

Rectors of Kilbride

Rev. Parker Erskine Major, M.A. (Rector from 1886 until 1929)



Rev. Parker Erskine Major, M.A.

Introduction

Rev. Parker Erskine Major was rector in Kilbride Parish Church for more than 43 years from 1886 until 1929, when ill-health precipitated his retirement. He was only the second rector of St Bride's following the church's construction and consecration on 9th June, 1868, succeeding Rev. Francis Charles Young who died on 2nd November, 1886 in Ballyhamage House. Following his ordination he spent two years as curate in Drummaul, Randalstown followed by a very fruitful curacy of four years in St Matthew's parish church on the Woodvale Road, in Belfast, overseen by the incumbent and his future father-in-law, Rev. George Hamilton. When he was instituted to the Parish of Kilbride he would experience a completely different way of life coming from a completely urban and rapidly developing industrial environment to the largely rural parish of Kilbride with the established flax industry and agriculture being the main areas of employment. Rev. Parker Major's tenure as rector in Kilbride spanned some turbulent years in Irish, British and world history with deep unrest in Ireland as the campaign for Home Rule gathered momentum,

culminating in the rebellion in 1916. World political events in the early years of the 20th century would eventually lead to the horrors of a world war sparked by the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria in Sarajevo in June 1914. The implications of the Great War, as it became known, for life in the quiet, rural parish of Kilbride would be far reaching for the parishioners of St Bride's, with Rev. Parker Major's pastoral care skills being severely tested as he was called on to support the bereaved families of men from the area who fell in battle. Domestic political upheaval was once again to the fore in the early 1920s as Ireland divided with dreadful violence taking life and destroying property across the country and especially in Belfast where Rev. Parker Major had spent his childhood in the Unionist heartland of east Belfast.

Major Family Background

The Major family name (formerly the Norman name Mauger) has its roots in Normandy and it is believed that the first Major came to England in 1066 with the invasion of William the Conqueror. Too many centuries have passed to speculate on how the Major family arrived in Ireland but Rev. Parker Major's family can be traced back a number of generations to the provincial town of Lisburn. His grandfather William and a number of William's brothers were successful businessmen in Lisburn and owned or leased land in the surrounding area. William Major had a business based in Bridge Street in Lisburn supplying sewed muslin cloth which was in high demand at the time. His brother Parker was also a leading merchant and in the commercial publications for the 1840s there are the following entries for Lisburn;

Major, George, Timber, Iron and Spirit Merchant, 29 Market-square

Major, James, (and seedsman) Ironmonger and Hardware Merchant, Bow-street

Major, Parker, Grocer, Tea Dealer, Seedsman, Ironmonger and Spirit Merchant, 10 Bow-street

Major, William, Muslin Manufacturer, Bridge-street

In the early part of the 19th century Lisburn was expanding rapidly in terms of industry and population and no doubt the Major family was able to amass substantial wealth as a result, being the suppliers of many essential commodities needed at the time. With the increasing population and concerns being raised for the economic and spiritual needs of the poor, in 1841 a deputation of prominent, mainly Episcopalian, people in the town approached the agent of the third Marquis of Hertford, who owned much of the land around Lisburn, about identifying a site for the establishment of what would be a "Chapel of Ease" and which would be funded by public subscription. The Marquis' agent was Dean Stannus and, on behalf of the Marquis, he was extremely supportive of this proposal and readily identified a prominent and "picturesque" site close to the town. The land on which the site was located was held by Parker Major, who had put considerable effort into improving

the soil but Dean Stannus suggested that he should be approached and an agreement made for some recompense for the outlay made. On being asked Parker Major immediately relinquished possession and refused to accept any remuneration for his outlay. Charles Lanyon, a prominent and successful architect of the time, was tasked with the design of the new church and funding of £400 for the tower was donated by the third Marquis of Hertford. Construction began and on Sunday, 20th November, 1842, the church was opened for public worship.

