

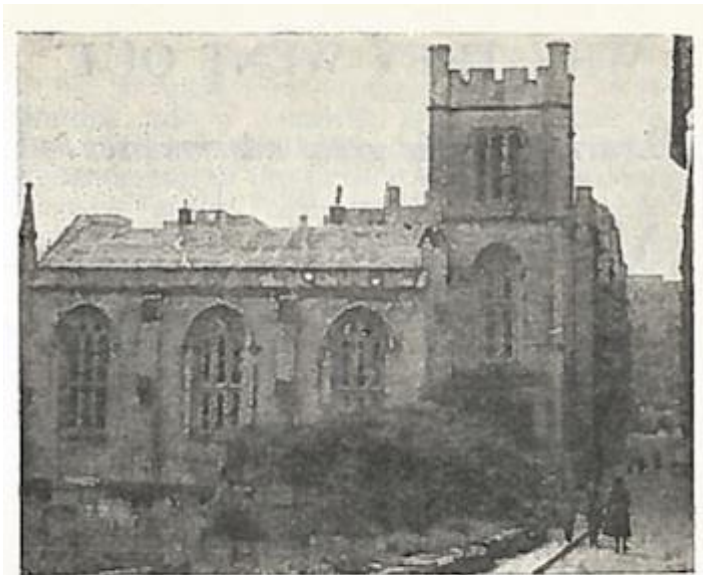
Home > Features > Looking Back: Church of Scotland in Malta

## Looking Back

*Friday December 2*

# Looking Back: The Church of Scotland in Malta

**A history of St Andrew's Church in Malta, published in December 1956 as the congregation was preparing to celebrate the centenary of the building.**



*St. Andrew's Church, Malta, which is celebrating the centenary of the present building*

***Sheriff's Appeal brought Kirk to Malta***

**IT'S 113 years since the first Presbyterian minister went to serve in Malta. He was the Rev. Dr. J. James Wood, of New Greyfriars, Edinburgh. But he claimed he was the second Presbyterian. "St. Paul was the first," he declared, "and there has been a rather long vacancy!"**

The Kirk Session intend celebrating the centenary of the present Scots Church on St. Andrew's Day, 1957, and plan to mark the occasion by installing two stained-glass windows above the pulpit – one to commemorate the centenary itself and one as a Window of Remembrance for those who gave their lives in the Mediterranean theatre of war.

### ***Sheriff's appeal***

A few manuscript notes on the early history of the Scots Church in Malta, penned in 1954 by the minister, the Rev. G. A. Sim, still survive. In these he says, "In the year 1841, a distinguished Scottish advocate, Sheriff Andrew Jameson, was sent by the British Government to Malta to revise the legal code of the island. Sheriff Jameson was a good and earnest man, an elder of the Church of Scotland. While in Malta he saw the oldest of our Highland regiments there, the Black Watch. He noted with regret that, although almost entirely Presbyterians, the Black Watch had no Presbyterian chaplain to minister to them and that there was also in the island a number of Scottish civilian residents similarly situated."

This state of things so impressed the worthy Sheriff that, when he returned to Scotland in the spring of 1842, he spoke warmly in the General Assembly of the Church regarding the need of Presbyterian services at Malta. In his appeal he was powerfully seconded by Dr. Stewart of Erskine, afterwards of Leghorn. The Colonial Committee of the Church took the matter up, a Ladies' Colonia Association was formed to raise funds and in the end of

1842 undertook to provide the means to enable the Colonia Committee to send a minister to Malta.

During Dr. Wood's stay in Malta the Disruption of the Church of Scotland took place. He and those at home who had been responsible for the new sation at Malta adhered to the Free Church of Scotland, which took up the care of Malta henceforward.

Dr. Wood had been only temporarily appointed to Malta and had to return to his charge in Edinburgh. The Colonial Committee appointed as his successor the Rev. John McKail who was ordained as chaplain at Malta by the Free Church Presbytery of Edinburgh on 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1843.

At the same time an offer was made to the Colonial Committee of premises in Valletta. On this site there was then a small house and a small church, held by a Wesleyan minister, the Rev. John Keeling, who had bought the place from the Government of Malta in 1824. Mr. Keeling offered to sell the premises to the Free Church of Scotland which bought them from him for £900 in December 1843. This is the original citadel of our services and work in Malta

### ***New Chaplains***

A succession of ministers followed Mr. McKail until in 1854 a permanent minister was appointed – the Rev. George Wisely. When Dr. Wisely came out the old Wesleyan Chapel was now proving too small. With much difficulty he obtained the site upon which the present church stands, and he started to collect funds to build the new church. This he did partly in Malta, and partly while he was home on sick leave at the close of the Crimean War; and his efforts were so successful that neither the church nor the manse cost the home Church a penny. The foundation stone of the Church was laid on 27<sup>th</sup> June, 1856, but unfortunately the date of the opening of the Church is not recorded.

Dr. Wisely was succeeded in 1896 by the Rev. G. A. Sim who ministered until 1920. The Church has been served by Naval Chaplains ever since, except for a short break during the last war.