



Dailly Parish Church, Dailly Parish, Ayrshire, Scotland

After the boundaries of Dailly Parish shifted in the 1600s, the church heritors built a more centrally located parish church. That church opened in about 1696, but it was poorly constructed. It was replaced by the current Dailly Parish Church in 1766. Some of our direct ancestors and numerous cousins worshipped here, although none of our direct ancestors were buried in its churchyard.

When the church heritors, the wealthy parish landowners who supported the church, decided to build a new parish church more centrally located in Dailly Parish, they agreed on a site near Milncavish, at the time little more than a corn mill and a couple houses. The new parish church was built, and services began there about 1696.

St. Machar's Church of Dailly, as it was called, was poorly constructed, and it also proved to be too small to meet the needs of the parish. After failing an inspection, the church was replaced in 1766 by the structure we see today, although the new church had to be enlarged just 12 years later to accommodate 100 more parishioners. The village of New Dailly – today's Dailly – was laid out around the church at about this time, too. Today, the church stands on Dailly's Main Street.

This new church had a T-shaped floorplan and featured three lofts where seating for the parish's prominent families was located. Tradition holds that this was so that they could look down on the minister, a symbol of their higher status in the community.

The parish church would undergo minor renovations several times in the years since. It survived a proposal in the 1880s to completely replace it, but it underwent major renovations in 1914.

Some of our direct ancestors and numerous cousins worshipped here, and their births, baptisms, marriages and deaths were recorded in this church's registry. It has a churchyard, and many parish burials have taken place there, although none of our direct ancestors were buried here that I can find in the available records.

The Ayrshire Ordnance Survey Name Books 1855-1857 described the Dailly Parish Church, the Church Manse and the Church School this way:

No. 21. *Dailly Parish of Dailly*

List of Names as written on the Plan	Various modes of Spelling the same Names	Authority for those modes of Spelling	Situation	Descriptive Remarks, or other General Observations which may be considered of Interest
Church	Church Do Establish'd Church No	Thomas Scott W. M. Culloch J. W. Willet J. D. Ross Esqr	I. II	A Substantial Stone & Lime Church erected in the year 1766 by the heritors of the parish It is capable of containing upwards of 650 persons. It is a plain building & has a dingy appearance [Given] the want of being kept in proper [order] A recent lantern in which the bells are kept surmounts it.
Manse	Manse Do No No	Thomas Scott W. M. Culloch J. D. Ross Esqr J. W. Willet	I. II	A substantial building two storeys & in good repair. It was erected in 1801 There are additions to it in 1818. [The] Ministers stipend is £365 with £5 of teen [teind] money [& a Free house] & garden, Glebe etc.
School	School Do Parochial School No	Thomas Scott W. M. Culloch J. W. Willet J. D. Ross Esqr	I. II	A one storey slated School [house] with an average attendance of 60 scholars the branches taught are English, writing & Grammar Latin, [writing] & arithmetic etc The Schoolmaster salary is £30 half of which is from Government the other from heritors

Ayrshire Ordnance Survey Descriptive Remarks for Dailly Parish Church: "A Substantial Stone & lime Church [erected] in the year 1766 by the heritors of [the] parish It is capable of containing upwards of 650 persons. It is a [plain] building & has a dingy appearance [Given] the want of being kept in proper [order] A recent lantern in which the bells are kept surmounts it." [sic]

Ayrshire Ordnance Survey Descriptive Remarks for Dailly Parish Church Manse: "A substantial building two [storeys] & in good repair. It was erected in 1801 There are additions to it in 1818. [The] Ministers stipend is £365 with £5 of teen [teind] money [& a Free house] & garden, Glebe etc." [sic]

Ayrshire Ordnance Survey Descriptive Remarks for Dailly Parish Church School: "A one storey slated School [house] with an average attendance of 60 scholars the branches taught are English, writing & Grammar Latin, [writing] & arithmetic etc The Schoolmaster salary is £30 half of which is from Government the other from heritors" [sic]

Dailly Parish Church Ministers and our Watson Ancestors

Here is a list of the Dailly Parish Church ministers who served during the years that our known ancestors lived in Dailly Parish, along with the family births (baptisms), marriages and deaths that were recorded in the church registry during their tenures.