Rev. Parker Major's father, James Spence Major, as a young man worked for his uncle Parker Major, described as one of Lisburn's mercantile aristocracy, in the grocery and hardware trade, and proved to be a very good hand behind the counter. On growing up to adulthood he had nearly sole charge of the very extensive business of his uncle. The Market Square business was relocated to Bow Street in 1829 and James S. Major continued to conduct his uncle's business until 1845, when he commenced the sewed muslin manufacture in partnership with his brother Joseph. In a few years the trade increased considerably, and the firm removed to Belfast which was becoming the most important commercial and manufacturing location in the north of Ireland. At that time numbers of agents were employed getting embroidery work done by the women and girls in the rural districts of Co. Down. The hands engaged in Donaghadee, Bangor, and Newtownards were unequalled for artistic needlework. Messrs. Major Bros. had removed to the large four-storey concern in York Street, where, for some years, the manufacture of tobacco had been carried on. In a commercial publication for 1850 the firm is also recorded as being located in St Anne's Buildings, Donegall Street. The firm in 1852 had some thousands of hands engaged in country districts, and a large number of assistants in the town warehouse. A great proportion of the fancy goods produced by the different houses in Belfast was shipped to New York, and on several occasions James S. Major crossed the Atlantic to arrange affairs with the agent to whom he had assigned his goods for sale. In the 1860s and 70s great changes took place in the embroidery manufacturing industry and the sewing machine gradually monopolised the work once done by hand. In a newspaper notice on 18th April, 1877 a large auction was advertised where all the equipment of the firm of Major brothers, now located in James Street South, was offered for sale. James S. Major was then 67 years old.

James Spence Major, married Elizabeth Sarah Neely in Lisburn cathedral on 19th April, 1849. Elizabeth, or Bessy as she was known, was the daughter of a pawnbroker in Lisburn called Erskine Neely. A branch of the Neely family that settled in Lisburn was known to have come from the Clogher Valley area. The name 'Erskine' may have been used as a given name by the Neelys because the landed gentry of the area had been the Erskine family – Sir James Erskine of Augher Castle

James and his wife would no doubt have lived in Belfast close to the business and it is likely that both of their sons, John Joseph Major (c.1856) and Parker Erskine

Major (1858), were born in that area. There is no record of there having been any other children in the family. Around 1861 a large house called Belvoir Hall became available in Ballymacarrett and James, Bessy and their two sons moved the short distance to it in what is now the Newtownards Road. Belvoir Hall was a house of some significance located almost opposite the parish church, with office buildings and a large, walled garden. James Major soon established himself in the area, both from a business point of view and socially. The area was rapidly being developed with the influx of labour for the industry that was being established nearby, especially the shipyards and rope works. In the early years after taking possession of Belvoir Hall James Major and Major Brothers, it would seem, were instrumental in building houses in the Ballymacarrett area. Historical maps of the period show that Ballymacarrett was largely undeveloped and in the 1860s James advertised newly-built houses to let on a regular basis. The land close to Belvoir Hall was developed too as fruit trees from the garden were advertised for sale in 1881 to make room for building. The names of a number of streets opposite St Patrick's Church are evidence of buildings and streets established by James S. Major, namely Parker, Erskine and Major Streets. Bessy's father, Erskine Neely, died at Belvoir Hall in December 1861. There is no evidence today of where Belvoir Hall stood but it was beside a masonic hall and between Parker Street and Belvoir Street. This area suffered dreadful damage during World War 2 in what became known as the Belfast Blitz in Easter 1941.

The Major family was Anglican and undoubtedly would have joined Christ's Church, as St Patrick's in Ballymacarrett was formerly known, as soon as they moved to the area in 1861, beginning a long family association with the church. The vicar at the time was Rev. Dr. Thomas Wellesley Roe, the incumbent from 1857 until 1889, followed by Canon George Gore Mervyn who was instrumental in changing the dedication of the church from Christ's Church to St Patrick's. Dr. Roe was a much-loved vicar with great vision who worked tirelessly to build up what would become the most populous and largest staffed parish in the Church of Ireland. James Major would have been a prominent member of the church supporting Dr. Roe in his work. He was a member of the Select Vestry and various church committees and also took a very active interest in the well-being of the community. In later years James was a member of the Belfast Board of Guardians representing the Ballymacarrett area.

