

OUR HERITAGE --- OUR PAST AND FUTURE

1888 to 2023 to ?

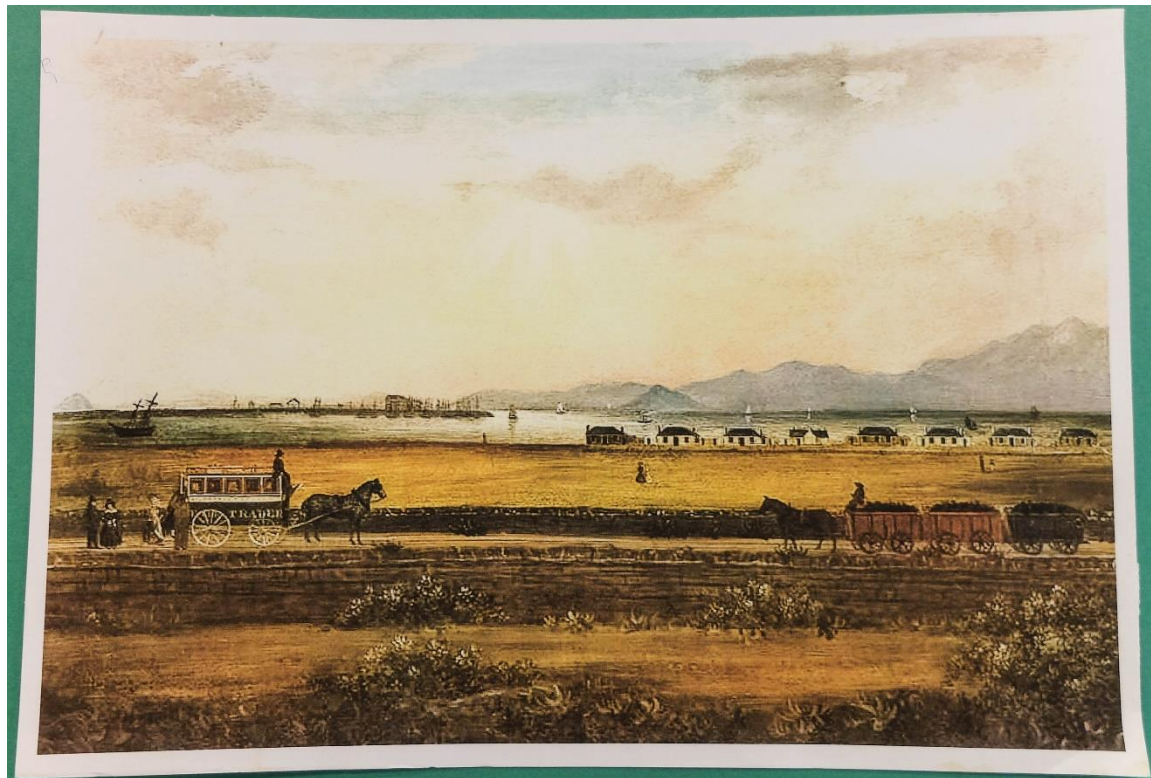


TROON ST. MEDDANS PARISH CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
Registered Charity SC015019

Setting the Scene, the historical beginnings.

A church is more than the building, and the congregation and people of St Meddan's Church have a heritage going back for over 200 years.

The congregation had its beginnings long before the present church was built. The first members were workers who came to Troon from Kilmarnock to build the harbour and railway to transport coal to the harbour



The Duke's Railway

The historic wagonway from Kilmarnock to Troon was much more sophisticated than its eighteenth century predecessors. It had the hallmarks of a real railway, having cast iron rails, and indeed was the first line in Scotland for which an Act of Parliament was obtained.

The Duke of Portland came up with the idea in 1807. He wished to move coal from his pits located in the Kilmarnock area to Ireland and his problem was the standard one of how to transfer the coal to navigable water, in this case, from Kilmarnock ten miles west to the harbour of Troon. Assured of financial support from his fellow landowners, the Duke commissioned William Jessop to survey a railway. An Act was obtained on 27th May 1808, and the railway was opened from St. Marnock's depot, Kilmarnock to Troon harbour on 6th July 1812.

