared a call for him nearly unanimous. He was then put on "Second Trials" by the Presbytery, which being finished and no objection appearing, he was ordained to the pastoral charge of the congregation on 1st December 1795.

The following is a copy of the call to Mr Browne:

"We, the Protestant dissenters of the congregation of Garvagh, rendered destitute of a stated pastor through the awful dispensation of the Most High, but piously resolve that to forsake the assembling of ourselves together and devoutly wishing the residence of a faithful minister of religion amongst us to preach the glorious Gospel of ye Blessed God, and administer the sacred institution thereof and whereas through a kind providence we have had repeated opportunities of sitting with national delight and religious satisfaction under the ministry of the word by you, the Rev J Browne: being amply satisfied as to the purity of your morals, and improvement of your talents, and perfectly convinced of the truth and integrity of your principles; as Presbyterians glorying in it as our inalienable right and exercising it as our unquestionable privilege to choose our own minister, do hereby solemnly invite and call you, the aforesaid J Browne, to assist and influence, direct and govern this religious community in the public worship of God, and to administer such means of grace and salvation as the great author of our holy religion hath appointed in His word.

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Solemnly pledging ourselves that in the faithful discharge of your duty we will know

you with reverential regard, respect your person, love you in the Lord and esteem you very highly in love for your work's sake, and in time shall yield unto you a suitable and comfortable maintenance, convinced that the labourer is worthy of his hire, that he who serves at the altar must live by the altar, that elders who rule well especially in word and doctrine are counted worthy of double honour, and that whosoever shall give but a cup of cold water in the name of Christ to His disciple shall not lose his reward."

In testimony of which we have hereunto annexed our signatures dated at Garvagh, this 7th day of June, 1795 - John Wallace, James Kerr, John Fisher, Alex Smyth, Robert Fisher, John Browne, David Orr, Hugh Brown, Sam Taylor, John Orr, Thos. Browne, Robert Orr, Robert Fisher, James Dalhouse, Sam Patterson, John Martin, David Rankin, John Logan, Duncan McCook, Wm. Campbell, Hugh Hopkin, Thomas Mitchell, John Gormley, James Gormley, Samuel Gilmour, Alexander Smyth, John Dunlop, Jacob Forsythe, John McComb, Thomas Torrance, William Hunter, Edward Patton, Matthew Robertson, Hugh Robertson, John Lyle, David Caghy, Alex Browne, John Alexander, William Lamb, William Turner, Archibald Boyd, Daniel Richmond, Thomas Gray, John Kelly, Robert McClenaghan, Jun., Robert McClenaghan, Thomas Alexander."

At the end of the call:

"I do hereby testify to all whom it may concern that in open congregation in ye meeting-house of Garvagh the above call was fairly obtained and the signatures annexed thereunto by the special order of each individual for himself in living voice and that there were only two qualified votes in opposition to

Mr Browne's settlement. Given under my hand on the day and year above written - John Glendy (minister) Maghera."

In 1796 the congregation consisted of 495 families. It would appear from the records that the whole affairs of the congregation for some time after Mr Browne's settlement were managed by a committee, as there is no account of a Session in 1803. The following names formed the committee of the congregation: David Rankin, John Wallace, Matthew Woodburn, Thomas Alexander, Robert Jamison, Hugh Browne, John McCook, John McComb, Robert Fisher, Samuel Dorrance, John McClenaghan, Edward Patton, William Hilton, John Lyttle, David Hamill, William Campbell, Matthew Woodburn, John Matthews, Jas. Beers, John Creighton, Hugh Robinson, Alex Browne, John Logan, John Orr.

Mr Browne worked closely with the famous Henry Cooke, whom he had baptised, and other faithful men in purging the Presbyterian Church of Arianism. He was foremost in enforcing subscription to the Confession of Faith at every ordination. He is described as an exceedingly well-built and gentlemanly man and one who by his off-hand manner and inoffensive character endeared himself to the whole community. He was a great patron of students and licentiates, his house being a home for them at all times.

Mr Browne built a house on his farm at Carrowreagh, called Mount Pleasant, now the home of Mr and Mrs R J Gillanders. One of Mr Browne's daughters married Dr Dougherty of Garvagh and became the mother of the Right Hon. Sir J B Dougherty, Under Secretary for Ireland.

During Mr Browne's lifetime there was no such thing as public marriage or for that matter public baptism, and accordingly at any hour of the day or night a pair could be united in wedlock in a private house. Considering Mr Browne's obliging disposition, it is therefore not surprising the numbers of people who flocked to him from all quarters to be married. The number of marriages he celebrated and children he baptised is remarkable. All such were accurately recorded by him. During the first eleven years of his ministry, the Rev Browne baptised 710 children.

On the 26th February 1806 (a fast day) the following committee was chosen: David Rankin, John Wallace, Matthew Woodburn, Robert Jamison, Hugh Brown, John McCook, John McClenaghan, David Hamill, John Creighton, James Gilmore, Hugh Robertson and John Orr.

From 1796 to 1809 there was an average of 65 baptisms a year, and that too, in Rebellion times. Everything was done decently and in order, and we find that on 4th June 1821, an initial meeting of session and committee was called to plot and lay out a graveyard. On the 30th November of the same year another meeting was held, Rev James Browne presiding, and others present were John Wallace, John Orr, Robert Jamison, John McCook, James Gilmore, William Rankin, David Hamill, Hugh Robinson and John Hilton. It was decided that the width of a grave be 3 feet and that no persons could acquire more than four graves.

