

A Short History of BALLYNURE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Further revised January 2013

Much of the early history of the Church comes from an article in the 'Weekly Telegraph' (later to be the Larne Times) which was published on April 6th, 1912. Most of this account was also published in 'The Corran' in 1982 by Oonagh McClean.

This revised history fills in some of the gaps and corrects a few of the errors that had crept into that account. The section from 1912 has been written by various members of the church and also draws on the very comprehensive details in both the Kirk Session and Church Committee Minute Books.

Ballynure Presbyterian Church was established on the 18th June 1723, during the reign of George I, the first Sovereign of the Hanoverian line. The petition to have a separate Congregation established in Ballynure was presented to the Synod of Ulster by a **Mr Lorimer** and several other commissioners, who advanced a number of arguments in favour of the request, one being that they had no desire to live under the non-subscribing minister at Ballyclare. Before the separation took place a large number of the Presbyterians around Ballynure attended worship at Raloo, a distance of about five miles, and undoubtedly this influenced the Synod in arriving at a decision, as the prayer of the petitioners was acceded to notwithstanding strong opposition on the part of the Ballyclare congregation. At this time, Ballynure occupied quite an important position commercially.

When first established, the congregation offered £30 stipend per year, and this was the income of the first minister, who is believed to have been a man of the name of **William Watt**. Nothing very definite can be stated with regard to the infancy of the church, as the earlier records have been burnt or mislaid, but from information gleaned from various sources, it would appear that the **Rev Mr Watt** remained in charge of the congregation for about thirty years. The Meeting House, which was built in 1767 and was extensively refurbished in 1827 and was at right angles to the present building so that it faced out on to the street, was sufficient for the needs of the congregation until the year 1851, when the old building was demolished and gave place to the present edifice. It is related that when the old building was being torn down the workers found a number of cannon balls concealed inside the church, but

nothing is known of how they came to be there, or by whom they were hidden.

Records from the official Presbyterian 'History of Congregations' do not mention Rev William Watt but do include a **Rev Clotworthy Brown**, although the fact that he was never installed by the Synod may account for the fact that his name has been missing from the newspaper account. Clotworthy Brown was a son of Rev Alexander Brown of Donegore and seems to have stirred non-subscribing support in the Ballynure area. He was not ordained until 5th February 1746 in Ballinderry but resigned the following year, 1747, to minister in Ballynure. He was a non-subscriber and left Ballynure to be installed in First Belfast Congregation. He died in 1756. A list of Ministers included on the back of the Order of Service for the 250th celebrations in 1973 includes Clotworthy Brown as having been in Ballynure from 1748 to 1751.

In any case, the next Minister was the **Rev William Rodgers** (also spelt **Rogers** in some texts), who was installed on 10th December 1751 having previously been in the 2nd congregation of Holywood. He 'laboured in the village for thirty-two years, dying about the year 1783'. Not much is known about his ministry but we do know that, in July 1760, one of his children was 'scalded to death by falling into a bowl of boiling water, which a servant girl had inadvertently left on the floor where the four year old child was playing'. This report in one of the Belfast newspapers was followed by another announcing the death of his wife, 'after a severe and tedious illness which she bore with resignation truly Christian', on Oct 6th, although no year is given. The obituary records that 'she was a most loving and dutiful wife, an affectionate and indulgent mother, exceeding charitable and beneficent to the poor'.

The **Rev Adam Hill** born in Randalstown in 1757 and educated in Scotland, was ordained to the pastoral oversight of the congregation in the year 1784 or 1785. He pursued his labours in the midst of turbulent times, and, if not an active participator in the disorders which stirred the country in 1798, he seems to have been in sympathy with the United Irishmen. On 14th October, the day proceeding the battle of Antrim, a man called William Orr, a 'respectable farmer' from Farrashane, near Donegore, Antrim, and a United Irishman, was tried and executed at Carrickfergus. His body was being removed for burial in Templepatrick, and when they arrived at Ballynure in the 'gathering dusk of a gloomy October evening', the coffin was taken to the Presbyterian Church, where the corpse was 'dressed and coffined' and waked until morning. An unknown source makes the point that the Presbyterian Meeting

House adjoined the residence of Hughey Fullarton who was a strong United man, a reed maker to trade, and a teacher of the children of the surrounding farmers, who assembled in a little room 'at the reere of the meeting-house'. It goes on to record that 'the people for miles around, many having come very long distances, stayed in Ballynure all night, watching and guarding the dead body with almost idolatrous care'. Great crowds lined the route next day as he was taken to Templepatrick for burial.

This action on the part of Rev Mr Hill, a friend and spiritual consoler of Orr, was adjudged as an offence against the Crown, and he was imprisoned in Carrickfergus for two days. It is related that he occupied the same cell as Poet Campbell, who was at that time incarcerated for some action which had been considered a misdeed; and that the night being a cold one the poet shared his cloak with his reverend brother. 'With a poet as a companion, the cell might have been chilly and uncomfortable, but it could hardly have been altogether cheerless to the reverend gentleman.'

Evidently his brief experience of prison life did not seriously affect his mental or physical power, as he laboured with much energy and gratifying results for over a quarter of a century after the rebellion.

On April 14th 1788 Rev Mr Hill placed an advert in a Belfast newspaper declaring his intention to open 'a Grammar School at Ballynure on 1st May, should he meet with sufficient encouragement prior to that period. He trusts his knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages, with his experience of six years as a teacher of them will enable him to give general satisfaction to such parents as shall entrust them with the education of their children'. No record can be found of the outcome of the advert.

He died in the year 1826, after a faithful ministry of 42 years. He was married to a daughter of the Rev William Rodgers, his predecessor, and both he, his wife and 27 year old son, Adam are buried in Ballynure Graveyard. The slab which is lying over the grave bears the following inscription 'Beneath are deposited the remains of Rev Adam Hill, Presbyterian Minister of Ballynure, who departed this life on 21st July in the 70th year of his age and the 42nd of his ministry. Like Nathaniel of old he was 'an Israelite indeed in whom there was no guile' (in Greek).



It is stated that the Rev Mr Rodgers was buried in the same grave, but the tombstone, if there was one, and it is asserted that there was, has been broken or removed from the place.

