

THE PRESBYTERY OF AYR 1581 - 1981

The Changing Face Of Presbytery

In 1581 Ayr Presbytery comprised 24 parishes, served by 11 ministers and 7 readers. Almost all of these parishes had been served by the pre-Reformation Church. The sole exception was the charge "callit Air secundo" but, although founded in 1557, it did not have a minister of its own until 1613.

There were ministers at Ayr (one of the first 8 towns in Scotland to have a minister), Craigie, Cumnock, Dailly, Dalmellington, Dundonald, Kirkoswald (where most of the work was done by a reader), Mauchline, Ochiltree, Straiton and Tarbolton. Readers served in Girvan, Kirkmichael, Maybole, Monkton with Prestwick, and Symington. This meant extra work for some — like John Nisbet of Tarbolton with oversight of "Barneweill, St. Kevokis (formerly Sanchar-in-Kyle), and Monkton with Prestwick". When he died in 1610 he left "the kyndness of my land in Tarboltoun to my sonne that bruiks the kirk thairof".

Gradually the vacancies were filled. By 1600 Symington, Dalrymple, Girvan, Galston, Monkton with Prestwick, Maybole and Coylton had their own men. During the 1600's fresh advance was made with St. Quivox, Barnweill and Auchinleck finding ministers and Alloway enjoying brief independence from Ayr. New parishes were created at Muirkirk, Riccarton, Barr and Stair. In 1691 New Cumnock was put on its feet at the second attempt and the next year saw Sorn (Dalgain) re-erected.

For almost 100 years there were no more changes. And then the Industrial Revolution. Towns and villages began to grow rapidly and, to meet the needs of the shifting population, chapels-of-ease were built. These chapels, their financing, and their relationship to the original parish churches were to produce awkward problems. So much so that in 1798 the General Assembly enacted that the recognition of any such chapel would rest with the Assembly and not with the local presbytery.

Before then, however, the Newton Freemen had already built a chapel to serve their well-populated end of Prestwick parish. In 1779 the parish of Newton-upon-Ayr was formally erected. Catrine came next in 1792.

The 1830's saw the most striking progress. This was due largely to the efforts of Thomas Chalmers' Committee on Church Accommodation. Between 1835 and 1839 no less than 264 new chapels were built in Scotland. Ayr Presbytery had its share — Troon, Wallacetown, Fullarton, Girvan South, Crosshill, Maybole West (the Glen Kirk), Patna, and Fisherton all appeared before 1843.

One great impetus to this extension work had been the Chapels Act of 1834. This act was meant to give all chapels an enhanced status as parish churches *Quoad Sacra*, i.e. for ecclesiastical purposes only as distinguished from the old civil or *Quoad Omnia* parishes. After some bitter controversy the Court of Session declared the Act illegal. Some years later it was replaced by a similar Act of Parliament. By then, however, the damage had been done— the Disruption had taken place.

The issue underlying that conflict was the relationship between church and state, in particular patronage and the rights of congregations. Like the rest of Scotland Ayr Presbytery was exercised by the debate —

1840, January "Mr. Stewart of Sorn moved that the following petition be adopted by the Presbytery and presented to both Houses of Parliament your Petitioners have learned from the decision of

the House of Lords in the case of Auchterarder that the Law passed by the General Assembly in the year 1834 has not been recognised by the civil Courts of the Country. May it therefore please your Honourable House to take this subject into your serious consideration and to pass such an enactment, as in your wisdom, shall seem best suited to guard against the settlement of ministers in parishes, in opposition to the will and feelings of the great body of the people, and thus prevent the most serious evils to the Church and to the Country The Roll being called and votes marked it carried Petition; and therefore, the Presbytery did and hereby do resolve to present the above Petition to both Houses of Parliament". Dr. Hill and six others asked to have their dissent recorded.

