INTRODUCTION

HOW AND WHY THE STRUGGLE BEGAN

The Covenanting period in Scottish history was not just a religious struggle but also a civil one. This period marked the end of the concept of the divine right of kings and the beginning of a transfer of power to the people.

Cumnock and Doon Valley is rich in Covenanting history and a number of significant sites from the period are to be found throughout the district.

THE MEANING OF THE COVENANT

The word ‘covenant’ in Scottish history signifies a bond between the Scots people and God. The idea of a covenant between God and humankind lies at the very heart of the Bible. At the Last Supper Jesus Christ interpreted his own life and death as the perfect covenant. This perhaps explains the strength of opposition in Scotland to the imposition of Episcopacy, where the Church is ruled by bishops answerable to the monarch.

The first covenant can be traced back to around 1557 and dates from the growth of Protestantism in Scotland just before the Reformation of religion in 1560. King James VI had asserted the ‘Divine Right of Kings’ and was determined that he would have no competing authority in the land.

In the king’s eyes, the competing authority was the Kirk, and its Presbyterian policy whereby the church is ruled by an assembly of ministers and lay members independent of the state. The differences between Episcopacy and Presbyterianism lay at the very heart of what motivated the Covenanters.

THE NATIONAL COVENANT

Opposition to the growth of Episcopacy as a form of church government was underlined by the signing of the National Covenant in 1638 by those who believed in a church which reflected keeping their bond or covenant with God. The National Covenant, as its name suggests, involved the whole nation.

When Charles I succeeded to the throne, he was set on completely overthrowing Presbyterianism.

Although he was quick to set out the consequences of non-acceptance of the king’s supremacy, the National Covenant was begun in Greyfriars Kirkyard in Edinburgh on 29th February 1638. It included a confession of faith asserting the Church’s freedom in Scotland and its loyalty to the king:

From the knowledge and conscience of our duty to God, to our king and country . . . we promise by God to continue in obedience of religion (Protestant and Presbyterian).

Copies of this Covenant were sent to all parts of Scotland to be signed and even to sympathisers in London.

Such was the emotion of those signing that some wept aloud, others shouted in exaltation and others cut open their veins and wrote their names in their own blood.

This was open defiance of the king and his policies but people were prepared to face the consequences of refusing to submit to the imposition of Episcopacy.
THE SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT

Charles I hoped to destroy the Covenanter but in 1643, during the English Civil War, the Scots entered into a Solemn League and Covenant with the English to achieve reformed religion.

By 1646 the civil war in England was ending in victory for Parliament. Charles I hoped to persuade the Scots to help him against the English parliament.

But the Covenanters would agree to assist the King only if he established Presbyterian church government in England.

The King refused and the Scots left him to fall into the hands of Parliament. Charles I was eventually executed in 1649.

THE RESTORATION OF CHARLES II

After the rule of Oliver Cromwell, Charles II was restored to the throne. The king restored the bishops and allowed ministers to hold charges only if they were acceptable to local landowners and denounced the covenants as unlawful.

About 300 ministers, many from Ayrshire, refused to submit to the new regulations. People were fined for failing to attend church and absentees’ names were listed. Troops were stationed all over Ayrshire to crush illegal church services, called conventicles.

In 1679, Archbishop Sharp, a supporter of the King, was murdered by Covenanters as he travelled home to St. Andrews. ¹

Historical Background

The Covenanters were Scottish Presbyterians who objected to English Episcopal interference in their worship. They were called Covenanters because they supported the National Covenant of 1638 which pledged opposition to the English bishops. When Charles II was restored in 1660 many ministers left their parishes and held illegal open-air conventicles. Troops were sent in and violence erupted on both sides. Known locally as 'the killing times', one of the main persecutors of the Covenanters was John Graham of Claverhouse or 'Bloody Clavers'. Hundreds of Covenanters marched on Edinburgh but they were dispersed at the Battle of Ruthven Green in the Pentland Hills on 22 November 1666. The Covenanters were routed again at Bothwell Bridge in 1670, and at Airds Moss near Cumnock, in 1680. The Rev. Richard Cameron, who fixed the Sanquhar Declaration to the old town cross in Sanquhar, was one of those killed in this last battle. The Rev James Renwick took up the cause but was captured and executed in Edinburgh in 1688, at the age of 26. In the same year William and Mary came to the throne, relaxed the laws in an attempt to unite the country and the area became more peaceful.

Some other Covenanters' Memorials in Southern Scotland


KIRKCUDBRIGHT The churchyard has a memorial to two hanged and beheaded Covenanters.

WIGTOWN A tall obelisk commemorates two women who were drowned for their faith: Margaret Wilson aged 18, and Margaret McLaughlan aged 63. Three other martyrs are buried here.

MONIAIVE An obelisk to James Renwick, born here in 1662.

MOFFAT A roadside memorial at the Devil's Beechill commemorates John Hunter of Corehead.

AYR A memorial to seven prisoners from Pentland, hanged by another prisoner, after the official hangman refused to do so.

GLASGOW The Cathedral has a memorial to nine martyrs: four were at Pentland, and five were hanged for refusing to answer questions.

EDINBURGH Greyfriars churchyard still has the Covenanters' Prison which housed some 1500 men after the Battle of Bothwell Bridge. Open to the elements, many died before trial; others were shipwrecked off Orkney on the way to slavery in America.
Places of Interest

1. Portpatrick - Many Covenanters sailed from this once busy harbour to safety in Ireland. Others sailed from Leith - as slaves for America.

2. New Luce - Alexander Peden was Minister here from 1659-62. He then preached in the Galloway hills.

3. Linn's Tomb (NX244725) - Said to have been a shepherd from New Luce, Alexander Linn was shot by dragoons near this spot.