Parker Erskine Major (1858 - 1933)

Parker was the younger son of James Spence Major And Bessy Major (née Neely). He was born in Belfast on 11th August, 1858 and would have spent the first few years of his life living near Belfast town centre (Belfast would become a city in 1888) before moving with his family to Belvoir Hall in Ballymacarrett in 1861. He was educated at Methodist College, Belfast with both him and his brother John beginning their studies there in September 1871. Parker passed the matriculation examination for entry to the Queen's University of Ireland in October 1876 and was an undergraduate there between 1876 and 1879 (in 1879 it became the Royal University of Ireland and in 1908 Queen's University, Belfast). He graduated with a second class honours Bachelor of Arts degree in Experimental Science on 15th October, 1879 in St Patrick's Hall, Dublin Castle, Dublin. He obtained his Master of Arts degree the following year, accredited by Cambridge University.



Queen's University of Ireland (Belfast)

Drummaul Parish Church, Randalstown

Rev. Parker Major's first clerical position was as a deacon in Drummaul parish church, Randalstown where he served for approximately two years until 1882. During his time at Drummaul he was ordained as a priest during a service in Holywood parish church on 4th June, 1882 by the Lord Bishop of Down and Connor and Dromore, Robert Bent Knox, who would later become Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland in 1886.



Drummaul Parish Church (St Brigid's)

St Matthew's Parish Church, Woodvale Road, Belfast

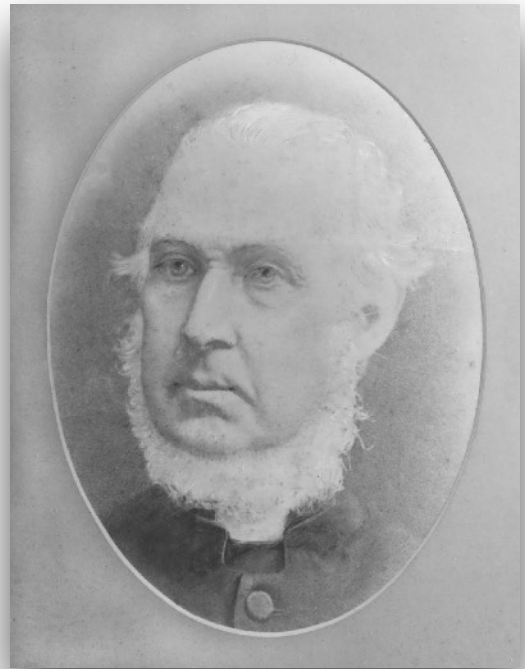


St Matthew's Parish Church

On 1st November, 1882 he was officially appointed as curate in St Matthew's parish church on the Woodvale Road. He was very warmly introduced to the parish at a social evening by the chairman, the Rev. George Hamilton, rector of the parish. Rev. Parker E. Major said that "he was glad to have that early opportunity of speaking to them at a social gathering, and he trusted that his ministry among them might be blessed, and that when a day came for him to leave St. Matthew's he might see the fruit of his labour and carry with him the good wishes and the "Godspeed" of all. They were members of an ancient and true Church, and though the enemies of that Church had sought to destroy it they had not succeeded; for there was life in the old tree yet, and her branches were strong and her boughs as green as ever." (his comments about the destruction of the church would have been a reference to the relatively recent disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1871)

Rev. Parker Major and his brother, Rev. John J. Major, had attended a temperance meeting in St Matthew's a few weeks earlier and both had addressed the meeting.

The choir of St Matthew's that evening was directed by a Miss Hamilton and it sang several temperance melodies. Rev. George Hamilton had two daughters, Annie who in 1872 had married Rev. Charles Scott, incumbent of St Paul's, and Eleanor Georgina. It isn't known if Eleanor had met the young curate before that evening but she would later become his wife when they were married in St Paul's parish church on York Street, Belfast on 31st October, 1889. Officiating at the ceremony was Rev. Charles Scott, Eleanor's brother-in-law. Parker Major spent four very happy and productive years in St Matthew's and during his curacy there he took an active part in its life and in the community around it. He and his unmarried brother, Rev. John J. Major, were clearly very close and frequently went to meetings and functions together. John is recorded as having accompanied Parker on a Sunday school trip on the train to Whitehead in the summer of 1883. When the time came for Parker to leave St Matthew's in November 1886 the following was published in the Belfast News-Letter on Saturday, 18th December, 1886;