1840, March "Mr. Wallace then read the following Overture, and moved that it be transmitted to the ensuing General Assembly — whereas the non-intrusion of ministers into vacant parishes against the will of the congregation, and the independency of the Church in all spiritual and ecclesiastical matters, are principles inherent in its constitution, involved in the exclusive sovereignty of Jesus Christ, and essential to the interests of religion and the just rights of the people; may it therefore please the General Assembly to adhere steadfastly to said principles, and adopt all measures which in their wisdom shall seem calculated to secure them inviolable and intact."

An amendment was proposed " in order that peace may be restored to our distracted Church, and the unseemly collision which has taken place between the civil and ecclesiastical judicatories be brought to an end". It wanted the Assembly to rescind the 1835 Act and to "take such steps as may be consistent at once with the principles of our Church and the law of the land". The amendment fell.

In both 1841 and 1842 attempts to overture the Assembly to repeal the Veto Act were defeated. However, when the Act was finally declared to be illegal by the House of Lords, the Presbytery changed its mind and asked for its repeal. By now the final break was imminent and in May 11 ministers demitted their charges and left their homes — and the Presbytery.

A depleted court met in June "And the Presbytery felt that they could not conclude this minute without expressing their deep regret that the above mentioned individuals whom they respected and esteemed as fellow labourers in the Vineyard of their Blessed and common Master, have judged it to be their duty to secede from the Church of their fathers, which the Presbytery consider to be pure in doctrine and discipline, which has long been a singular blessing to the people of this land, and which still opens up a wide and unlimited field for their zeal, the piety and the talents of the most gifted ministers".

It was not only ministers who left. At Dundonald, the minister had "only one officiating elder in his parish" • At Ochiltree there were two but one was "considerably advanced in his life and not in good health". At Old Cumnock, Newton, and Monkton almost all the elders followed their ministers out.

The very buildings were almost lost. The managers at Catrine, Wallacetown and Girvan refused to yield the chapels on the ground that they were not parish churches. A law agent had to be brought in.

1844, December "The Presbytery recommend to all its members to make every exertion in their power in their several parishes to collect funds for the purpose of liquidating the debt of the Church and to defray the expenses of Processes for the recovery of what are commonly called Quoad Sacra

Churches and that the members report to the Presbytery their diligence in this matter at the next ordinary meeting".

However, by January 1845 all the parish churches, if not all the chapels, had been filled. Slowly the work of extension was taken up again. A mission was started at Alloway in 1858 and two years later it was given Quoad Sacra status by the Court of Teinds. By the end of the century new churches had been established at Annbank, Glenbuck, North Newton, and Ayr St. Leonards. In addition the older chapels also gained the Quoad Sacra rank they had briefly held in the 1830's. In the first decade of the 20th century further progress was made with the building of Prestwick St. Nicholas. The outbreak of war prevented more work but the biggest advance of all was just around the corner — the Reunion of 1929.

For years the Presbytery had encouraged closer contacts with the Free Church, had welcomed joint ventures and shared in joint protests. They had openly discussed union since the old Free Church had come together with the United Presbyterians in 1900. In February 1929 the Presbytery "unanimously agreed" to the Assembly Overtures on the Basis and Plan of Union. That April replies from the congregations gave a consent which was almost unanimous, in only one congregation was there any dissent.

When the united Presbytery met for the first time on 9th October the roll of congregations was read. There were 77 charges plus a number of mission stations. This introduced a new element — readjustment. (It also required congregations to distinguish themselves with new names, hence the "Olds", "Saints", and "Memorials" alongside the Norths and Souths.) In the first year of the Union, readjustment was raised in Patna, Annbank, Symington, Maybole and Crosshill. Talks were abandoned at Annbank and Maybole— "nothing could be done"— and the first attempted union, at Patna, foundered after a few months.

Thereafter the face of Presbytery has been altered by both expansion and contraction. While new buildings have gone up to meet the needs of new communities in Prestwick, Ayr, Auchinleck and Old Cumnock, some of the older charges have been linked or united. Yet the aim of the reformers of 1581 to have a church in the midst of the people remains unchanged.