4. Glenvernoch (NX346753) - Home of Margaret Wilson who was tied to a stake in Wigtown Bay and drowned by the incoming tide. The house was used to garrison soldiers and her innocent father suffered many indignities.

5. Martyr's Tomb, Caldons (NX397788) - A memorial in the woods commemorates six Covenanters surprised at prayer and immediately shot.

6. Largmore (NX570823) - Home of John Gordon. Wounded at the battle of Bullion Green, he reached home but died soon after. He is buried at Kells churchyard, 400 yards north of New Galloway. His son Rodger (who fought at Bothwell) had many narrow escapes from dragoons in this vicinity.

7. Earlston Castle (3km N of Dalry) - William Gordon of Earlston was killed near Bothwell; his son Alexander escaped and was free until 1683 when he was sentenced to death at Edinburgh. He was reprieved and released in 1688.


9. Ardoch Farm (NX634832) - Robert Stewart of Ardoch was present when James McMichael slew the curate of Carsphairn. Hunted down on Auchencloy Hill, Stewart and John Grier are now buried in Dalry churchyard.

10. Stroanpatrick (NX644920) - A suspected informer by the name of Roan was killed near here by James McMichael whilst trying to escape from a group of Covenanters.

11. Allan's Cairn (NS698008) - George Allan and Margaret Gracie were shot on the Fawns of Altyre, an area of open moorland 1km east of the Whigs' Hole (NS671000) - a place for open-air conventicles. The monument was placed on the nearby junction of three parish boundaries.

12. Sanquhar - A tall obelisk in the High Street lies on the site of the old town cross where the Rev. Richard Cameron affixed the Sanquhar Declaration in 1860.

13. Glendyne - (3km W of Brandleys Cottage) This glen was much more wooded when Peden "The Prophet" used it as a hiding place.

14. Martyr's Knowe, Coghead (NS8314128) - Three Covenanters captured by the Laird of Drumlanrig and his soldiers made their escape here in a great thunderstorm.

15. Enterkin Burn (SW side of Lowther Hill): (i) in 1684 James McMichael, James Harkness and other Covenanters fired upon a group of soldiers who gave up their prisoners and fled. (ii) In 1685 McMichael's brother Daniel was shot at the foot of the Dalveen Pass. (iii) A few years later six Covenanters who had escaped from Edinburgh were passing through the glen and effected the escape of two more prisoners.

16. Traquair House (NT336355) and the Minchmuir Road - The Marquis of Montrose banged on the door of Traquair House in 1645 but was refused admission. He had fled along the high Minchmuir Road after his Royalist troops had been routed by a Covenanting Army at Philiphaugh (NT455282) near Selkirk.

17. Covenanters Well (NT535418) - The well lies 300m SE of Bluecaim Farm, 7km N of Melrose.
THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE COVENANTERS

His Hon. W. H. R. Crawford and used with permission

In Scotland the old Pre-Reformation Church was even more oppressive, venal, corrupt and unpopular than its English counterpart had been. Scotland’s preference for Presbyterianism, where the Church is ruled by elders elected by the congregation and there are no bishops, may have been fuelled by a strong reaction against the past. Whatever the reason, the doctrines of Calvin, Luther and Presbyterianism appealed to Scots from the outset. In 1557, the Lords of the Congregation signed the First National Covenant, binding themselves to replace the Roman Church with a Presbyterian one. In 1560, with the aid of Elizabeth’s troops, that aim was achieved; the French troops of Mary of Lorraine were driven out; the authority of the Pope was denied, the Mass was declared illegal, and Presbyterianism was established.

From that moment on the Scots Nation (with the exception, curiously, of an area round Aberdeen, which remained firmly Episcopalian) did not waiver in its desire to worship according to the Presbyterian rite. Yet for the next 130 years the Stuarts sought to impose either Episcopacy or actual Roman Catholicism upon Scotland. Much of the turbulence which was apparent in 17th century Scotland arose from this single cause.

James VI and I preferred Anglicanism, as indeed he preferred England to his native land, but his motive in seeking to impose it upon the Scots was that it would cement the Union. Charles I, with his insistence upon the Divine Right of Kings, genuinely believed that Presbyterianism and Kingship were incompatible. His attempt to impose upon Scotland Archbishop Laud’s High Anglican prayer book led directly from the Jenny Geddes riot, to the signing of the Second National Covenant of 1638 by many thousands of Scots.

The Covenanters, as the signatories were now known, made clear their loyalty to the King, but also their utter opposition to the rule of bishops, and to anything even remotely connected to the Roman Catholic rite. As Charles sank deeper in to the mire of the Civil War, the government of Scotland was carried on by the General Assembly of the Kirk, which had organised the signing of the Covenant. For ten years, the Assembly ruled Scotland in a way which recalls the rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan in recent times. A diarist of the period wrote, “Much falsit (dishonesty) and Scheitting (cheating) at this tyme wes daylie detectit by the Lordis of Sessioun; for the quhilk their wes daylie hanging, skurging, nailing of luggis, and binding of pepill to the Trone, and boring of tounges.”

Executions for moral offences were commonplace. The severing of hands and limbs was frequent. The Kirk’s moral code did not exclude the use of torture, generally by ‘the Boot.’ To many of those who had signed the Covenant, like Lauderdale and Montrose, it was a form of government more foul and oppressive than the absolutist rule of Charles I would ever have been.