Rev. George Hamilton
Image courtesy of St Matthew's Parish Church

Address and Presentation To

Reverend Parker Erskine Major, Reverend and Dear Sir -

It is with no ordinary feelings of regret that we, the Members of St. Matthew's Church, Belfast, have heard of the severance of the ties which have bound you to us as our Curate. We rejoice very sincerely on your behalf, and desire to offer you our warmest congratulations on your well-merited promotion to the Incumbency of the Parish of Kilbride. During your Curacy of rather more than four years' duration you have discharged the duties of your sacred office in a manner which has proved you to be an able minister of our Lord and Saviour, and you have likewise secured such a place in our affection and esteem as we feel assured time will not efface. You will be missed in our Sunday schools and Bible classes, where your manifest sympathy with the young and your ability to counsel and direct them made you popular. You will also be missed in the sick chamber, where your wise and gentle ministrations have so often brought light and comfort, and smoothed the pillow for the dying head; and also in the dwellings of the poor, in many of whose hearts your considerate kindness has awakened feelings of lasting gratitude.

As a small expression of our appreciation of your valuable services and of our feelings of affection and esteem, we beg your acceptance of this Dining-room Clock and Ornaments, together with the Student's Commentary. Praying that through many years you may be spared to illustrate in your life and ministry the Gospel of the Grace of God, we are, rev. and dear sir, sincerely and affectionately yours,

(Signed on behalf of the congregation)
Geo. Hamilton , Incumbent,
William Woodside,
William Lynes Church wardens
James Lyttle, Treasurer.

Reply

My dear Mr Hamilton and Friends - I thank you very sincerely for your complimentary address, and the valuable gifts which accompany it, and I heartily reciprocate your expressions of good-will and friendship. I came among you, four years ago, a stranger with but little experience of practical duties of the ministry, and your support and encouragement have helped me at all times. I have been with you in your joys and in your of sorrows ; and I shall always look back with pleasure to our friendly intercourse. My call from among you was, as you know, unsolicited and unexpected, and I therefore regard it as an opening, under the Divine blessing, for future usefulness. My interest in your welfare will not cease with my resignation of your curacy, and I pray God that His richest blessings may rest upon you individually, you great prosperity.

I remain, my dear friends, yours faithfully, Parker E. Major.

Kilbride Parish Church - Appointment as Rector



Kilbride Parish Church (St Bride's)

Rev. Parker Major became rector of Kilbride following the death of the previous incumbent, Rev. Francis Charles Young, who died on 2nd November, 1886 in Ballyhamage House. Rev. F. C. Young had been in active ministry until a short time before his death aged 70 years. Rev. Parker Major was in all likelihood instituted to the Parish of Kilbride a few weeks after Rev. F. C. Young's death. He officiated at his first wedding in Kilbride on 23rd January, 1887.

The first few years of his incumbency in Kilbride were spent as a single man in a country parish but it isn't known where he lived in those early days, as the Rev. Young had lived in his own residence, Ballyhamage House in Doagh. He may have taken lodgings in Doagh or nearby and when he married Eleanor Hamilton in 1889 his accommodation requirements would have changed again.

New Rectory for Kilbride

In 1894 the construction of a stylish new rectory was completed on a two acre plot on the edge of the Fisherwick estate, generously donated by the Torrens family, and funded from a number of sources including parishioners and a number of generous benefactors. This was to be the home of all future rectors of Kilbride for over 120 years until 2019 when a new rectory was established nearby in Doagh. Rev. and Mrs Major employed the services of one of the church's parishioners, Mrs Elizabeth Hill, who was originally from Co. Cork, as a domestic servant. The Parish Hall was built on the same plot a few years later.



Kilbride Rectory

During the late 1800s and early 1900s there was a continued migration of labour around the island of Ireland and beyond. A number of Rev. Major's congregation came from other parts of Ireland looking for work and many set down roots in the Kilbride area, especially in Doagh and Cogry where the well established mills were the major employers and the professions of many parishioners at the time were strongly linked to the flax industry. Skilled jobs such as scutchers, bleachers, flax bundlers, flax dressers, preparing masters, spinners, etc. were frequently recorded in the 'Trade or Profession' column of the church's baptismal records during the many years of Rev. Major's incumbency.