BUILDINGS AND STIPENDS

According to the First and Second Books of Discipline it would be simple. Churches would be built and maintained, and ministers—like teachers and the poor — looked after "upon the charge of the Church". That is, the money would all come from the wealth of the Old Church, in particular from what were known as "the Great Teinds". It did not work out as planned, the Church getting about one sixth of what was required.

Whereever possible the old church buildings were used. In Ayr the people went to the same church down in the "bent lands" at the sea front, until Cromwell turned it into a citadel in 1652. The new church was then built "the room, place and stance of the Grey Friars Kirk".

There were other ways of utilising old property —

1650, June 26 "The Presbytery considering that the new kirk of Barre is to be builded, thairfore they thought it was necessair and expedient that the materials of Kirkdomini as yet standing be taken down and transported to the place where the said new kirk is to be builded".

Responsibility for the upkeep of property was vested in the heritors. They did not always fulfil their duties to the satisfaction of Presbytery, but it should be said that Presbytery did not always do much more than tell others what to do.

1687, September 13 "... Underwood came from the Paroch of Craigie and Barnwell, desiring Mr Campbell's continuance among them; who was answered that if Craigie Paroch would give sufficient surty for his maintainance, he should be continued among them, otherwise declared transportable".

1688, July 5 "... Mr. James Boog appointed the excite the paroch of Symontoun to provide a meeting house for themselves, as also a maintainance and house for the minister".

A different kind of problem cropped up with the Revolution of 1689 and the removal of the "curates". "... were appointed to consult with Provost Muir how the manse of Dalmell•ngton might be possessed, or any other manse in the like case, where the coformist continues to inhabit, or hath damnified the manse".

Presbyterial oversight is shown in the following examples:

1746, May 27 Consideration of the Acompt of the particulars necessary for repairing the manse of Dundonald.

"To repair the garret in the manse with Dales nails and workmanship	£	10:00:00
To thatch for the manse		40:00:00
To putting on the thatch by a thatcher		8:00:00
To a man to serve the thatcher		4:16:00
To point the Kirk 4 bolls lime and 1/4 ct. Sclates		1:04:00
To pointing and sclatting		2:08:00
To two visitors		1:04:00
	Total £	<u>75:12:00"</u>

Presbytery inquired into the state of the property when a new minister was inducted. This was not always a mere formality —

1747 "The heritors and elders of Barr being advertised to attend the Presbytery instantly and after prayer compeared Mr. Kennedy of Ballymore, Mr. Martin of Dalwhairn, Mr. Ferguson of Auchinsoul, Mr. McCully of Changue askt anent the Decreet of Locality and as to the state of the manse and office houses they are in a ruinous condition but that they resolve to build a new one and are tofall on measures forthat effect againt next spring. As to the Kirk which is also in a very bad condition they likeways resolve to have the Kirk enlarged which cannot be done soon till all concerned agree thereto but in the meantime they resolve to repair what is necessary".

". . . . workmen being called there appeared John McNeill, Sclater and Glassier, Robert Montgomery, Mason, Sclater, Glasier and Wright, and Robert Gibson, Wright,they brought in their report the committee finding that the manse is to be new built do theref,ire appoint that one thousand pounds

Scots be laid upon the heritors for the same end the sum of seven pouns seventeen shillings twopence sterling is sufficient to repair the Kirk at present according to best of our knowledge".

1895 ". . . the parish church of Ochiltree has fallen into a state of serious disrepair, that the walls are rent in several places, the cornice and plaster are cracked loose and in part fallen away" "the Presbytery find that the said church of Ochiltree is not only unsuitable for public worship but in some respects dangerous, further find that the replacing of the present church by a new building is the most advisable and also the most economical course to be adopted".

Heritors handed over this responsibility in 1929, on the understanding that all buildings were in a state of "tenantable repair". They cannot have been too sorry.