The line followed an easy course down the valley of the Irvine Water. The railway was 9 miles 6 furlongs in length and cost £38,167.10s. It was double-tracked throughout, the gauge being 4ft. Cast-iron plate rails were used with a flange on their inner edge and the 4 inch running surface was sunk flush with the ground. "The road is to be double or two distinct roads of 4ft distance from each other, with frequent communications from one road to the other so as not only to allow carriages to go both ways but to allow one carriage to pass another when they are both travelling in the same direction." A contemporary sketch describes the space between the rails as the 'horse path' and the space between the two tracks as the 'attendant path'.

When finished it was intended that horses would be able to draw 10-12 tons from Kilmarnock to Troon harbour and 8-10 tons in the opposite direction. Each horse would draw 3 or occasionally 4 wagons at a speed of 3 m.p.h. There was some difficulty at first through the horses kicking stones and gravel on to the rails thus making the running surface rough and bumpy, and men had to be employed to keep the rails swept clean of ballast.

That early congregation mostly lived in wooden huts along Barassie seafront, and met for their services in the open air

A petition for sermon was presented to the Burgher Presbytery of Kilmarnock on 29th March 1814. By this time the congregation was sufficiently large in number to afford the rent of a sail loft in Portland Terrace. The sail loft was situated where the outdoor Troon Swimming Pool stood (now the Italian gardens) and was demolished to make way for the pool.

There was neither promenade, or sea wall at that time and at high tide on a stormy day the sea would come flooding over the land.

This happened one Sunday while the congregation were meeting in the sail loft, they climbed down the ladder to find the ground floor under several inches of water.

A move to other premises became a matter of urgency after being marooned for several hours after an exceptionally high tide until the water had subsided.

From 1822, the congregation worshipped in a building in Barassie Street which could accommodate 300 people. This was the first purpose-built church building in Troon, it was built by a Secession congregation. (The United Secession Church was a Scottish Presbyterian denomination originally formed in 1733 by an exodus of ministers and members of the Church of Scotland it later became the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland in 1847)

Throughout its existence this building has been used for a variety of purposes: it has housed three different sects of the Presbyterian church, it has been an isolation/fever hospital, it has been used by S. Ayrshire Council as a store for the cleansing department then converted to form office accommodation and hall and later flats/hostel used for homeless persons. 12 Secession House Troon

Following a period of financial difficulty between 1832 and 1838 when the congregation lapsed, the church was revived in the Barassie Street Building until 1843 when as the congregation grew, larger premises were required to accommodate it, so the next move was to what is now Seagate Church, previously known as the Bethany Hall.

Originally a very modest settlement, Troon was expanding exponentially in this latter part of the 19th century as part of a series of planned developments, most notably the Duke of Portland's 1883 scheme for the area south of the original town centre

The status of the growing urban centre was underscored by the construction of what is now known as St Meddan's in 1888 and the nearby Church of Scotland in Ayr street in 1886, this is now known as Troon Old Parish Church but was originally known as Troon Old Part of Dundonald. Both churches are a potent and enduring symbol of the town's modern foundation and the wealth it enjoyed at this time.

