

A Pilgrimage to the Ancient Church of Fowlis Wester.

OUR pilgrimage begins at New Fowlis, which is about four miles from Crieff, on the main Crieff-Perth Road. On alighting from the 'bus we see a roundel of beech trees close to the road; on the mound on which they stand are four large stones, pointing to religious rites and a civilisation earlier than Christianity.

The whole upland district to which one ascends from the cross-roads is rich in stone records of the dim past. Above the village is a large stone circle, complete with sacrificial stone of Druid worship, belonging to the bronze age. In this district, too, the Celtic Counts of Strathearn held sway in the dark ages, almost as independent rulers. Their court was held at the village of Fowlis Wester.

A curious and rather uneuphonious name is that of Fowlis, a name lost in the mists of antiquity and supposed to be derived from "Fowgnolish," meaning "under the light." The place was so named, tradition has it, by an Earl of Strathearn who, desirous of having a church in the vicinity of his castle, stood on an eminence on which he had a summer-seat and vowed to erect it wherever the first beams of the morning sun struck. He fulfilled his vow.

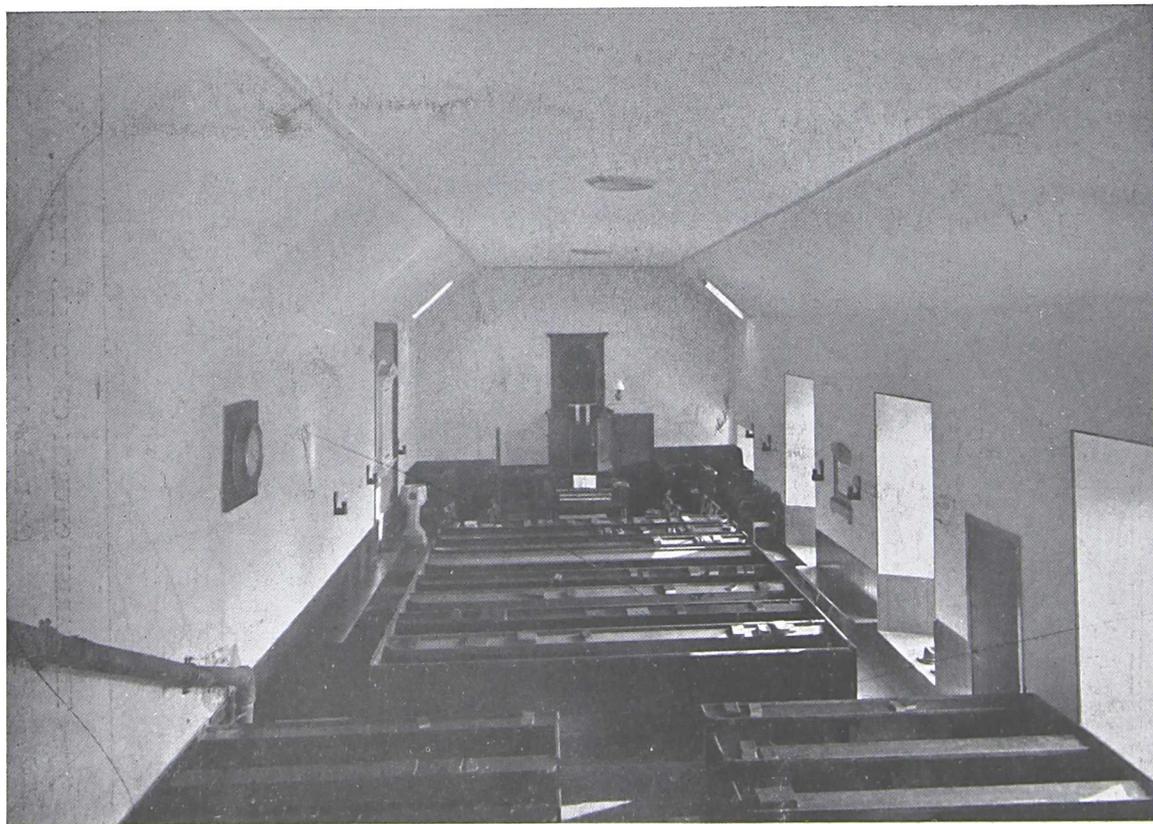
The village lies in a fold of the quiet hills half-a-mile up from the main road. Entering it one is immediately transported to another age. The ancient "Cross of Fowlis" stands in the open square, the children probably playing around it. This ancient stone once stood at the mouth of the Sma' Glen, and at an early date was brought over the hill and set up in the village, which was the market-place for a wide district. On one side of the slab there is a finely carved Celtic Cross, and on the other the more human and personal scene of an Earl of Strathearn, accompanied by his hound, triumphing over wild animals. Tradition has it that the stone was erected to commemorate the catching of the last wolf which infested the district. A few links of an iron chain still hanging from the centre of the Cross indicate that culprits were here put "in the joughs" by the Stewards of Strathearn.

