



## **St Finnarr's Scottish Episcopal Church, Dornoch**

This church is dedicated to St. Finnarr who was born in Ireland, probably around 540AD. He founded a monastic settlement in Cork (Ireland), studied, travelled and made pilgrimages in Europe before coming to Scotland as a teacher and missionary. Tradition maintains that he had a base and founded a monastic settlement here in Dornoch, before eventually returning to Ireland, and there is some archaeological evidence to support this. Sometime before 1146 a stone church dedicated to St Finnarr was built at the east end of the present Dornoch Cathedral burial ground and until the 15<sup>th</sup> century served as the parish church for Dornoch but later fell into disuse. For many centuries St Barr's Fair was held on 25<sup>th</sup> September, the date of the feast of St Finnarr.

In 1903 an Episcopal Church Mission was established in Dornoch which met in private houses and in 1909 a fund was set up to raise money to fund the building of an Episcopalian church in Dornoch on land gifted for the purpose. This new church, designed by Alexander Ross, was used for the first time on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1912 and the Benediction (blessing) took place on August 28<sup>th</sup> of the same year. When the church was free of debt it was consecrated on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1913. The register shows that there were 14 communicants on that day.

In the intervening years the church has been furnished with the generous gifts of many people – the chairs, altar silverware, altar frontals, pulpit and pulpit falls, lectern and many other items. The stained glass window is by Percy Bacon. It was gifted to the church in 1926 by Archibald and Elizabeth Barrow of New York in memory of their son born in July 1906 and who died in April 1914. The child depicted in the centre panel may be a likeness of the boy. A Vestry was added in 1932 and the porch in 1969. The organ came from St Paul's, Strathnairn and the font and bell from St Mary's Church, Highfield (near Dingwall), when it closed in 1966. There are seventy tapestry kneelers with highland themes which were designed and made over twelve years from 1981 by fourteen members of the congregation. Since the 1990's an area of the church grounds has been set aside as a wild flower meadow which provides a haven for insects and birds.

From the beginning up to the 1950's services were normally held only in the summer months of July, August and September. Visiting priests, from many parts of England, Wales and Scotland, some of whom were probably retired, seem to have spent their summers here and conducted services, often three per Sunday. Between February 1918 and April 1919 the register records two Canadian Chaplains as taking services, one from Nova Scotia, the other from Saskatchewan. These may have been chaplains to Canadian troops stationed around Dornoch. Canadian forces were certainly present in the area as members of the Canadian Forestry Corps, who were organised at the request of the UK government to set up logging camps in various places throughout Scotland, including Sutherland, to assist in the production of timber in the war effort.

In the 80's and 90's Father Alex Gordon looked after St Finnbar's, St Columba's in Brora (which still uses the 'tin

tabernacle' which originally came from Tain) and Lairg Mission, combining that with being the full time pharmacist at Lairg. The first full time stipendary Priest in Charge was Father Mel Langille who came to us from Canada in 2003 and moved on to Fortrose in 2009. A new chapter in St Finnbar's history opened with the Licensing of Father Chris Mayo as Priest in Charge of East Sutherland and of Tain in July 2012.

The Scottish Episcopal Church is a welcoming and inclusive Church that traces its history back to the beginnings of Christianity in Scotland. We are part of the world-wide Anglican Communion. Although sometimes referred to as the English Church we are not and never have been part of the Church of England. The central act of worship in the Scottish Episcopal Church is the Eucharist (also known as Holy Communion) and everyone is most welcome to join us in the celebration.

Service times: Sunday 11am Eucharist (5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in month varies please consult the notice boards or ring for information).

Wednesdays 10.30am Holy Communion (Reserved Sacrament) or Morning Prayer.

Fr Chris Mayo : 01408 600818

Monica Dargie: 01862 810877 and if Fr. Chris unavailable

St. Finnbar's Episcopal Church: Dornoch.  
Scottish Charity No. SC009639