Montrose turned against it. He decided to back the King, recommending to him a form of constitutional monarchy. With the aid of Irish troops and Highlanders under Colkitto, he won a series of brilliant victories against the men of the Assembly. Tippermuir, Aberdeen, Inverlochy, Auldearn, Alford and Kilsyth followed each other in dazzling succession, marred only by the sack, pillage and slaughter that followed the victory at Aberdeen. After Kilsyth his troops, their motives less noble than his, melted away back to the Highlands and Ireland. Montrose sought replacements in the Borders, but at Philiphaugh, near Selkirk, he was surprised and routed by Leslie. He narrowly escaped with a few followers, most of his reduced force was captured; many were slaughtered on the field, and the rest, including women and children, were taken to Edinburgh. The Assembly announced they were to be executed. Protests poured in from all over Scotland. These were ignored; the execution of the women and boys was carried out, the Rev. David Dickson, an ex-Moderator of the General Assembly, declaring, “The wark gangs bonnily on.”
Montrose continued to seek troops in the Highlands, until Charles I called on him to desist, and leave the country. He went to Holland. There, on hearing of the execution of the King, he fainted. The reaction of the rest of Scotland was one of fury and horror. Charles II was immediately proclaimed King in Edinburgh, but with a proviso that he should not reign until he had accepted the Covenant. Charles, before he accepted this proviso, decided to let Montrose see what he could do. Montrose landed in the Orkneys, recruited unskilled Orkney lads and, with them and some gallant noblemen, like the Earl of Kinnoull, crossed to the mainland. The Orcadians were no match for General Leslie and Colonel Strachan, and were routed. Montrose sought sanctuary with Neil Macleod of Assynt, who betrayed him for £25,000 Scots; 20 in cash and 5 in meal. It is some slight consolation that the meal was sour, and the cash was probably never paid. Montrose was led down through Scotland, his feet tied under a highland pony. Charles II did not lift a finger to try to save him. The courage, dignity and ‘sweet carriage’ with which he, the poet-hero, went to his death before his execution, ‘let them bestow on every airdth a limb,’ are an imperishable monument to his greatness.

Charles II, having sacrificed Montrose, landed in Scotland, made obeisance to the mullahs of the Assembly, and signed the Covenants. Cromwell immediately marched north with his army and put the Scots army to flight at Dunbar on 3rd September 1650, General Leslie having been goaded into tactical error by the ministers of the Assembly. Exactly a year later, Charles and Leslie marched into England and were defeated at Worcester. Charles fled abroad, and Cromwell replaced the administration of the Assembly with one of his own. It was infinitely more just, but it was equally oppressive, it was English, and it was highly unpopular. There was universal rejoicing in Scotland when Charles II was restored. Alas, as the later history of the Covenanters shows all too clearly, the rejoicing was soon to turn to tears. 1

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1 Scottish Covenanter Memorials Association Newsletter, No. 93, February 2007. pp 6-7, 10
Chapter CXX

Scenes of the Scottish Covenanters
By The Rev. W. S. Crockett, D.D.
Author of “The Scott Country,” “The Scott Originals,” etc.

The Scottish Covenanting conflict covered a period of half a century—between the years 1637 and 1688. Scotland never witnessed a blacker or a bloodier episode in her whole history. The love of freedom has ever burned itself deeply in upon the soul of the Scottish people, and it was this sense of freedom which lay at the root of the great Covenanting struggle. Its one contention was for liberty to worship in the manner which most appealed to the national conscience, and which the rational conscience considered to be in harmony with the mind and will of God and the teaching of the Scriptures. Prelacy and Popery were utterly abhorrent to the Scottish ideal. Whatever savoured of priestcraft and the Mass was anathema to those who believed there could be no human medium intervening between the soul and its Maker.

Under the Reformed Church, set up in 1560 by John Knox and his associates, the country was cut adrift from the curse of Roman Catholicism and the Presbyterian system acclaimed as the religion of the land. There were those, however, who adhered to the old order, and who hoped for the time when it would be resuscitated in something like its ancient power. Episcopacy prevailed in England, and to bring the northern half of the kingdom into line with the religion of the south was their constant aim and firm resolve.

The most determined of those instruments was King James VI himself, aided and abetted by prelatic sympathisers in both countries. James accepted not only the dogma of the divine right of kingscraft, but episcopacy, he held, was no less according to God’s appointment. It was, he said, “the religion of a gentleman.” Under James’s regime the order of bishops was fully restored in the Church and in the councils of the State, and very soon the Church of Scotland was as Episcopal as it had been Roman Catholic in pre-Reformation days. No betterness came with the advent of Charles I—matters grew worse and worse. It was Charles’s attempt to foist upon the Church the use of a liturgy prepared by Archbishop Laud, and little better than the Roman breviary, which became the fons et origo of the Covenanting Cause.

On Sunday, July 23, 1637, the new manual was ordered to be introduced into all the churches. Dean Hammy officiated in the High Kirk of Edinburgh—S. Giles Cathedral. He had read but a few sentences when the pent-up anger of his congregation manifested itself in unmistakable fashion. Audible whispers stole through the building, followed by the débacle in which Jenny Geddes figured so conspicuously. Constant tradition affirms how a humble vegetable-hawker hurled her creepy-stool at the Dean’s head, shouting out: “Thou false thief, dost thou say Mass at my leg?” An unseemly brawl, perhaps, but it served its purpose, a tocsin sounding forth its summons to the nation. For so was the first blow struck in that mighty battle for religions and civil liberty which did not cease till the whole obnoxious system of Prelacy-cum-Papacy was swept away, and with it the Stuart dynasty.