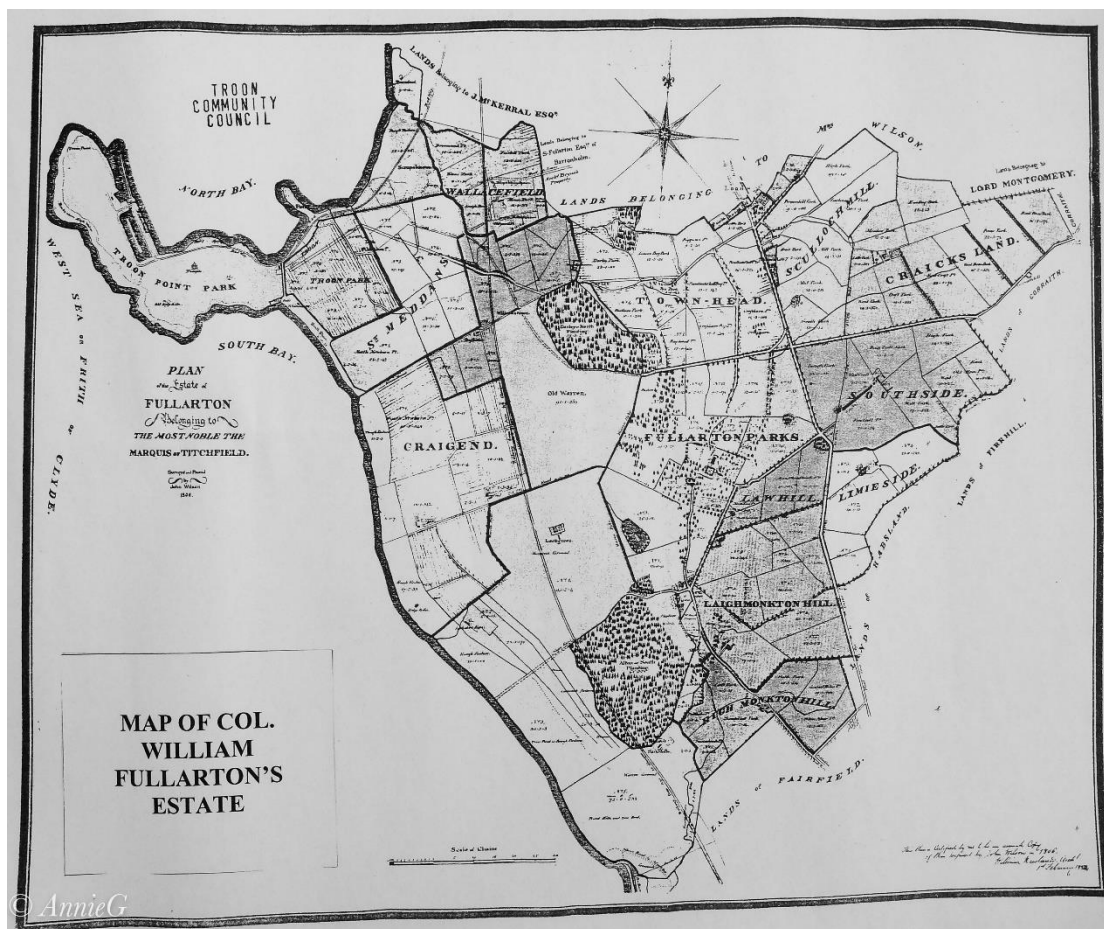
The New Building

In 1887 the unanimous decision to build a new church was taken at a joint meeting of Session and Managers on 12 September 1887, however the proposal met opposition at a meeting of the congregation which was documented as "having a good attendance", the congregation probably numbered 150-200 at this time. Following further amendments and votes the motion to erect a **new church** was then put to the vote and also carried by a large majority (4 voting against). A committee comprising the Minister and some members of the congregation (all male) was set up to take matters further. The first service was held in July 1889. This new church, which was later to become known as St Meddan's was the successor to the first church to be built in Troon in Barassie Street.

Why St Meddan's?

St Meddan used to be the ancient name for this area of Troon and is shown on old maps made around 1608 and on the Plan of Fullarton 1804 produced by the Duke of Portland in his plan for expansion of Troon. It would be logical to name the church after the area in which it is located.

We share the name with the street and the Roman Catholic Church, Our Lady of The Assumption and St Meddan which was built on a site formerly known as St Meddan's Park



The origin of the name St Meddan's is uncertain, there is a story of the visit to the area by St Meddan, an extremely beautiful Irish Princess, a disciple of St Patrick, who came from Ireland in the 5th century. The village of Maidens may also owe its name to this lady.

St Meddan is reputed to have been the first woman to form a community of Christian women in Scotland, various forms of the Saint's name are found in different areas of Scotland where she is said to have founded seven churches. In later years St Meddan's was the first church in Troon to admit women to the Congregational board and later to the Kirk Session. She is said to have died around 400AD.

