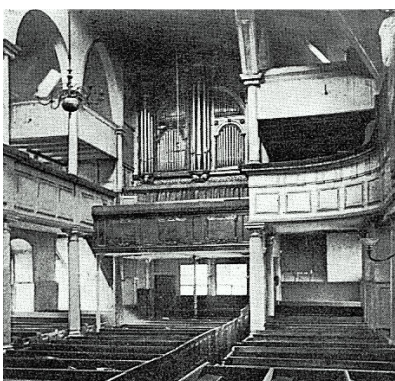


Benefactress —the Duchess of Gordon

Two forms of Episcopalianism existed side by side after the Penal Acts. On one hand, the old faith being made invisible by the penal laws and the other 'qualified' in order to be tolerated and public. In the 18th century, nearly two thirds of all worshippers were Episcopalian and so an accommodation had to be found for those who wished to continue to legally follow the Episcopalian faith in the eyes of the government legislators. Such congregations were obliged therefore, to employ priests ordained in English or Irish orders, to pray for his Majesty, George II and the House of Hanover; to use the English Prayer Book, and in order to exercise such rights as holding public office, the right to vote, or admission to universities and colleges. They were known as Qualified Congregations; and their places of worship, Qualified Chapels.

Dr James Robertson in his volume, '*Book of Bon-Accord*' writes that in the year 1719, one of the Episcopal congregations in the burgh of Aberdeen withdrew from the superintendence of the Bishop and founded "an odd sort of independents". In fact the Diocese had no Bishop at the time, as Bishop Halliburton had died at his home in Coupar Angus on 29th September 1715 aged 77 years. Bishop John Falconer, advanced to the College of Bishops (he sat in the College from 1709-1723), was directed to look after Aberdeen whilst a new Bishop could be found. The 'disaffected' Aberdeen congregation set to work to collect a subscription for the foundation of a chapel and in 1720 a document was drawn up supporting the inauguration of St Paul's Chapel. The proposers, 'Burghers, Merchants, Tradesmen, Advocates and Inhabitants of Aberdeen met together on the 2nd August of that year to arrange premises and the employment of a qualified Minister in terms of the Law. They were refused a further lease of their existing chapel of the Trinity Friars in the Green by the magistrates who were the licensees and so the new group were forced to undertake the erection of a new Church.



The interior of St Paul's Chapel (1721-1858) looking east and showing the organ case for which it was famous; Now known to be built by Thomas Hollister, it was a very fine instrument admired by Dr Samuel Johnson on his visit the day before receiving the Freedom of the City of Aberdeen in 1773. The Chapel design was based on the London research of the builder/architect, Alexander Jaffrey, Jaffray of Kingswells was a member of the well known Quaker family He was 4th laird of Kingswells.

The chapel was completed in 1721 on the west side of the Gallowgate on land overlooking the Loch of New Aberdeen. From inauguration to 1858, St Paul's was a collegiate church with first and second ministers. However, our story is of two treasures handed down to us from St Paul's; an alms' plate and a large carved wooden heraldic achievement. The alms' plate was made out of two silver cups and two small silver plates previously presented to the church in 1757 and reworked by George Jamieson in 1882; the heraldic Panel, writes Fenton Wyness, in his couthie way, was prominently displayed on the forebriest' of one of the numerous galleries of the church and now resides in the Museums of Scotland collection in Edinburgh. The coat of arms was that of Henrietta Mordaunt, the Duchess of Gordon who came to divine worship in the Chapel, and was welcomed with open arms for the large cash donation she gave.

Henrietta Mordaunt was the only daughter of the celebrated Charles Mordaunt, Earl of Peterborough and Monmouth and his wife Carey, daughter and heiress of Sir Peter Fraser of Durriss. Henrietta married Alexander, the 2nd Duke of Gordon and it was through this union that the Lands of Durriss passed into the ducal House of Gordon. The Duchess came of a Roman Catholic family but in marrying Alexander, the second Duke of Gordon, a Jacobite supporter who had played a large part in the 1715 'Rising', rose to the cause of Prince Charles and gave all the assistance she could. Shortly after the death of her husband in 1728 in an apparent diplomatic triumph, Henrietta was awarded a state pension of £1,000 per year and in return she undertook to bring up her large family of four sons and seven daughters in the Protestant faith. Hence her appearances at St Paul's in whose Sacramental Registers are scattered numerous entries of her family's history. Adroitly, Henrietta refrained from mentioning the part she had played in fostering the Jacobite cause and of the influence she brought to bear on her third son, Rt Hon Lord Lewis Gordon, when he kissed the Prince's hand and joined His Royal Highness's Standard. Lord Lewis was appointed Jacobite Governor of the City of Aberdeen and having served Prince Charles through out the entire campaign and being present at Culloden, he was forced to 'lurk' in the northeast before escaping to France where he died a fugitive in 1754.

The discovery of Jacobite papers showing her implication lost her the Pension despite the fact she made repeated requests to have it renewed citing three of her sons who remained loyal to the Hanoverian government; her third son, Cosmo George, became the 3rd Duke of Gordon. (I am grateful to Lyndsay McGill of National Museums Scotland for the pictures of the Heraldic Arms and the Silver Alms Dish)

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Henrietta Mordaunt by Peter Lely

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Arms of Henrietta, 2nd Duchess of Gordon; in the interior view opposite they were affixed to the left hand lower gallery front



Silver Alms Dish with an inscription on the base: '1882: Made from the silver of Two Cups and Two Plates which were presented to St Paul's Church in 1757'

Stuart Donald