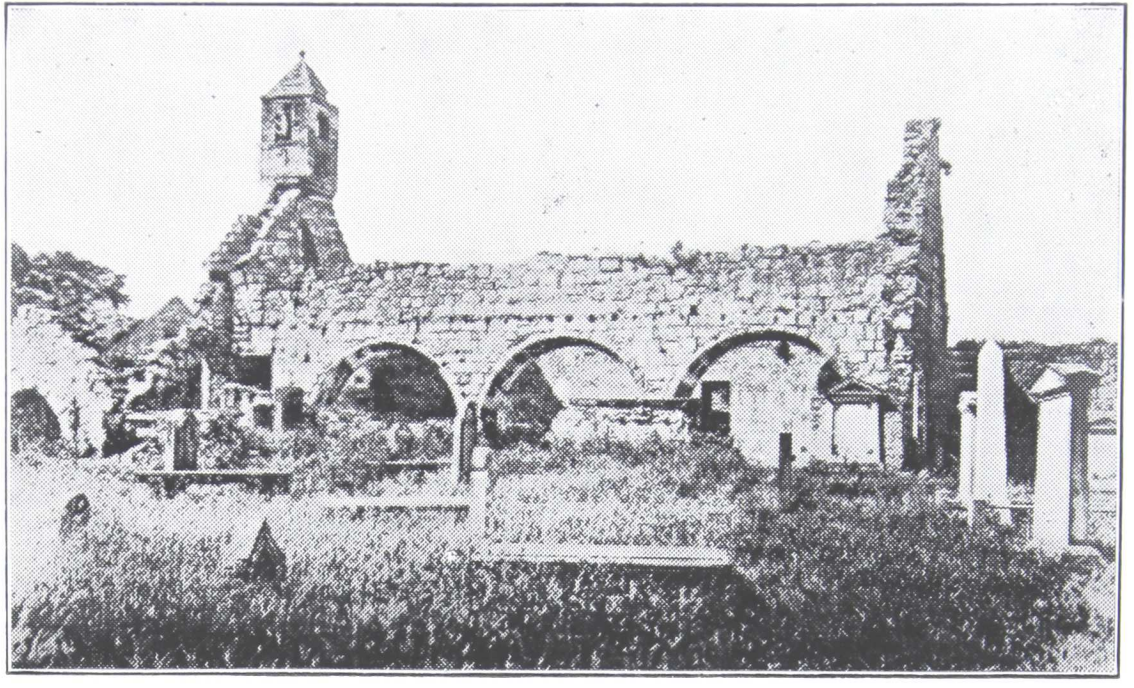
S. Fillan's Parish Church, Aberdour.

S. FILLAN'S CHURCH was built in the first half of the twelfth century. For 130 years, from 1796, it stood roofless and covered with ivy. In 1926 it was restored, to become one of the most complete and perfect Norman churches still in use in Scotland for worship.

The earliest mention of the church is in the Bull of Pope Alexander III. of 1178, but a charter of William de Mortimer makes clear that it existed before that date. "William de Mortemer to all the sons of the holy mother Church, clerks and laymen, present and future greeting. Know all men that the concession which I made by request and arrangement of my Lord, David, brother of the King of Scotland, to his clerk, Robert, of the church of Aberdour was contrary to God and to all form of law and justice. For on the evidence of religious men, clerks and laymen, of the kingdom of Scotland, I have understood that in the times of the Kings Alexander, David, and Malcolm, the aforesaid church of Aberdour belonged to the canons of Inchcolm and they held it as their own and adjacent to the mother Church of the Isle." Alexander founded the Monastery of Inchcolm about 1123, so that the church was built in the first half of the 12th century. It probably took the place of an older Celtic foundation. The first mention of its name is in the will of James Douglas of Dalkeith, who held the barony of Aberdour, the oldest will extant, dated 30th September, 1390: "Do tres libras vjs. viijd. for purchasing vestments for the church Sancti Fulani Aberdour."