At Girvan in 1923 the manse was found "in need of very considerable reconstruction and repair". Another house was offered to the new minister which he was keen to accept. However, this fell through and repairs were started instead. Presbytery found the repairs did not satisfy them. A proposed piggery had to be abandoned "under the Burgh Bye-laws". The study chimney was also argued over. In turn the heritors were put out that the minister "had converted part of the manse garden into an ash tennis court which has to a certain extent destroyed its usefulness as a garden".

A similar problem arose over stipends in the early years — the original stipend for Ayr, £100 Scots, was increased in 1573 when Alloway was added to the charge. A few years later the town added money from the former endowments of the old monastic houses—vested in the provost and magistrates—but not much. When John Welsh arrived as assistant and successor there was no house for him. The town did repay those who gave him accommodation and later during his imprisonment and exile they went on paying the stipend. This, however, is more a measure of Welsh's unique worth than an indication of overall policy.

1643, July 12 The Presbytery allowed the translation of the Alloway minister "in respect he has neither manse, nor glebe, nor competent allowance".

1613 The Kirkcubright minister left for Ireland for "lack of sufficient stipend".

Stipends were paid in parish churches according to the grain prices as determined by the local fiars' courts. Augmentation was a matter of consultation

1894 ".... there were laid before the Presbytery an Extract Interlocater of the Court of Tiends showing that an Augmentation of three Chalders having been granted by the Court the stipend of Dalrymple Parish had been raised to twenty three chalders with ten pounds for Communion Elements".

Not that everything was always amicable —

1893 "The Freemen while admitting their liability in regard to the manse in the Sheriff Court have chosen by their subsequent actings that they mean to pay the expenses of the repairs and alterations ordered by the Sherrif out of the seat rents, or in other words to deprive the minister of what has been hitherto in use to be paid as part of his stipend and to apply this in discharge of their liability".

By the 20th century things were becoming organised at Presbytery. In 1919 contributions towards the increase of minimum stipends were allocated for the first time. The Basis and Plan of the 1929 Union brought an end to the old system, if not all the old problems.

TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY

Presbytery oversight of students is shown in the case of Archibald Kennedy. From the 13th September, 1687 to 27th January 1691, the Presbytery reported on his progress on 34 occasions — "Mr. Eccles and Mr. Stevenson appointed to prescribe Mr. A. Kennedy a text and hear him privately upon the same reported that they judged he might be entered upon his tryalls for the ministry he was appointed to have a homilie on 2 Cor.5, 17 in privat had his exercise and was approven to have a publick tryall, both to expon and add delivered his homilie in publick and was approven he is appointed to handle the Controversie de Authoritate Scripturae to deliver his common head as also his exegesis, and likewise to defend his theses, give an account of his languages, and answer chronologicall or other extemporary questions. He is appointed to preach his popular Sermon on 2 Tim. 4, 8 and to be ready to undergo the peeces of trya ll formerly appointed in all which he was approven, and licenc'd to preach the Gospel within the bounds of the Presbytery".

"Mr. Kennedy appointed to preach two Sabbaths at Stratoun, if desired by them preached two dayes at Stratoun, who petitioned for advice concerning the said Mr. Kennedy to whom they had some inclinations to give a call' he is in the meantime to supply them two Sabbaths and also to catechise that Paroch .. The Paroch of Stratoun presented a call to Mr. A. Kennedy, who declared that he had some scruples why he could not instantly accept the said call Mr. A. Kennedy gave back Stratoun their call to the end it might be subscribed by more Heritors: he accepted the call of Stratoun and is to continue there, in the meantime is to enter upon his tryalls for ordination". "This day Mr. A. Kennedy approven in the exercise: was approven having finished his tryalls with approbation this Presbytery appointed Mr. John Hunter to preach a day at Stratoun and to try the unanimity of the Congregation Mr. Kennedy's edict to be served, and returned endorst was served, and return'd endorst whereupon his Ordination was appointed to be solemnised at Stratoun the 27th of January 1691."