The **Rev James Whiteside McCay** was appointed to the oversight of the congregation on the death of the Rev Mr Hill,. He was born in Dervock in 1800, educated at Belfast Inst and licensed by the Route Presbytery in 1822 before being ordained in Ballynure on the 21st December 1826. After a strenuous ministry of 21 years, he died in the year 1847, and was buried in Ballynure in an enclosed plot beside the one in which his two forerunners are interred. The inscription on his grave records that he had 'died sincerely', and was 'deeply lamented ... after a faithful and not unfruitful ministry ... during which his amiable character and Christian deportment commended him to the love and esteem of all'. Also interred in the grave are his two young daughters, each named Jane Houston Boyd, the first of which died on 5th April 1841 aged 2 years and 3 months and the second who died on 14th September 1851 in her 9th year. His wife, Margaret Boyd, (the widow of J A Alexander MD) died in 1890 aged 70 years. 'Rest after weariness – peace after pain'.

The oldest available Kirk Session Minute Book dates from 1844, when Rev McCay would have presided as Moderator, and the earliest records mention little more than the dates, times and places of the Session Prayer Meeting along with 'congregational business'; Unfortunately nothing more about this 'business' is mentioned. Hugh Hetherington was the Clerk of Session. On loose pages in the same book are a number of letters of recommendations, or references as we know them, for various workers and one about the 'dangers of rum'.

An insight into the state of the church is given in the Ordnance Survey 'Memoirs of Ireland' by James Boyle 1840. The 'incomplete' entry appears to be quite repetitive and, on some occasions, contradictory. Near the beginning, he writes, 'The Presbyterian Meeting House is situated near the Western end of the village. (Ground plan "T" shape) It is a plain but comfortable and substantial house measuring 60 feet long and 30 feet wide and containing accommodation for 560 persons. It was erected by subscription in 1767' ... 'In 1827 the repairs, viz new pews, ceiling, new windows and doors, painting, cost about 400 pounds by subscription the money collected by the Minister from the following areas: Belfast 120 pounds, Dublin 40 pounds, Coleraine and Ballymena 10 pounds each as well as from members of the Ballynure Congregation.

Elsewhere in the memoirs, the Meeting House is described as standing 'on the North side of the main street and near the centre of the village. It is a plain uninteresting-looking edifice, having little of the aspect of a place of worship. It is, however, kept in neat order and is substantially constructed of stone and roughcast. It consists of a main aisle or body fronting the street (on which it opens by 2 plain doorways) and measuring internally 69 by 22 feet. Attached to the rear or North centre of this is a lesser aisle, 23 by 22 feet. It is well lit by 8 pointed and spacious gothic windows, 4 of which are in the front and 4 in the rear. The aisles are of earth, in the front 5 feet wide and the other 2 smaller ones are boarded, each 2 feet wide. The internal fitting is commodious and substantial. It contains 69 single pews ... each 8 feet 4 inches by 2 feet 4 inches, all in good repair. 8 persons have to sit in each pew'. It goes on: 'The attendance at worship is some 300 – 400 in the summer and 150 – 200 persons in the winter. The membership was 500 families or 2500 individuals.'

The memoir also includes a number of interesting and sometimes anecdotal observations from the Ordnance Surveyor ... 'the improvements consequent on the establishment of a Presbyterian congregation have been as general here as elsewhere and have produced desirable effects on the people. Among these have been Prayer Meetings held on Sundays and during the week (where up to 80 people attended). A Scripture reader, named David Weatherup, who is paid 25 pounds per annum, reads and expounds the Scriptures'. There were a number of book clubs in the village at that time.

James Boyle also observed that 'Much attention is paid to the moral education of his congregation by the Presbyterian clergyman'. Among the other recorded facts is the 'poor box collection' which raised about 4 or 5 shillings per week in the church. This money was distributed by the elders, the records of which appear in the Kirk Session minutes. Perhaps the most damning statement in the whole article by James Boyle is his observation that despite a music society having been formed in the house of John Logan, publican, and though 'they have good voices and ears ... in the Presbyterian meeting house, in which the entire congregation joins, the nasal and monotonous hum of their psalm tunes would form a contradiction to this statement.' And who says, 'bring back the good old days!'

The next minister was the [Rev Samuel Alexander Hamilton](#) who was ordained on the 28th March 1848. After a ministry of eleven years he resigned the pastoral oversight of the congregation, and emigrated to Australia as a missionary in July 1859.

The minutes of this period record that a fairly substantial number of members of the congregation were brought to Kirk Session for various 'sins' ... those of blasphemy, 'drunkenness and strife' and 'ante-nuptial fornication' being the main problems. In some of the latter cases the meeting ended up with the infant child then being baptised! These 'sins' appear over and over again right into the 20th Century and only finished coming to the attention of the Kirk session about 1910. It seems to me that the session took its role very seriously in those days.

The present church, which was built during his ministry, in the year 1851, is 'suited in every way to the requirements of a large and prosperous congregation. Well finished internally and externally, the comfort of worshippers seems to have been kept prominently in view in its construction'. A gallery was included to provide extra accommodation for over 100 families due to the 'increase of the church'. This was faith in action. There is no mention in the minutes of pulling down the other building, requesting permission from Presbytery nor any form of celebration of the event. Times have changed! It is interesting to note that in this decade, both the Methodist Church (1846) and the present Christ Church (1850s) were also built.

Up to this time the amount of stipend paid to the ministers was £30 per year. On the departure of the Rev Mr Hamilton, the congregation was anxious to obtain the services of an evangelical clergyman whose preaching had created a very favourable impression. The gentleman in question was not disposed to accept the call, and the congregation, as an inducement, doubled the stipend to £60. The clergyman still refused to accept the pastorship, and now that the congregation had offered £60 the Synod would not allow them to recede, and this was the amount received by the next minister, **Rev Andrew Ross Boyd McCay**, a son of the Rev J W McCay, the previous minister of that name.



He only remained in charge of the congregation for about six and a half years, resigning as a result of a dispute with some members of the congregation and, like one of his predecessors, emigrated to Australia. Nothing is recorded of this dispute in the minutes prepared by Samuel McMinn, the Clerk of Session.

After migrating to Victoria, Australia in 1865, Rev Boyd McCay accepted a call to Castlemaine where he remained minister for twenty-five years.

He taught church history to theological students, graduated MA at the University of Melbourne in 1882, became the professor of Church History and had an Irish D.D. conferred on him in 1887.

His Son, Sir James Whiteside McCay, one of ten children, was born on 21st December 1864 just before the family left Ballynure and went on to become a highly respected barrister, MP and soldier in Melbourne before being appointed Lieutenant-Governor in 1920. Look him up on the Internet.



Rev McCay was succeeded by the [Rev William Kerr](#), who was ordained on the 31st March 1866, and died on the 15th March 1909, after faithfully serving the congregation for 43 years. Of his term of ministry much might be said, and certainly under no other pastor did the congregation make anything like such rapid progress. At the commencement of his ministry, the congregation was paying £60 per year stipend, and at his death it was paying £103 stipend and £60

sustentation, truly a remarkable improvement to be effected by one minister. His death was much regretted by a wide circle of friends.

