

A Brief History



1864

2014

St Magnus' Church
Lerwick

CONTENTS

4	An introduction
5	A brief history of Episcopacy in Shetland
7	The Foundation
9	The Rectory and School
9	Mission Services
10	The House of Charity
13	The Stained Glass Windows
15	Paschal Candle Stand
16	The War Memorial
16	Developments to the Church
18	St Michael's Mission Hall
19	The Mission to Seamen
19	Work among the Fisher-girls in Lerwick
21	100 th Anniversary Celebrations
22	The Church Today
25	The restoration 2008/2009
25	The pattern of worship
27	Incumbents of St Magnus' Church

An introduction

Since 1863 when the foundation stone for this church was laid, St Magnus' church has been much more than a building designed for worship. Much of this short history, now reprinted to celebrate the 150th anniversary of its dedication and consecration in 1864 reflects the fact that St Magnus' has always been about its people and those they served and ministered to.

The life of the church has seen periods of both growth and decline, but in all, the lives and stories of its people have been the life blood of this place.

Today's faithful worshippers here continue to build on the foundations laid down by our predecessors. The life of prayer and worship continues to this day, and through this prayer and worship lives are continued to be touched and blessed by God, whether it is in the baptism of a new born child, the dedication of a couple at marriage, the thanksgiving and commendation of our faithful and beloved departed, or of course the humble prayers offered week by week of a people who seek to recognise the continuing love of God to a world so much in need.

St Magnus' church is one such focus in this town of Lerwick and on these Islands which make up "Shetland". Looking through our visitors book we already know its influence far exceeds the building, and stretches around the world. We continue to give thanks for this.

Neil Brice Rector, June 2014

A brief history of Episcopacy in Shetland

At the time of the Revolution of 1688, while the majority of people of Shetland accepted Presbyterianism, the lairds and some of the merchants continued to belong to the communion of the Scottish Episcopal Church despite being banned by law. An extract from the Presbytery records of Zetland dated 25 September 1723 states that a charge was made against James Taylor, Chaplain to the Laird of Lochend and teacher to his children. In that he was – *Episcopal, is critical of the Presbyterian Church, is opposed to the Government and never prays for King George*. A later extract dated 7 June 1727 reports that he returned to Shetland in August pretending to have orders from a bishop to set up congregations in Lerwick and Burra. Having received final warning, which he ignored, the sentence of ex-communication was passed on Taylor from the Lerwick Auld Kirk pulpit on 22 October 1727. He left Lerwick on 10 July 1729.



John Hunter was the next and last remaining Episcopal priest in Shetland, and from his diary (1734-45) it appears that he was very much an itinerant priest with all of Shetland as his parish. His permanent residence was at Sumburgh, Dunrossness. It is recorded that he had a small chapel, dedicated to St Barnabas, originally believed to have been at the south end of Lerwick, but more likely to have been located at Toab, Dunrossness. For a century after his death in 1761 there were no Episcopal clergy in Shetland.

In 1861 the Rev Robert Walker, Priest at Tillymorgan, Aberdeenshire was asked to open a mission in Lerwick. It had been arranged that Major

and Mrs Thomas Mouat Cameron, who were the founders of the new mission, would travel with him on the same steamer, but something prevented them from sailing on the arranged day and Mr Walker arrived in Lerwick alone on a Saturday afternoon. Having never been in Shetland before, and knowing no one, he thought it best not to attempt to hold any service until his friends arrived by the next boat about three or four days later. The following day (Sunday) was a perfect Shetland summer day and Mr Walker took his Bible and Prayer Book, and went out to the hills behind Lerwick, and there, with the town spread below him, he held the Sunday services, and spent the whole day in a solitary retreat with God preparing for his future mission.



The mission services began on 7 July 1861 and there were six communicants at the first celebration of Holy Communion the following Sunday. Services were held in the Subscription Rooms formerly the 'Auld Kirk' (now the Masonic Hall) in Queens Lane.

It was said that to the very end the Rev Walker kept up his constant rule of daily matins and evensong, and on week-days was always his own bell-ringer. On the night he died in 1896 he went out at 10.00pm to see that St Magnus' Church stove was burning properly, in order that the church might be warm enough on Sunday morning, so careful was he of everything connected to the House of God.