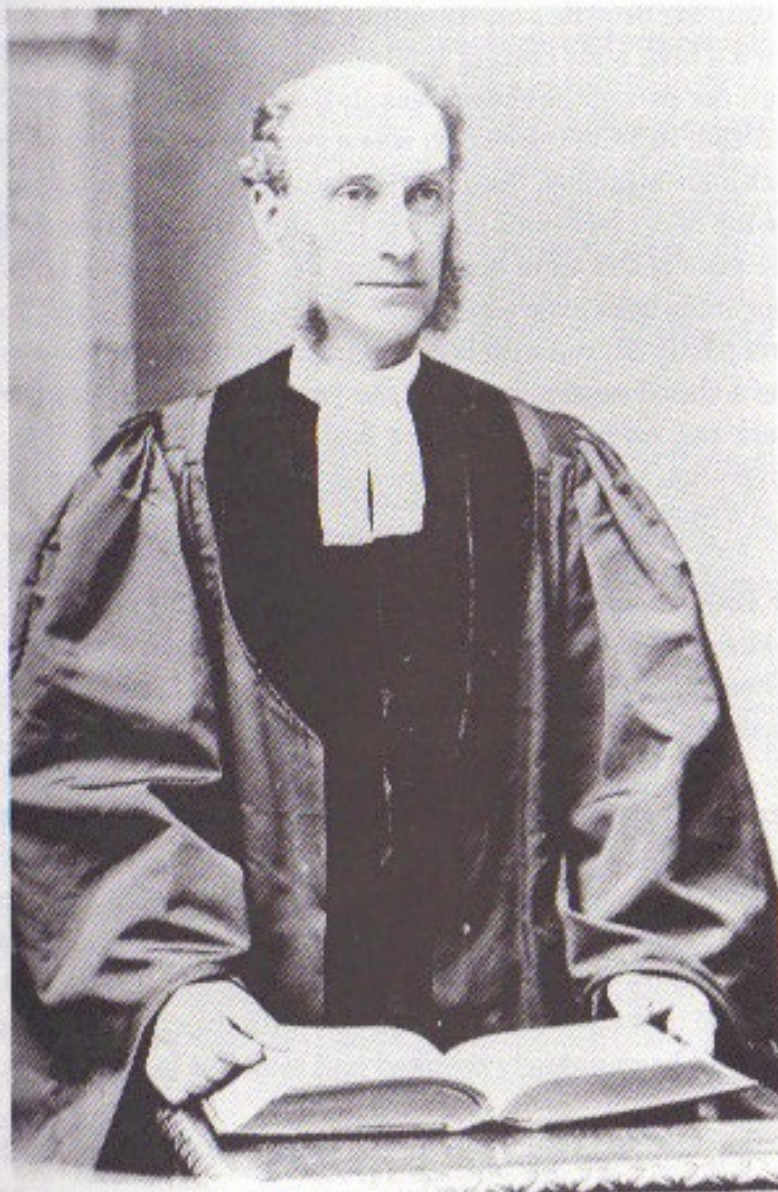
The congregations of Moneydig, Ringsend and Swatragh were all erected during Mr Browne's ministry, from the old parent congregation at Garvagh.

During Mr Browne's ministry the church was enlarged in 1829 when a back aisle costing £250 was added. In 1835 the roof of the older part of the church was slated at a cost of between £70 and £80. In 1836 the church was a two storey building with a back aisle attached, the galleries being entered from a door at the top of cut freestone steps on the outside of the back gable. The aisle of the main building was floored with brick but the floor of the back aisle was of clay. The pews on the ground floor were partly floored with boards and partly with clay and there was a slated session house in the yard. During the last three years the number of families had decreased by 40 due to emigration to America. Mr Browne received £45-10-0 stipend plus £75 Regium Donum.

Mr Browne was appointed Clerk of the Route Presbytery in 1811 and held that office until his resignation in 1834 due to ill health. He was succeeded as Clerk by his son-in-law, Dr. Clarke Huston.

During Mr Browne's time it was found necessary to publicly discipline members found guilty of the sin of adultery. The guilty parties, when called, were to leave their seats and come into the alley in front of the pulpit and remain there until permitted by the minister to withdraw, their names being recorded in the session book together with the crime for which they had been publicly rebuked and restored to fellowship.

At the visitation in 1835 there were 500 families in the congregation but arrears of stipend were accumulating and the ordination of Mr Browne's successor was postponed until money owing to him was paid. Mr Browne died on the 20th of May 1850, aged 88 and in the 55th year of his ministry.



Rev. J. Millar  
1840 — 1859

Rev James Millar of Mount Hamilton, Ballyweany, Loughguile, was ordained as assistant and successor to the pastoral charge of First Garvagh on 18th February 1840. At that time the ruling elders were Daniel McAllister, Archibald Hamill, Robert Gilmore, Sen., John Orr and Robert Gilmore, Jun. On 17th May 1842 additional members of session were ordained as follows: Matthew Huston, James McCook, Robert Dripps, John Huston, James Hamilton and on 16th October 1845 John Elder of Bellury was received into First Garvagh as ruling elder on certificate from the Boveedy congregation. On 23rd October 1851 William Lyttle, John Torrens, Hugh Wallace and James Smyth were ordained as elders.

In 1846 we find Mr Millar chairman of the committee formed to manage the English, Scientific and Clapical School which was built on a site obtained from Lady Garvagh where the present Youth Club now stands. One of the rules for the school states that applicants for the position of teacher in the school were:

"to be examined within hearing of each other and also that each candidate examines a clap or clapes so that an opinion may be formed as to their facility of communicating knowledge."

Special sermons were preached as a means of clearing debt and Dr Morgan preached on 30th December 1850 and local gentlemen of substance were invited to be present and lift the collection, their donations being recorded. The collection raised £45. By 1857 Mr Millar's health was 'delicate' and he was unable to do any regular visiting and at the visitation of 1859 it was stated that while he did visit the sick and afflicted when called upon to do so, there were some complaints. Mr Millar



Dr. T. Madill, LLD  
1866 — 1917

gave the number of families as 300-350 but the elders thought there were about 400.

