

Tayside Organists' Society

"If Stones Could Speak"

**Talk by Dr Mary Reilly
in the Church of St Athernase, Leuchars, Fife**

Wednesday 25th September 2019

Review by Kevin Veal

The September 2019 meeting of the Society was held in St Athernase' Church, Leuchars, (a pre-Reformation foundation), on the evening of Wednesday 25 September 2019. There was a splendid attendance of members, (about 25 persons). In addition, we were joined by members of the Congregation of St Athernase.

The speaker was Dr Mary Reilly, a retired Lecturer in History from Dundee College of Education who now lives in Balmullo, Fife, and who is a member of St Athernase' congregation. She was known to some Society members, who remembered her when she lectured under her maiden name, Dr Mary Cuthbert. She has a special interest in Scottish history, and has made a detailed study of St Athernase over the last 4 years.

Her interesting and stimulating talk was delivered entirely from memory and without notes!

Having been introduced by the Society President, Sheriff Kevin Veal, Dr Reilly gave a fascinating talk on the foundation and history of St Athernase from its erection in 1244 by Norman masons, (who had earlier been invited to Scotland by the Scottish King) to the present time. She highlighted that the land had passed into the hands of the De Quinci family in the late twelfth century, and that family had also owned land south of the border! That family had also furnished a number of Knights for the Crusades to the Holy Land. The erection of this church and the erection in 1243 of the church at Lathrisk, (dedicated to St John the Evangelist and St Athernase), were due to King Alexander's Chamberlain, David de Bernham.

The chancel and apse of the church displayed the work of the Norman masons, and Dr Reilly spoke of the history and symbolism of the stones and masons' markings. Members were encouraged to walk around the church and see the stones and markings.

Reference was also made to long serving ministers of the Church, including the Reverend Alexander Henderson, who was the incumbent between 1612 and 1640.

Dr Reilly's talk was much appreciated by all who were present. Tea/Coffee and refreshments were served in the Church Hall following the talk, and Vice - President Ron Oliver voiced eloquent and sincere thanks to our speaker, as well as to Minister and Kirk Session for their support for the Society's visit to this special venue.