The Foundation

Major Thomas Mouat Cameron and his wife Mrs Mary Margaret Cameron arrived back in Lerwick three or four days after Robert Walker in 1861. Major Cameron who was the youngest son of Captain William Cameron of Garth, Unst, was educated at the Military Academy, Edinburgh. After twelve years service with the East India Company, he served in the 55th Regiment of Bengal Native Infantry. Mrs Cameron had lived in India with her husband and they were there during the 1857 Indian Mutiny.



Mrs Cameron returned to Shetland in 1859, and stayed in the houses of Gardie, Bressay and Annsbrae, Lerwick. Major Cameron retired from the army in 1861 and on his mother's death in 1871, Major Cameron succeeded to the estate of Garth, having previously acquired Annsbrae following his father's death in 1855.

Mrs Cameron had helped in the revival of Episcopal faith in the islands after an absence of about 100 years. Largely by her the efforts and that of Rev Walker, subscriptions were raised for building of a church. Mrs Ogilvie, Aberdeen, Mrs Forbes of Boyndlie, the Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone, Mr Skinner, and others were among subscribers; and when enough money was raised for the church, then the Rectory was undertaken, and afterwards the school and school house. Major Cameron donated the site, and the architect was Mr Ellis, of Aberdeen.

On or about St Magnus' Day, 16 April 1863, the foundation stone of St Magnus' Church was laid, with the Rev Walker and Rev Ellaby officiating. It was finished and consecrated on 27 June 1864. Mr Ellis gifted a pair of carved capitals for the little polished red-granite pillars in the chancel arch.

An article, which appeared in the March 1896 edition of the Scottish Standard Bearer magazine, gives a vivid description of the church -

“The beautiful little Church of St Magnus consists of - first, porch; second, nave, lighted by two single and two double lancet windows on each side; third, chancel, paved with tiles, raised three steps above the nave, and lighted by a handsome rose window, with twelve small round lights of stained glass. The uppermost one contains a representation of the Lamb of God; the lowest, that of the pelican, type of the church; and four others contain the emblems of the four evangelists. In the centre light is the scene of the Crucifixion, with the Blessed Virgin and St John on either side, or angels swinging censers around.

A tiny sanctuary is raised four steps above the chancel and is also paved with tiles; and the altar is raised yet another step.

The altar is a massive slab of sandstone supported on three stone pillars. The most exquisitely embroidered of the altar cloths and stoles, which are varied according to the seasons, were worked and presented by Mrs Muir of Montrose, and also the beautiful white silk almsbags; the handsome red altar cloth was worked and presented by Miss Ogilvie in the early days of the church. The curtains and other hangings were given by various friends.

On the south side of the chancel are a piscina and sedilia for two clergy; also a vestry and organ chamber containing a sweetly tuned organ. Towards the purchase of the organ Miss Ogilvie donated £100, the rest of the money being collected from various friends largely by the efforts of the late Mrs Walker.

The walls of the chancel are painted and gilded- a labour of love by the pastor's own hands, and those of the Rev Robert Mackay of Longside, formerly a member of St Magnus' choir.

The lofty, graceful pointed stone arch is one of the chief beauties of the church. The open, high-pitched rafter roof and the open seats are of varnished wood.

The west end has a rose window slightly larger than that at the east end, also furnished with stain glass. The east end window already described, was the gift of Charles B. Skinner, late of Calcutta, great- great-grandson of the Rev John Hunter, the last Episcopal clergyman in Shetland, who lived, laboured and died

there about 120 years before Mr Walker's arrival, and to whose memory his descendent put in the window."

In 1891 a bell-tower designed by Mr Ellis, Aberdeen, was added to the church containing a choir-vestry, classroom and ringing-chamber also a bell-loft added by Mrs Cameron. Messrs. Sinclair & Hardie, Lerwick, who built the original church, were again employed

The Rectory and School

The Rectory is a commodious house of nine rooms built c.1864 and is still the residence of the Rector.

St Magnus' Episcopal schoolroom, or Walker's School as it was more commonly known, was built in 1868 and could provide education for about 80 pupils. It was open to children of all denominations, but with a priority to Episcopalians. In 1870 Lerwick Episcopalian School received a government grant of £60.10 shillings for 85 pupils.