Presbytery continued to exercise control over the quality of new ministers. Before ordaining a probationer they had to be satisfied as to his academic attainment —

1746, July 2 "... the above call together with the attestation was read and approven as a sufficient call whereupon Presbytery appointed Mr Thomas Walker, Minister at Dundonald, to write to M r. Allan signifying this to him that the Presbytery has appointed him to deliver the Exercise and Addition from Hebrews 7th and 6 as also a lecture— Romans 10th at the next Presbytery and that he supply Barr as often as he can".

1746, July 23 "... delivered his Exegesis, defended his Thesis and answered the Extemporary Questions as also the Questions in Chronology, interpreted part of Psalm 112 in Hebrew and a part of the Greek Testament ad aperturam libri thereafter he was approven in all his tryalls appoint that tomorrow three weeks he be ordained minister at Barr".

Presbytery set probationers trials right up until 1931 — "... resolved to take Mr. Ewing on Trials for Ordination. The following Trials were prescribed:-

1. Hebrew: Psalm 11.
2. Greek; Mathew 5-7.
3. Divinity; the Person of Christ.
4. Church Law; Constitution of the Church and Duties of Kirk Sessions.
5. Pastoral theology."

Equal care was taken to monitor the progress of local students —

1846, October 7 "Mr. John Whyte from Girvan and Mr. Archibald Murray from Muirkirk, students of Philosophy, were examined on Literature etc. by the annual committee the Presbytery authorised the Clerk to grant them certificat".

There were similar reports in 1847 and 1848 and on 4th July, 1849 —

". . . . strictly and privately examined Messrs. Rorison, Murray and White, proposed for probationary trials, and were well satisfied as to their knowledge of Greek and Latin, of Philosophy and Theology.... Presbytery resolve to take them on public trials for license appoint the following pieces to Mr. Murray, for homily, Mathew 5: 20; lecture, Luke 15: 11-24; exercise and addition, 2 Tim. 3: 14 to end; exegesis, 'An Sit Deus Praesciens?'; popular sermon, 2 Cor. 5: 20. They also appointed him to read the 8th chapter of Genesis in Hebrew and the Greek New Testament ad aperturam libri, and to pass Catechetical trials on Divinity and Church History, particularly on the Arminian controversy ". Mr. Murray duly delivered the pieces in December 1849 and February 1850.

"The Presbytery were fully satisfied therewith the said Mr. Murray was licensed to preach the Gospel "

Presbyteries are still responsible for the oversight of students within their bounds. However, they do not check up as 1860 — ". . who were examined in Latin, on Livy book xxi, Virgil's Bucolics; in Greek, on Herodotus book 1; orally on Logic and Moral Philosophy; and by written questions on Natural Philosophy and Mathematics; and on the Shorter Catechism".

OVERSIGHT OF MINISTERS

Presbytery has always taken very seriously its responsibility for the good behaviour of ministers.

1645, November 26 John Maccorn of Straiton was deposed as he "usually frequents the aill-house, drinking indifferently with all sorts of persons from morning to night, except a little in the midst of the day, when he goes home to take a sleep."

1646, January 13 Robert Hamilton was deposed from Monkton for "various misdemeanours", including reading his sermons. This had had an interesting effect on worshippers at Monkton — "in tyme of sermon the most part of the people do nothing buy lay wajours upon the turning of the pages".

And there always have been two sides to every case —

1687, November 15 "Mr. William Eccles is appointed to writ a letter in the Presbytery's name to the Paroch of Barr, to stirr them up to be encourageing to their minister".

1688, October 23 "... but they left him as they found him; only he desired a testimonial from the Presbytery, which they answered could not be given".

And there were happy endings —

1691, March 24 "This being the day for private censure in the Presbytery, all were approved, excepting onely Mr. Hugh Campbell in Muirkirk, who was said to be sometimes guilty of drunkenness, and of too frequently meddling in secular affairs and country trysts".