The labours of the great Revival of 1859 impaired Mr Millar's health and he died of paralysis on 19th November 1859, aged 49, leaving a widow and six children, the eldest of whom died during his fourth year at college. He was buried in First Garvagh graveyard where a tombstone was erected by the congregation.

After Mr Millar's death the congregation continued in a rather distracted state for some time, hearing from time to time a number of licentiates.

Mr Millar's successor was Rev Thomas Davidson of Lisburn who was ordained in First Garvagh by the Coleraine Presbytery on 25th September 1860. He is described as a very agreeable man and much loved by his congregation. Mr Davidson lived on his 17 acre farm at Mettican. He died suddenly of heart failure on 2nd August 1865 and was buried in the family burying ground at Legacurry, near Lisburn.

Thomas Madill, a licentiate of Cavan Presbytery, was ordained on 21st February 1866 with a salary of £70 per annum with increase. He married Sara McKinney Millar, a daughter of a former minister of 1st Garvagh and they had a family of three sons and two daughters.

At Mr Madill's ordination objection was taken to the sermon preached by Rev William Sturgeon, 2nd Dunboe, and he was brought before the Presbytery and warned to be more evangelical in future.

On 22nd May 1867 ten members were voted for as additional members of session but only four, Joseph Lytle, Samuel McAlister, John Cooke and John Creighton, accepted office and were ordained.

Under the superintendency of John Cooke, the sabbath school began to flourish and in July 1867 this energetic gentleman was commissioned to oversee the drainage of the graveyard and repairs to the outside of the church. On the 29th August 1867 Mr Cooke submitted his account of £18 for the work.

On 17th August 1870, as a mark of esteem, the congregation presented Dr Madill with a horse, trap and harness, total cost £41 10s and an address was read to the Rev Madill by Mr Walter Smyth of Gortnamoyagh.

Soon after Mr Madill's ordination the question of renovating the inside of the church was brought before the congregation. At the meeting an alternative suggestion was made that a new church might be built instead of repairing the old one. This suggestion was strongly supported by Mr John Bones of Augusta, Georgia, USA, (son-in-law of the former minister, the Rev James Browne) who was visiting his native land at the time. But as the majority of the congregation were in favour of renovating the old church the whole matter was postponed in the meantime.

On the 1st October 1872 it was agreed that the whole inside of the church was to be completely renovated, new floors and new windows were to be put in and a semi-circular platform was to be erected at the front ready for the railing. The gallery was to be overhauled and the two front seats of the aisle gallery were

to be removed. The outside staircase was to be roofed and ceiled. The whole to be painted according to the terms of the agreement and the work to be done in a workmanlike manner. The total cost of these repairs was £184-8-0. It was also agreed at the same meeting that, as the seats would be put up by public subscription, there should in future be no such thing as tenant right in seats and no selling of titles or subletting.

The Rev Professor Smyth DD, the MP for the County of Londonderry opened the church on 1st April 1873. He preached in the morning and lectured in the evening on the subject of the American churches. The following gentlemen acted as collectors:

John Adams JP, Ballydevitt, Bones Hamilton, Ballymoney, William Rankin, Newpark, H R Morrison JP, Moneydig, Henry Anderson JP, Rusky Manor House, Alexander Barklie JP, Mullamore, I T Gallogly, Ulster Bank, Garvagh, S W King, Garvagh, Alex MacNeary MD, Garvagh, William Rankin, Moneycarrie, S Gunning JP, W H Ashe JP, Garvagh, Robert Moore, Garvagh, William Boyd, Garvagh and Gavin Craig, Garvagh. Many subscriptions were received, the three largest being £10 from the Ironmongers, £3 from Nathaniel Alexander, Epsom and £3 from John Stiel Cathcart, Garvagh, making a total from all sources of £166 12s 2d.

A number of young ladies in the congregation, consisting of the Misses Gilmour (Garvagh), Campbell, Deane, Millar, Jackson, Dunlop, Lyttle, Stuart, McKee, Woodburn, Knox, Stuart (Gortfad), Johnston, Dripps, Glenn, Linton, McMullan, Gilmour (Inchaleen), Hutchinson, with Miss Browne as general superintendent, formed themselves into a committee for



the purpose of fitting up the platform with desk, railing and drapery and matting all the aisles. They were encouraged in their work by a handsome donation of £7 from John Bones and his niece Miss Longstreet, Augusta, Georgia, USA. These ladies collected £41 3s. Having spent £27 on the fitting out of the platform and aisles, £8 was set aside towards the purchase of a stove and the remainder towards the building of a wall in front of the church where there was a hedge. This wall was to be built by Robert Faith at 2s 2d per perch. The two gateways were to be built up and one gateway was to be opened opposite the centre of the church.

The Committee appointed Ellen Craig as sextoness on 27th December 1873 and John Johnston resigned as precentor the following year. It was agreed that "the resignation be accepted and that we endeavour in future to conduct the Psalmody of the Congregation gratis by a voluntary choir and that the money thereby saved be devoted to the Sustentation Fund."

Mr David Hoy, manager of the Ulster Bank and a member of the congregation, volunteered to train and lead the choir. Mr Madill obtained his LLB degree in 1878 and his LLD the following year.

In the month of November 1885 a public meeting of the young ladies of the congregation met to discuss ways of raising funds towards the repair of the church exterior. Dr and Mrs Madill invited all who would take part to tea in the manse and the following attended:

Miss Jackson, Garvagh, Miss Tilly McKee, Kewrin, Miss E Elder, Mettican, Miss Lytle, Moyletragh, Miss McKee, Carhill,

Miss Wallace, Trinaltenagh, Miss Glass, Caulheme, Miss Linton, Caw, Miss Robertson, Caw, Miss McFetridge, Caw, Miss Moore, Mettican, Miss Mitchell, Garvagh, Miss Woodburn, Garvagh, Miss Millar, Garvagh, Miss Huston, Gorticloughan, Miss Gilmour, Garvagh, Miss Hill, Ballyagan and Miss Kerr, Glenkeen.