Pupils at Walker's School in the 1920s
Back: Laurence Robertson, Samuel Robertson, Susan Hunter (nee Leask), Minnie Greenhill (nee Johnson), James Leask. Front: ?, B. Watt, Jean Lobban (nee Johnson), Islay Dow (nee Gray), Agnes Johnson (nee Milne), ? Robertson

The school was later enlarged and divided, so as to form two good-sized rooms besides the classroom. The school closed in 1929 when the pupils were absorbed into Lerwick Central Public School.

Mission Services

In 1902 Sister Annie (Stevenson), of the Sisters of St Margaret, Aberdeen arrived to prepare for a mission to be carried out in Shetland by Father

R. Traill and the Rev G. E. W. Holmes. Miss Gutterm joined her for a short time.

On Saturday 22 February 1902 a series of mission services began in St Magnus' Church with an introductory service at 8.15 pm. On three Sundays, (23 February, 2 and 9 March), five services were held, while every day throughout the mission four services took place. Mondays and Wednesdays in the Masonic Hall, Queens Lane; Sundays for men and lads in the Rechabite Hall, Mounthooly Street, and in the Albert Hall, Garthspool a series of meetings were also arranged.

When the mission was over, the Sisters were allowed by the Mother Superior, at the urgent request of the Rector and the congregation of St Magnus, to remain to carry out the work of the church. The Mother Superior was none other than the Camerons' daughter, Margaret Anne. At first the Sisters lived in a small house at the South End of Lerwick until the House of Charity was built in Knab Road for their use.

The House of Charity

In 1904 the House of Charity, officially called St Magnus' Home, was erected, from designs by Mr J M Aitken, the well known architect and builder, in the Annsbrae grounds, Knab Road, as a memorial to Mrs Mary Margaret Cameron of Garth and Annsbrae who had died in January of that year. She was buried in a vault under the altar of St Magnus' Church alongside her husband, Major T M Cameron of Garth and Annsbrae who had died in 1892. A memorial plaque marks the location.



The House of Charity in Knab Road. Note the chapel windows above the memorial stone

Mrs Cameron had taken a keen interest in the welfare of the people of Lerwick. She was the instigator of a nursing scheme, the Lerwick Sick Aid Society, and she was elected their President in 1896. It had been her desire to have Christian Sisters based in Lerwick who would “live for others, and work among the people and care and comfort them in their time of need”.

Following Mrs Cameron’s death her son and two daughters carried out her wishes, and the House of Charity was dedicated by the Bishop of the United Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney on 16 June 1904. A memorial stone bearing the inscription *“To the Glory of God and in thankful remembrance of His servant Mary Margaret Cameron, this House of Charity is dedicated 1904”* was placed in the east gable using a mallet made of wood from Gardie House garden. The House opened on 27 December that same year following a Sale of Work two weeks earlier to raise funds for completing the furnishing and fitting out of the House.

The entrance was through a glass porch and there were two classrooms, one smaller than the other, a sitting room, dining room, kitchen and scullery. Upstairs was a small chapel, three bedrooms, servants’ room and box room with a large loft above.

The stained glass windows in the House of Charity were designed by Sir Ninian Comper. His father, Rev John Comper, was Rector of St Margaret of Scotland in Aberdeen and it was he who persuaded the Sisters of the Society of St Margaret at East Grinstead to establish a Community in Aberdeen. The Mother Superior was the Camerons’s daughter, Margaret Anne, hence the connection with the House of Charity. Ninian was born in 1864 and Knighted in 1950. His work can be found in churches throughout the world, and



following his death in 1960 his ashes were buried beneath the windows he designed in Westminster Abbey. He left his "Signature of the Strawberry" in his work, a memorial to his father who died in Duthie Park, Aberdeen while distributing strawberries to the poor.

The triple window overlooking Knab Road was dedicated to Mrs Cameron and a pair of windows in the south wall to Lt James Pochin R.N., a Lerwick coastguard, who lived in Fort Charlotte and was also a lay preacher in St Magnus Church and involved with Walker's School. He was accidentally drowned in Girlsta Loch in 1904 and a small memorial stone stands on the west side of the loch.