On February 28, 1638, the National Covenant was signed in Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh. Dr. Hay Fleming claims to have disproved the popular tradition of a flat stone in the churchyard having been utilised as a table for signatures, many of these being written, not in ink, but in the witness’s own blood. Dr. Fleming maintains the Covenant was signed in the church alone. But tradition is not easily slain, even if it has been shown that by the light of candles and crucibles the sacred edifice was used for this purpose, long after nightfall. No unanswerable argument has been adduced against the oft-repeated, romantic story of the stone. A General Assembly held at Glasgow in November drove the bishops from their sees and restored Presbyterianism. “We have cast down the walls of Jericho,” said the Moderator, Alexander.
Henderson, minister of Leuchars, “let him that rebuildeth them beware of the curse of Hiel the Bethelite.” Charles’s threat of Civil War was speedily extinguished, although the royal army and the forces of the Covenanters (camped upon Duns Law, in Berwickshire, where the Covenanters’ Stone is still seen) faced each other for some days.

In 1643 a new bond—the Scottish League and Covenant (often confused with that of 1638) was approved by Parliament, and provided for the extermination of Popery and Prelacy within the three kingdoms. The execution of the king proved a backward stroke to peace. The Scots proclaimed Charles II, and dispatched an embassy to interview him at The Hague. Charles (not so good a man as his father) declined the conditions under which the great Marquess of Argyll and his coadjutors laid the crown at his feet. With a handful of foreign mercenaries the Marquess of Montrose hastened to raise the country against Argyll and the League, a foolish and disastrous adventure which brought about the unmerited death of one of the gallantest men who ever handled a sword.

In 1651 Charles was crowned at Scone, solemnly swearing to uphold the Covenant. The Cromwellian dictatorship (tolerant to Scotland, although Oliver inhabited meetings of the General Assembly) saw Charles an exile in France. On May 29, 1660, he re-entered London, and June 19 was celebrated in Edinburgh as a Thanksgiving for the Restoration. On New Year’s Day, 1667, Middleton’s notorious “Drunken Parliament” met, to pass, in the course of its brief career, numerous Acts, the most execrable and hateful in the annals of the Scottish Statute-book. Everything became centred in the supremacy of Charles. He was given absolute despotism over Church and State, and on September 6 Episcopacy was re-established.

Meanwhile sinister events had occurred even while Middleton’s Parliament was in progress. Some of Scotland’s best sons were marked out for martyrdom. On May 27, 1661, Argyll, his country’s sagrest statesman, the foremost citizen in Scotland, sealed his testimony with his blood. “I could die like a Roman,” he said on his way to the scaffold, “but I choose to die like a Christian.” Ere another week had passed James Guthrie, minister of Stirling, was hanged at the Cross of Edinburgh. His last words were, “The Covenanters, the Covenanters shall yet be Scotland’s reviving.”

The saint and scholar of the Covenant, Samuel Rutherford, marked out for a similar fate, was mercifully delivered from it by illness and death supervening. Of all the shrines of the Covenant none is better known than “Fair Anwoth by the Solway,” Rutherford’s beautiful parish, from which he was ejected and banished to Aberdeen, where he penned

**The Scottish Covenanters**

ARCHBISHOP SHARP

James Sharp, the minister of Craif who became Archbishop of St. Andrews through his betrayal of the Covenant, persecuted his erstwhile friends with all the venom of the tamecoat. This portrait of him is by Sir Peter Lely.

**The Marquess of Argyll**

Archibald Campbell, Marquess of Argyll, the most moderate of the Covenanters’ leaders at the time of the Restoration, died for his Faith on the scaffold in 1661. The photograph is from a painting in the Duke of Argyll’s collection.
The Scottish Covenanters

those celebrated Letters which exercised a more potent religious influence than all his pulpit pieties. His "Lex Rex" was the text-book of the Covenanters of Scotland.

With the rehabilitation of Prelacy there appeared on the scene the most prominent and most unprincipled of those turncoat divines for whom a traitorous trimming to the circumstances of the hour probably never cost them a moment's thought. James Sharp, minister of Crail, sent to London to safeguard the interests of the Kirk and to seek the goodwill of the king, returned to Scotland as head of the new hierarchy—Archbishop of St. Andrews. No emissary of the powers of darkness could have been more hostile or more vindictive. Sharp's hand can be traced in all the horrible and despicable incidents of his eighteen years of Primacy. With his connivance, and often at his express orders, severities were heaped on severities upon the Presbyterians, who numbered the great majority of the people, especially in the centre and south and west of Scotland. Persecution opened its voracious maw day by day, until in 1662 Parliament decreed that all ministers appointed after 1649 (when patronage was abolished) could hold their charges only on a fresh presentation from the patron and collation by the Bishop. A third of the incumbents, about 400, forsake their benefices rather than betray conscience. "Scotland," says Robert Wodrow, "was never witness to such a Sunday as the last on which the ministers preached."

When Alexander Peden, known as the "Prophet of the Covenant," parted with his people at New Luce, after shutting his pulpit door he struck it three times with his Bible, dramatically exclaiming, "I arrest thee in my Master's name that none enter thee but such as come by the door as I have done."

Many of the deprived ministers continued to reside in their parishes, giving origin to the memorable Convention movement, those secret prescribed meetings in private houses and among sequestered nooks of the hills and fields, which constituted the most tragic yet the most splendidly heroic feature of Covenant times. Not seldom thousands of people participated. The spot selected was usually a remote solitude; a stretch of heathery moorland, the edge of a broad morass, the lee of a thick plantation, a secluded slope or "hope" among the mountains. or

A PROSCRIBED MEETING OF COVENANTERS BEING HELD IN A MOORLAND SOLITUDE

In field or heathery moorland, marsh or woodland glade, any solitude remote enough to evade the vindictive vigilance of the enemy scoffery Covenanters would foregather for service and prayer. Preacher and preacher took up a position from which they could be seen and heard by every worshipper; round about them sat the congregation, joining fervently in psalm or hymn. Sir George Harvey's painting reproduced in the above photograph renders graphically one of these meetings. The painting is the property of Glasgow Corporation.
The Scottish Covenanters

the bend of a stream, and always where keen-sighted watchers could be told off to give the alarm to the worshippers in case of need.