After much discussion it was decided that a congregational quilt should be made. The quilt would be divided into squares with a name embroidered on each square at a cost of at least one shilling. A sum of £65-1-0 was raised and lodged in the Ulster Bank by Miss Jayne Young Millar and Miss Alicia Lytle as trustees for the Young Ladies' Committee.

The church was repaired in 1887 and opened towards the end of the year by the Rev R J Lynd of May Street, Belfast. One wing of the church was re-roofed, a new floor was laid down and flowered wainscotting was added above the level of the seats. Panelling was added to the semi-circular iron railings of the platform and crimson drapery introduced. The seats were in oak with mahogany cappings, while the fronts of the galleries and the panelling on the platform were in maple, relieved by a pitch pine framework with walnut mouldings. The session room was enlarged as much as possible and by sliding doors could be made into two smaller rooms or one lecture hall.

The Coleraine Chronicle, 17th December 1887, described the handsome ornamented structure enclosing the platform of the church as "of semi-circular form, with front of stained wood, supported on arches in Gothic style and the remainder of wrought material of chaste design, manufactured by the firm

of Riddle & Co., Belfast." As Mr Bones and his niece Miss Longstreet, when in Ireland, had given a handsome donation towards the renovation of the platform and as Mr Bones had since died, it was decided that the platform should be in memory of Mr Bones.

A resolution passed by the session and committee in October 1888 states that:

"The minimum stipend of each seat on the ground floor and the front seats of the gallery be £1 each, half a seat to be 10 shillings, two sittings 7 shillings and sixpence and one sitting 4 shillings. Other sittings in the gallery will be let according to circumstances. No person is entitled to more of a seat than he pays for."

Lamps for the evening services were purchased in May 1896 and further repairs were carried out to the church.

During 1900 the following committee was elected:

Robert Holmes, James W Wallace, John Wallace, Robert Houston, Robert I Linton, Solomon Glenn, Hugh Robertson, Robert Boyd, William Forgrave, Thomas Dickson, David Lynn, Thomas Millar, David Johnston, David McKee and David Milliken.

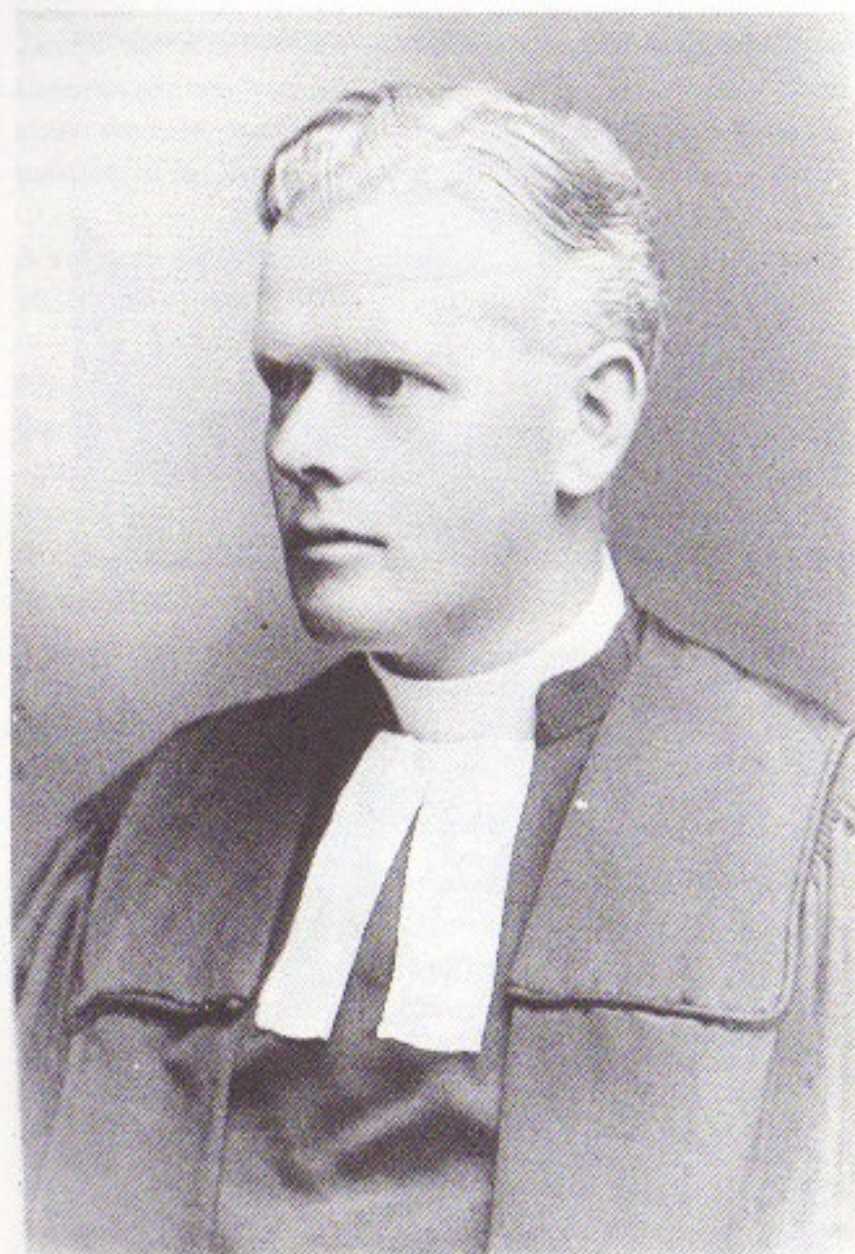
At a meeting of session and committee held in June 1903, called to discuss the heating of the church, it was agreed that owing to the antiquity of the church fabric and the probable necessity of having to make extensive improvements to the same at no distant date, perhaps to rebuild altogether, the old



The Old Church



A wedding in the Old Church



Rev. M. Majury, BA  
1917—1920

stove should be replaced with a similar one in the meantime. The buildings were insured for £1000 and the premium was £1 15s.