Sister Annie lived in the House assisted from time to time by others including Sister Christine Mary. Sister Ethel and Sister Harriette Lendrum were her companions during the difficult years of the First World War. Local people can remember the three Sisters of Mercy. They wore nuns' habit and were well known around the town. At that time there were many Lerwegians who could not afford to pay for treatment at the Gilbert Bain Memorial Hospital and the Sisters nursed and cared for them in their own homes. It was said that many local people were converted to the Episcopalian faith by the example shown by Sister Annie.

The nuns left in 1919 when elderly Sister Annie and Sister Harriette were withdrawn and there were no younger Sisters available to replace them. Sister Harriette died suddenly at Aberdeen in August of the following year. Failing sight due to cataract was a problem for Sister Annie but after treatment she was able to read and write again. She died of pleurisy and pneumonia at Aberdeen in March 1923.

With the departure of the Sisters the house became the Rectory for St Magnus' Church, (not to be confused with the present Rectory situated behind St Magnus' Church.) The Sunday School and Girls Guild met there, and once a month a service was held in the chapel for the Girls Guild.

The house underwent considerable repairs and reconstruction in 1939 and it would seem that the chapel was rededicated to Sisters Mary and

Margaret. It was described as being pretty with the stained glass windows, whitewashed walls and wooden seating. Many local couples were married in the Chapel.

Because of the number of spare rooms available the Rectory often kept lodgers, and during the Second World War army officers were billeted there. It became a popular place for the church's choirboys who were attracted by the constant offer of good food made available by the housekeeper Miss White. The extra rations no doubt supplied by the army.

In 1969 before the house was sold into private ownership, the Comper stained glass windows were removed to St Magnus' Church for storage. In 1973 Rev Derek Wallace instigated the removal of the clear windows in St Magnus' Church and had them replaced by the windows from the House of Charity which had been sent to Bristol for restoration and alterations. The windows were rededicated on 28 October 1973. The triple window is now three separate windows, but the two Pochin windows are together.

The present owners bought the former "House of Charity" in 1991 and, following extensive refurbishment and additions, it became the Glen Orchy Guest House.

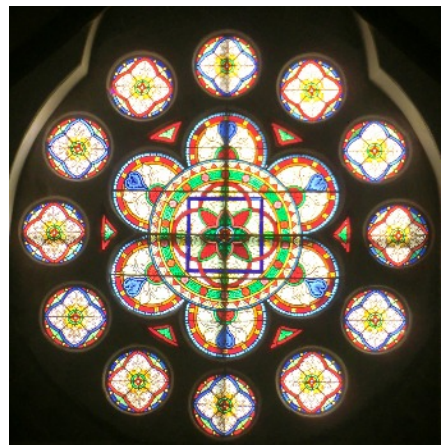
The Stained glass windows

Above the West Door

This is the oldest glass in the church, and is of a formal pattern. Originally the centre light was above the altar, but it was transferred when the present light was gifted.

Above the Altar

The centre light is in memory of the Rev John Hunter, and was donated by Mr Charles Skinner of Calcutta (a



great-great-grandson of Hunter). The twelve outer circles were not included in the gift and are therefore of different glass. The centre light depicts the crucifixion of Christ. Six of the outer circles depict the Agnus Dei, the Pelican and her young. (*The Pelican is a symbol of the atonement and the Redeemer. It was supposed to wound itself in order to feed its young with its blood and to bring to life those who were dead*) and the symbols of the four Evangelists. The remaining six are of a formal pattern.



North Wall - Choir

In memory of the Rev Robert Walker. This window depicts respectively (left) the great commission to St Peter 'Feed my lambs; feed my sheep' and (right) Christ walking on water and calling to his disciples 'Be of good cheer, it is I'.

North Wall – Nearest Door

In memory of Andrew John Grierson (1832 – 1896) of Quendale, Justice of the Peace and Deputy Lieutenant of Zetland. This window depicts the call of the first two disciples, Peter and Andrew.

The Comper Windows

After Sir Ninian Comper's father died in 1903 he incorporated a strawberry into his work as a tribute. These windows are therefore among the first to have the strawberry signature.