Another explanation is based on a link between Troon and Paisley Abbey which has an integral chapel dedicated to St Meddinus or St Mirren. The Rev. J. Kirkwood who was minister at the time of building the church, offered the theory that St Meddan was a corruption of these two names.

At the time the present church was built the congregation was known as The Troon United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The name "St Meddans" did not appear until 1901 when, with the merger of the United Presbyterian Church and the Free Church, the congregation became the "St Meddan's Street United Free Church". The union of the United Free Church with the Church of Scotland in 1929 and the adoption of parish boundaries in Troon resulted in our present name.

- ~1804 Open Air meetings on Seafront.
- 1814 Sail Loft Portland Terrace
- 1822 New Church, first in Troon, Barassie Street, United Secession Church
- 1843 Portland Street, Bethany Hall (now Seagate Church) became Troon United Presbyterian Church of Scotland in 1847.
- 1889 First service in St Meddan's Church.
- 1901 St Meddan's Street United Free Church.
- 1929 Troon St Meddan's Parish Church of Scotland.

The current building is the successor of the first church to be built in Troon and these dates show an unbroken link to its early roots.

The Church Building.

St Meddan's church was built in 1888 of Mauchline red sandstone, a material that used to be used extensively in the locality for its appealing warm colour.

(The sandstone was formerly quarried for building stone at Ballochmyle, near Mauchline and was used in many buildings and monuments in the west of Scotland)

St Meddan's is a competent well-designed piece of architecture in Gothic style; the most accomplished of the surviving late 19th century Gothic churches in the town. Of particular architectural value are the steeple, south, and east elevations. The church has been designed to dominate the surrounding streetscape.

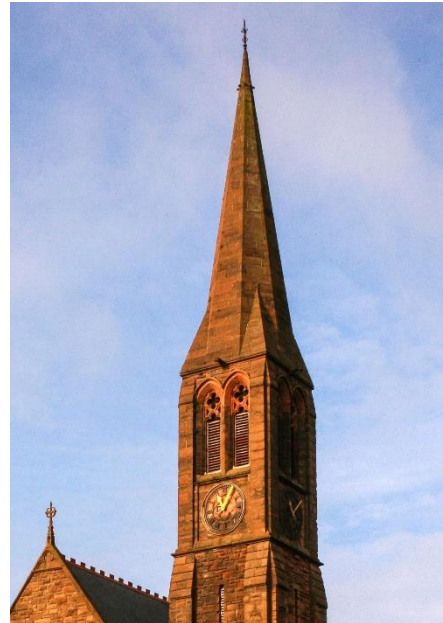
The central gable to the front has a large decorated window, it is framed by two large arched doorways each bounded by heavy buttresses, each against a tower backdrop – the western for the stairs, and on the east the base of the distinctive spire.

John Bennie Wilson (1849-1923) was the architect of the church. He was important and recognized for his extensive ecclesiastical work for the United Presbyterian and Free Churches, designing at least 45 churches over the course of his career. St Meddan's is a particularly good example of his church work, on a par with the broadly contemporary St Andrews Church in Ayr.

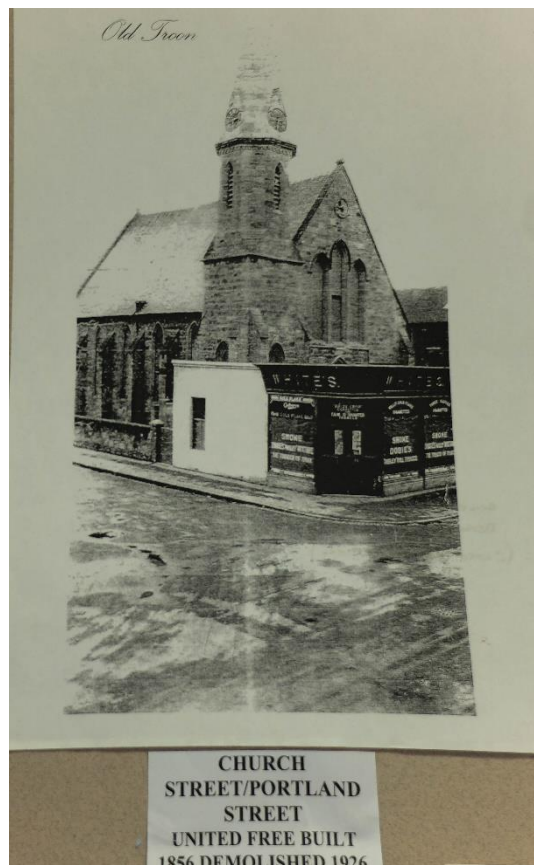
The distinctive prominent spire and bell tower is the tallest built structure in Troon and is clearly visible from around the town.