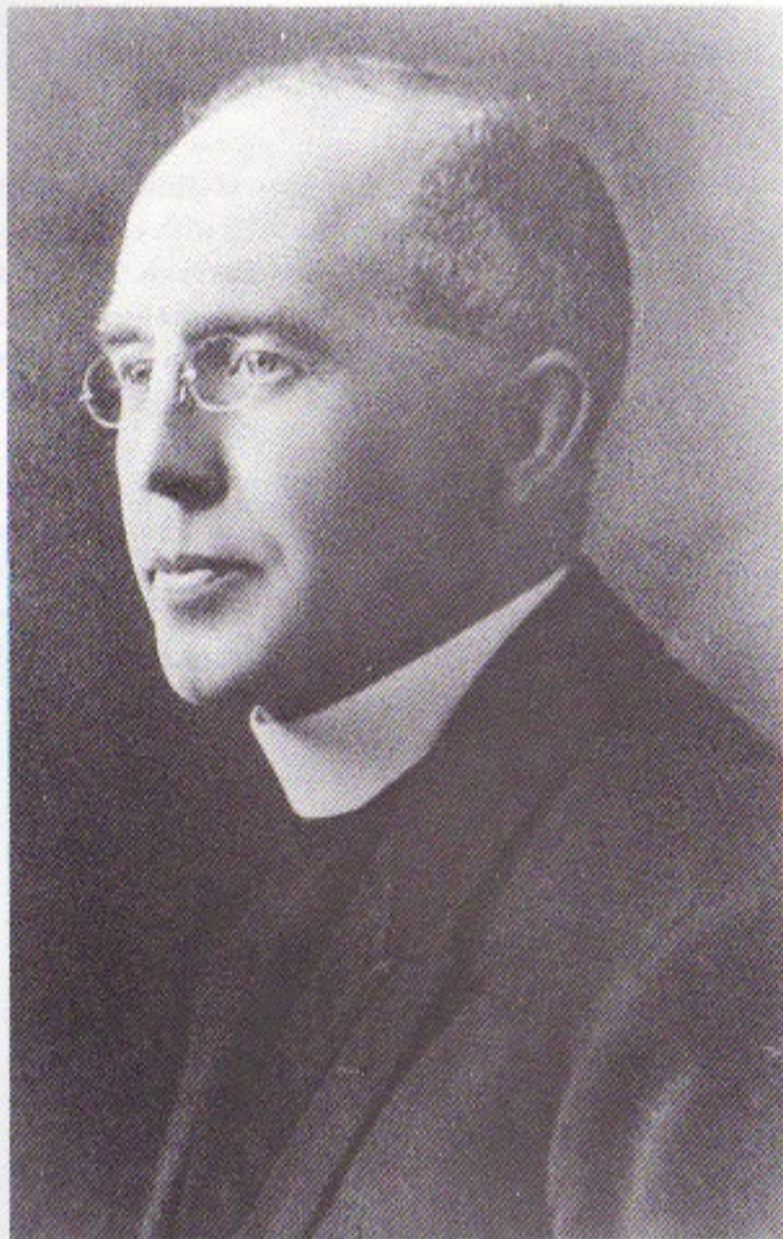
In 1908 the Rev W J Stronge, Minister of Third Garvagh, resigned and the congregation was dissolved with about thirty families of the congregation joining First Garvagh. The building then became the church hall for both First Garvagh and Main Street churches. The number of families given at the 1912 visitation was 178.

Electric light was installed in December 1912 at a cost of £12 19s 6d by Mr James E McLaughlin and the electricity bill the following year was 10 shillings paid to Mr Sam Stewart. The Church was still heated by a stove in the aisle which was replenished during collection time, a bag of fir costing 1 shilling and 2 cwts of coal costing 3 shillings.

In 1916 Dr Madill was presented with an illuminated address and a purseful of sovereigns as a token of the congregation's esteem.

On 7th August 1917 Dr Madill died after half a century of faithful service and was laid to rest amid general sorrow and universal respect, a funeral still remembered by some of our senior members. A headstone to his memory was erected by the congregation.

Rev Matthew Majury, B.A., B.D., was appointed to the oversight of the congregation on 10th July 1917. He was brought up in connection with Kilmore congregation, Co Down.



Rev. W. Campbell, MA  
1920 — 1943

At the end of 1917 two fields comprising 6 acres 1 rood and 36 perches, in Twenty Acres, were bought from Dr Wallace for £383 10s as a site for a manse. Mr Majury collected the money for this and for a manse, receiving promises from the congregation of £1,468 10s and £100 from the General Purposes Fund. He collected from outside sources £211 10s 6d and the congregation collected from acquaintances £102 14s 9d, subscriptions from the congregation to be levelled over three years. In March 1920 Mr Majury accepted a call from First Antrim. £1,541 9s 2d had then been raised and a deposit receipt for £1,157 9s 2d was handed to committee. Mr Majury received £150 as stipend and was tenant of manse lands.

Mr William Campbell, a licentiate of the Coleraine Presbytery, was ordained in 1st Garvagh on 16th November 1920. He married a daughter of Mr Oliver Liken of Dunedin, Lodge Road, Coleraine. They had no family. He died on 11th February 1943, aged 63. His obituary in the Presbyterian Herald described him as, "genial and friendly and as a convincing preacher who could frame his message in a manner which gripped his hearers."