The three figures (St John the Evangelist, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Margaret of Scotland) were originally a triple light over the altar in the Chapel of the House of Charity given in memory of Mrs Mary Margaret Cameron. The double light (Christ and St James) was in the south wall in memory of Lieutenant James Winstanley Pochin, RN. (1862-1904).



North Wall – Second from Door

The window depicts the coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Italian inscription round the sun reads *‘L’amor che moue il sol e l’altre stelle’* (The love which moves the sun and the other stars). This is a quotation from Dante’s *‘Divine Comedy’*, part III.

South Wall – Nearest Door

St Margaret, Queen of Scotland, (with strawberry signature). The shield is that of her father, Edward the Confessor, the founder of Westminster Abbey.

South Wall – Second from Door

St John the Evangelist. The shield bears the symbol of the Evangelist.

South Wall – by Memorial Tablet (Pochin Windows)

The windows depict the risen Christ, (with strawberry signature) and St James (I Corinthians 15.7: *‘Then he appeared to James’*). The Greek beneath Christ means *‘Peace be with you’*. The club was the instrument of St James’ martyrdom.

The sentence on the scroll is peculiar in that it is written in two languages *‘Regnum celorum violentia pate’* (Latin) and *‘Da caldo amore e da viva speranza’* (Italian). It is not obvious why there are two languages used or whether, in any sense, this is intended as a quotation. The literal translation is: *‘The kingdom of heaven suffers violence by ardent love and lively hope’*.

The Paschal Candle stand

The Easter Candle (Paschal candle) is blessed and lit on the Eve of Easter Day at a rich ceremony where the church is symbolically filled with the new light of Easter and the congregation greets the risen Lord with Joy and renews their baptism vows all together. The Candle Stand is rich with symbolism. The base is made from horse chestnut and is sandblasted to give a rock like texture reminding us of Jesus’ words to Peter who he described as the rock on which the church is built. The stem itself is made to look like a stone pillar reminding us

that we are the “living stones” (1 Peter 2:5) which are built together to make the church. The top is made to look like a lighthouse or a crown reminding us that Christ is the head of the church, and also that we are light to the world. The crown has five arches to represent the five ministries that form the living church. (Apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher.) The stem and crown are Maple wood and carved into the top in Hebrew is “Malech Yahweh and Shalom” (“The Lord is King and Peace”).

This Paschal candle stand was made by local artist Cecil Tait, and dedicated in 2007.



The War Memorial

The War Memorial tablet in the Church is not dedicated to the fallen of the congregation but to twenty-two men and officers of the Royal Canadian Air Force who died in Shetland during the Second world war. The tablet was given by Mrs T.T. Stoker of Montreal, Canada, in memory of her son Thomas Thornley Braithwaite Stoker.

Developments to the Church

In 1907 a bazaar was organised with the aim of raising £300 in order to make up a deficiency of £15 in the fund for Church expenses; £150 required to carry out essential improvements to the day School; and fund a Lay Reader to carry on mission work at St Michael's Mission, Garthspool, and around the docks and waterfront all year round.

In 1909 Mr James Coates of Paisley donated a school bag to every pupil in St Magnus' School, a choice of presents to each teacher and a postal order for ten shillings (50p) to the school cleaner.

In 1933 there was a successful little sale followed by a jumble sale to raise funds towards the cost of installing a new heating apparatus in the church.

In 1964 the church was redecorated and new floodlights were fixed in the Chancel walls. Flock paper was put on the Chancel walls, as being the nearest to the gold paintwork originally put there by the Rev Robert Walker.

In 1971 the hall was completely renovated and redecorated. An anonymous donor provided £1000 for a porch on the rectory,

In 1972 the room in the Tower, above the Vestry was converted into a chapel where daily services could be held. The Bishop of Aberdeen and Orkney, the Rt. Rev E. F. Eason dedicated it on 7 June to St Olaf – King and Martyr of Norway. At the present time this area is no longer in use as a chapel.

In 1973 Rev Derek Wallace replaced five clear windows in the Church with the Comper triple and double stained glass windows from the House of Charity, which had been in storage.

In 1974 a new organ was dedicated and on 19 November Cyril Baker, the organist at that time, gave the inaugural recital.

In 1980 the dossal curtain behind the organ, which had been given in memory of Fl. Lt. Hornell by his family, was dedicated.