No assembly could have been more solemn or more uplifting. Round about the company of reverent-minded worshippers lay the grand sublimities of Nature. Near by might be the hallowing presence of a martyr’s grave. The preacher and preacher took up a position from which they could be seen and heard by all. With full-throated voice of praise the familiar psalm was sung, and in the hush of prayer the bleating of a sheep, the flapping of a wild bird’s wing, the cry of an infant, alone broke the stillness.

The celebration of the most impressive of the Church’s ordinances—the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper—became almost more a heavenly feast when men and women partook of it not knowing what might happen before the night mists fell.

Though the utmost precaution was taken, and distant watchers maintained a steady eye, conventicles were spied out by the enemy and dispersed; preachers and people were captured, or wounded, or slain. Quiet worshippers returning homeward, ecstatic in the joy of sweet communion with one another, were interrupted and questioned; some were put under arrest; some cruelly maltreated; some ruthlessly murdered, as the martyr stones on many a Lowland moor silently testify.

Every sort of expedient was employed to crush the conventicle spirit and to bring the nonconforming element within the sweep of the numberless Acts passed against them. The intruded “curates” “piled up” “black lists” of church absentees and acted the part of informers. Spies disguised as pedlars, minstrels and ballad-mongers, beggars, and even as fugitive

Covenanters, wandered from place to place, ferreting out information and conveying intelligence to the authorities, for whom the military were the main instruments of oppression. Soldiers, reckless, profane, pitiless, brutal, were given liberty to act as they pleased—to fence, imprison, ill-treat, shoot, in merciless scourings of the country which shook the whole south-west of Scotland with a blast of terror.

In 1666 that “fierce and dissolute tyrant,” Sir

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GRAVE OF WILLIAM DINGWALL, AND THE DRUNCLOG VICTORY

Drunclog, a desolate moor a few miles from Strathaven, was the scene of the Covenanters’ only military success. But it cost the life, among others, of the steady William Dingwall, whose end is recorded on an impressive monument (bottom). The inscription shown in the top photograph is that on the monument commemorating the victory (see page 125).
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company mastered at Invergarry and marched to Dumfries, where Turner was taken while still in bed. Continuing, they made for Ayr and Lanark, under the command of Wallace of Auchinleck, with Major Learmonth, Captain Arnot, the redoubtable John Paton of Meadowhead, and others. They had now increased to 2,000 strong, enough, they thought, for a bolder stroke. A rumour (false) that Edinburgh was ready to join them, led them in that direction.

On reaching Rullion Green, on the slopes of the Pentland Hills (some eight miles from the city), while reduced unhappily to a famished and half-starved condition, they were met by the forces of “Bloody Dalrymple” of Bannock and put to flight, leaving about fifty killed and a hundred prisoners. The latter were tried for treason. John Neilson of Conis and Hugh MacKail were put to the torture of “the Boot,” and hanged. Between thirty and forty were executed and the rest were banished. At Rullion Green an insignificant tombstone marks the spot where the battle took place and the slain were buried.

Sharp was the real author of the retribution meted out to the Rullion prisoners. Their lives might have been spared on a promise of quarter upon surrendering, but the relentless Primate retaliated at the bare suggestion, “You are pardoned as soldiers, but you are not acquitted as subjects.” The die was cast, and at the same time Sharp’s own fate was rendered certain. For thirteen years he lived under a dread of assassination. An attempt was made on his life in the High Street of Edinburgh in 1668, but he pursued his nefarious rule and persecuted the unfortunate Covenanters for eleven years longer.

On May 3, 1679, while on his way to St. Andrews, and in crossing Magus Moor, he was dragged from his carriage by a band of nine zealots, headed by Hackston of Rathil and Balfour of Kinloch, known as “Burly,” men of his own stripe, and stabbed to death, notwithstanding his daughter’s presence and an escort of soldiers powerless to interfere. The deed was murder foul and cannot be condoned, and was at once condemned by the Covenanting leaders. But it was an age of desperate deeds, and Sharp’s conduct was of such a character and his acts of infamy so revolting, that the marvel is he escaped.

THE COVENANTERS’ ONE VICTORY OBELISK AND BATTLEFIELD OF DRUMCLOG

This photograph shows the cairn erected to the Covenanters on the battlefield of Drumclog, near Strathaven (see page 1289). Graham of Cavenham surprised the Rutherglen “rebels” at a great conventicle here, but was himself surprised by the resistance offered, and suffered an ignominious defeat, finally being obliged to escape on a borrowed horse. The victorious Covenanters, however, failed ignobly to avail themselves of their success, and after a fruitless march on Glasgow met their Waterloo at Bothwell Bridge (see pp. 1284, 1285).
so long. Interred in the Church of the Holy Trinity at St. Andrews, a highly ornate memorial covers the spot where his bones reposed; for the tomb seems to have been rifled, and nothing remains except the handles of his coffin.

Rathillet and Burly fled to the West Country and quickly attracted a following. On May 29, led by Hamilton of Preston, they declared their policy in a poster affixed to the market cross of Rutherglen, where they publicly burned all Acts directed against the Reformation "as our enemies perfidiously and blasphemously have burned our holy Covenants."