The church is simple in form. It consisted at first of Nave and Chancel. In the present church the Chancel and Chancel Arch, the north wall of the Nave, the Norman windows in the Chancel and the north wall, are all parts of the 12th century church. In the late 15th century the present south Aisle was added. It is separated from the Nave by an arcade of three bays, having circular splayed arches, with moulded base and caps. The authorities find evidence to prove that this aisle arcade has been inserted in the pre-existing Norman south wall of the original Nave. When the Aisle was added, the gables of the Nave were raised and the roof set at a steeper pitch than the original



S. FILLAN'S PARISH CHURCH, ABERDOUR. (BEFORE RESTORATION.)

roof. The south-west Porch, the present entrance, was also built then. The Gothic window in the West Wall was inserted in the 16th century, and the date on the Belfry is 1588.

After the Reformation further alterations were made. A Gallery, of which mention is made in the Kirk Session Records, was inserted in the west end of the Nave in the 17th century. Access to it was by a flight of steps leading to a doorway formed in the west end of the Aisle. There had been a west window in the Aisle, corresponding to the west window in the Nave. Traces of this window were found during the restoration, but it had been largely destroyed by the doorway into the Gallery. The transeptal vaulted Aisle in the north wall (of the Nave) was heightened at the beginning of the 17th century. The archway opening from this Aisle into the church had been much lower, and the mark of the original arch can still be seen. The date above the doorway is 1608.

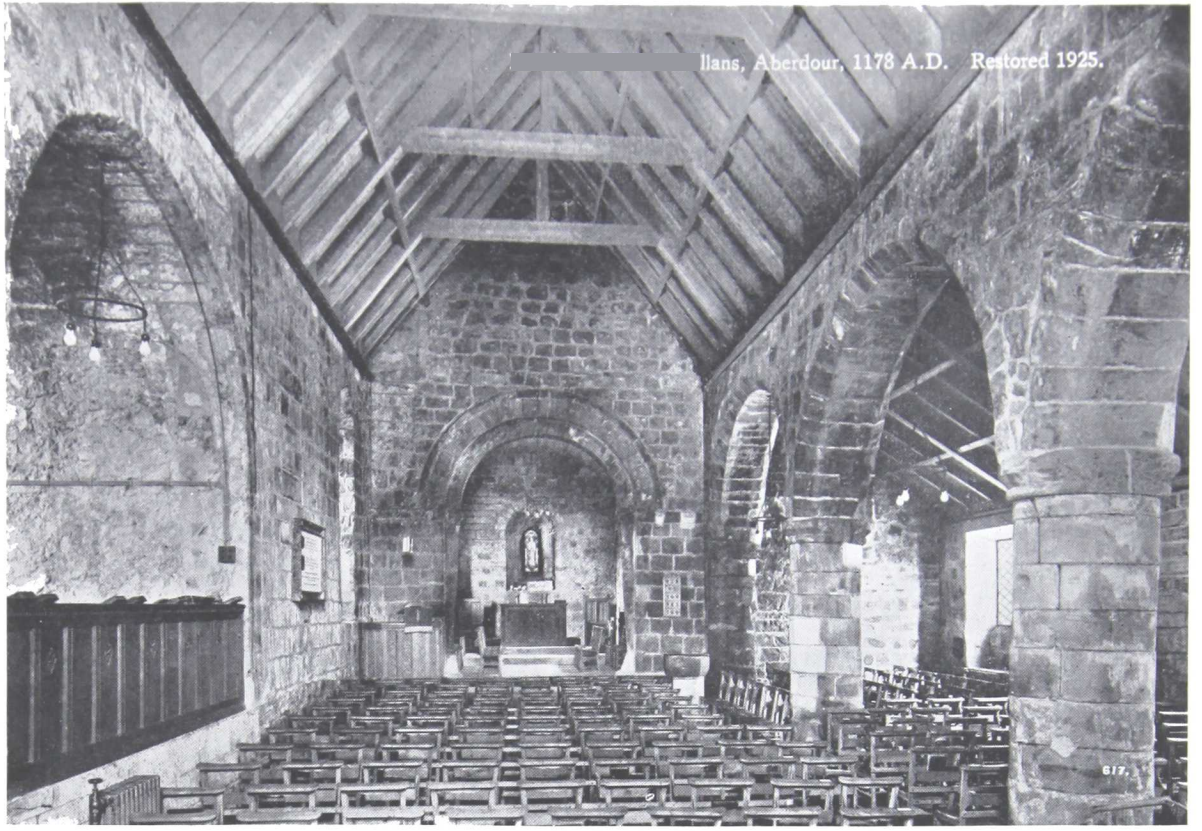
About 1796, during the ministry of Robert Liston, who had succeeded his father, John, and who was Moderator of the General Assembly in 1787, the roof was taken off the church and a new church built on another site some distance westwards. The reason for this is not known. In a letter to Lord Morton written at the end of the 18th century a neighbouring proprietor expresses his willingness to support his Lordship in his desire to change the site of the parish church. The church stands just beside Aberdour Castle, which was the Mortons' residence, so that the reason for the change is probably that Morton wished to have the church less near his dwelling.