The present church, or Meeting House as it was called then, was first renovated in 1881. These renovations included fixing the roof, painting, plastering and even ensuring that the pews held five people in the centre and six at the sides. Committee minutes record that ‘after a rather lengthy and spirited discussion’ it was agreed to have lamps suspended from the ceiling and from hinge arms on the side walls. There is a marble tablet erected by the members of the church to the memory of the late Mr Andrew Kirk, Belfast, and his wife (the plaque uses the word ‘relect’), who contributed funds to this extensive renovation.



Richard D Park was the chairman when the committee also proposed, in 1880, that ‘the triangle of ground behind the church was also to be prepared as a playground’, presumably between the church and the old National school.

The **Manse** was built or renovated around 1884 and, according to the report, 'is a very neat building, and presents a smart appearance. Internally [it] is well finished and is most comfortable. In 1895 the **Village Hall** (now the Lecture Hall) was built at a total cost of £1062.5s.7d.

In his excellent little book about the origins of Ballynure, 'History and Happenings in the Village over the last 400 years, the late Ernie Scott, a lifelong member of the Ballynure Presbyterian congregation, records 'A village hall was built on land donated by the Landlord, Conway Arthur Dobbs of Kilroot, Carrickfergus. This parcel of land was a corner of a field called the *Shilin Hill*, so named because the shells, or shills in Ulster Scots, blew on to it when the grain was heated after winnowing at Milltown. There was consternation in the village when this happened as the *Shilin Hill* had always been common land on which the local people had been allowed free grazing for their animals.



This hall was built as a community hall for the people and was supported by subscriptions from people of all religions ... a committee had charge of running the hall until the Boer War. When money was scarce they fell into debt with the rates and the Presbyterians stepped in and took over responsibility.'

Session minutes, with Mr McMinn as Clerk of Session, record that there was a Congregational meeting on 23rd March 1892 'to consider the advisability of erecting a Hall for the use of the Sabbath school and other meetings.' At this meeting the congregation agreed to 'accept the offer of Mr C A Dobbs of a 999 year lease at one penny per annum'. It's also interesting to note that money from the Samuel Stewart bequest was used to 'finish the walls of the building and erect a wall around it'. The original list of donors is held in the church records and show that £390.11s.0d came from 'Congregational subscriptions', £382.11s.3d were 'from other sources' and £350.0s.0d was 'on loan from Mr David Wilson'. Not much has changed!

The newspaper article continued: 'The stained glass windows on either side of the pulpit, depicting 'Faith' and Hope' erected in 1910 at a cost £46.19s.6d by the congregation to the memory of their pastor, Rev Wm Kerr, are exquisite pieces of workmanship, and are very



fitting tributes to the memory of one who laboured among them for over forty years. The Sabbath School in connection with the church is held in the Lecture Hall, and it is stated that, in 1912, there were twenty-three teachers; it will be readily understood that it is in a very flourishing condition. The Sabbath School was first commenced in 1834, but it fell away, and was revived by the Rev A R B McCay about the year 1859'.

In 1909, the **Rev John Edmund James Mitchell** became the ninth clergyman to have

charge of the congregation since its formation almost 200 years before. He was a native of Co Tyrone and was born at Maine House on 27th Nov 1877, near the town of Omagh. Having received a very thorough primary education, he studied at the Christian Brothers School in Omagh before entering Magee College, Londonderry, where he distinguished himself by gaining numerous prizes. At college he was known as Jack and at home he was called Johnnie but we will remember him as John. He won the scholarship given by the Temperance Council, and while at the same institution he gained the prize given each year for Scripture Reading, an honour which was much sought after by the students at the College.



After leaving Magee College, Mr Mitchell went to Edinburgh University, where he gained fresh laurels, and where his education was completed. Before coming to Ballynure he had charge of the Pettigo Presbyterian Church for a period of ten months while he had also the charge of St Johnston's, near Derry, for three months. During his stay at Pettigo he made numerous friends and when leaving the congregation his admirers and well-wishers gave expression to their appreciation of his many excellent qualities and the good work accomplished by him during his short stay, by presenting him with a beautiful marble clock and a handsomely designed illuminated address. His stay at St Johnston's, although brief, was not without its happy results, and here also he was the recipient of an address and presentation when leaving the congregation.



The Weekly Telegraph' finishes its report by mentioning that 'Mr Mitchell came to Ballynure slightly over two years ago, being ordained on the 23rd September 1909. The sterling qualities with which he is endowed, and which must win him friends wherever he goes, have not

remained unnoticed by the people of the Ballynure congregation, and the members of the church choir, the bible class, and the Sunday School teachers, have already placed on record their estimation of his worth by presenting him with a solid silver tea urn and silver salver, suitably engraved. A man whom to know is to admire, it is not at all surprising to find that wherever he goes he makes legions of friends, who never miss an opportunity of giving expression to their feelings of friendship in a tangible manner. That he may be long spared to command the respect and esteem of the devoted congregation, and continue his labours with that acceptance which has characterised his work up to the present is the hope of all with whom he has come into contact.'

He, and his two younger brothers, Frederick Charles Joseph and James, who appeared to be living with him in the manse, signed The Ulster Covenant in 1912.

<i>Frederick C. J. Mitchell.</i>	<i>The Manse Ballynure.</i>
<i>Thomas John McKinstry</i>	<i>Shilburnston Ballynure</i>
<i>James A. Mitchell.</i>	<i>The Manse, Ballynure.</i>
<i>John Edmund Mitchell</i>	<i>The Manse, Ballynure</i>

Of interest from the Kirk Session minutes during his brief ministry in Ballynure is an entry in which 99 members of the congregation petitioned the Kirk Session to appoint more elders. Some of the session meetings seem to have included 'the most bitter arguments' and been, according to the clerk, 'most unpleasant meetings'. Rev John Rainey in his reflections about his predecessors wrote that 'this, combined with his deep personal loss sustained by the death of his wife, in all probability brought about his resignation and departure to Scotland'.