During Mr Campbell's ministry a new manse was built in 1922 by Thomas Johnston and Thomas Fleming on manse lands at Station Road at a total cost of £2553. On 4th May 1922, Alexander McCotter, David McMillan and Thomas Moore were ordained as elders and at the May communion of that year individual cups were used for the first time. A new heating system was installed in 1924 at a cost of £167 17s 6d. Following the installation of the heating system and redecoration, the church was re-opened on the 16th November when hymns and an organ, presented by Mr Albert Moore, were



First harvest decorations, 1933



The Choir  
1960

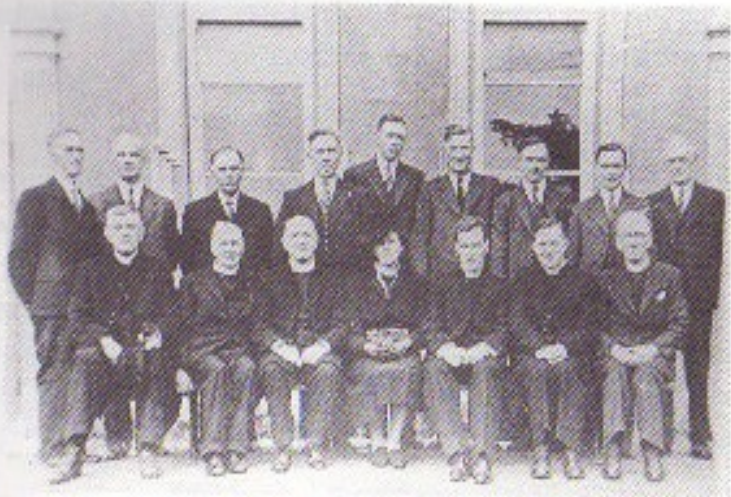
used for the first time. Miss Lil McMillan was then appointed as organist at a salary of £15 per annum.

On Sunday 5th November 1933 a Harvest Thanksgiving Service was held and the church was decorated for the first time. The attendance at this service was so great that, with fears being expressed about the number of people entering the galleries, the doors to them were closed. Hugh Wallace, Samuel Brown Holmes and William Wallace Houston were elected to the eldership and ordained on 25th March 1934 and Robert Boyd was co-opted the following year.

Exceptionally heavy rain accompanied by thunder and lightning was experienced on Sunday 3rd September 1939, the day on which war was declared on Germany. During the war Garvagh became a garrison town and many of the soldiers, camped in Ashe's meadow and in the grounds of Garvagh House, attended the church.

1941, being the 300th Anniversary of the Church, the occasion was marked by special services held on Sunday 22nd June at 1.00 pm and 6.00 pm, when Dr Clarke, Strabane, preached. Robert G Moore was co-opted as an elder on 16th March 1941.

Mr Campbell's successor was the Rev John Williamson BA, who was the Assistant Minister in Mountpottinger. He was the last of seven candidates heard by the congregation and was ordained and installed on the 9th September 1943. At Mr Williamson's installation the Rev JH Withers BA BD, Portstewart preached a sermon on the 'Unwrinkled Church'. After their marriage Mr and Mrs Williamson took up residence in the manse on the 1st October 1943 and they have three



**INSTALLATION OF THE REV. J. WILLIAMSON, BA**

Front Row: Rev. L. Rankin, Rev. J. Watson, Rev. S. J. White, Mrs. Williamson (mother of the new minister), Rev. J. Williamson, Rev. A. Gardiner, Rev. W. T. McClelland  
 Back Row: Messrs. R. Moore, R. Boyd (Congregational Secretary), J. Glass (Clerk of Session), D. J. McIntyre, H. Wallace, S. B. Holmes, W. W. Houston, J. T. Mullan, J.S. Linton



First Garvagh Manse

children - Trevor, the minister of Glastry Presbyterian Church, Yvonne a teacher and Jennifer who is a doctor.

Mrs Williamson was closely associated with the formation of the WMA and the GB and Mr Williamson recommenced the Boys' Brigade after the war and also started the Grove Afternoon Sunday School. The First Garvagh Company of the Boys' Brigade won the National BB Volleyball Championship at Cardiff in 1989.

In 1949 two memorial windows were installed, one by Mr James Glenn Caskey in memory of the Glenn family and one by Mrs Fitzsimmons in memory of Mr & Mrs Albert Moore. The committee decided they would mark their thanksgiving to Almighty God in a tangible manner for the safe return of members of the forces by presenting two memorial windows. The PWA and the GA also presented two memorial windows at this time. These six windows are now incorporated in the new Church. Four seats at the front of the church were also removed to provide sufficient room for the choir and the inside of the church was renovated. During these renovations the congregation joined in worship with Main Street Church.

In 1947 consideration was given to renovating the Church Hall, locally known as the New Hall and later called the Presbyterian Hall, following occupation during the war by the military. Eventually plans were prepared by Mr Williamson and the work was carried out by Mr T A Johnston, Station Road. Dr J K L McKean MA DD, the Moderator of the General Assembly re-opened the Hall on the 18th September 1952. First Garvagh sold its interest in the Hall to the Main Street congregation in 1990.



Rev. J. Williamson, BA, LLB  
1943 — 1987

To mark the 10th anniversary of Mr Williamson's ordination he was presented with pulpit robes, Mrs Williamson received a silver gift and a cheque was given to both.

During 1957 Mr Williamson undertook a 9 week tour of the United States during which he took part in the New York Crusade conducted by Dr Billy Graham.

After an inspection of the roof of the church in 1960, the church committee began to think about finance for repairing the old, or building a new church. Dr T C Patterson, Conlig, conducted worship in the church on Sunday 12th June 1960, when he outlined Christian stewardship. After much discussion it was decided to commence a building fund and to erect a new church when in a financial position to do so. An offer from Mr T B F Thompson of a site opposite the old church was gratefully accepted, but as planning approval was not forthcoming, it was used as the church car park. Mr John Brown of Main Street, Garvagh, then donated a field on the Kilrea Road, in the Parish of Desertoghill, as a site for the new church.

On 30th April 1961, Joseph Conway, Dr Thomas P McB Kelly, David Paul, T B F Thompson, Richard Wallace and William Wilson were ordained as elders.