The pre-eminently evil genius in the Government's military excesses came now to the front in the person of John Graham of Claverhouse, afterwards Viscount Dundee. Graham had been a soldier of fortune on the Continent, but in 1677 he was back in Scotland, a lieutenant under Montrose. To him was assigned the task of coping with the Rutherglen rebels. Within a week he was at their heels, surprising them at a great conventicle at Drumelg, on a desolate moor near Strathaven. Graham never anticipated defeat. His charger was disembowelled under him with a bayonet, and his forces were heavily routed, himself escaping on a borrowed horse, drawing rein only when Glasgow was in sight. It was the only battle the Covenanters won—the only one Claverhouse lost.

The victors marched gaily to Glasgow, but that city desired none of them. They retired on Hamilton, adding daily to their adherents, but stupidly fell out among themselves over questions hotly debated from the standpoint of those who were either moderates or extremists, willing to recognize the Indulgencies, or not.

At Bothwell Bridge the men of the Covenant faced their worst disaster. Some 400 of them were slaughtered. No fewer than 1,154 were taken to Edinburgh, where they were confined for five months in a corner of Greyfriars churchyard. Five were executed on Magnus Moor to avenge the murder of Sharp, with which they had nothing to do; about a hundred escaped; a considerable number died of starvation; many were given their liberty by taking the necessary

THE CASTLE AT STRATHAVEN, WHERE MANY CAPTIVE COVENANTERS SUFFERED AND DIED

Strathaven Castle, otherwise known as the Castle of Avondale, is a ruin of grim memories in the Covenanters struggle. Behind whose battered walls were dungeons, and in them prisoners languished, often for many months, subjected to every kind of privation and unspeakable torture. Several of those brought in here never saw the light of day. They were done to death, without pretence of trial or warrant, by the rough sodality of merciless Royal Commanders, or died of their untended wounds.
eaths, until 257 were left, to be shipped as slaves for the American plantations, which none of them ever saw, the vessel being wrecked off the Moul Head of Deerness in the Orkneys, when 48 managed to struggle afloat and 209 perished.

Notable names at this period are Richard Cameron and Donald Cargill—both extremists, founders of the Cameronians or Society Folks. On the anniversary of Bothwell, with a score of followers armed with drawn swords, Cameron and Cargill rode into Nithdale, and on the Cross of Sanquhar displayed a manifesto disowning allegiance to Charles and declaring war on "such a despot and usurper." A month later Cameron, "the lion of the Covenant," fell at Ayrmoss, near Maikirk.

Of all years of the Covenant struggle, 1684 and 1685 stand out with such undiluted horror and obloquy as to be specially labelled the Black Years and the Killing Time, although the whole period was more or less a Killing Time. The arrival in Scotland of the king's brother, the Duke of York, was responsible for most of those atrocities. Under him the Test Act was put into operation, and became an instrument of almost incredible oppression. All classes, gentle and simple, rich and poor alike, came under its ban. Robert Baillie of Jerviswood and Mellerstain suffered death, ostensibly as a Rye House plotter, but really for his staunch Presbyterianism. William Carstairs, afterwards Principal of Edinburgh University, was tortured by the "thumbkins." Throughout the whole of the south of Scotland, Claverhouse, Colonel James Douglas, Dalzell, Bruce of Earlshall, and the superiniquitous Sir Robert Grierson of Lag, carried on their dastardly avocation, riding down victims in every district and desecrating hundreds of homes in their bigoted fury.

In the prisons of the Covenanters, Dunnottar Castle, Blackness and the Bass Rock, hundreds of brave sufferers languished for long and weary months, herded together like cattle, in dark and filthy dungeons, where to lie down was impossible, and so stifling the atmosphere that turns were taken at tiny air-holes for a breath of the fresh breeze from the sea.
The Scottish Covenanters

Orange the sun of freedom shine on once more. Episcopacy was abolished and Presbyterianism restored to its true place in a land which can never forget how it has been flowered and hallowed with martyr graves.

An authoritative estimate of the number who suffered from 1660 to 1688 is impossible. The statement on the Martyrs' Monument in Greyfriars churchyard that 18,000 were murdered and destroyed between the execution of Argyll and that of Renwick was probably derived from Defoe's "Memoirs of the Church of Scotland," published in 1717.

That total therefore includes not only those who were killed in frights and skirmishes, shot in cold blood on the hills and moors, or executed after a trial hardly deserving of the name, but also those who were banished from the country, those who perished of exposure and disease, those who died of privations of other kinds, those who were tortured or maimed or driven insane, and those who went into voluntary exile.

Lonely graves lie scattered over all the southern shires, where the conflict was chiefly waged and persecution raged its fiercest. What Robert Paterson (Scott's "Old Mortality") did to perpetuate their memories by rechiselling their rough, decaying epitaphs has been done in more durable form by the Rev. John H. Thomson in his "Martyr Graves of Scotland," wherein is given an account of over one hundred of those scattered meeting-places amidst the wilds of Galloway and Dumfriesshire, and in many town and country churchyards of Lanarkshire and Ayrshire. All tell their own valiant tale of "adherence to the Word of God and Scotland's Covenanted Work of Reformation." The inhuman monster who decreed their doom is not forgotten, and in the vast number of instances "Bloody Claverse" is the predominating cognomen of detestation and shame, a man who, it is said, though the evidence is not clear, himself shot through the head John Brown, the "Christian carver" of Presthill, before the eyes of his pleading wife.

1 Crockett, Rev. W. S., D. D. Scenes of the Scottish Covenanters (Chapter CXX), pp 1285-1292
IN OLD MORTALITY’S FOOTSTEPS

Dane Love

It was Sir Walter Scott who coined the nickname, ‘Old Mortality’, used by him to describe Robert Paterson, a mason who left behind his wife and family to travel to Scotland with his pony, erecting gravestones in memory of the martyrs of the Covenant.

