

CANONGATE KIRK

THE KIRK OF HOLYROODHOUSE



SOME NOTES ON THE KIRK OF THE CANONGATE

1. In its long history, the Kirk of the Canongate has had two buildings: at the Abbey of the Holy Rood (1128), now lying in ruins beside the Palace of Holyroodhouse; and here in the heart of the Canongate. In 1688 King James VII (James II of England) took over the Abbey church for use as the Chapel of the Order of the Thistle, and he offered to build this one in its place. It cost roughly £1,900 which came from a fund left to the Crown by a rich merchant, Thomas Moodie, whose coat of arms can be seen above the entrance to the Kirk. The building was completed in 1690, after King James VII vacated the throne; and the keys were delivered to the Minister of the Canongate in 1691. The Royal Arms, also above the entrance, are those of King James, with the shield of Nassau placed in the centre to make them the arms of King William who succeeded him.
2. The church had a royal beginning. King David I was riding alone in the forest near the present grounds of Holyroodhouse, when he was attacked and unhorsed by a white stag, which was about to gore him. Suddenly a vision of the Holy Cross (or Rood) appeared between the stag's antlers. The King took courage from this and the stag took flight. In thanksgiving for his deliverance, the King founded the Abbey in 1128 *in honour of the Holy Cross, the Virgin and all Saints*. The Abbey church served both as the parish church for the people of Canongate, and as the Chapel Royal where many of the Sovereigns of Scotland were baptised, married, crowned and buried. The last King to be crowned there was Charles I in 1633. At the Reformation in 1560, the church became known as the Kirk of Holyroodhouse (the Kirk of Canongate), and the people of Canongate continued to worship there until 1688.
3. The legend of King David and the white stag is depicted throughout the building, notably in the King David Aisle: first, in the picture by Stanley Cursiter RSA; and second, in the communion table's embroidered frontal panel which was designed, fashioned and presented by devoted members of the congregation. The story is also represented outside the church, at the apex of the front wall, by the gilded stag's head and antlers, presented to the Kirk by King George VI.
4. The floor of the apse bears the names and dates of Ministers of Canongate since the Reformation in 1560. The ministry of two of these, *The Revd Thomas White* and *The Very Revd Ronald Selby Wright* (who was widely known as the *Radio Padre* during World War II) spanned almost ninety years.
5. To the left of the apse is the Memorial Chapel, opened in 1951 by the Governor of Edinburgh Castle and dedicated to the memory of 40 sons of Canongate who gave their lives in the 1939-45 war. The small glass case to the west of the Table is the memorial of the Dunkirk Veterans' Association and contains sand from the beaches at Dunkirk. The *Roll of Honour* of the 603 (City of Edinburgh) Squadron was unveiled by HM The Queen in 1989. The sculpture of *Christus Victor* is by Josephina de Vasconcellos.
6. The Palace of Holyroodhouse and Edinburgh Castle still lie within the Parish of Canongate and have pews on either side of the centre aisle of the Kirk, on the fronts of which are appropriate coats of arms.

PLEASE DO NOT TAKE THIS SHEET AWAY

7. Canongate Kirk is recognised as the Military Church in Scotland's Capital City. Above the nave hang the *Old Colours* of the 1st Battalion The King's Own Scottish Borderers, laid up in 1976 in the presence of their Colonel-in-Chief, HRH Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester; and the 7th/9th Royal Scots (The Dandy Ninth), laid up in 1986 at a service attended by their Colonel in Chief, HRH Princess Anne, The Princess Royal.

In 1983, on the 350th anniversary of the raising of the Regiment, The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment) adopted Canongate as their Regimental Kirk, as recorded on a plaque on the wall beside the pulpit. The pulpit belonged to the famous preacher *Dr Thomas Chalmers*, and was moved here from Chalmers Church near the junction of the West Port and the Grassmarket when it closed in 1949.

8. Historic links with the craft guilds which once flourished in the old Burgh of Canongate are recalled by the emblems on the front of the gallery.
9. Considerable changes to the interior were carried out after World War II. Two major 19th century additions to the church were removed: the wall which blocked off the nave from the apse; and the side galleries. At the same time, new furnishings were presented: particularly the stalls in the apse, the Royal Pew, the Governor's Pew and the Choir Stalls.
10. Further extensive work both outside and inside, including the restoration of the 1817 ceiling, was completed in 1991 to restore and conserve the building and to mark its 300th Anniversary. The money for this came not only from the congregation but from every section of the community, and included generous support from every adult member of the Royal Family.
11. In 1994, a tapestry project was begun as a memorial to those who died during, or since, the Battle of Normandy on 6 June 1944 (*D-Day*). The Tapestry was conceived to clothe the seat of the apse in such a way as to draw attention to the cross which is the focal point below the large clear window of the apse. It was designed by Hannah Frew Paterson MBE of Glasgow, worked by a team of 23 embroiderers, and its cost met by the Normandy Veterans Association *Fife, Lothians, and Borders No. 34 Branch* and by members and friends of Canongate Kirk.
12. The organ in the gallery was designed and built by Th. Frobenius of Copenhagen, Denmark. It is a memorial to The Very Reverend Ronald Selby Wright CVO, TD, DD, FRSE, who was Minister at Canongate from 1937 to 1977, and was dedicated on Sunday 15 November 1998. It consists of a great organ, a swell organ, and a pedal organ, with twenty speaking stops in all.
13. The Visitor Centre at the entrance of the Church demonstrates the link between the first building at Holyrood and the present building here in Canongate. The *Mortification Board* of 1644 was brought from the old church at Holyrood in 1691: the new engraved glass porch at the entrance commemorates the 300 years of continuous worship in this place, 1691 - 1991.
14. This church is architecturally unique in Scotland. A more complete description of it and a sketch of its history is contained in the Guide on sale in the vestibule. Also available is a Guide to the Churchyard.

A Family Service is conducted every Sunday at 10.00 a.m.

Parish Worship follows at 11.15 a.m.

All visitors will always be very welcome.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion is celebrated at the Service of Parish Worship at Easter, Pentecost, All Saints, and Christmas and on the last Sunday of each month.

PLEASE DO NOT TAKE THIS SHEET AWAY