In a corner of the square, steps mount to the churchyard in which the Church stands. We pass through an old lych-gate, on the central panel of which is a curious inscription, "Tak heed to thy foot when thou entrest into the hows of God—1644,"—which advice, remarked the architect at the time of the restoration, "must have had to be taken very literally for many years."

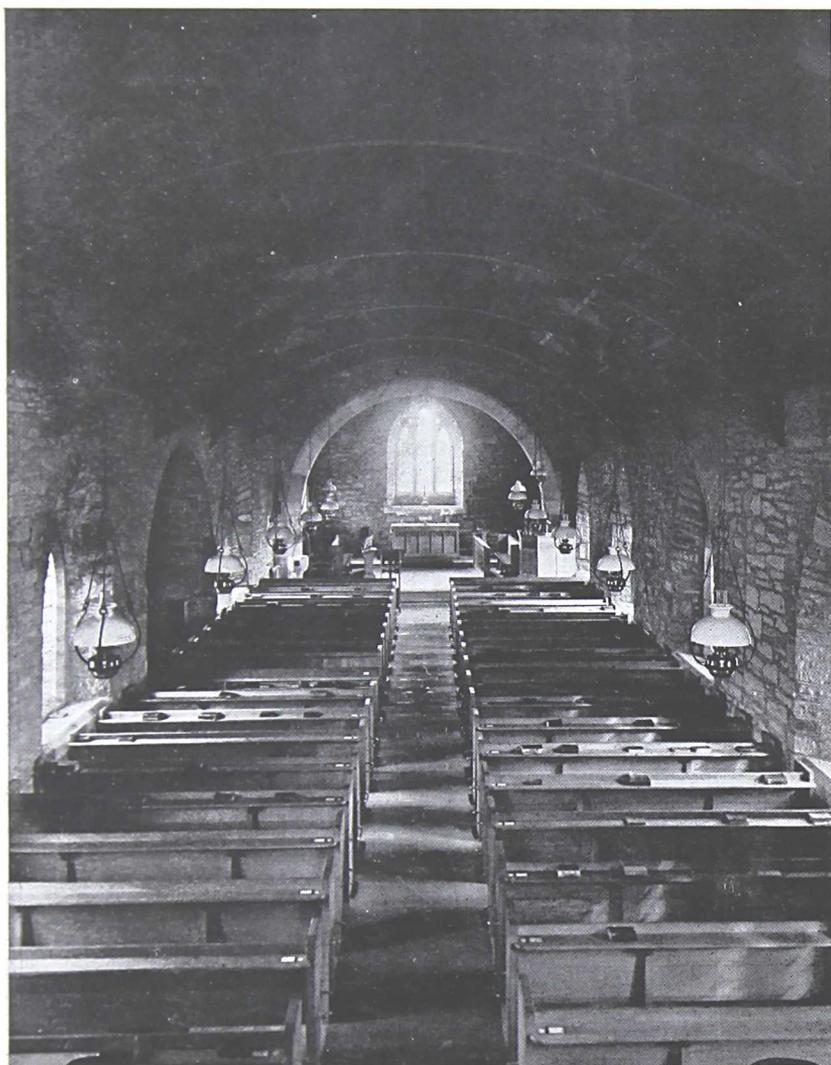
In the graveyard are some interesting stones, one the copestone with the sword and battle-axe of a Crusader, and another of more recent times in memory of a blacksmith, with the quaint inscription:—

" My forge and hammer's both declined,
My bellows too have lost their wind,
My fire's extinct, my forge decay'd,
And in the dust my vice is laid,
My coal is spent, my iron's gone,
My nails are drove, my work is done.