This work is still carried on today, but now, rather than one person tackling it, the Scottish Covenanter Memorials Association see that no monument to the martyrs is lost or uncared for. A number of volunteers check the obelisks or headstones at regular intervals and, where railings require painting, this is carried out; if enclosures need weeding they get down on their knees and do it, and where there is a report of damage requiring professional attention, then the funds see that this is attended to.

The Association was founded in September 1966 as a result of a letter sent to the magazine Life and Work by an English reader. He complained that some martyrs’ graves were not being properly looked after and wondered if anything could be done. The man who wrote the letter was Brian Nutter, a Religious Education teacher, and when the Association was founded he duly joined it, and has been president for the last seven years.

His letter was seen by three men from Ayrshire, in the heart of Covenanting country. William Stirling, Walter Storrar and William Miller quickly got together and began the work of cleaning up the memorials. At first they did just simple jobs to monuments in their immediate locality, but as time went on they travelled farther afield and tackled greater problems.

A retired master of works and mason, Walter Storrar, knew how to carry out some of the jobs needing done, whereas William Miller was more interested in research and finding new volunteers. William Stirling acted as Walter’s labourer and also dealt with the correspondence which grew as their work increased.

When William Stirling died in 1974 the remaining members realised that the Association would require to be better organised and invited new, younger members to join and ensure that the work begun would continue. So successful have they been that they now have members worldwide and are this year celebrating their Silver Jubilee.

It is not just older folk who are welcomed to the Association - the minimum subscription of £1 is such that it is within the reach of any child’s pocket money. In 1986 to mark the tercentenary of the ‘Killing Times’ when most of the martyrs suffered, a youth scheme was run, to encourage Girl Guides, Boys’ Brigades and other youth groups to run short projects on the Covenanters, and so ensure that their memory survives. An attractive badge was presented to every person undertaking such a project, and the Association reaped the benefits, for as well as finding new members, many groups finished off their projects with a clean-up of their local memorial.

Any who are able to spend some time cleaning stones, pointing masonry or painting ironwork are encouraged to do so. It used to grieve Jim Brackenridge, a retired banker and Association treasurer, who died earlier this year, that not all claim back their expenses for materials, for he had a growing bank balance, despite several major projects having been completed.

One of these was the replacement of the martyrs’ memorial at Caldons, near Loch Trool in Galloway. The old sandstone grave had been destroyed by vandals in 1983. The fragments were removed, and though it was possible to have them ‘glued’ back together, it was felt that this would leave the memorial in a far weaker state. Sir Walter Scott stated that the memorial at Caldons was ‘highly venerated’ as being the first to be erected by ‘Old Mortality’, and when the stone was tested it was confirmed to have come from the original sandstone quarries of Nithsdale.

The old stone was repaired and placed in Newton Stewart Museum, but at Caldons a replica was erected, copying the ungrammatical inscription and ligatures exactly. Instead of the softer sandstone, white Creetown granite was used, ensuring that the stone will survive for a long time to come.
The memorials rarely require total replacement; normally a few hours spent cleaning them is sufficient. However, on occasions when it is discovered that the work is beyond the ability of volunteers, the Association have engaged monumental sculptors to re-cut inscriptions or re-face scaled surfaces. Monuments where considerable renovation work has taken place in recent years include the Lochenkit obelisk, west of Dumfries, the Nairn grave at Bonhill, and the Martyrs’ Fountain in Glasgow.

Sometimes the Association works with other groups, be they community councils, district councils, churches or other interested bodies, to have a memorial renovated. The cost is often shared, but on occasion it requires the push of the Association to persuade some authorities to act. Glasgow’s Martyrs’ Fountain was a case in question. Historically it stood over the bodies of the martyrs hanged there, but, as developments in the city took place, it was moved about. At one time it was built into the front of a picture house, followed by a shift to beneath a motorway flyover. Its neglected condition was a source of concern to many and, after numerous letters, the district council agreed it should be moved. Its present location outside the Martyrs’ Church in St. Mungo Avenue is more appropriate and should last considerably longer than some of its more recent positions.

Members of the Association receive three newsletters per year, packed with snippets of news, telling of work done, discoveries made, or furthering the members’ knowledge of the martyrs. The editor (and honorary secretary) is George Scott, who resides in Cumnock, and who can see the grave of the Rev. Alexander Peden, ‘Prophet of the Covenant’ from the room where he writes. A keen hill-walker, Mr. Scott frequently has to put his best foot forward when visiting some of the more remote graves with which the moors of the south-west are covered.

Robert Paterson died in 1801 and was buried in an unmarked grave. Sir Walter Scott wished to have his character’s resting place marked by a stone, for it would have been unfair for ‘Old Mortality’ to have erected so many stones, yet be left to lie in a plot bearing none. Despite numerous searches Scott failed to discover where his grave was before he too died. At length Scott’s publishers found that Paterson was buried at Bankend of Caerlaverock, near Dumfries, and had a stone erected, thus respecting the wishes of the ‘Wizard of the North’.

A number of ‘Young Mortalities’ are now making sure that the graves of the martyrs will survive for many years to come. It is over three centuries since the Covenanting times but, because of Paterson’s work, and the Scottish Covenanter Memorials Association, their memory will most certainly live on.
The association was founded in 1966 by John Morton, a man who realised that the memorials were in a poor condition. They travelled around the country helping them up, painting railings and bringing them to the attention of the local authorities. In 1993 the association became a Scottish charity.

Illustrations:
1. David Dun & Simon Paterson, Cumnock, Ayrshire.
2. Unknown Covenant.