The tower houses a clock with an interesting history.



The clock originally came from the University of Glasgow whose archives show it was commissioned in 1751 as part of the University's tercentenary celebrations. It was built by Andrew Dickie, a Glasgow watchmaker for 720 scots pounds (under £100) It was originally housed in a tower in the centre of a quadrangle in the Glasgow University's Old College building in High Street Glasgow, where the University had been located for nearly 400 years. When these buildings were demolished and the University moved to the current Gilmorehill site it was purchased by our neighbour the Portland Church for the Portland Church Building which then stood on the corner of Portland and Church Street (subsequently becoming the old Post Office site and Menzies)



Portland Church subsequently moved to their present building in 1914, which was without a tower, and gifted the clock to St Meddans.

The history of the clock was confirmed around 30 years by the University Archives Department who put in an offer to buy it. This leaves us with a very rare and important survivor from the pre-19th century buildings.

It is interesting to note that both the Troon Old Parish Church and St Meddan's being built around the same time were built with red Mauchline sandstone which came from quarries only a few miles apart, but that was enough to make a difference; the stone supplied to St Meddans Church was hard enough to take the weight of a steeple bearing down on it, but it was found during construction of the Parish Church that their stone was inadequate to take the load so their tower had a timber frame which was sheeted and slated. In the 1950's the frame was found to be suffering from rot, which made it unsafe, so the structure was removed and only the footing for a tower can still be seen today.

The Church Interior

Windows.

The large decorated window dominating the south, central gable is a superb example of late 19th century glass painting. It is thought to be the last known piece of work still in existence of the designer William Smith of Marylebone Road, London. William Smith designed, painted and signed this window. The window was officially opened on 19th September 1892 a few years after the building of the church.



The figure composition is contained in the five upper lancets, whilst in the lower lancets there are naturalistic floral and foliage compositions which have been created with great skill-the detail of the flower painting being of a very high standard. There is a fishing boat in the top left of the window which is also in the Troon coat of arms. At the top of the window are two encircled symbolic peace doves.

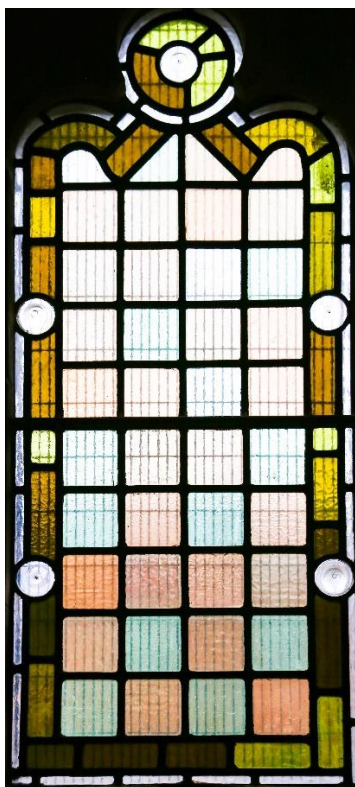
The window depicts the story of the healing of Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:18-26 and Mark 5:21-43) and is said to be in 'cartoon' style.

There is possibly a curious anomaly or mistake to this window. The first two lancets depict Jairus kneeling at Christ's feet pleading with Him to come and save his daughter. His wife has arrived with two servants to lead him away. "Trouble the Master no longer your daughter is dead" His wife's head dress is **white**. In the second of the two lancets, Christ is raising the daughter from her bed, and her mother is supporting her; her head dress is **green**. In the fifth and final lancet, the daughter is restored to her mother whose head dress is **white** again ! What is your opinion? Is it just a change in position of the cape or as documented by historians who thought that William Smith, as a freemason, saw the window as being too perfect, so made a deliberate mistake, as he thought that only God makes things perfect.

