
THE KIRK OF ST MACHAN, ECCLESMACHAN VILLAGE



About 764 years ago, on the 13th September 1244, Bishop David de Bernham held a service of consecration - or more likely, re-consecration - at the little church at Ecclesmachan. Just how old the building was at that time we shall probably never know, but from architectural fragments which still remain in the south wall it would seem that it had already been in existence for a couple of generations. It is highly likely that an earlier, wooden church once stood on or near this site, and tradition asserts that St Machan himself chose the spot in the 6th century. Machan was a disciple of St Cadoc and both saints are depicted in stained glass behind the communion table. Naturally, nothing of this wooden building remains today - indeed very little remains of the church built at the end of the 12th or beginning of the 13th century.

When dedicated, the church of St Machan would have been a plain oblong structure with an arch or screen separating the people in the nave from the priest in the chancel, with the altar sited at the east end, in front of what is now the Pinkerton window. By the late 15th century the church was practically in ruins and was virtually re-built on it's original foundations by Archdeacon, later Bishop, Elphinstone whose coat of arms can be seen above the vestry door.

In 1710 an aisle was added on the north, turning the ground plan into a 'T' shape. The pulpit and communion table were placed between the two stained glass windows in the middle of the south wall - near where the colourful "Strathbrock Parish Church" banner now hangs - and a belfry was placed on the west gable. The church retained this 'T' shape, with numerous alterations, and the addition of two more lofts, until 1908 when the north aisle was extended east and west to make it the same length as the nave; the lofts were swept away and a chancel, vestry and porch added. The church we see today remains relatively unchanged since that date and would be immediately recognisable, both inside and out, to Herbert Honeyman, the architect of the 1908 additions. Praise be to God that it still accommodates a thriving and sizeable congregation for weekly worship over 100 years later.

Compiled from historical information supplied by Mr Brian Lilley.