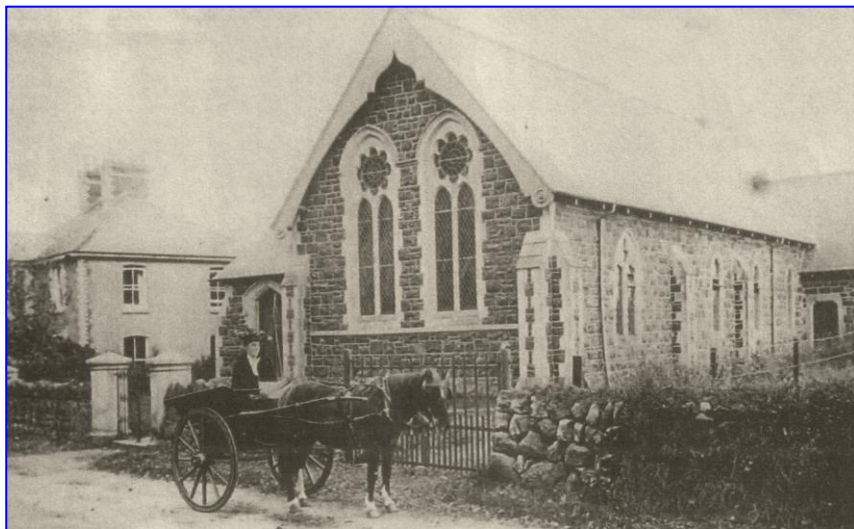
The last recorded minute in the Kirk Session book was written after the meeting on 5th October 1916. There is no mention of the fifty five young men from the congregation who went off to the 1st World War. They were remembered in the War Memorial which is mentioned in greater detail later.

John Edmund Mitchell married Edith Sarah Dickson, M A, in Belmont Presbyterian Church on 25th October 1916 and she died in childbirth in the manse just over one year later on 11th



November 1917. Edith, who was originally from Pomeroy, was a school teacher and 'looked charming in a pretty dress of ivory crepe-de-chene over crème silk taffeta' and carried a handsome bouquet. A well-attended social evening, chaired by Rev David Steen from Islandmagee, was held in the church halls on Wednesday 20th December 1916. Good wishes from all the churches in the district were

expressed by a number of local ministers and the evening concluded with a musical programme from several local artists accompanied by Miss Graham of Ballyclare. The congregation marked the occasion by presenting the happy couple with a cheque, a Drawing Room Clock and some ornaments.



In the newspaper public notice, the congregation put on record its appreciation of all that Rev and Mrs Mitchell had achieved among them and took the opportunity to 'avail themselves of the opportunity to express appreciation of your work and worth. We recognise with special gratitude your sympathetic attention to the sick and infirm ... in your pulpit administration you have always proclaimed the grand old gospel

of the grace of God. Your interest in the welfare of the Sabbath school has been an inspiration to both teachers and scholars and an encouragement to all to make the training of the young the ideal work of the church.' Signed W A Ross, Wm Woodside, Samuel Percy, members of Kirk Session; William Jas. Kennedy, William J Wilson, William Mawhinney, William Scott, Adam Park (members of committee).

It would appear that John left the church in Ballynure very shortly after Edith's death to travel to Scotland later where, initially, he became the assistant minister of Bridgeton Parish Church, Glasgow in 1918. He was admitted by the General Assembly to Church of Scotland in 1921 before becoming the Assistant at Shettleston.

During this time, he met and married a deaconess of the Kirk, Jeannie (Jessie) Stewart Downie. They had two children, a girl and a boy, Catherine and Joseph John Edmund Downie (1927 – 2002), both of whom became doctors. Rev Mitchell then became minister of Nigg Parish Church in Aberdeenshire where he died suddenly in 1927 or 1928 after a diabetic attack. He was buried in the family cemetery in Cappagh, Northern Ireland. Catherine, his daughter, married Rev Alan Mathers and their son, Rev Dr A R Neal Mathers, is the Senior Pastor, Emmanuel Presbyterian Church, in the village of Nottawa, Canada.

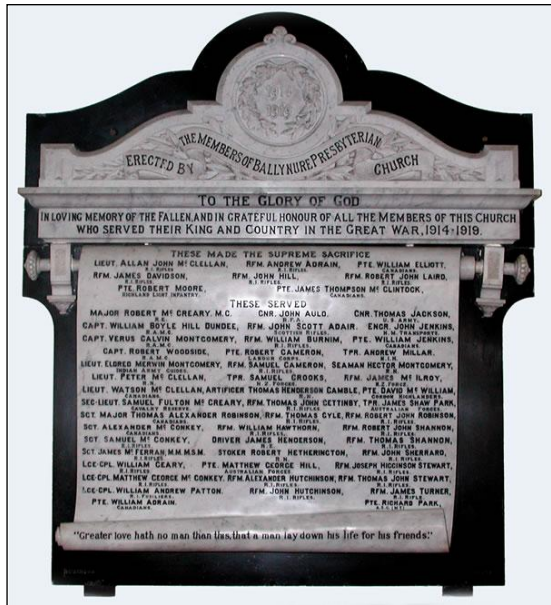
Rev Andrew Scott, a native of Donemana, was installed in Ballynure on 3rd October 1918. He was unmarried and lived with his two sisters. His salary was £125 per year with the manse being free from rates and taxes.



At his first committee meeting the members were asked to ban all smoking from the church premises. Initially this was agreed to and then rescinded before being finally passed. In 1919 there was much discussion about ownership of the school premises which were beside the church. The Education Authority wanted to take over the building but the church was finally allowed to retain ownership. About this time Mr Scott requested, and was allowed to build a poultry house and chicken run in the church grounds!

A man of very strong convictions, Mr Scott abhorred the use of alcohol. Almost immediately the Kirk Session agreed to the requirement that all those coming to the Lord's Table for the first time were asked to 'abstain from all alcoholic beverages' and also asked to sign 'the pledge'.

In 1919 permission was given to Ballynure and Straid Peace Celebrations' Committee first of all, in July, to hold a function to entertain 'the demobilized soldiers and sailors of the district to supper'. This was followed on 21st November by a concert 'at which Bibles were presented as souvenirs of the Great War to soldiers and sailors of the district and also to the relatives of those who had laid down their lives in defence of their country'. In 1920 two War Memorials were dedicated and unveiled in the church and these, presumably, hold most, if not all, of the names of the people honoured at the concert: The first, on the street side of the church was dedicated by Mr Scott and unveiled by Major Robert McCreary MC RE to the fallen and those who served in the war. On the car park side, Rev Scott dedicated the other to the memory of Allan



John McClellan who was killed in the war. Mr James McQuillan, headmaster of Larne Grammar School, unveiled the memorial which had been erected by Allan John McClellan's father who was Head Shepherd on Ballyboley Hill, which was then owned by Sir Thomas Dixon.