Ulster Covenant

Ulster Day was Saturday, 28th September, 1912 and Rev. Parker Major was the Agent in Charge for the signing of the Ulster Covenant in the parish. This was a petition opposing the British government's Home Rule Bill for Ireland. Both he and his brother John signed the covenant but his wife Eleanor is not recorded as having signed the women's equivalent, the Declaration.

The Great War Years

By 1914 Rev. Parker Major was well established in the parish and had gained the respect and affections of everyone in both the parish and in the wider community. On the declaration of war in August 1914 the community rallied when the call was made by the government to enlist in the armed forces. Lord Kitchener's face looked out from posters at the time and many men from the Doagh area answered his written call, including many associated with St Bride's. Young men who had attended the church had left Ireland in the years before the war, seeking a new life in various countries of the British Commonwealth, particularly Australia and Canada. A number returned to Europe to support the British cause as soldiers in the armies of their adopted countries. Of the many who enlisted at home and abroad a total of twenty three men fell in the battlefields of France and Belgium, at sea or died through illness. Rev. Parker Major would have personally conducted the funerals of two men who died at home. Robert Turkington had been a serving soldier in the Royal Irish Rifles but died of tuberculosis in Cogry on 20th April, 1917. Samuel Busby of the Devonshire Regiment, died of wounds in hospital in an Ipswich hospital on 3rd October, 1918. His remains were returned for burial in Kilbride New Cemetery. On 6th September, 1916 Roberta Bill was baptised by Rev. Parker Major but she would never meet her father Robert, who had died at the Somme a few short months earlier on 25th June 1916. David Hamill was baptised on 26th December, 1914 and his father Robert would only have known him briefly during short periods of leave as he too was killed at the Somme on 1st July, 1916. Rev. Parker Major had the unenviable task of consoling the families of the many men who would never return, a task he could never have anticipated when he entered Holy Orders some thirty years earlier. He officiated at the Service of Remembrance when the Kilbride parish war memorial tablet was unveiled on 14th December, 1919 by Major General Sir William Adair, K.C.B., of Loughanmore.





Kilbride Parish Church War Memorial

Political Unrest in Ireland

The political situation in Ireland in the early 1920s had reached a watershed with the resulting partition of the island in 1921. Partition did not stop the terrible violence right across the island and the Major family's home parish in Ballymacarrett experienced dreadful rioting with a large loss of life and destruction of property during the period of unrest. Rev. Parker Major's eventual successor in Kilbride and rector of St Patrick's in Ballymacarrett at the time, Rev. John Redmond, was heavily involved in trying to keep the peace with some degree of success.

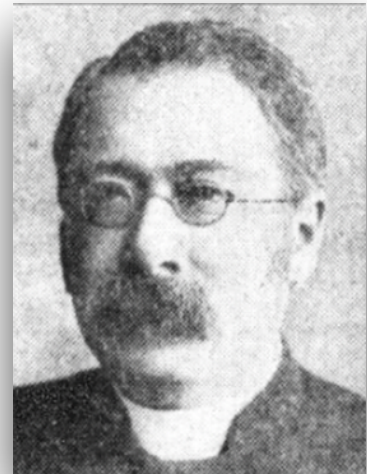
Bereavement and Re-marriage

In May 1923 Rev. Parker Major was to experience deep personal grief as his beloved wife of more than thirty-three years, Eleanor Georgina, passed away at the rectory. Her funeral service was conducted by Rev. John J. Major and she was interred with her parents in Belfast City Cemetery. In October of the following year he remarried. His second wife was also called Eleanor Hamilton and they were married by Rt. Rev. Dr. Charles Thornton Primrose Grierson, the Bishop of Down

and Connor and Dromore in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast. Eleanor Jane Hamilton, who was born on 14th May, 1881, was the daughter of a farmer from Tattykeel near Cookstown and some twenty-two years his junior. It's not known where he had first met her nor how long he had known her but following their marriage the second Mrs. Eleanor Major soon settled in to life in the rectory and the parish. In the 1911 census of Ireland Eleanor Jane Hamilton was a hospital nurse living as a companion to an old lady called Mrs. Jane Allen of Unicarval near Comber. The family were parishioners in St Mary's in Comber but given that Rev. Major preached in many churches in Belfast and beyond it is entirely possible that he had met Eleanor Jane Hamilton during guest preaching engagements. Mrs. Allen died in 1914 resulting in Eleanor needing to look for new employment.