1691, May 19 "... the session was called and interrogat concerning their minister's doctrin, diligence in visiting, catechising, and they approved of him in all, onely they complain'd of his negligence in catechising and his sometimes overtaken with drink especially when abroad the whole congregation was questioned to the same purpose to which answered that there were somethings in him that was offensive and stumbling to themit's their desire that he might be removed Mr Hugh was call'd in made no complaint of them, professed his grief for them, promising amendment for the future through the Lord's strength, adding withall his readiness to demitt and quitt his relation to that people, to concurr with them in a call to another minister, if they so inclin'd the Presbytery unanimously concluded that the congregation should have liberty to call another minister, yet Mr. Hugh's relation should continue firm and valid as formerly till such time as they shoudl unanimously concurr in a call". In fact he stayed on until his death in 1714.

Scandal of another kind caught up with John Steele of Stair. Edinburgh Presbytery reported that he had been present at Home's tragedy "Douglas". Admitting his presence, he pleaded "the Playhouse being a great distance from his parish, he had no reason to apprehend that he would be known, or that his presence would would have given offence". A mistake for which he apologised, "declaring his firm resolution to abstain for the future".

One of the longest cases on record concerns Alexander Cunningham of Symington. In 1763 Cunningham was called before the Presbytery. "There were several stories talked of to his prejudice through the country". He did admit attending the Playhouse "but gave such an account of some instances that were mentioned as to induce the Presbytery to hope they were not so gross as was usually represented".

Then the next November a letter from the Symington elders complained that the minister had been "near a year absent from his charge". Presbytery re-opened the case and wrote to various other presbyteries for information on alleged misconduct by Cunningham. The prolonged absence was explained on the grounds that he had gone to Edinburgh on business and had been overtaken there by illness. He even produced a letter from an Edinburgh surgeon.

However, replies from presbyteries suggested there was a case to answer. Reports talked of his being "the worse for drink" at Irvine the time of the Synod there". Witnesses said it happened in the house of James Shaw, Vintner". Then at a Masonic gathering in the White Hart, Glasgow, Cunningham gave the toast "here is to the remembrance of Adam and Eve who forfeited paradise that we might have the pleasure of drinking and smoking". He had drunk at John Tait's in the Gallowgate till three in the morning before preaching in Shettleston. There were 8 other items of misconduct alleged.

In December 1765 the Libel was given, an answer to be sustained by February. Presbytery considered the reply, dropped the question of his prolonged absence, and sustained the other 7 charges.

Hearings began in May with witnesses called by both sides. For example, Mr. Witherspoon of Paisley (who would later sign the American Declaration of Independence), asked what he meant "staggering a little". "seemed to walk as one in liquor", replied that he meant "staggering a little". How did he know it was wine and punch on the table? The accused had "pressed him much to drink a glass either of one or the other". And so on.

Cunningham has been seen once walking his horse, red in the face and without his hat. Had there been an accident — or was he incapable of riding? Friendly witnesses tried to make light of a drinking session, saying he had slept through most of it.

Finally Cunningham spoke in his own defence. Admitting that "he has been in some respects blameable" he promised "to act a part in life for the future that will be approved by God and his own conscience". Presbytery unanimously decided that he "should be suspended from his office for 4 months."

A rather unusual case occurred in 1808 — "Then a motion was made and seconded that whereas it has been generally reported and likewise asserted in this court, that Mr. James Wright, minister at Maybole, had at last harvest given from the pulpit encouragement to his parishioners to lead in their corn on the Lord's Day, the Presbytery do enquire howfar said report and assertion are true".

This started a row. It was argued that the Presbytery should first have "conversed with Mr. Wright privately". He complained that the Presbytery had refused to ask if the Dalrymple minister had said that "Mr. Wright had endeavoured to erase the 4th Commandment from the Decalogue and to abolish the observance of the Sabbath day and to trample it under his feet—or words to that purpose?"