Between 1796 and 1925 the church lay a ruin. The west end of the Nave, beneath the West Gallery, was built up and made a burial vault for the Morton family. The archway of the north transeptal Aisle was closed up and the east window in the Chancel blocked. Gravestones were thrown into the church, trees of considerable size were growing in the Nave and in the walls, and little more than the gable of the Porch remained.

The restoration, as is well known, was due to the Rev. Dr Robert Johnstone (whose father, it is interesting to note, had been minister of the other Norman church in Fife, Leuchars) who came from Murrayfield in 1914, and was minister of the parish till his death two years ago. Preaching at the Memorial Service to him on Easter, 1944, his friend of many years, the Rev. J. M. Webster, B.D., of Carnock,



S. FILLAN'S PARISH CHURCH, ABERDOUR. (After Restoration.)



S. FILLAN'S PARISH CHURCH, ABERDOUR. (INTERIOR.)

told how, shortly after the end of the last war, as the two of them stood together looking at the ivy-clad ruin, Dr Johnstone spoke of "the great longing that was growing up in him that this place, hallowed by the associations of so many centuries, might once more become the House of God for the parishioners of Aberdour." The restoration was made possible when Lord Morton gave permission to remove the family vault from the west end. The eight plates which are now on the west wall were taken from the coffins found in the vault.

When the work of restoration was begun, the east window of the Chancel, which had been blocked, was exposed, and two windows in the south wall of it required to be slightly restored. In the sloping sill of the north window in the Chancel an aumbry was found, which had been made evidently during the Episcopacy, as the date is 1670. On the wall beside this the Consecration Cross can still be seen, with a diameter of 1 foot $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches. In the Chancel arch are the marks of where the Rood Screen had been, which was still there in 1650. The arch itself is semi-circular and is built in two orders with hood moulding. The windows of the Chancel are narrow and widely splayed inside with semi-circular heads. The Chancel is 20 feet 10 inches long on the south side and 18 feet 11 inches long on the north side, and 13 feet 3 inches wide. These are the inside measurements.

The Nave is 49 feet 7 inches long by 17 feet wide, and the total width of Nave and Aisle is 30 feet 7 inches. On the north wall of the Nave the archway of the transeptal Aisle was opened up and the Aisle is now used for the organ and choir. During the excavations beneath this Aisle to form a heating chamber a stone coffin was found. The body was buried with the head towards the Altar and was probably the body of one of the canons of Inchcolm who had been Vicar of Aberdour. This Aisle may originally have been the Sacristy. There are partial remains of a Norman doorway at the east end of this transeptal Aisle. The round-headed window at the west of the Aisle had been a later doorway. When the gallery and burial vault at the west end were removed, the doorway giving access to the gallery was built up. The south wall had to be partly rebuilt, as had also the walls of the porch, though the gable containing the arched outer entrance was still intact. Broken grave-stones had been heaped up in the entrance porch, but when they were cleared away, the old stone seats and the benatura,

the holy water stoup, were exposed. The Font, an octagonal basin of stone, was found in the graveyard. It measures 2 feet 1½ inches in diameter by 1 foot ½-inch in height.

The donors of the money required for the restoration were the late Misses Laurie of Starley Hall, Burntisland. The Architect was Mr W. Williamson, A.R.I.B.A., Kirkcaldy. The Communion Table, the Pulpit, the silver basin from Iona now in the Font, the Organ and other gifts to furnish the church for worship were given by present and past parishioners. The paving round the church was laid by members of the congregation. The cost of restoring the fabric, including the preparation of the ground, the removal of the Morton vault and the provision of the present oak doors, was £2709. The gifts from present and past parishioners amounted to £1300. The total cost was thus just over £4000.