Mr Gordon McKnight, ARIBA, was appointed architect and in 1966 presented his plans for the new church. On the 9th September 1968, the 25th Anniversary of Mr Williamson's installation, the first sod was cut by the Moderator of the General Assembly, Rt Rev Dr G H Withers BA DD, the contract having been awarded to Mr James G Wallace, a member of the congregation, to build the church and tower



Rt. Rev. Principal J. M. L. Haire laying the foundation stone of the Houston Hall



The Mallet used by Miss E. A. S. H. Houston at the laying of the Foundation Stone was turned by Mr. A. Kirk. The Mallet was presented to Miss Houston by Mr. J. G. Wallace

with ancillary rooms at a cost of £68,025. Mr Tom McMaster, another member of the congregation, was responsible for the structural steelwork. The foundation stones of the buildings were laid on 16th June 1970 by the Rt Rev Dr J M L Haire MA DD, Moderator of the General Assembly, and Miss E A S H Houston. At the rear of the church a new cemetery was consecrated on the 31th May 1971. The new church buildings were opened and dedicated on 17th November 1971 by Dr Rupert Gibson BA DD, Moderator of the General Assembly.

Many memorials and gifts presented to the new complex, were also dedicated by Dr Gibson. The generosity of the late W W Houston JP and Miss E A S H Houston enabled the completion of the buildings. The bell on the Church Tower was the gift of the Rt Rev Dr Perdue, Bishop of Cork and was taken from the Parish Church of St. John in Tallow, Co Waterford. The casting date on the bell is 1468. The erection of the new church and ancillary buildings were in no small way due to the foresight, leadership qualities and tireless efforts of Mr Williamson.

Miss S M Glass, George McIlroy, Ivan Thompson, Dr Brian Wilson and Thomas S Wilson were ordained as elders on 27th March 1977. Mr Williamson was Moderator of the Synod of Ballymena and Coleraine in 1978 when he was again presented with pulpit robes and Mrs Williamson received a gold watch. James Glass, Andrew B Magowan, Samuel J McKee and R Alan McMaster were ordained as elders on 21st April 1985.

Mr Williamson took an active interest in the local community and for a time served on the Coleraine Rural District Council.





Members of First Garvagh Presbyterian Church Sunday School who laid a continuous line of old pennies from the door of the old Church in Bridge Street to the vestibule of the new Church now under construction at Kilrea Road. How many pennies were required? A grand total of 17,069, all of which were donated for the provision of Sunday School equipment.



Mr. W. W. Houston, JP



Taking part in the opening of the new church were: Rev. C. W. McKinney, Rev. W. L. Lamont, Rev. J. Williamson, Rt. Rev. Dr. R. Gibson, Rev. W. G. M. Martin, Rev. V. G. Corkey.



Interior of First Garvagh Church



SESSION & COMMITTEE, 1987

Front Row: R. Wallacc, J. F. McLenaghan, Rev. J. Kane, Mrs. Williamson, Rev. J. Williamson, Miss S. M. Glass, T. S. G. McIlroy  
 Second Row: R. A. McMaster, T. Black, D. Paul, Dr. R. B. Wilson, I. Thompson, A. B. Magowan, S. J. McKee, Dr. T. B. F. Thompson, T. McMaster  
 Third Row: S. J. Brizell, T. A. Fleming, J. Taylor, I. A. R. McLenaghan, D. J. McIntyre, K. Thompson, T. S. Wilson, S. Black, E. McLenaghan  
 Back Row: H. Mullan, W. McMaster, R. J. Shiels, G. Gordon, J. Smyth, M. Campbell, M. Glass, S. Campbell, J. Moody, H. Taylor, Absent: J. Conway, R. Gilmore, W. Henry



RETIREMENT PRESENTATIONS TO REV. AND MRS WILLIAMSON

Front Row: R. Patterson, G. Wella, J. A. Glass  
 Second Row: Mrs. M. Wallace, Miss L. McMurtry, Rev. J. Williamson, Mrs. Williamson, Miss S. M. Glass, Mr. J. F. McLenaghan  
 Third Row: Miss R. Thompson, Miss L. Holmes, Mrs. L. McCart, Mrs. Y. Sloan, Mrs. V. McMaster, Miss L. Paul  
 Back Row: Mr. I. Thompson, Mr. S. Campbell, Mr. H. Taylor, Mr. A. Wilson, Dr. R. B. Wilson

He was responsible for the council's housing development in Lyttlesdale and Fountainville and also served on several school management committees continuing First Garvagh's interest in promoting education, first begun by the Rev James Millar in 1846. He successfully persuaded the Ministry of Education to establish a secondary school in the town when Garvagh House was sold by the Ministry of Agriculture.

