

Bishop's Court

If you travel a few hundred yards up Albyn Place to a point just about opposite Prince Arthur Street you will see a tall two and a half story building, which at one time was called Bishop's Court. 29 Albyn Place does not appear in Aberdeen Directory until 1857 when it was occupied by a Mrs McKenzie of Glack. Bishop Arthur Gascoigne Douglas when he arrived in Aberdeen in 1883 to begin his appointment as Bishop, he lived at 15 Albyn Terrace. By 1892 the owner of 29 Albyn Place was Mrs Chalmers, widow of Patrick Henderson Chalmers, late partner in C & P H Chalmers advocates in Aberdeen. She sold the property to the Diocese as a home for Bishop Douglas, the last 'aristocratic' bishop to hold the See of Aberdeen & Orkney. Douglas sat in the See until 1905 when during a visit to Orkney he died in MacKay's Hotel Stromness on 19th July 1905. He got the reputation of being eager for the care of small and scattered congregations, opening up Deeside with three churches and planting the church at Burray.

Next to be elected was the Revd Canon Rowland Ellis, who had come from his post as Rector of St Paul's Episcopal Church Edinburgh to become Bishop of Aberdeen & Orkney. His tenure of Bishop's Court was also very short. He died suddenly during his sleep whilst staying over with Mr & Mrs Ainslie of Delgatie Castle on 14th December 1911. He had been on a visit to St Luke's Cuminestown to take the annual confirmation service. Ellis was a zealous campaigner for the reunion of Scottish Christendom.

In April 1912, Aberdonian Anthony Mitchell was consecrated Bishop by Primus Robberds (Brechin); and Bishops Campbell (Glasgow); McLean, (Moray); Mackenzie (Argyll & the Isles); Walpole (Edinburgh) and Plumb (St Andrew's). It was Mitchell who elevated St Andrew's Church in King Street to Cathedral Status in 1914, the last Diocese in Scotland to name its Cathedral. Once again, his career



The Above picture is of the altarpiece in the Chapel of Bishop's Court, Aberdeen painted for the late Bishop Ellis [Bishop of Aberdeen 1907-1911] by Miss W. M. Watson, Edinburgh. The general idea of it is the suggestion of Perugino's Albani Altarpiece and the details are either copied or adapted from the original Perugino. The central panel representing the Crucifixion is copied from the picture of Santa Maddalena dei Pazzi at Florence. It is flanked by two patron saints of the Diocese of Aberdeen & Orkney, St Nicholas and St Magnus. Along the top, beginning from the left we have (i) the Baptism from a picture by Rouen; (ii) the Resurrection adapted from one in the Vatican; (iii) the Nativity after the one in Perugia. The beautiful frame is worthy of the picture and was crafted from a design of the artist by Mr Alexander Drysdale, Edinburgh. On the sale of Bishop's Court, the reredos was installed in the Lady Chapel of St Mary's Episcopal Church Carden Place Aberdeen



Johnstone Carmichael, Chartered Accountants and Financial Services providers, 29 Albyn Place Aberdeen, is now housed in what was formerly Bishop's Court, the chapel was within the addition to the left

as Bishop was all too short, including Mission tours of Africa and India. He was the first bishop to make an American Speaking tour which later translated into a volume of his papers entitled '*Biographical Studies in Scottish Church History*'. His tenure of office was sadly cut short by two debilitating illnesses from which he never recovered. In all probability, he died of diabetes, for which there was no cure at that time. His body lay within the chapel at Bishop's Court before being transferred to the Cathedral.

After Diocesan deliberation, The Very Revd Provost of Glasgow Cathedral, Frederick Llewellyn Deane was elected and he sat in the See until 1944. Deane made his Episcopal home in Aberdeen at Bishop's Court and lived happily there hosting many high profile guests such as Sir Ninian Comper at the time of the Dedication Ceremonies of the Seabury Memorial at St Andrew's Cathedral in September 1938.

Deane resigned from the See after 26 years service as Bishop of Aberdeen & Orkney, during which he travelled far and wide as Bishop of the Fleet in northern waters taking his Naval duties very seriously although on occasions he was considered a security risk for intimating where he was going, to the chagrin of war time authorities!

His successor was Bishop Hall, dubbed 'the Buchan loon' in the local press. Times had changed and the Diocesan Executive Committee decreed that Bishop's Court was old-fashioned, rambling and 'had semi basements which few people cared to occupy'. The hunt was on for a more modern house; but wouldn't we have given our eye teeth to have retained Bishop's Court, a very central, imposing property which would have suited and answered a number of our needs today.



This photograph circa 1860 shows Bishop's Court in Albyn Place just complete. The picture is from a photo by the late G. W. Wilson taken after 1860 and it serves to record the fact that the quiet of the Bishop's Court, Albyn Place might have been disturbed permanently by a Bill which went through parliament to enable a railway to run past the gable of that mansion that is why there is a large space between each house [Bon-Accord picture]

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