Rev. John J. Major

Rev. Parker Major's brother, Rev. John J. Major, had studied at St Bees Theological College, Cumberland in England, which was the first independent theological college to be established for the training of Church of England ordinands. He was ordained as a priest on 18th December, 1881 in Holywood Parish Church. Rev. John J. Major served as a curate in Christ's Church (Ballymacarrett), Magheralin and Donaghcloney before serving as rector in Drumgath (Rathfriland), Bright (near Downpatrick) and Ardmore (near Lurgan). He did not enjoy good health in later years and stepped back from full time ministry, preferring to assist in various parishes across the then united Diocese of Down and Connor and Dromore. He was honoured with the title of Minor Canon of Down Cathedral for his services to the cathedral over the years.



Rev. John J. Major
Image courtesy of B.N.A.

He came to live in Kilbride rectory in the early 1920s and assisted in many of the tasks of the parish. His name appears occasionally in Kilbride parish registers, having officiated at numerous weddings and baptised children in the absence of his brother. On 19th January, 1926 he quite unexpectedly died in the rectory and was interred in Belfast City Cemetery. He shares a grave with two ladies called McCall, who were sisters, and likely to have been close relatives. On 23rd April, 1927 the Bishop of Down and Connor and Dromore, the Right Rev. C. T. P. Grierson, B. D., visited Kilbride to dedicate a brass eagle lectern to the memory of the Rev. John J. Major. His lordship commented that they owed a debt of gratitude to Miss Wilson, of Ballyhamage House for the gift of a very beautiful marble font, which was kept by a previous rector (Rev. Francis C. Young) in his own home, and which was now appropriately placed at the entrance to the church.

Retirement from the Parish of Kilbride

Rev. Parker Major's health began to deteriorate to the point where he eventually had to resign from his position in Kilbride. He officially left St Bride's in December 1929. The following is the text of a presentation certificate given to his wife Eleanor at the time, her husband being too ill to attend.

It perfectly summarises the esteem in which he was held and the quality and extent of his ministry in Kilbride.

Presentation Certificate from Kilbride Parish Church Hanging in Vestry Room

Address and Presentation to

The Revd. Parker E. Major, M.A.

on the occasion of his retirement from the Parish of Kilbride, Doagh.

Revd. and Dear Sir,

We have learned with deep regret, that the serious illness through which you have passed, has been the cause of your resigning the charge of this Parish.

We feel that a suitable time has now come to express our deep appreciation of what has been a beloved, devoted and popular ministry.

We have highly appreciated your reverend and devout manner when conducting the public services of the church, and have listened with absorbing interest to your sermons which testified to your anxiety for our Spiritual Welfare and your earnest desire to build us up in our Most Holy Faith.

You will be sadly missed in the sick room where your wise and gentle ministrations have so often brought Light and Comfort, and in the homes of the poor, the aged and infirm where you so frequently attended to both bodily and spiritual needs.

We know that not withstanding the distance which will separate us you will still pray earnestly for the good of the Church, your people and your friends.

We pray for your speedy recovery and hope you will live long as a Model of a Minister who preached the Gospel of the Grace of God, and we trust to have your presence with us on many future occasions.

We desire to include Mrs. Major in all our good wishes. She has proved herself a loyal and devoted helpmeet to you and she has always been anxious to forward any good cause in the district that needed practical support.

We ask you to accept the accompanying Salver and Tea Service as a token of our affection and appreciation of you both.

We are sincerely and affectionately yours,

Signed on behalf of your parishioners and friends,	
Hugh Irvine Hon. Secy.	Thos Elder
Cornelius Wilson Hon. Treas.	Alexander McConnell
Harriet C. Orr	Archibald Wilson

December, 1929

Address and Presentation to
The Rev. Parker S. Major, M.A.

on the occasion of his retirement from the
Parish of Kilbride, Doagh. * * *

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We are sincerely and affectionately yours,

Signed on behalf of your parishioners and friends,

Hugh Irvine
Hon. Secy.

Cornelius Wilson
Hon. Treas.

Herbert C. Orr

Thos J. O'Connell

Alexander McConnell

Archibald Wilson

December, 1929.