The **eight members** who made the supreme sacrifice were: Lieut Allan John McClellan (R I Rifles), Rfm Andrew Adrain (R I Rifles), Pte William Elliott (Canadians), Rfm James Davidson (R I Rifles), Rfm John Hill (R I Rifles), Rfm Robert John Laird (R I Rifles), Pte Robert Moore (Highland Light Infantry), Pte James Thompson McClintock (Canadians)

These **forty seven** men also served: Major Robert McCreary MC (RE), C N A John Auld (R F A), Cnr Thomas Jackson (U S Army), Capt William Boyle Hill Dundee (R A M C), Rfm John Scott Adair (Scottish

Rifles), Engr John Jenkins (H M Transports), Capt Verus Calvin Montgomery (R A M C), Rfm William Burnim (R I Rifles), Pte William Jenkins (Canadians), Capt Robert Woodside (R A M C), Pte Robert Cameron (Labour Corps), Tpr Andrew Millar (M I M), Lieut Elgred Merwin Montgomery (Indian Army Guides), Rfm Samuel Cameron (R I Rifles), Seaman Hector Montgomery (R R), Lieut Peter McClellan (R R), Tpr Samuel Crooks (N Z Forces), Rfm James McIlroy (N A Forces), Lieut Watson McClellan (Canadians), Artificer Thomas Henderson Gamble (RN), Pte David McWilliam (Gordon Highlanders), Sec Lieut Samuel Fulton McCreary (Cavalry Reserve), Rfm John Thomas Gettingby (R I Rifles), TPR James Shaw Park (Australian Forces), Sgt Major Thomas Alexander Robinson (Canadians), Rfm Thomas Cyle (R I Rifles), Rfm Robert John Robinson (R I Rifles), Sct Alexander McConkey (Canadians), Rfm William Hawthorn (R I Rifles), Rfm Robert John Shannon (R I Rifles), Sgt Samuel McConkey R I Rifles, Driver James Henderson R E, RFM Thomas Shannon R I Rifles, Sgt James McFerran MM, MSM (R I Rifles), Stoker Robert Hetherington (R R), Rfm John Sherrard (R I Rifles), Lce-Cpr William Geary (R I Rifles), Pte Matthew George Hill (Australians Forces), Rfm Joseph Higginson Stewart (R I Rifles), Lce-Cpr Matthew George McConkey (R I Rifles), Rfm Alexander Hutchinson (R I Rifles), Rfm Thomas John Stewart (R I Rifles), Lce-Cpr William Andrew Patton (R I Fusiliers), Rfm John Hutchinson (R I Rifles), Rfm James Turner (R I Rifles), Pte William Adrain (Canadians), Pte Richard Park (ATC NI)

In 1927, early in Rev Scott's ministry, the committee investigated repairing the flat roof in the original tower of the church. These repairs were carried out by Allan McNeill at a cost of £66.13s.4d and presumably amounted to having the original 'flat' roof on the tower replaced with the pointed one that is there now.



It is interesting to note the part that music played during his ministry and may well explain the memorial gift of a pipe organ from the congregation at the end of his ministry. In 1921 permission was sought from the Kirk Session to sing hymns as well as psalms and paraphrases

in the church. This was refused because three people from the congregation had objected by letter and that had been the condition set by the Kirk Session.

While hymn singing was allowed in the evening services, the matter was finally resolved when the petition to install an organ and sing hymns was accepted by a unanimous vote of 47 to 0 at a congregational meeting on 1st June 1924. The committee purchased an Estey Organ from Crymbles of Wellington Place Belfast. Estey organs were made in Vermont, USA until 1960. It is interesting to note that the organ was brought to the auction in 2009 and may now go on permanent display.

One of the local ladies, Miss Nannie Woodside, was offered the post of Organist at a salary of £10 per annum. Even though the salary was increased to £12, she still refused and so, when the job was advertised, Alice Porter ALCM of 2nd Ballyeaston, the daughter of William Burrows Porter, the Presentor in the church for 28 years until 1920, was appointed. The church still had a Presentor at that time, a Mr John Hayes from Millvale in Ballyclare, and it wasn't until the position became vacant that the job was changed to that of 'Organist and Choir Master'. Even though Alice Porter had done part of the job for a number of years, Miss Hettie Taylor of 18 College Green, Belfast was appointed in 1926 at the sum of £25 per annum.

Also on the music theme, permission was given for a concert in 1931 but the group were not allowed the use of the piano since there was a rule 'prohibiting its use for other than congregational purposes'. The newly formed Ballyclare Male Choir was given permission to hold a second concert in the hall on Wednesday 29th March 1933 having 'generously supplied the Programme of a concert in the hall on 4th March 1932 in aid of church funds' ... no record is made of whether or not the use of the piano was granted!

When Miss Hettie Taylor retired, she was replaced as Organist and Choirmaster by Mr Wilson Lyttle McDonnell of Cromwell Road in Belfast. His salary was increased to free the Kirk Session 'from the responsibility for his travelling expenses and for the provision of hospitality for him in Ballynure'. It seems that Miss Scott, the Minister's sister, had, for a great many years provided this hospitality every Sunday until she became too ill to do this. Wilson McDonnell was forced to resign in 1940 just after the war started because, 'under the restrictions imposed by the Government', he was no longer allowed to

use his car for 'unnecessary purposes'. Catherine Lusk ATCL was appointed as his successor.

It was on 17th April 1889 that Kirk Session agreed that the Celebration of Communion would be held on the first Sabbath of May and November. The minutes give detailed account of new members coming forward and a review of the services. In some of the years, the only times session seemed to meet was a few days before or after these celebrations. The communion roll was 'subjected to an exhaustive scrutiny and revision' in January 1920 and was then again 'examined and thoroughly revised' in 1921. This is probably the last time any revision has been done! On 3rd May 1931 the present individual Communion cups, trays and plates were presented by Mrs S McGookin in memory of her husband who had died on 15th December 1930.

In 1925, the first recorded permission was given to Straid Masonic Lodge to hold a church service in July or August and later on in that year, two weeks of services 'in the moonlight' were held in the latter part of November. The preachers were Rev R S Craig, West Church Ballymena and Rev John Kyle from Holywood. Sunday Services for the Masonic, Royal Black Preceptories and the 'Loyal Orders' has been an



annual feature of the church since then.

The new Primary school was built in the early 1930s and it seemed as though the old school adjacent to the church was taken over and used

and consequently maintained by the church. It is not easy to discover when it was demolished.

Many elders' names that are still familiar in the area appear in the minutes as well as those mentioned specifically in the memorials recorded in the text. There is John Logan, Ballybracken, who died on 13th February 1929 and had been an elder for 46 years and 3 months. One can read about John Drummond, William Hill, William Mawhinney, James McGookin, William Woodside who attended the Kirk Session meetings regularly in the 1930s and 1940s.