In 1982 the Schoolhouse was sold for £14000. A kitchen was installed in the Hall, while pointing of the church was completed.

In 1986 the decorating of the Church was completed, and new heating and lighting installed. The heating was again updated in 2008 when the church was connected to the "district heating" scheme.

In January 1995, the Reverend Elizabeth McNab was ordained as a priest. In the same year a Building Fund was established, and a grant from the Shetland Churches Council Trust enabled the stained glass windows to be covered with protective glazing; installation of paving at the entrance to the church; and the porch roof to be re-slatted. In addition a handrail was fitted on the chancel steps.

In 1996 the Rector expressed a need to renew and revise the constitution which was dated 1880, and had only been revised once when in 1930 it was decided to allow women on the Vestry. In 2010 the constitution was revised and updated again

St Michael's Mission Hall



St Michael's Mission Hall

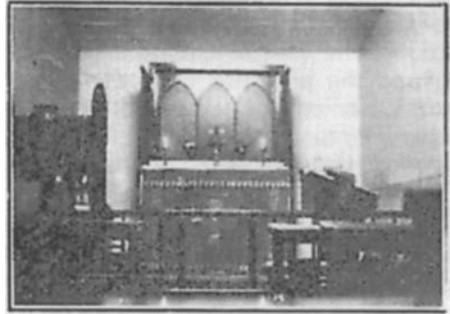
In 1902 the small wooden St Michael's Mission Hall was opened at Garthspool, at the north end of Lerwick, for the fishing community who lived there. Services were held regularly and it was also used during the fishing season as a reading room and dispensary where the Mission's nurse tended to the fish workers' hands. It is recorded that in

June 1905 St. Magnus' and St. Michael's Sunday Schools' Picnic took place and after a short service children, teachers and friends, plus a good cargo of provisions, were transported to Bressay where outdoor games were played.

Services continued to be held in the mission until 1938 when it was relocated to Charlotte Street, and the Hall was let to the Salvation Army. The Hall is now the site of the Army's new premises.

Seamen's Church of St Peter

In the Charlotte Street property owned by the Trustees of the Bishop of Aberdeen's Diocesan Fund a chapel was built and dedicated as the Seamen's Church of St Peter. Short Services were held for seafarers on Sunday evenings and weekday daily prayers at 10.00am and 9.30pm with Holy Communion from the Rector of St Magnus' Church on request.



Seamen's Church of St. Peter

In 1953 the Trustees sold the building to the Mission to Seamen, (later called The Flying Angel Mission). Incidentally the Mission closed in 1960 and was taken over by the Norwegian Welfare and became the Havly Centre. It is now the privately owned Havly Café.

Valuable work among the fisher girls at Lerwick

During 1920 the Fisherfolk Committee of the Representative Church Council of the Episcopal Church in Scotland arranged for Miss Mary Graham to come to Lerwick to work.

On arrival she sought out premises to be used exclusively for the girls and soon after she secured a hut which had been in storage. It had been brought to Lerwick in 1918 by the Church Army and erected at Alexandra Wharf as a recreation hut for the Naval personnel stationed there.

The hut was relocated to the upper side of the North Road above Holmsgarth, about one mile from the town.

Within a short time a considerable number of girls used the hut, mainly to have their hands dressed, and this was much appreciated. The District Nurse treated over 200 cases of cut or poisoned hands during the season. The canteen was managed by a Mrs Donald and several ladies provided much help. Games, concerts and knitting formed a pleasant change for girls who worked long and tiring days over the gutting farlins or in the curing sheds. An interesting development was the selling of knitted items through the Shetland Knitting Depot in Edinburgh.

During the 1920 season a total of 2,748 girls used the facilities.

The spiritual side of the work was hampered by the lack of a chaplain dedicated to the care of the girls. It was not possible for the Rector to regularly visit St Michael's Mission Hall and the girls' recreation hut due to the distance from St Magnus' Church and pressure of work in connection with the Church as he was also Chaplain to the Mission to Seamen. However Miss Graham frequently took Prayers with the girls in the hut.

An unfortunate incident took place the following year when the hut was destroyed by fire but thankfully it was insured. A new hut was erected and the good work continued for several years.