The glory of the parish, however, is the Church itself, restored by Mr Jeffrey Waddell, architect, in 1927. Here is a sanctuary of singular beauty. Opening the west door and gazing down the long central aisle towards the Holy Table one's eye is satisfied and one's soul uplifted. The Church is very long, as compared with its width, and of graceful proportions. The fine old thick walls, with the stones exposed to tell their own story, the open-timber roof and stone chancel arch, and the tiny aisle or north transept all combine to give an atmosphere of worship. The Church is dedicated to St Bean (Beannus), who was much venerated in Strathearn. Bean was a tenth century Bishop, whose name appears in the Calendar of the Breviary of Aberdeen. There is ample evidence that the site of the present church has been devoted to the celebration of Christian rites since Christianity was first introduced to the parish. The Church was served first by the Culdee priests, the disciples of St Columba, and afterwards by Preaching Brothers from the Abbey of Inchaffray, until the Abbey was destroyed at the time of the Reformation. On the borders of the parish there once stood an ancient Culdee house or monastery, and in 1198 Earl



THE PARISH CHURCH OF FOWLIS WESTER,
(Before Restoration).



THE PARISH CHURCH OF FOWLIS WESTER.
(As Restored, 1927).

Gilbert founded the Abbey of Inchaffray upon this site. Malis the Hermit, a Culdee priest, was the first Abbot. In 1200, Gilbert endowed the Abbey with certain churches in the district, and in 1210 he made over to the Canons of Inchaffray the Church of St Beannus at Fowlis, along with the dower lands of the Church, and the common pasturage of the parish.

The present building shows unmistakable evidence of having been in use in pre-Reformation times. In the East gable a recess or ambry with I. H. S. in Gothic letters, a consecration Cross and M.A. for the Virgin, was found. This was exposed when the thick plaster was removed from the walls. This and the chancel arch, which had been filled in after the Reformation, prove conclusively the pre-Reformation date of the walls. For four hundred years until 1927 the chancel had been used, one part as a coal-hole, and the other as a vestry. The leper "squint" on the south wall near the Holy Table was re-opened and filled with glass.

In the north transept, and thus preserved from the ravages of the weather, there stands a most beautiful stone, one of the most beautifully carved stones which have been found in Scotland, and belonging, it is thought, to the ninth century. The design consists of a finely enriched cross carved on an upright oblong base, and decorated with spinals and key patterns resembling those on the crosses at St Vigean's, Meigle, and Largo. "The stone," says an expert, "is one of the finest in all Scotland." It was discovered, during the work of restoration, built into the wall near its foundation. As time goes on more and more people will wish to see it, and admire and reverence it.

The Church is now most tastefully furnished. The furniture, naturally, is modern, but everything is in keeping with the style and spirit of the old work. The central feature of the chancel is the carved Holy Table, adorned with a runner of green brocade, and surmounted with a memorial brass Cross which stands on a stone ledge, behind and above the Table. Choir stalls, lectern, font and pulpit are all harmoniously designed, and are well worthy of the Church.

The restoration was achieved mainly through the efforts of the late Laird of Abercairney, Captain W. S. Home Drummond Moray, and the Minister (1924-41), the late Reverend Thomas Chalmers Sherriff, M.A.

ANDREW CUMMING.

A MANUAL FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF YOUTH.

IN its report to the General Assembly of 1943, the Commission for the Interpretation of God's Will in the Present Crisis called for a strong re-assertion of the doctrine of the Church. It rightly pointed out that no aspect of Christian teaching is more relevant to the present world-situation.

If this neglected emphasis is to be recovered, no more fruitful beginning could be attempted than in the religious teaching of the youth of our land. For this specific purpose we are now fortunate in having at our disposal an excellent handbook, by the Rev. John Howat, B.D., St Rule's, Monifieth, published for the Youth Committee of the Church of Scotland, at the price of two shillings. It is entitled *Concerning Christ and the Church*, with the sub-title *Studies in the Meaning and Nature of the Church*.

This timely publication will be widely welcomed. Based on addresses given to the author's Bible Class in his former parish of Ballater during the first winter of the War, it sets forth clearly and convincingly, in simple language, the relevance of the Church to the needs and problems of our time, and its claims upon the loyalty and obedience of its members.

Successive chapters deal with the necessity of the Church, its origins, its central place in the mind and purpose of our Lord, its relation to the Kingdom, its doctrine, teaching and organisation, its worship, sacraments and other ordinances. In this connection, a gratifying feature is the use of copious extracts from the *Book of Common Order* as the authoritative manual of the Church of Scotland. The witness of the Church to the world, its relation to politics and the State, its authority, and the urgent question of Christian re-union are all dealt with, not in a remote, academic fashion, but closely related to current problems and questions. We warmly commend this book and trust that it will receive the wide circulation it so richly deserves.