The upshot was the following decision — "... The Synod did and hereby do unanimously set aside all the proceedings of the Presbytery of Ayr. At the same time, recommend to all the Presbyteries to exercise due vigilance for preserving and promoting a stricter regard for the Lord's ddy, ind to caution their members against offering such opinions relative to works of necessity to be done on that Holy Day as may prove a stumbling block to their people".

Changed days from the early 1600's when the Craigie minister reprovved his congregation for breaking the Sabbath and the laird threw a knife at him "which he avoided by stooping and it lodged in the back of the pulpit".

In addition, Presbytery had to ensure the orthodoxy of the ministers and their ability to get the Word across —

1789, July 15 a case that prompted Burns' "The Kirk's Alarm" —William McGill, Ayr second Charge, was accused of publishing false doctrine. A committee was appointed, met 6 times and drew up a 50 page report. Thereafter the case was passed back to the Synod. A two hour meeting resulted in an "Accommodation" and they "appointed one of their number to offer their thanksgivings to the Almighty".

1847, May 10 the settlement of a new minister in Girvan was delayed by "certain objections", all the more weighty because in Girvan "there is already so much dissent" (a reference to the strength of the Free Church).

July 7 "he is unable to speak his native language either intelligibly or grammatically he even makes use of words which obviously he does not understand his discourses are unimpressive, confused and unedifying, and display great want of judgement, narrow views of religion he denied the allegations contained in the said objections " "The Presbytery did and hereby do admit the objections, which have been found relevant to proof, and allow the parties a conjunct probation . ."

November 8 "Presbytery found that the objections may all be resolved into three" first two "not proven", third found proven (i.e. his discourses were unimpressive etc.) "the presentee is not fit and qualified to take the pastoral charge of the parish of Girvan and hereby refuse to proceed . ."

However, an appeal went to the Assembly of 1848. The Assembly "reversed the sentence of the Presbytery of Ayr". Mr. Corson then took the customary trials which he duly passed in July. Another attempt to reject him as unfit was "unanimously repelled", the Presbytery being "unanimously satisfied as to Mr. Corson's soundness in the Faith". On his ordination "a great number of the parishioners received Mr. Corson as their parson".

Presbytery continues its work of oversight, but although a minister had to be threatened by a law agent as late as 1891, the emphasis is more on talking difficulties through in quiet consultation. At its most strict the Presbytery still gave a hearing and was never vindictive. When left to themselves the people of the church were much more direct in dealing with offending ministers —

In 1637 William Annand of Ayr was attacked in Glasgow for defendng Laud's Liturgy before the Synod — "Some hundreds of inraged women of all qualities were about him with neaves, staves, and peats". He escaped but the next day "at his onlouping his horse fell above him in a very foul myre which occasioned more speech".

And in the days after the Glorious Revolution the "King's curates" were often helped on their way — "he was forced into the church-yard by 90 armed men who discharged him to preach and tore his gown they returned and forbade him to preach anymore at the church on which he deserted the charge took him out of house and after talking with him about an hour put him through the water of Irvine outed by the people".

THE PRESBYTERY ITSELF

From the beginning the Presbytery has met "at Air" (apud Ayr). No meeting place is mentioned but it is understood that the church of St. John the Baptist was used. In addition the court went wherever business took it—even unto Muirkirk and unto Barr. This in turn necessitated hospitality and the building of large manses, probably at their grandest in the 1850's.

Presbytery meetings followed a steady pattern down through the centuries. The Moderator served variously for a year or for 6 months, and was for some time appointed on a simple rota. The clerkship was rather different, continuity being more obviously a virtue. It is significant that in 1929 the united Presbytery had one moderator — the most senior minister willing to serve — but two clerks.

Many of the present day features of meetings date back to 1929. The use of the County Buildings on a regular (and, briefly, free) basis was decided. Robes were presented to the moderator for official wear — a "Presbyterial" scarf being added later. And one notices an increase in the number of standing committees to expedite business.

One difference— Presbytery had traditionally met in the morning, eleven o'clock being chosen in 1929. This in turn had led to such developments as a Lunch Club, a Choir, and a Library, all gone.