Printed & Published by W.C. Hann Ltd. Belfast

Address and Presentation Parchment

New Residence in Belfast

The Rev. and Mrs Major moved from Kilbride rectory to live at 120, Malone Avenue in Belfast and it was here that he passed away on 8th November, 1933 aged 75 years. He was buried in Knockbreda cemetery close to Knockbreda parish church. There were many fitting tributes made by clergy and parishioners at the time and a memorial service was conducted in his honour a short time after his death on 19th November, 1933 conducted by his successor, Rev. John Redmond.

Mrs. Eleanor J. Major continued an association with the parish for a time and with Ballymacarrett as she had property interests in the area, a legacy of the Major family's investment there many years before. She later moved a short distance from Malone Avenue to "Heathcote", Sans Souci Park, Belfast. When she died there on 27th October, 1960 she was interred with her husband in Knockbreda cemetery. In her will a sum of £500 was allocated to the installation of a memorial window in St Patrick's in Ballymacarrett in memory of her husband Parker, his brother John and their parents James and Elizabeth Major. This was commissioned and installed in 1963 and replaced a memorial window funded by Rev. John J. Major in 1903, that was destroyed in the Belfast Blitz in 1941. The window takes the theme of the Parable of the Good Shepherd and quotes lines from St Patrick's Breastplate.

A very fitting tribute to the Major family and in particular Rev. Parker E. Major and Rev. John J. Major for the service they gave in the discharge of their sacred duties and their faithful, loving ministries.

Statistics

Births

From the church baptismal records, beginning in January 1888, Rev. Parker E. Major baptised 728 children. His brother, Rev. John J. Major, baptised 51 children.

[Page /].

BAPTISMS administered in the Church of *Saint Bride* in the Parish of *Kilbride* in the Diocese of *Connor*, in the Year 1888

When Baptized.	When Born.	Child's Christian Name.	Parents' Name.		Abode.	Quality, Trade, or Profession.	By whom the Ceremony was Performed.
			Christian.	Surname.			
1888 13 th Jan ^y No. 1	30 th Decr. 1887	Hugh John	Andrew +	Cairns	Rashee	Engine driver	Rev. Parker E. Major

The First Recorded Baptism by Rev. Parker E. Major

Marriages

From the church marriage records Rev. Parker Major performed his first marriage ceremony in Kilbride on 23rd January, 1887 and his last on 26th June, 1929. He officiated at a total 151 marriages. His brother John officiated at 10 marriages, the last being on 4th December, 1925, only a few weeks before his sudden death.

between us, 100

1887. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of *Kilbride* in the County of *Antim*

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
100	23 rd Jan ^y 1887	Robert Davidson	23	Bachelor	Soldier	Dough	Jackson Davidson	Doctor
		Agnes Harbinson	22	Spinster	Dress-maker	Dough	Hugh Harbinson	Labourer

Married in the *Parish Church of Kilbride* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the ~~United~~ Church of ~~England~~ and Ireland, by licence by me, *Parker E. Major*

This Marriage was solemnized between us, } *Robert H. Davidson* } in the Presence of us, } *Alexander Hustard* } *Agnes H. Harbinson* } *Matilda H. Harbinson* } (*Rector of Parish*)