The Manse was completely renovated in 1929 and has had a number of other improvements over the years although all of the original buildings seem to have been incorporated into the various schemes but may have had their purpose changed. The Presbytery report in 1939, at a time when Mr Scott seemed to be too ill to be present, notes that 'givings to missions seem rather small for a congregation of this size'.

The church has always served the community over the years. For instance, at the start of the war in May 1939, Dr H Baird (Dr Herbie Baird's father) was given permission to run 12 weekly classes for training in First Aid and Home Nursing. In May 1940 he was given further permission to hold a number of 'Air Raid Precaution Meetings'.

The electric lights were installed after very much deliberation by the Church Committee and were officially switched on by Mrs William Smyth on 18th September 1939 ... probably just in time for the blackouts!

In 1933 **Andrew Crooks**, a member of the congregation and licentiate of the church was congratulated by the Kirk Session 'on the call which he had received to be Minister of Minterburn and Caledon in County Tyrone' not long after he had been ordained and installed as an assistant in Oldpark. He then went to Bethany Presbyterian on 3rd January 1935 and was there for 29 years before moving again to Loughaghery where he was installed on 2nd April 1964. He retired in 1971 and died on 26th Aug 1987.

William John (Jock) Mawhinney was the second member of Ballynure to enter the Presbyterian ministry. He was licensed by the Carrickfergus Presbytery on 7th May 1942 before being ordained and installed as an Assistant in McQuiston in 1943/1944. At the end of his assistantship he became minister in Bellaghy & Knockloughram. In June 1964 he was installed as minister of First Ballymoney where he remained until his retirement. In Presbyterian circles he was always called 'Jock' and after

suffering the loss of his partner, his second wife wrote 'Cook with Kate' for the Presbyterian Herald. He died in January 1996. Of interest to the reader may be the fact that these two men grew up on adjacent farms in Ballybracken.

The third member of Ballynure Presbyterian to enter the ministry was **Alexander Clements**, the son of Mr David Clements of Kilwaughter. He was licensed by Carrickfergus Presbytery on 17 May 1943 having served as assistant in Townsend Street congregation in Belfast. He was ordained on 23 November 1943 in First Saintfield Church by Down Presbytery. He resigned on 17 Feb 1953 and became minister of Knox Presbyterian Church, Palmerston, Ontario. His son David also followed him into the ministry in Canada. Incidentally all three young men had been educated at Craiganorne school.

The Communion Table was presented to the church as a gift in November 1949 by the Misses Margaret and Annie Elizabeth Mayne. The small silver lectern, on which the Bible usually rests at Communion, was presented in memory of John Boyd JP and his wife Margaret Ann by Margaret Lawson OBE, Elizabeth S Holden and James Boyd. Tributes to at least four long serving elders, John Drummond, William Mawhinney, James McGookin and William Hill are recorded in the minute books during the 1940s and 1950s.

Mr Scott is remembered for his long sermons and for the lengthy services – lasting one and a half hours. He was an excellent pastoral visitor. As he did not own a car, he walked or used his motor cycle, a Zenith, to go to outlying homes of the congregation. In his latter years, as he became more feeble, his sister drove him around in her car. It is interesting to note this deterioration even in his writings in the Kirk Session minute book ... on some occasions the lettering becomes very large and doesn't even sit on the lines of the page. No minutes exist for the period 1946 to 1951 but a number of letters from the choir and Church Officer would seem to indicate that all was not well towards the end of Rev Scott's ministry.

Rev Mr Scott died on 19th January 1951 and his funeral service was held in the church on 22nd January 1951. An Evans and Barr pipe organ which is still in good use, leading the praise every Sunday, was installed in his memory and dedicated on December 7th 1952.

Rev William John Rainey was installed in Ballynure in July 1951. He was married to Irene, a former nurse in the Royal Victoria Hospital, and they had one daughter, Jennifer, when they arrived in the Manse. Rosemary was born in 1953.



John Rainey was the son of a County Antrim farmer and had connections with Portglenone and Randalstown. For some years he worked on the family farm. One evening, in the OC Church in Randalstown he felt God calling him to the ministry. He returned to school at Ballymena Academy and went on to study in Londonderry and Edinburgh. When in Edinburgh he contacted poliomyelitis, which affected one of his legs, leaving him with a slight limp.

Before being appointed to Ballynure he served in Glennan and Middletown. During that time he became ill and had a kidney removed. Despite his illnesses Mr Rainey was a tireless worker. The fact that the first youth service was held on 10th September 1951, very soon after Mr Rainey's installation, shows

how he set the agenda for a change of emphasis in the congregation. During his ministry in Ballynure both the BB and GB companies were formed in 1962 and eventually the Youth Club was started after a petition by the young people, including James Logan, in 1973.



The WMA which later became known as the PWA, or Presbyterian Women's Association, was started by Mrs Rainey who worked tirelessly on its behalf. It was the PWA that erected the 'Dorcas' Memorial Window in her memory in 1984. Rev Rainey is seen here receiving his new robes from Miss Mayne and Mrs Wm Mawhinney.

The Minister's Chair in the pulpit was donated by the Rev Rainey in memory of his mother Emily Faulkner in 1952, and, at the same time, Mr and Mrs Lusk gave the pulpit Bible which is sadly no longer in use. In 1953 the Baptismal Font was presented by Mr and Mrs William J Curran in memory of their son David (1912 – 1952) and the Lectern and accompanying Bible were given by the Wilson family of Headwood, Larne in 'loving memory of John who met death suddenly as a result of

an accident on 7th March 1951'. The Lectern was dedicated on 17th May 1953 by Rev Andrew Crooks, the first member of the church to enter the Presbyterian ministry almost 20 years before.

A number of gospel missions were held during Rev Rainey's time in charge and the issue of dancing in the Church Hall combined with working on Sundays (washing, gardening, painting or even going to the seaside!) seemed to become a pre-occupation of the Kirk Session members on a number of occasions.

The minutes record a steady number of young Communicants coming to the Lord's Table for the first time. In fact the few occasions on which no new members were forthcoming stands out. Many of these 'young' people are now very active serving members of the choir, the PWA as well as session and committee. Cathy Bell went overseas on our behalf with PCI to serve in Pringle home, Jamaica.

The distribution of Communion Tokens by elders started in 1956 and over the years this matter was debated on a number of occasions because of the detrimental effect it seemed to be having on the attendance at pre-communion. In 1965 it was agreed that the collectors each Sunday morning would stand at the front for the Offertory Prayer ... a tradition that still happens at present.