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For the Preservation of Graves and Memorials of the Covenanters

Who were the Covenanters?

Stated in a most simplistic way—the Covenanters were those people in Scotland who refused to subscribe to the belief of the Stuart kings (the Divine Right of the monarch) that the spiritual head of the Scottish Church was the King. The Scots knew only one Head of the Church—and that was Jesus Christ. Many signed the National Covenant in 1638, and from then until 1688, persecutions and punishments of all kinds—fines, torture, executions, murder, transportation—were used in an attempt to quell this "rebellion".

What are the main arms of the Association?

To restore, repair and preserve the graves and memorials of the Covenanters and to promote a greater awareness of our religious and historical heritage; to encourage local members to have an interest in, and to care for, the memorials in their particular area. Simple jobs such as keeping the stones free from moss, weeds, etc. are carried out by volunteers. The more difficult jobs are turned over to professional masons and sculptors, the cost being met from Association funds.

Who may Join?

Membership is open to all who are interested in the Covenanters, their memorials and in the history of Scotland. We have neither sectarian nor political connections.

How does the Association keep in touch with its members?

A newsletter is posted to each of our 400 (approx.) members three times a year. Many of us meet together at our Annual General Meeting each autumn, at an Annual Dinner in the Spring, or while attending Convencies which may be held in various parts of the country.

How is the Association supported?

Entirely through voluntary contributions. We receive no support from official bodies. Donations are often received for general funds or for particular projects. But our main income is from the subscriptions of members.

Find out more on our website:
www.covenanter.org.uk
This also contains much information on the Covenanters and their memorials.
Anwoth:  Carsphairn:  Girthon:  Kirkpatrick Durham:  Kirkpatrick Irongray:
1 Boreland Hill  6 Churchyard  11 Churchyard  16 Churchyard  18 Hallhill  
2 Kirkyard  7 Garryhorn Farm  12 Auchencloy Hill  17 Lockenkit  19 Skeoch Hill  
3 Balmaclellan Churchyard  8 Meaul Hill  13 Kells Churchyard  
4 Balmaghie Churchyard  9 Crossmichael Churchyard  14 St Cuthbert’s Churchyard, Kirkcudbright  20 Caldons (Minnigaff)  
5 Borgue (Kirkandrews Churchyard)  10 Dalry Churchyard  15 Barholm Castle (Kirkmabreck)  21 Kirkconnel Moor (Tongland)  
22 Twynholm Churchyard
Location Map 2
Covenantering Sites in Nithsdale

1. John Knox Memorial Cairn
2. St. Michael's Kirkyard
3. Dumfries Burgh Museum — Statuary
4. Troqueer Church
5. Turpentine House
6. Friars' Vennel
7. Moniaive — Renwick Monument
8. Smith's Stone, Moniaive
9. Igliston Mains, Moniaive
10. Glencaan Kirkyard
11. Tyneon Kirkyard
12. Penpont
13. Allan's Cairn
14. Closeburn Kirkyard
15. Crichton Linn
16. Old Daigmacock Kirkyard
17. Darvel Church
18. Lower Dalven
19. Euston Pass Rescue
20. Sanquhar
21. Tarwald Kirkyard
22. Mitchellslands
23. Crawick — Hyslop Obelisk
24. Blackcarnich Conventicle

Location
25. Lag Tower
26. Rockhall
27. Damscote Old Kirkyard — Lag
28. Quarrelwood
29. Carfinerock Kirkyard
30. Condiebank Farm
31. Kirkbride Churcheyard
32. Skewcoat Obelisk, etc.
33. Kirkkernel — Kirkland
34. Lenchlith (Larghill Moor)
35. New Cumnock — Cairn Farm
36. Iongray Church
37. Haltbridd Monument
Avondale Covenanting Trail

Tom Leith of Caldermill, near Strathaven, is pursuing the re-erection of new signs marking the Avondale Covenanters’ Trail. This was created a number of years ago, and signs erected at that time, but most of these are now either missing or needing replaced. A leaflet is also under preparation and a grant is being pursued. The route will indicate the following locations: Strathaven Castle, Strathaven Graveyard – Martyrs’ Graves, John Hastie Museum – Covenanting Exhibits, Trumpeters Well, Caldermill, Memorial Kirk, Drumclog to Site of Battle of Drumclog, Old Memorial School, at Site of Battle of Drumclog, Drumclog monument at Site of Battle of Drumclog, Auchengillich Monument at Conventicle Site, Glassford Graveyard. - Martyrs

1 Scottish Covenanter Memorials Association Newsletter, No. 81, February 2003
LOCATION MAP 4 – CAITLOCH HOUSE

1 Caitloch House, Strutt & Parker
LOCATION MAP 5 – COVENANTING SITES IN THE CLYDE VALLEY

In Covenanting Footsteps – A Car Tour of Covenanting Sites in the Clyde Valley, Lanark: Clyde Valley Tourist Board.
Location Map 6 - AE Forest

1 The Forest of AE, AE Forest District (Ae) no year given
LOCATION MAP 7 – DARMEAD MONUMENT
LOCATION MAP 8 - AUCHENGILLOCH MONUMENT

Location Map 8 -
Auchengilloch monument
LOCATION MAP 9 – INNERPEFFRAY LIBRARY

1 Scenic Maps, 2003
LOCATION MAP 11 - LANARK

1 Lanark
Four miles along Raiders Road Forest Drive. Turn left at Barney Water (small car park).

Walk 1 ½ miles along forest road. Turn right at forest fire break (grass has been swiped)
Walk 1 km along fire break to Monument.

www.streetmap.co.uk