Centenary celebrations

In 1964, to mark the centenary of the Church, a Social Evening was arranged, talks were given on the work of the Missions to Seamen and on a trip to the Holy Land.

A pilgrimage to St. Ninian's Isle was held. The Lerwick Brass Band accompanied the congregation and led the singing of a short service in the ruins of the old Church there.

The main service of Thanksgiving and dedication was held on Wednesday 24 June, at which the preacher was to have been the Primus, the Most Rev F. H. Moncrieff, Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway. It was most unfortunate that he was unable to reach Lerwick because of fog. The service and address were taken by the Bishop of Aberdeen and Orkney, the Rev E. F. Easson. The Church was filled to capacity including representatives from the other Churches in Lerwick and from the Council.

During 1994 the Church celebrated its 130th anniversary by holding an exhibition of painted sails '*Sails in St Magnus*'. Originally shown in St Magnus' Cathedral, Kirkwall, it depicted the pilgrimage of Earl Rognvald II to Jerusalem. It was opened by the former Guizer Jarl Ronald Gair and was well supported by the local community.

During the celebrations the 18th century Eucharistic Liturgy of St James was held – complete with traditional metrical Psalms. The choir held a concert in the Town Hall, while the Sunday School had its annual outing.

During the Dedication Festival the choir sang Schubert's Mass in G. Following Choral Evensong with the Osterøy Choir from Norway a successful Johnsmas Foy was held.

The Church today

St Magnus' Church, or '*Da English Kirk*' as it is erroneously called locally, as a congregation of the Scottish Episcopal Church, in the Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney is in full communion with all the other churches of the Anglican Communion throughout the world. Communion is also fully shared with the German Old Catholic Church, the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands, the Church of North India, the Church of South India, the Hawaiian Reformed Catholic Church and the Philippine Independent Church.

Since 1994, through the Porvoo Declaration, the Scottish Episcopal church has joined with the Lutheran Churches of the Nordic and the Baltic countries, and the other Anglican churches of Great Britain and Ireland, in recognising the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry of each other's churches. As well as the churches of Wales, Ireland and England, the Porvoo Declaration includes: the Evangelical-Lutheran Churches of Estonia, Finland, Iceland and Lithuania; the Church of Norway and the Church of Sweden.



Since 2001, through the Reuilly Common Statement, it has become possible for the British and Irish Anglican Churches to share Communion with the French reformed Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of France, the Reformed Church of Alsace and Lorraine and the Church of the Augsburg Confession of Alsace and Lorraine.

The Scottish Episcopal Church is committed to the ecumenical movement and is an active participant in the national body Action of Churches Together in Scotland. (ACTS).

In 2002 St Magnus' participated in the Making Your Church More Inviting (MYCMI) the foundation phase of the Province's 'Mission 21' Programme. The six goals identified for the congregation by Mission 21 were about continued development of shared ministry, outreach, social events, welcoming, children and study groups.

From the goal of wanting to explore a greater shared ministry grew the programme 'People on the Move' which has at its heart the question 'what is ministry?' The goal of shared ministry will continue to raise

important and challenging issues for the church, and is an area of great growth.

With regard to outreach the need was identified for members and friends of St Magnus' to come together to worship in the South Mainland. Since then meetings have been held in people's homes, this group continues in prayer and fellowship and this is known as the South Mainland Group. The group regularly meet together to discuss faith and to pray.

Social events were identified as important in themselves and as a way of including people. All events organised have been and continue to be very well supported and a very pleasing example of growth. The choir from time to time hold a concert, and in 2014 hope to record and launch their first CD.

Soup and Sweet lunches are offered on many Saturday lunchtimes from March through to September, and this draws a faithful and dedicated group of people. Many other social events take place and draw many people to enjoy times together.

A team of Stewards was established to welcome people at the door of the church, and other ways identified in which St Magnus' could be more welcoming. It is hoped that the warm welcome you receive at St Magnus' will be one you will remember.

The Church has a corner for young children and their carers to spend time whether during worship or at other times. A Sunday School now meets on the first Sunday of each month during school terms and all young people are invited to share in this whether on a regular basis or as a visitor.

