

that alone. My informant - who belonged to that shrewd, intelligent, intellectual class of weavers for which the parish has been famous - regarded Smith as a splendid reader of a paraphrase. But he was more than that. He was a popular pastor and from all that I have been able to learn, he was an excellent man whose influence in the parish was great and whose memory has not yet died out of our midst. He had a large family who also enjoyed the respect and esteem of Galston and its neighbourhood."

- Rev. George Smith and his wife, Marion, had eight of a family:
- Margaret Isabella, born 22 July 1783, married John Moodie, Minister of Riccarton.
  - Jean, born 24 April 1785, died 30 December 1824.
  - Henrietta Scott, born 24 July 1787, married Louis Balfour, Minister of Colinton).
  - William, born 24 November 1789, Banker in Edinburgh.
  - Adam, born 1 June 1791, Merchant associated with Calcutta.
  - George, born 17 February 1793, Minister of the Tolbooth, Edinburgh.
  - David, born 12 November 1798, Merchant associated with Calcutta.
  - John, born 9 November 1800, Merchant associated with West Indies.



It was during the long and tireless ministry of George Smith that the heritors were persuaded of the need to add to the religious life of the community by building a new church and it was preached in by him on 18 June 1909.

He was buried in the Kirkyard and his grave, and that of his son, is at the back on the north side, sadly, in a broken and ruinous state.

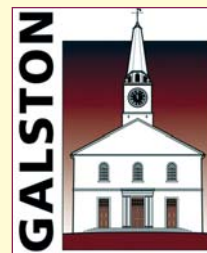
The Church Centenary was celebrated on Friday 18 June 1909, Rev. John Brown, who had been Minister in Galston from 1878-1887, and Minister of Bellahouston, preached the sermon and 100 years later, on Thursday 18 June 2009 the then Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, William Hewitt, preached at the Bicentenary service.

*Left is Dr. Peter Freer-Smith, great-great-great grandson of Rev. George Smith pictured by the ruinous gravestone on his famous ancestor.*



GALSTON PARISH Church of Scotland (Charity No. SC010370)  
 Information Leaflet : *Our Heritage*    REV. GEORGE SMITH  
 WEBSITE: galstonkirk.com    HISTORIES: www.kirknews.org.uk

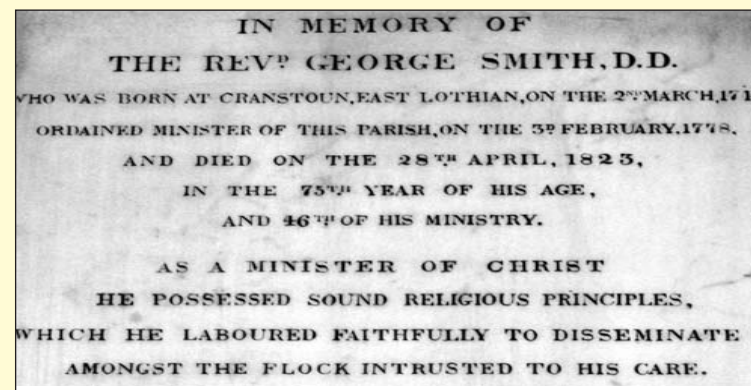
# OUR HERITAGE



PARISH CHURCH  
 of Scotland  
 Charity No. 010370

## Rev. George Smith

*A Minister with connections!*



# Rev. George Smith

## *Known to Robert Burns and a great grandfather of Robert Louis Stevenson*

In the centre of the South Wall of Galston Parish Church is a memorial plaque to Rev. George Smith and his widow, Marion Freer. He was Minister in Galston from 1778 until 1823 and died in office. He was a remarkable man.

George Smith was born in the manse at Cranstoun and was educated at Glasgow University. He was a forceful preacher, a popular pastor and a hospitable host. Many an impecunious scholar found bed and board and no doubt some fatherly advice at the manse in Galston. One of his daughters married Mr Balfour, the Minister of Sorn and their grandson was Robert Louis Stevenson, author and poet.

But this was not his only connection with literature, for living as he did at the end of the 18th Century and in Ayrshire and a Minister albeit of the moderate variety, Smith soon came under the pen of Robert Burns.

His name crops up in three poems - *The Holy Fair*, *The Twa Herds* and *The Kirk's Alarm*. Two verses in *The Holy Fair* run as follows:

*But hark! the tent has chang'd its voice;  
There's peace and rest nae langer;  
For a' the real judges rise,  
They canna sit for anger.  
(Smith) opens out his cauld harangues,  
On practice and on morals;  
An' aff the godly pour in thrangs  
To gie the jars an' barrels  
A lift that day.*

*What signifies his barren shine,  
Of moral powers an' reason?  
His English style, and gesture fine  
Are a' clean out o' season.  
Like Socrates or Antonine.  
Or some auld pagan heathen,  
The moral man he does define  
But ne'er a word o'faith in  
That's right that day.*

We are told in *Three Centuries of Clerical Life in Galston* that the Poet meant this as a compliment to Smith. He belonged to that class of Ministers known as the Moderates and if Burns had any predilections for Ministers at all, his sympathies were with the Moderates and not with the other party who might be regarded as the Evangelicals. But we are also told that the compliment was not received as such by Smith and, therefore, the Poet afterwards attacked him in *The Kirk's Alarm* and that in no dubious terms:

*Irvine-side, Irvine-side  
Wi' your turkey cock pride  
Of manhood but sma' is your share  
Ye've the figure tis true  
Even your faes will allow  
And your friends they dare  
grant you nae mair.*



Rev. George Smith

In an article, separate from that in *The History of Galston Parish Church*, it is noted that Burns suggested in *The Twa Herds* that Dr. Smith, while pretending 'New Licht' sympathies, was possible not to be trusted!

*An monie a wan that I could tell,  
Wha fain would openly rebel,  
Forby turn-coats amang oursel;  
There's Smith for ane -  
I doubt he's but a grey neck still  
An that you'll fin*

Nevertheless, a letter written by Robert Burns on 18 June 1787, to a friend, suggests good friendship between both :

*"I have pleasure to find all my friends well - I breakfasted with your grey-headed, Reverend friend Mr Smith, and was highly-pleased both with the cordial welcome he gave me, and his most respectable appearance and sterling good sense."*

Dr. Smith, as Burns indicates in his *Holy Fair*, was a man of elocutionary power. Rev. John Brown continues in his *Three Centuries of Clerical Life in Galston*: "I have heard this in Galston. An old man told me of Smith. He seemed to regard him as a first-rate elocutionist and he said that people came to church to hear him for