The windows in the Chancel, in the north wall beside the pulpit and in the Aisle, are the work of Mr A. Strachan, Edinburgh. The west window is by Mr James Ballantine, Edinburgh, and the round-headed window in the north-west of the Nave is by a London artist. They are in memory of families long associated with the parish and given by their descendants. Local interest attaches to most of them.

The east window in the Chancel shows our Lord with His foot on the head of the serpent, the Cross behind, the Dove descending, the Testamental Cup, and the hand raised in blessing. It is in memory of all who have worshipped in the church since its foundation.

The north window in the Chancel represents a Franciscan Sister receiving an aged pilgrim into a Hospice. There is, now covered over in a garden adjacent to the graveyard, a well called the Eye Well. To it pilgrims used to come, and James, 1st Earl of Morton, records that at the desire of Sir John Scot, Vicar of Aberdour in 1474, he founded a Hospital for their shelter, called S. Martha's Hospital. It was under the care of four Sisters of the Order of S. Francis, the poor Clares. The Nuns of this Order had one other house in Scotland, in Dundee. The Hospital stands on the site of the building called still the Old Manse, which was the post-Reformation manse till about 1815, when the present manse was acquired. The Eye Well is also seen on the window in the north wall of the Nave beside the pulpit, which depicts our Lord healing the Blind. It is also in connection with the pilgrims that we have on the outside of the west wall

beneath the window a stone, probably of the 16th century, with the words :—

PANS. O. PILGRIM.
THAT. PASSITH. BY. THIS. WAY.
UPON. THYN. END.
AND. THOU. SAL. FEAR. TO. SIN.
AND. THINK. ALSO. UPON. THE. LATTER. DAY.
WHEN. THOU. TO. GOD. MAN. COUNT.
THEN. BEST. THOU. NOW. BEGIN.

This stone blocks the old leper window, which can be seen on the inside. One of the lights in the window above the stone, the west window, represents a Pilgrim. The other light depicts S. Fillan.

The west window on the south wall of the Chancel represents S. Andrew finding his brother Simon. It is a memorial to the Rev. Robert Blair, a Covenanter, whose stone is on the south wall outside. It has the following inscription :—

HIC RECONDITAE JACENT
MORTALES EXUVIAE
P. ROBERTI BLAIR
S.S. EVANGELII APUD ANDREAPOLIN
PRAEDICATORIS FIDELISSIMI
OBIIT AUG. 27 1666 AETATIS 72.

The scroll surmounting the inscription has the words Mors Janua Vitae. He had been a Regent of Glasgow University, Chaplain to Charles I. and Minister at St. Andrews, and died at Couston Castle, near Aberdour.

Blair's life was written by his son-in-law, William Row, and at the end of Dr McCrie's Preface to his edition of it, written in 1848, these words occur : " It only remains to make a parting allusion to the present aspect of the monument erected to the memory of Robert Blair in the old churchyard of Aberdour. The Editor can attest from personal observation the fidelity of the sketch appended (a sketch is given). He found the stone erected upon the side wall of the (old) Kirk of Aberdour ; but the wall is mouldering away piecemeal, and the monument with its simple inscription is sadly effaced ; so that, unless measures are speedily taken for its preservation, even this memorial,

which was all that 'was judged fit and convenient to be put upon his tomb, by reason of the iniquity of the time,' will in a few short years be entirely obliterated and the fragments may soon have to be sought for among the nettles and brambles of the ruined building to which it is attached." It was a source of pride to Dr Johnstone that he was able to preserve this stone. The memorial window to Blair was offered him by a parishioner after he had told the story of the Covenanter at an evening service.

The other window in the Chancel represents S. Columba landing on Inchcolm, with the Hermit's Cell.

The window in the south wall of the Nave, beside the Font, represents our Lord with a child, saying to His disciples, " Whosoever shall receive this child in My name receiveth Me: and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth Him that sent Me." Beside this window is another holy water stoup.

The round-headed window in the north-west of the Nave represents a Celtic missionary preaching by the side of the Dour burn, from which Aberdour takes its name. Inchcolm is seen in the background. It, and the light of the west window representing S. Fillan, remind us of the early Celtic foundation.

The present bell does not belong to S. Fillan's Church, but to Dalgety Church, also a Norman structure, though now sadly ruined. (Dalgety is the neighbouring parish, now united to Aberdour, and the dedication of its church is to S. Bride, or Bridget.). The bell has the inscription in Gothic lettering,

O MATER DEI MEMENTO MEI.