The sixth goal regarding study groups recognised that there was nothing within the life of St Magnus' that offered study, teaching or discussion opportunities. This has completely changed with the creation of the annual programmes of congregational development that the congregation has worked on together. Here there is evidence of growth, not only in terms of the number of people supporting a greatly

increased number of events and sessions, but more important in terms of growth of individuals and a corporate growth.

Many of these aims and goal are still pursued today and are built upon. In 2010 a “congregation Day” was held to speak about our mission and vision and in 2013 we held a pilgrimage Day to St Ninian’s Isle and celebrated the Eucharist on the ancient chapel site itself. Further prayers and fellowship were held in Bigton Hall and the South Mainland Group hosted this event for us. We were also able to enjoy a Quiet Day based at St Colman’s Burravoe and members of the Society of Our Lady of the Isles (SOLI) were able to share this with us.

140th anniversary celebrations

In 2004 the church celebrated its 140th anniversary. Once again the *Sails of St Magnus* from Orkney were displayed in the church. Special concerts were held, and an art and photographic exhibition were enjoyed. A barbeque was held in the Rectory Garden.

The Restoration of 2008- 2009

Following many years of fundraising and after seeking grants from many places including Historic Scotland and the Shetland Churches Council Trust a major restoration programme was undertaken. During this period the church was closed and worship took place in the Church Hall next door. The heating system for the church was renewed, the nave roof was re-laid and major restoration work undertaken on the East and West windows. Internal plaster work was repaired and replaced. Some of the original Walker painting was restored in the chancel.

The church bell which had rung out from the tower had been seriously cracked for many years, and it was decided that this restoration work was

the opportunity to cast a new bell at Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London. Funds for this were generously donated and the new bell was cast on November 27th 2009. Once installed it was given a name chosen by the congregation at that time... “Peerie Magnus”

During the restoration work it was discovered that steel joists in the tower had seriously corroded away and needed urgent repair. This was a separate project to the original restoration, though work on the tower soon followed and concrete beams were cast and installed where previously steel joists had been.

To mark the conclusion of all this work it was decided to hold a special weekend during which the Bible would be read from beginning to end without stopping. This reading would take three whole days and Christians and friends from all over Shetland took part in this reading. The “Marathon Bible Read” concluded with a special service of thanksgiving for the completion of the work at which Bishop Robert Gillies preached. (Bishop of Aberdeen and Orkney)

The Pattern of Worship

In St Magnus’ Church the pattern of worship includes Morning Prayer on Wednesdays and Night Prayer on Thursday. On Sundays there is a Sung Eucharist at 10.45 am, the main act of worship. On Sunday evenings Evening Prayer is said throughout the year.

The Rector of St Magnus’ Church is also the Rector of the congregation of St. Colman’s Church, Burravoe, on the island of Yell. The Rector is also a Trustee of the Society of Our Lady of the Isles, an anglican religious community of women, now in the process of moving from Fetlar to Unst.

INCUMBENTS OF ST MAGNUS CHURCH

1864 – 1896	Robert Walker
1896 – 1907	Edward James Hodges
1907 – 1908	Lewis Hermann Tiarks
1908 – 1917	Benjamin Maturin
1917 – 1920	Charles Ross
1920 – 1923	James Alexander Malony
1923 – 1930	Henry Holloway
1930 – 1935	William Ernst Adam
1935 – 1938	Morris Victor Theodore Varney
1938 – 1939	Eric Hylton Osmund Cooper
1939 – 1948	Ernest Arthur Lister
1948 – 1952	Joseph Nelson
1952 – 1957	Gordon Powell Jones
1957 – 1962	Dixon Lynn
1962 - 1967	Herbert Oxley
1967 – 1970	Robert Smith
1970 – 1978	Derek George Wallace
1978 – 1979	Thomas Wailes Griffiths
1980 – 2000	Lewis Shand Smith
2000 – 2004	Martin Oxley
2006 – 2009	Ronald Keith Henshall
2010 – present	Neil Alan Brice



St Magnus' Church before the tower was built in 1891

This brief history and guide was revised and reprinted in 2014. Much of the content is found in an earlier history of St Magnus' written by Douglas Sinclair in 2004. We thank Douglas Sinclair for further revision and to Dr Barbara Crawford, who has sponsored the reprinting for the 150th anniversary