Patrick Crauford, 1691-1710

Patrick Crauford (Crawford) was the minister at the Old Dailly Church when the new church opened at Milncavish and his ministry was transferred there. He was buried in the churchyard at Old Dailly Church.

- Birth of John Watson¹, 1702
- Birth of Agnes Watson (John¹'s possible sister)

William Steel, 1711-1723

William Patoun, 1724-1755

- Marriage between John Watson¹ and Jannet Cathcart, 1728
- Birth of Anna Watson, 1729
- Birth of Hugh Watson, 1731
- Birth of Robert Watson, 1733
- Birth of Agnes Watson 1735
- Birth of John Watson² 1740

Thomas Thomson, 1756-1799

Thomas Thomson was instrumental in promoting the 1766 construction of the current Dailly Parish Church.

- Marriage of John Watson² and Helen Skeene, 1767
- Birth of Hugh Watson, 1769
- Birth of William Watson, 1771
- Birth of John Watson³, 1773
- Birth of Alexander Watson, 1776
- Death of John Watson³, before 1778
- Birth of John Watson⁴, 1778
- Death of John Watson¹, bef. 1784 and probably before 1780
- Death of Jannet Cathcart, 1784
- Birth of Henry Watson, 1784

John Thomson, 1800-1805

John Thomson, a son of Thomas Thomson, went on to become one of Scotland's most famous landscape painters.

- Marriage of John Watson⁴ and Jane Lambie, 1802
- Birth of William Watson, 1803

- For more about John Thomson, see [John Thomson, Dailly Minister and Landscape Painter](#).

Charles Cunningham, 1806-1815

Charles Cunningham's name and the year 1815 are inscribed on the church bell. Cunningham died in 1815, and the bell was presumably given to the church in his memory.

- Birth of Robert Watson, 1806
- Birth of twins Agnes and James Watson, 1808
- Birth of Janet Wason, 1811
- Birth of John Watson⁵, 1813

Alexander Hill, 1816-1840

Alexander Hill was appointed a professor of divinity at Glasgow University.

- Birth of Helen Wason, 1816
- Death of John Watson², 1818
- Birth of Hugh Wawsson, 1820
- Marriage of William Watson and Janet Martin, 1825
- Birth of Grizzle (Grace) Wasson, 1826
- Marriage of David Black and Janet Wason, 1828
- Birth of Jane Black, 1828
- Death of Helen Skeene, 1832
- Marriage of Robert Robertson and Agnes Watson, 1833

William Chalmers, 1841-1843

The Disruption of 1843 was a schism in the Church of Scotland over the authority of the church vs. state regarding matters of clerical appointments and benefits. Some 450 ministers of the church broke away and established the Free Church of Scotland. William Chalmers and a large part of his Dailly Parish Church congregation came out at the Disruption. Chalmers became the first Free Church minister at Dailly before moving to England and becoming the principal of the English Presbyterian College.

- John Watson⁵ (Wasson) and Jemima Russell were married in Riccarton Parish in December 1841 before emigrating to the United States in 1842, but there is some suggestion that they may have returned to Dailly for the winter and worshipped there before they emigrated.

Photos of the Dailly Parish Church



View of Dailly Parish Church from the east on Main Street, village of Dailly



View of Dailly Parish Church from the west on Main Street



Views of Dailly Parish Church from the east (top) and south (bottom)