The church was rededicated on July 7th, 1926, by the Right Rev. J. D. McCallum, D.D., Moderator of the General Assembly, who said, " This House, which was built for the honour and service of God, and is restored for His worship, is now, together with these gifts of love and devotion, solemnly dedicated unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; one living and true God, to whom be glory and majesty, dominion and power, for ever and ever, Amen." At the service one of the lessons was read by Lt.-Col. W. Glen Liston, a great-grandson of the Rev. Robert Liston, the last minister of the church before it was deserted.

As well as the Pilgrim Stone and the memorial stone to Robert Blair, there are two other memorial stones built into the walls of the church, both outside at the east end.

One is in memory of the wife of one of the ministers, and is dated 1688. The letters $\text{T}^{\text{M}}_{\text{M}}\text{L}$ signify Mrs Thomas Litster, minister. The inscription is: "Heir lyes the corps of Margaret Lyndesay, spouse of Thomas Lyster, Minister of Aberdour, who after she had lived with him directly 20 years, and brought forth and nursed on her breasts 11 children, died as she had lived, in love with God and man, July 11, 1688, and of her age 38." The writing on the other stone is now illegible, but it reads as follows:

Here lies interred below this stone
A man of virtues rare,
Of justice, probity and truth,
Few with him could compare.

Your virtues all in him combind
Ech one outweighed ye other,
Y in ye place qr he did live
You'd scarce find such another.

Yet death yt strikes at all alike,
Has vanquished him at last,
His body to ye dust has sent,
His soul's to glory past.

The oldest stone in the churchyard is dated 1646. The other old stones are all at the side of the avenue leading to the church.

The names of a number of the pre-Reformation clergy are known. (In the Bull of Pope Alex. III. it was stated that the Monastery had the right to serve their churches by their own canons, and the vicars of Aberdour would be canons of Inchcolm.)

In the reign of William the Lion *Salon* is Chaplain of Abirdour.

In 1320 *Sir Richard* is Chaplain of the parish of Abirdour.

In a Charter of 15th November, 1428, we find mention of "*Richard* of Abirdour, prior of Inchcolm."

In 1474 *Sir John Scot* is Vicar.

Sir Henry Sybbaud (1543) was probably Vicar.

In 1555 *Henry Ramsay* is Chaplain.

In 1560 *Walter Robertson* is Vicar of Aberdour.

As a Memorial to Dr Johnstone, it is hoped very soon to erect a tablet in wood bearing these names and the names of the post-Reformation clergy. It will be placed on the north wall of the Chancel. It is fitting that the Memorial should end with the name of Robert Johnstone, since he was not only the restorer of S. Fillan's but was also the last

minister of the separate parish of Aberdour. On his retirement in 1940 it was united with the neighbouring parish of Dalgety.

NOTE.—This article follows fairly closely a paper left behind by Dr Johnstone at his death. For some years he had been working on a full History of the parish, in which this paper, with certain additions, would have been a chapter. The History was not complete at his death, but the present writer has been asked to finish it, and he hopes to be able to do so reasonably soon.

D. M. G. STALKER.

Reviews.

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD. By F. D. Coggan, M.A., D.D. (6/-).

THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER. By D. E. W. Harrison, M.A. (6/-).

STRANGE VICTORY. By M. A. C. Warren. (6/-).

We have received from the Canterbury Press these the first three volumes of the S. Paul's Library which is being sponsored by a group of Anglican Bishops and other Clergy. The first, by Dr Coggan, deals with preaching in New Testament times, and indicates how present day preaching might be improved if more attention were paid to the practice of the early days of the Faith. The second, as its name implies, is a short history and description of the Anglican Prayer Book. All will not agree with Archdeacon Harrison's views; but even when one does not agree, he must admit that the writer's standpoint is one which can be defended. The third volume is a study of the Holy Communion Service in the English rite and its object is practical and not controversial. All three books are well worthy of perusal and give an excellent statement of the Evangelical position held by the party which is called by that name. The Bishop of Sodor and Man contributes a General Preface in which he insists on the need there is at the present time for such expositions as are given in S. Paul's Library. We have no hesitation in commending all three books and regret that, owing to considerations of space, we are unable to give a fuller account of each.

WILLIAM M'MILLAN.