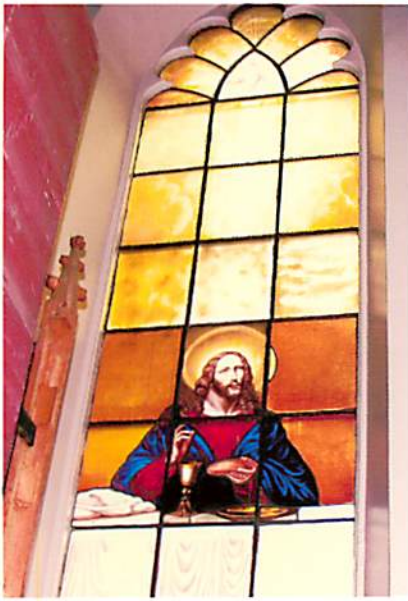


Revd William Browning



The Dove Window
(now in St Devenick's Bielside)

On Bishop John Skinner's decease, his son, William Skinner, became sole incumbent of the King Street Church. The minute books of 1816 report that Skinner was asked to find his own clerical assistant. The following May 1817, Mr William Browning was appointed as junior clergyman. He commenced his first duties at the opening of the new church in King Street on 27th July 1817, when Divine Service was celebrated for the first time.

Browning married Isabella Simpson on 26th August 1819, the officiant being Rt Revd William Skinner, and the witnesses were Peter [or Patrick] Gill [father of the famous Sir David Gill, astronomer [who lived at 48 Skene Terrace] and O. O. Walker, both Trustees of St Andrew's. At the time of his marriage Browning is listed residing at 11, Adelphi Court, off Union Street, moving to 12 Adelphi the next year. The Aberdeen Directory lists his residence from 1827 at the rented property, 38 Skene Terrace, where he remained for the rest of his life. Mrs Browning occupied the house after his death until 1850 when the directory entry describes her as 'teacher of music'.

He died on the 29th May 1843 after a long painful illness, bravely borne. The congregation must have thought well of him, as they erected a window in his memory in the South aisle. James Turreff historiographer of St Andrew's Church also reports that 'The Browning Bursary' would be a lasting memorial, valued at £18 per annum for a university student preparing for the ministry of the Episcopal Church; members of St Andrew's and St John's having first chance of an award.

An obituary written in the Aberdeen Journal of 7th June 1843 eulogises: "Here on the 29th May the Revd William Browning, Junior Minister of St Andrew's Chapel died in the fifty first year of his age and twenty seventh of his ministry. His connexion with St Andrew's began in 1817 as an assistant to the Bishop of Aberdeen in the duties of that Chapel. It was his first and only cure: he greatly endeared himself to a numerous flock by his quiet and unassuming manners, and by the unvarying strictness and unwearied attention with which he performed every duty of his sacred office. By his clerical brethren as well as by the Bishop, he was greatly valued as a sound and consistent Churchman. A strict and scrupulous conscientiousness, and an absence of anything like ostentation or a magnifying of self remarkably distinguished him. In every course of action his sole rule and principle was to do what was right and he did it in a most unobtrusive and lowly minded way. His life and ministry were brought to a close prematurely as it may seem by a tedious and painful illness, which he bore with the calm and patient endurance becoming a Christian and a priest. His memory will long be cherished by those attached friends by whom his retiring virtues ere known and appreciated".

He was Diocesan Librarian and the secretary of SPCK Aberdeen branch.



St Andrew's Chapel 1817



The Browning Window
in Saint Andrew's Cathedral Aberdeen

It may seem a little strange to illustrate this article with two stained glass windows, but they are the only surviving relics from Browning's lifetime. He would have recognised the 'Dove' window [so called because there is a dove in the top pane not discernable in this picture] as it was inserted into the east wall of the King Street Chapel [now erected in St Devenick's Bielside]. The window above, was placed above the South Door in his memory. Neither are stained glass in the true sense of the word. These are painted glass rather than being made up of the usual mosaics of coloured glass.

Stuart Donald