

parish of St. Mary's, hence the new church had to be called something different: St. John the Evangelist.

The Church of England had in the past few decades been rocked by what became known as The Oxford Movement or "Tractarianism", after a series of tracts, written in the 1830's by John Henry Newman and others. This teaching was re-emphasising the "catholic" side of Anglicanism. It began to express itself in more ceremonial in worship, greater use of candles and crosses and priests wearing vestments at the Holy Communion. From this inspiration, a new style of church architecture was introduced - "gothic revival" with its high roofs, pointed arches, long naves and ornate chancels.

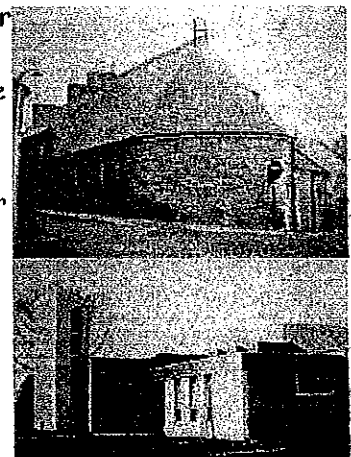
The "jewel in the crown" of this new building was the reredos behind the altar with its five arches of Prudham stone portraying in mosaic, our Lord as the good shepherd and the four Evangelists. The new church was opened in 1868.

You can take a photo tour of this church [here](#).

With the new building, Mr McEwen introduced "innovations" into the worship, which were at first resisted as being too "popish". These included a surpliced choir, candles, a ceremonial cross and evergreen decorations at Christmas! A harvest festival was first introduced in 1871. All quite harmless by today's standards - but there was more to come though not in Mr McEwen's day.

## St. Ninian's Mission

1883  
Mr McEwen's successor was the Rev. John R. Denham. One of his first tasks was the building of a new school. He introduced Guilds for men and women, a penny Bank, a Football Team and a church magazine. Mr Denham also began missionary work among the poor and became popular with the working classes. In those days, seats were not "free" in church - you rented them, and by this means the church raised money. Mr Denham wished "free seats" so that the poor could attend St. John's, but in this he was resisted by the vestry. After five years of opposition, Mr Denham at his own expense, built a mission church in which all seats were free. This church, known as St. Ninian's, was built just across the river at Maxwelltown (it is now the Brigend Theatre).



In the 1960's with the development of housing schemes on the outskirts of the town, the St. Ninian's church was closed and re-located to Lochside. Sadly the work there did not reach much beyond the next ten years, and the church was closed, the remaining congregation now attending St. John's.

## The 20th century

When the Rev. Frederick Moir became rector in 1897, he found St. John's services, according to its historian, "a simple ritual with a bare minimum of ceremonial, and