Handmade antique glass is used throughout with extensive use of silver stain for decorative effect

The window was given "in Loving Memory of Kindred Dear" by James Gilles, Chairman of the Board of Managers of St Meddans and Provost of Troon in 1892. His photo hangs by the window.

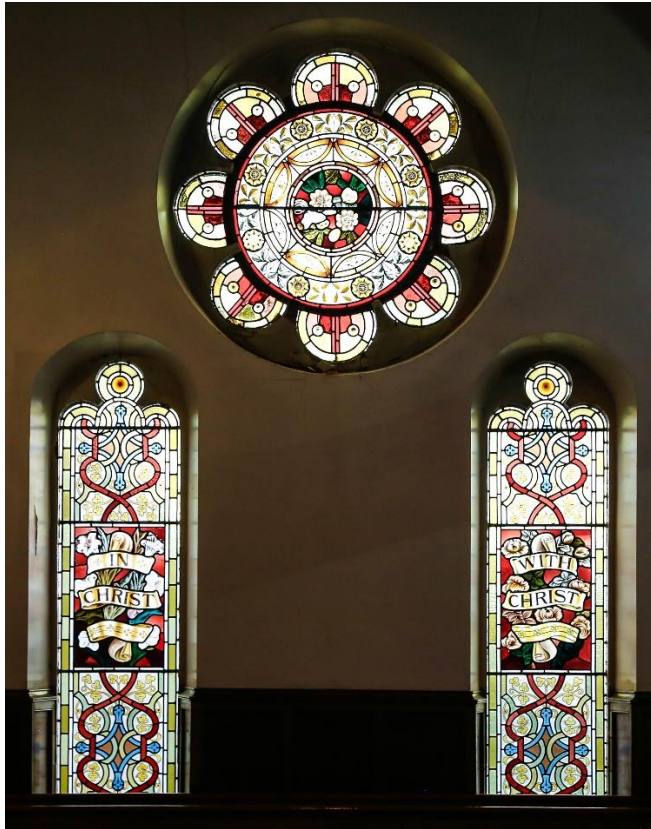
In 2007, the window was nominated by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland as one of 100 treasured places, and it came 4th in the competition!



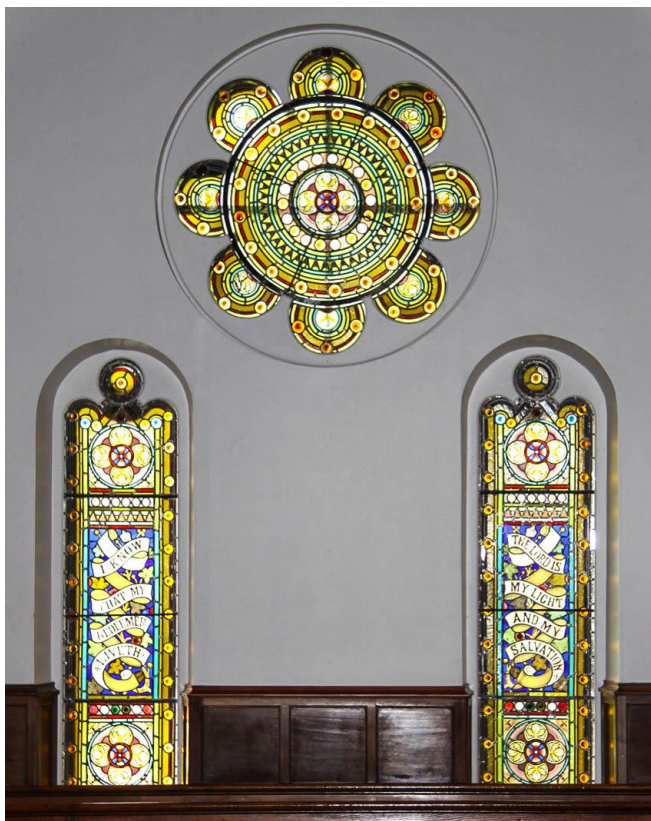
Cathedral Glass Windows.