The First Recorded Marriage by Rev. Parker E. Major

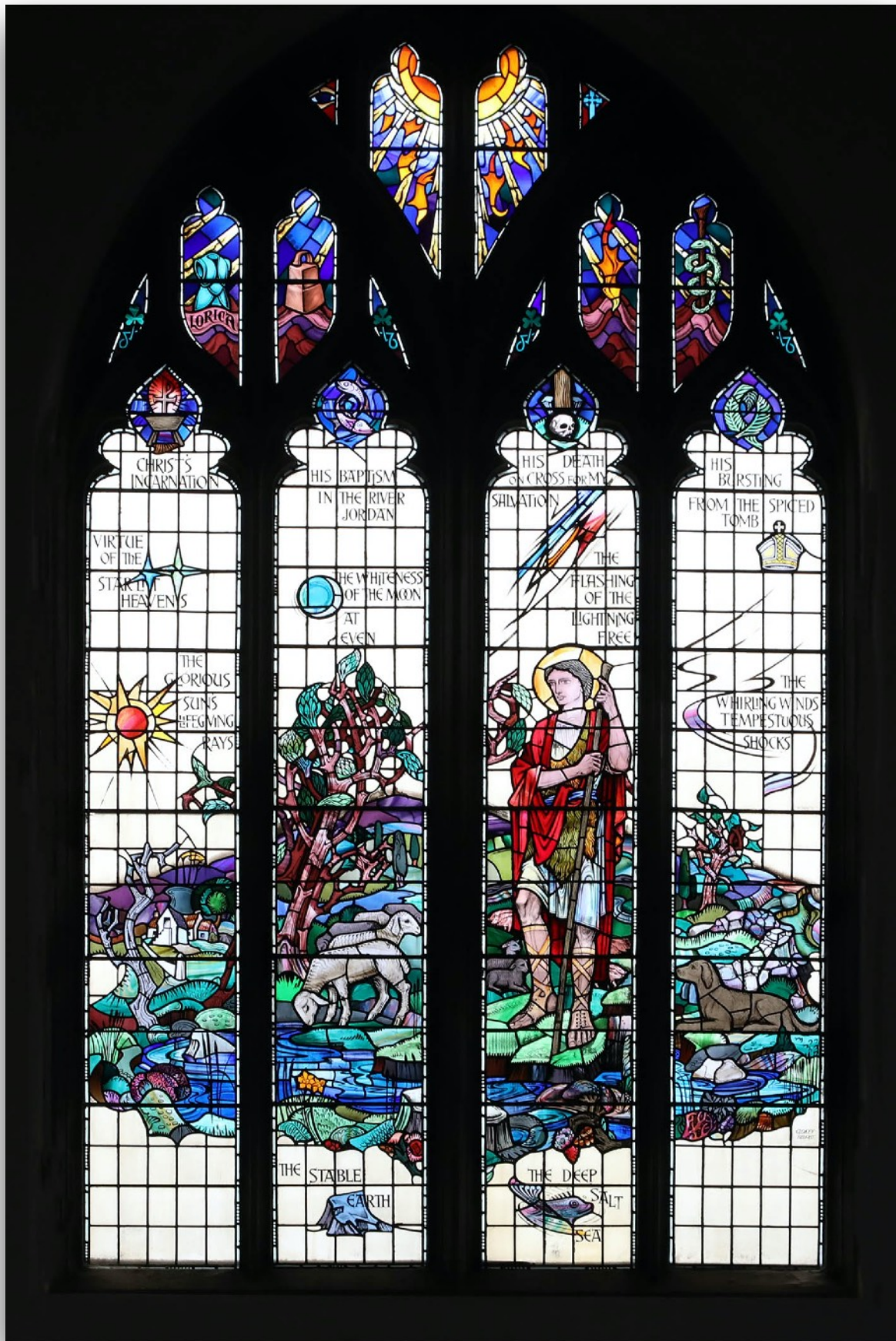
Primary Research Sources

British Newspaper Archives
Irish Civil Registration Records
Irish Census Records
General Register Office NI (G.R.O.N.I.)
Public Records Office NI (P.R.O.N.I.)
Kilbride Parish Church Records

Acknowledgements

Rev. Canon David Humphries, Rector of Kilbride Parish Church
Rev. John Cunningham, Rector of Ballymacarrett Parish Church
Rev. Tracey McRoberts, Rector of St Matthew's Parish Church, Belfast
College Archivist, Methodist College, Belfast
Staff of Belfast City Cemetery and Knockbreda Cemetery, Belfast

Photographs



Memorial Window in St Patrick's Parish Church, Ballymacarrett
Dedicated to the Major Family in 1963



Pulpit presented in memory of Rev. Parker E. Major, M.A.



Inscription plate at the base of the pulpit



Prayer Desk - one of a pair presented in memory of Rev. Parker E. Major



Lectern presented in memory of Rev. John J. Major



Inscription on the base of the lectern



Grave of Rev. Parker E. Major and his second wife, Eleanor Jane Major, in Knockbreda Cemetery, Belfast



Grave of Eleanor Georgina Major and her parents in Belfast City Cemetery



Grave of Rev. John Joseph Major in Belfast City Cemetery