Mr Rainey oversaw the building of the new Choir Room and the Minister's Room at a cost in the region of £6,000. The new rooms were opened by Miss Joan K Dobbs MBE and dedicated by the Right Rev James Dunlop on 22nd April 1965. The organ was moved in 1969 to allow members of the choir to stand between the back of it and the pulpit. The electric heaters in the room were donated by William Percy of Solar, Cairncastle, in memory of his father and mother, Samuel and Margaret Percy of Castletown. Samuel Percy died on 31st July 1940 and had been 'a Ruling Elder for 28 years and, for a considerable portion of that, Clerk of Session'. The desk and chair for the Minister's room was a gift from the Wilson family, Bryangtang House, in memory of Malcolm John Wilson. Very many other furnishing and gifts of chairs, curtains, mirrors, radiators, tables, towels, clocks, a piano, carpet, lamp shades and pictures were given on that occasion by members of the congregation and the church organisations. At a later stage, the music cupboard was the gift of Mr & Mrs A Davis.

The renovations to the Lecture Hall, including a new kitchen and toilets, at a cost of £8667.26 started in 1972 and was re-dedicated on Wednesday 2nd May 1973 by the Right Reverend R V A Lynas, the Moderator of the General Assembly. The service, on that occasion was

conducted by Rev John A McFall, a good friend of the congregation from the neighbouring Presbyterian Church at Woodburn.

Two services were held a month later, on Sunday 17th June 1973 to celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the Congregation. The earlier one at 12 noon was conducted by the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Right Rev John W Orr, and the evening one by Rev R Derek Drysdale, the Moderator of the Templepatrick Presbytery. Madge Hunter, the very popular organist on many different occasions for over 20 years, trained the choir to provide the special music at those services. She had taken over in 1962 from Ronald S Stewart. Mr Robert Evans was also the Organist and Choirmaster during Mr Rainey's ministry. The new Presbyterian Hymnbook was eventually accepted and its use promoted by the provision of copies for the pews by a generous donation from Maurice and Pat Elliot and also by the fact that they were now given out as Sunday School prizes. In 1981 the time of the Morning Service was changed from 12 noon to 11:30am by a majority vote, 170 to 35.

Herbie Mawhinney, still one of the church members, provided the architectural drawings for the Lecture Hall extension and, at a later stage, also drew the plans for the new church vestibule. The organ was also restored at this time and the Vestibule, two new stained glass windows along with a number of other gifts



including tables from the Park, Gowdy and Elliot families and the carpet in the aisles from Mr and Mrs George W Kennedy were dedicated on Wednesday 12th May 1982 by the Right Rev John Girvan, Moderator of the General Assembly... Frieda Sloss and James McCreary provided the music on that occasion. At this time the car park was enlarged due to the generosity of Miss Joan Dobbs and Mr Alex Kirk and a tarmac surface was laid. The present Trustees were appointed in March 1984 to oversee all the buildings and property.

John Rainey was a faithful preacher and made pastoral visiting a priority. He rode a bicycle, then a motorcycle until he eventually got a car. A sense of humour was one of Mr Rainey's main attributes. He had such a great hearty laugh.

Mr Rainey retired after 35 years in Ballynure and went to live in Edinburgh to be near his daughters and their families. Mrs Rainey died in 1983, some years before his retirement and this was a great loss and sorrow to him. All his life John Rainey had a great interest in sport,

especially rugby. In the final years before his death on 2nd February 2000 he spent much time reading, with a special interest in the work of C S Lewis.

During his ministry a number of stained glass windows were installed in the church. Two were dedicated on the same day, 12th May 1982 during the service for the Opening of the new Church Vestibule. The first was donated by Mr George Kennedy in loving memory of his father, mother and sister and the second by Mr and Mrs Samuel Stewart in loving memory of their two infant daughters. In 1986, a third, in loving memory of Samuel Woodside, who had been Clerk of Session from 1951 to 1972 and an elder for 49 years, was presented to the church by their son William, daughter Jean and their families. The GB presented a window in 1983 to mark its 21st Anniversary. Two coat racks were donated by Mr and Mrs Hyde in 1985.



The esteem in which John and Irene Rainey were held is marked by two lovely stained glass windows in the church and by the fact that he was welcomed back to Ballynure for holidays and enjoyed time spent in the homes of his former church members and friends.

John was indeed 'the good shepherd' and Irene the 'tireless worker'. The windows on each side of the church say it all.

Rev James (Jim) Campbell was installed as minister of Ballynure Presbyterian Church on 15th May 1987 after an Assistantship in Joymount Presbyterian Church in Carrickfergus. He came to the Manse with Adrienne, his wife and two daughters Jill and Jenny. During his ministry in Ballynure, Katy was born. Both Jim and Adrienne were from Ballysillan Presbyterian Church in North Belfast. Jim had worked in the computer industry after graduating from Queen's University before entering the ministry.



Early in his ministry pew bibles were purchased as a result of donations from a number of families in the church and 'Glory to God' Hymnbooks, a supplement from the Presbyterian Church, became widely used.

Adrienne contributed to Jim's ministry with a succession of musical cantatas presented by members of the congregation and others from the neighbouring churches. In 1995 sixteen members of the church choir were recognised for their long service, five who had been singing for over 40 years and eleven who had given more than 30 years service. Some are still in the choir. Trevor Mulholland and John Doors were the Organists/Choirmasters during Jim's ministry before Suzanne Kelly was appointed in 1994.

The tape ministry became so successful that a copier was purchased in 1994 to satisfy the demand from the congregation. Ballynure Brief, a newsletter published quarterly, gave members an insight into the activities provided by all associated with the church including the week of mission held at Easter in 1999. A number of other activities for children and young people including the Youth Club, Youth Fellowship and Holiday Bible Club were continued during Jim's ministry. The first Youth Leaders' dinner was held in March 1995.

After Jim's visit to Romania with School Aid Romania, Ballynure Presbyterian undertook to sponsor the fostering of three Beko children by members of the Baptist Church in Brasov. Two valedictory services were held during his ministry for Heather Wilson who went to Brazil with UFM to work with street children and for David Campbell who left to spend two years as Head of English in a Christian Boarding School in Kenya. Robert McCreary, who had served faithfully as Clerk of Session for 26 years, retired from that position in 1999. Thomas McD Mawhinney succeeded him as Clerk.

Jim Campbell's friendly and easy going manner made him a welcome visitor in the homes of his congregation. His sense of humour endeared

him to many of the elderly and housebound members. His sermons were always well prepared, relevant and thought provoking and these, combined with the influx of new members who had moved into the village, saw the ethos of the congregation change very significantly at the start of the third millennium.

Rev Jonathan Paul Moxen, the assistant in 1st Coleraine, was installed as Jim Campbell's successor on 4th May 2000. Jonathan was a member of New Row, Coleraine where he worshipped with his future wife, Gillian. They have three children, Ian, Ruth and Hannah, who was born since they arrived in Ballynure.