St Meddan's was the first church in Troon to install stained glass windows as in the 1870s strictures on church architecture began to loosen with the advent of the Gothic Revival

After the Reformation a great many statues, regarded as craven images, and stained glass windows, many great works of art among them, were destroyed. New churches were plain and utilitarian in their architecture with only greenish coloured 'cathedral' panes glazing the windows as in St Meddan's'.



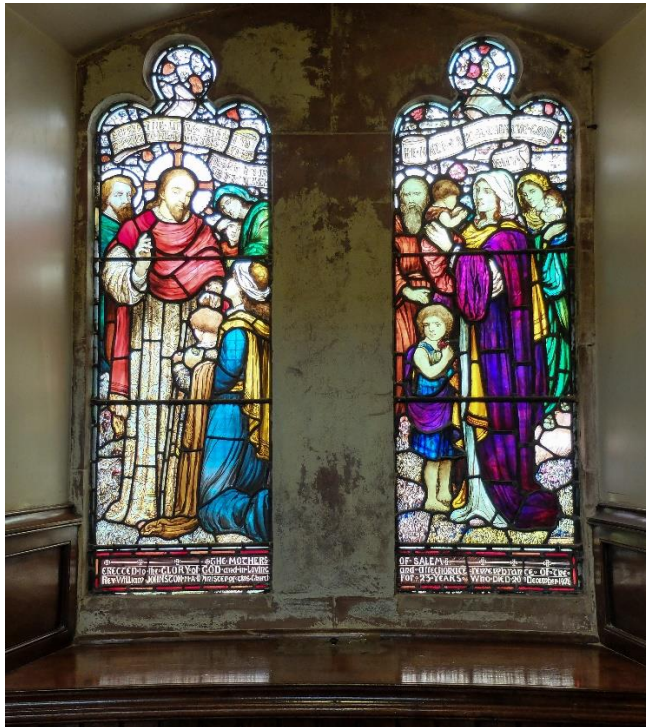
The first window to be installed when the building was new was the rose window to the left of the pulpit, viewed from the chancel, and was gifted from the church Treasurer.



The rose window on the opposite side of the pulpit was donated by the minister the Rev. Kirkwood in memory of his wife and was inaugurated at the same ceremony as the James Gilles window in 1892.

Downstairs there are two other very interesting windows

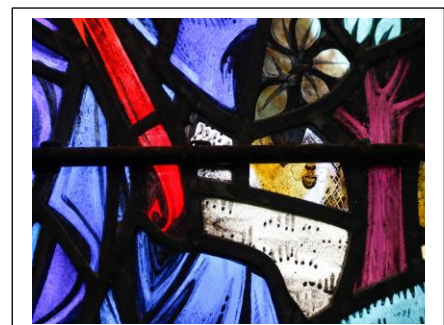
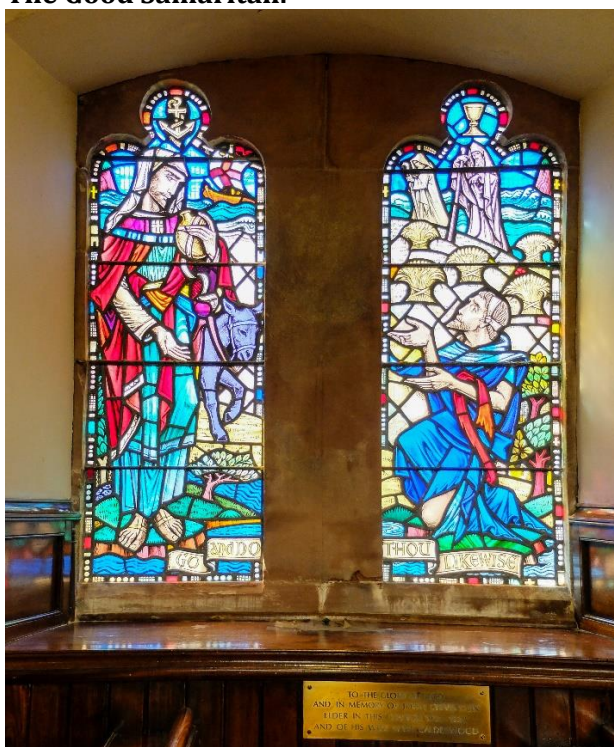
The Mothers of Salem