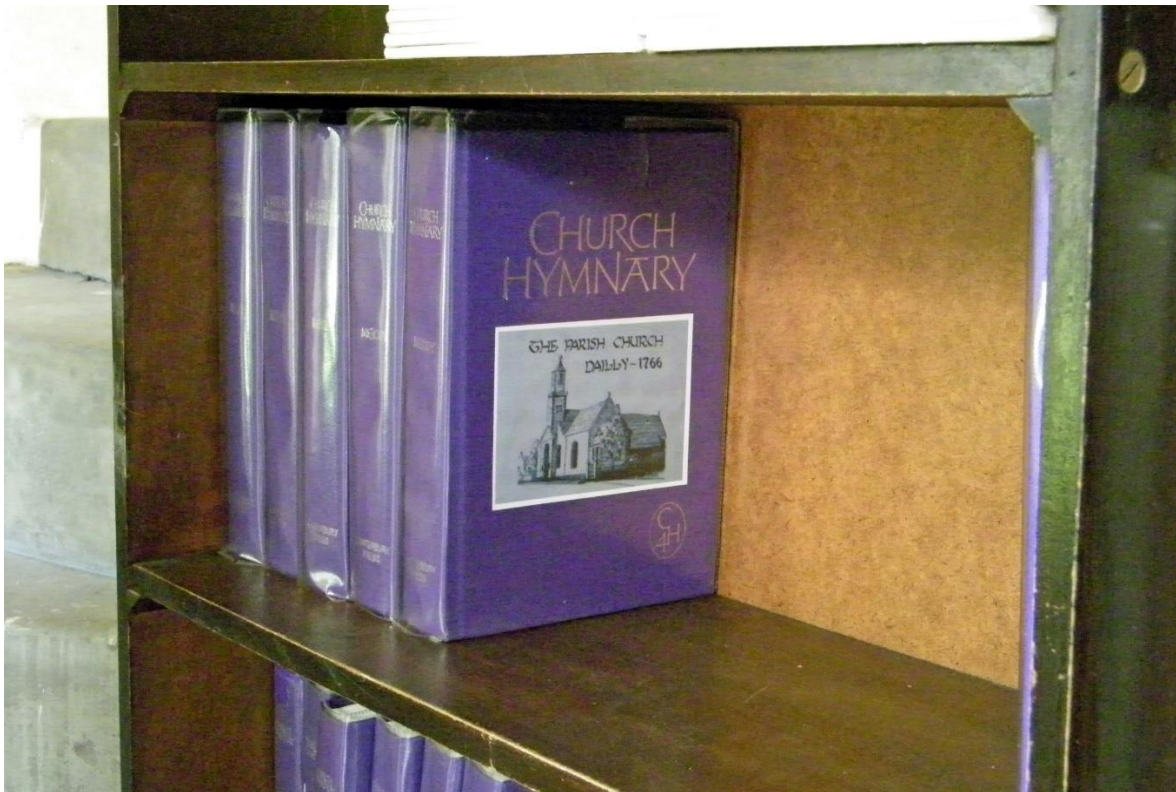
View towards the pulpit from the back of the church. In the 1914 renovations, the ceiling was removed, opening the inside of the church up to the rafters. This gave the church a more open, less claustrophobic feel.



Views of the east (top) and west (bottom) transepts. When the church was originally built, the balconies met at the corners, but they were pushed back during the 1914 renovations to help create a more open feeling in the church. These seats were reserved for the prominent families of the parish, e.g., the loft in the west transept was the Bargany Loft. Tradition holds that this allowed them to look down on the minister, a symbol of their higher status in the community.



The back of the church



This Church Hymnary is the standard hymnary used by all Church of Scotland congregations.



The marker for John Brown in the Dailly Parish Church churchyard

John Brown's grave is perhaps the most famous in the Dailly Parish Church's churchyard.

Brown was a 66-year-old collier at the Kilgrammie Coal Pit on the Bargany Estate. On October 8, 1835, a large portion of the pit collapsed. A series of rockfalls continued. After the roof collapsed, John Brown was the only miner who was not able to escape. After two weeks of digging with continued dangers of rock falls and gas leaks, they assumed Brown was dead and the official search operation was called off.

His fellow miners didn't give up. On October 30th, two miners broke through the debris into a small opening, but gas forced them back. Once the gas was dispersed, they were able to work their way into the opening. There they found a very weak John Brown. He was examined by a doctor and returned to his home at Kilgrammie Row for rest and recovery, but he died three days later on November 3.



Some remodeling at the Dailly Parish Church Hall had just been completed when I visited Dailly in 2012. I attended an open house there.



The former Dailly Church Manse was built in 1801 (with additions in 1818) as housing for the Dailly Parish Church ministers and their families. Rev. John Thomson was the first Dailly Parish Church minister to occupy the manse, which is just up the street from Dailly Parish Church.

Prepared by Mark David Wasson
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