Jonathan is a very popular young peoples' speaker and has moved from being convenor of the 'MAD' weekend working group, an initiative of PCI, to being the convenor of the complete Youth and Children's Board.

At Jonathan's request, Patricia Wilson helped with pastoral visitation and support for the elderly and others in need. Gillian Moxen was responsible for initiating Noah's Ark, a much needed facility for mums and toddlers in the village and congregation. Thelma Black was appointed as the Church Administrator and, among many other duties, edits and produces the magazine 'Connect' two or three times a year. Suzanne Kelly is the current Organist and is assisted in training the choir by Frieda Sloss. **Mr Nick Cooper** is the fourth person from the church to enter the Presbyterian ministry. At the time of writing, he has just been licensed by the Carrickfergus Presbytery (7th June 2009) and is serving as an Assistant in McQuiston Memorial, Belfast.

In June 2003, the late Mrs Ellen Hyde celebrated her 100th birthday and so became the first member of Ballynure to reach that milestone. At the May Communion season, she and the family presented a beautiful stained glass window in memory of her husband, Robert William Hyde who had been an elder for many years in the congregation.



Two trophy cabinets were presented to the GB and placed in the vestibule. The corner one was a gift from Harry Stirling in memory of his wife Margaret who had been President/Patron from the start of the GB in 1962 until her death in 1994. The other is a gift from Mrs E Orr (nee Curran), the first Captain, to celebrate the 40th

Anniversary of the GB in 2002. Two Oak Flower Stands were presented in 2002 by Mr and Mrs B McCowan and Mr R and W McCracken.

Jonathan is a man of great passion, quick wit and immense fun ... one could see this in all dealings with him and it even crept into the morning service, particularly at the Children's address. He is passionate about winning souls for Christ and his work among the young people in the whole of the Presbyterian Church has been recognised at this year's General Assembly when he was appointed convenor of the Youth and Children's Board. He preaches an infectious message to all who listen.

As a direct result of an audit by Rev David Montgomery, the (then) Director for Congregational Life, house groups were started and these continue under the direction of the Minister. We had our first church weekend in October 06 when some 70 people including a great many children, took over Castle Erin in Portrush One of the last groups to do so before it closed as a Conference Centre and holiday venue.

Richard Wallace succeeded Thomas McD Mawhinney as Clerk of Session in March 2003.

By far the most expensive and expansive project undertaken by the congregation has been the erection of new halls and the refurbishment of the Lecture Hall.



At a cost of almost three quarters of a million pounds, the church now proudly boasts a suite of buildings that contain: a Lecture Hall, a new kitchen, an upper room, a Minor Hall complete with the very latest audio-visual technology, a dedicated crèche area, a coffee bar, a church office, a choir room, a Minister's room, a prayer room, a lift, which will eventually allow people to access the gallery, and three general purpose rooms as well as a new suite of toilets. These were opened and dedicated by the Right Reverend Dr John Finlay on Saturday 1st December 2007 at the end of a week of celebrations. A number of gifts which were donated, including those given anonymously, were dedicated at this service.

Rev Moxen was called to Greystone Road, Antrim and left to take up his post there in September 2008.

During the vacancy, when Rev Sidlow McFarland (Minister Emeritus of 1st Carrick and one of our members), was the Convenor, it was discovered that the manse, which had stood for 125 years, was riddled with dry and wet rot. At a Congregational Meeting, on 8th December

2008, the proposal that “In view of the expense involved in repairing and refurbishing the existing manse, we demolish it and rebuild a replacement manse on the site’ (on the assumption that the restrictive covenant would be lifted by the Dobbs family) was passed by an almost unanimous decision (50 for, 0 against, 1 abstention).

Rev James William David Rogers was installed by the Carrickfergus Presbytery as the 14th Minister of Ballynure Presbyterian Church on Wednesday 24th June 2009.



A native of Bangor and a former teacher, James has been serving in Whiteabbey Presbyterian for the past six years, first as Assistant and then as their Associate Minister. He is married to Karen and they have four young children, Andrew, Hannah, Jonny and Sarah.

Alastair Black succeeded Richard Wallace as Clerk of Session in September 2010. **Nick Cooper** accepted a call to Ballygawley and Ballyreagh in April 2011.

Work started on the new manse at the beginning of 2011 and is due for completion in October.

Data projectors and screens were introduced in 2010 and the Tape Ministry has now been replaced by CDs.

For almost 300 years the Presbyterian Church has been an integral part of the Ballynure landscape. However, changes continue apace as housing developments bring an influx of new people to the Ballynure area. This presents Ballynure Presbyterian with possibly it's greatest challenge so far, that of reaching out with the good news of Jesus Christ to an enlarged community, whilst continuing to support and care for its existing members.

Revised by **Richard Wallace**

Clerk of Session 2003 - 2010

Ministers

Rev William Watt	1723 – 1748
Rev Clotworthy Brown	1748 – 1751
Rev William Rodgers	1751 – 1785
Rev Adam Hill	1785 – 1826
Rev James Whiteside McCay	1826 – 1847
Rev Samuel Alexander Hamilton	1848 – 1859
Rev Andrew Ross Boyd McCay	1859 – 1865
Rev William Kerr	1866 – 1909
Rev John Edmund Mitchell	1909 – 1918
Rev Andrew Scott	1918 – 1951
Rev William John Rainey	1951 – 1986
Rev James Campbell	1987 – 1999
Rev Jonathan Paul Moxen	2000 – 2008
Rev James William David Rogers	2009 –

Notable Dates and Events

- 1723 Congregation established on 18th June 1723
- 1767 Meeting House built
- 1827 Meeting House refurbished at a cost of £400
- 1851 Present Church built
- 1834 Sunday School established
- 1859 Sunday School rejuvenated
- 1881 Church refurbished
- 1884 Manse built (approximate date)
- 1893 Lecture Hall built at a cost of £1062.5.7
- 1910 'Faith' and 'Hope' windows installed at a cost of £46.19.6
- 1920 War Memorials dedicated
- 1924 Estey Organ purchased ... hymns introduced
- 1938 Addition of kitchen to Lecture Hall
- 1952 Evans and Barr Pipe Organ installed
- 1962 GB and BB established
- 1965 Choir Room and Minister's Room added
- 1973 Extension to Lecture Hall to provide kitchen, storage and toilets
- 1982 Front porch added to church
- 2007 New Halls opened
- 2011 New manse built

While every care has been taken with the accuracy of the text, the author would be happy to have corrections and additions so that the copy on the website, www.ballynurepresbyterian.org, is always up to date.