On the east wall these two panels depict the Mothers of Salem with the verse 'Suffer the little children to come unto me.....'. This window was designed by Norman McDougal whose trademark was to have a figure looking directly at the viewer. As you move around the eyes of the young child follow you. The window was erected in memory of the Rev. William Johnston who was minister of this church for 23 years from 1903 to 1926.

On the west wall the two windows depict the story of the Good Samaritan. The artist was John Blythe whose trademark was to always include the picture of a bee within his work

The Good Samaritan.



Interior of the Church.

Wooden Features

One of the features of St Meddan's is the warm woodwork. It is said to convey a warmth to the feeling of the church interior.

The Pews, some central ones now removed, are made of pitch pine a very hard pine containing resin. In the early days of the church there was a system of pew rents. Each pew was rented for a year by a person or family and a card was placed in the pew to say who it was rented to. People queued outside the vestry to ensure they paid their fee and got their pew.



The Communion Table. Standing at the centre front of the church is the large communion table, it is richly carved at the front and around the sides. There are two locking cupboards and a shelf at the back which contain the communion plates and cups. This was donated around 90 years ago by the Strang family.

The Font

The carved wooden font is beautifully engraved with the words "for such is the Kingdom of Heaven". A small deep bowl has been carved out of the octagonal shape to house a silver dish for the baptismal water. When not in use this is covered by an octagonal lid.

War Memorial Plaque. In the East vestibule as you leave the church is a plaque to commemorate those who made the supreme sacrifice in The Great War 1914-1918. It also honoured those who fought peril but returned to 'life and love'.

Time Capsule

St Meddan's celebrated its Centenary in 1988 and at this time a booklet was produced from which much of this information has been taken. Also for this occasion a Time Capsule was buried beneath the floor of the East Aisle. There is a plaque on the end of a pew towards the back of the church to show where it has been located

The Organ.

Little information is available regarding the original organ which would have been operated by hand bellows and stood on the chancel below the organ pipes. There are two doors in the woodwork to enable the organist to reach the organ.

Later the air was provided by a large electric pump located under the floor of the vestry. In the mid 1970's the possibly original organ was replaced by an electronic organ which remains in place and is used during services today.

The Future

Unfortunately, after over 130 years, the wind and proximity to the sea have caused this soft sandstone to erode significantly. Repairs and renovation to the fabric of the building, particularly around the treasured stained-glass window were made in 2010 and further extensive repairs were carried out recently.

OUR CHURCH TODAY

The three Church of Scotland churches are currently in the process of uniting to form Troon Church of Scotland. You are invited and welcome to attend any of our services or activities in this church or in Portland or Troon Old and also at the Meadowgreen Centre.

The new website is: <https://troonchurch.org.uk>

Sunday 10.30am is the time either here or in one of the other two churches.

Tea and coffee is served following the service.

Thursday 10.30am on second Thursday of the month we have a popular mid week service lasting around 25minutes with tea and coffee to follow.

We have wheelchair access to the church through the halls.

Sunday 9.30am informal service at the **Meadowgreen Centre** (off Deveron Road, Barassie). This is an informal child friendly service with a very relaxed atmosphere. Tea, coffee and cakes are served from 9.15.

St Meddans has always boasted a lively and active congregation supporting many projects and activities. Including the current Micah Project. Recordings of services on **youtube.com**

The church office is open Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday from 10.00 till 13.00 or by special arrangement. Contact: stmeddanschurch@gmail.com or 01292 317750 for further information .

All are welcome in our church please come and meet with God in this beautiful building which is said by many to have a warm, relaxed and friendly atmosphere.