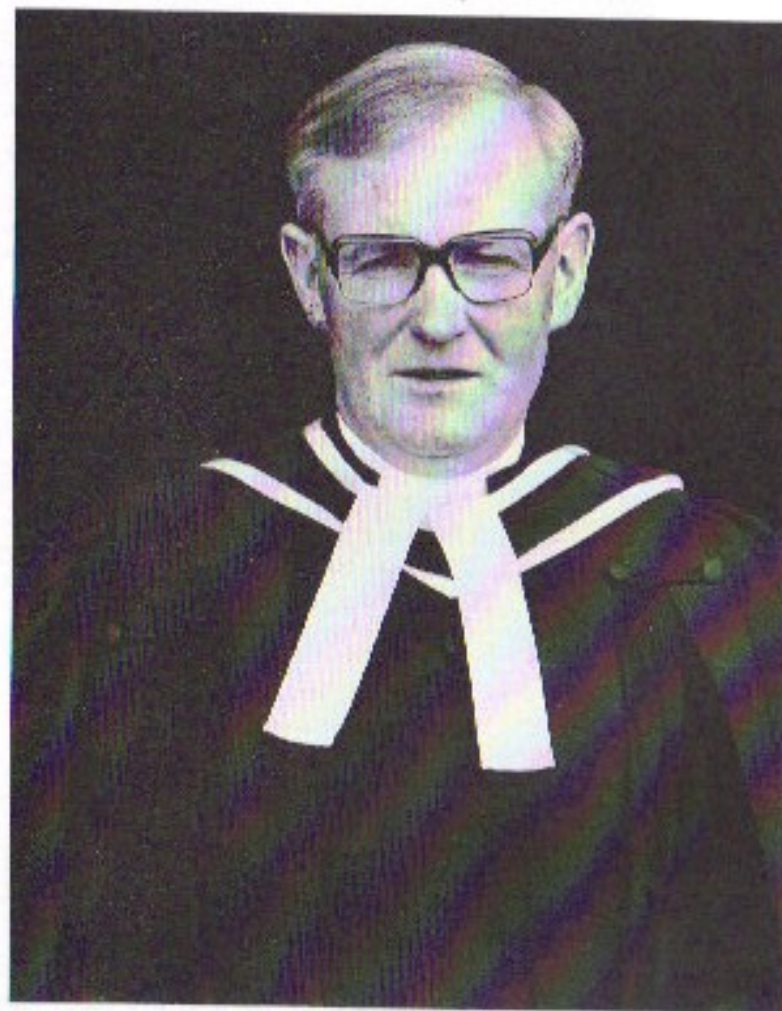
Mr Williamson retired on 4th April 1987, having completed over 43 years as minister of the congregation.

During Mr Williamson's ministry, Mr C W McKinney, Mr W J Lamont, Mr W Morrison, Mr F A C Wilson, Mr J Paul, Mr J T Williamson and Mr B A H Wilson entered the ministry. Miss Eva Glass, Miss Sally McAfee, Mr S J Lamont, Miss Lynne Glass and Mr Derek Taylor served in missionary work overseas and Miss Nesta McAllister became a deaconess.

During the vacancy, renovations to the manse were carried out by Mr Stanley McCart and the building was rewired by Mr Tom Fleming, both members of the congregation. A new bathroom and heating system were also installed.

In 1989 a new heating system was installed in the church by Crolla Engineering of Glasgow.

To fill the vacancy a call was made out to the Rev Thomas Stanley Lindsay BD, minister of Drumgooland and Kilk-inamurry and he was installed by Coleraine Presbytery as minister of First Garvagh on Wednesday 9th March 1988. Mr and Mrs Lindsay have four children, Esther, Ruth, Cherith, and Andrew.

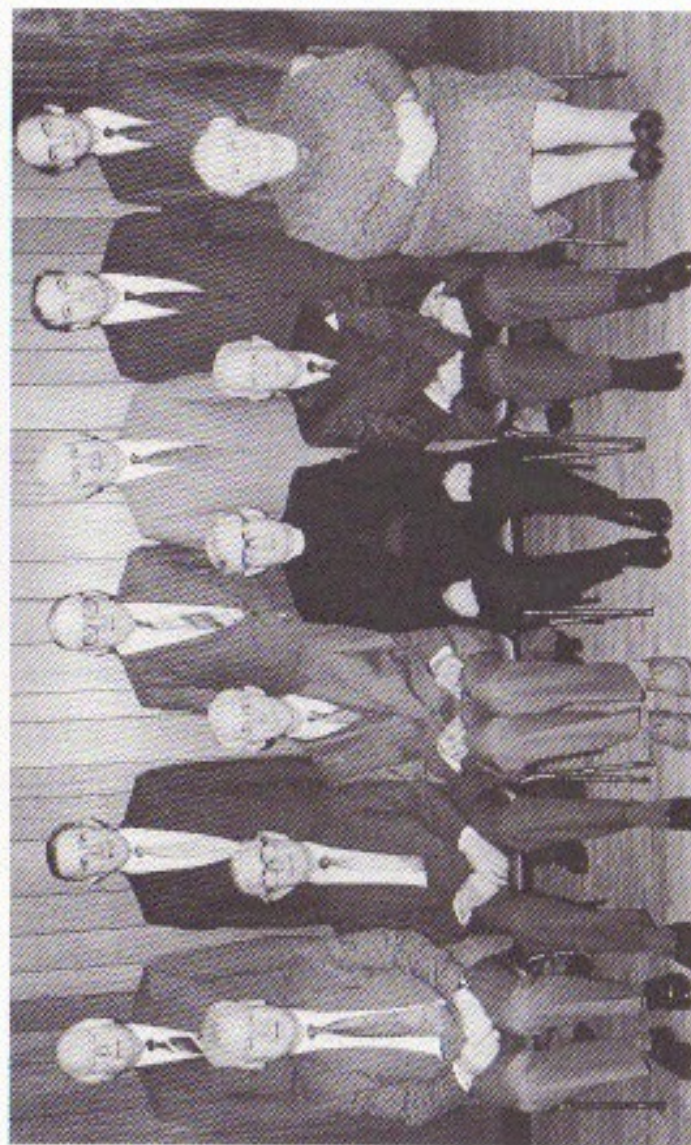


Rev. T. S. Lindsay, BD

As we celebrate our anniversary First Garvagh is a congregation of 180 families, with a kirk session of 11 and a committee of 20. Miss Lynne Glass continues to work with the Africa Inland Mission in the Comoro Islands and Mr James McMaster is studying at the European Bible Institute in Paris. A Good News Club has been started by Miss Lorraine Paul and Mr James McMaster. The torch of faith stills burns brightly.

*'Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.*

*For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.*  
Psalm 100.



KIRK SESSION 1991

Front Row: I. Thompson (Clerk of Session), D. Paul, R. Wallace, Rev. T. S. Lindsay, Dr. T. B. F. Thompson, Miss S. M. Glass  
Back Row: Dr. R. B. Wilson, T. S. Wilson, R. A. McMaster, S. J. McKee, A. B. Magowan, T. S. G. McIlroy