



## Leighton Letter No. 7

Newsletter of the Leighton Library<sup>1</sup>

May 2023

This Leighton Letter comes at another exciting stage in the Library's story, with the **Restoration** now well under way. Anyone passing by the Library can't have failed to notice the extensive works! And the Library's Restoration Team has been doing a good job of updating us on progress through the monthly Restoration News that we've been sending to Friends of the Library.

**The Story of the Restoration so far: 1 June Event!** An exciting opportunity to hear the story of the Restoration from the experts involved<sup>2</sup>. The talks will start **promptly at 7pm** in the Cathedral. The Cathedral Hall will be open from 6pm to 7pm to view Tom Astbury's exhibition of photos of the building works, and again after the talks, till 9.15pm.

**This is a free event but ticketed.** Demand for tickets was so high that all the tickets went rapidly. **But** the organisers moved fast to avoid disappointment – the talks will now be in the Cathedral itself, so tickets are available again. You can book on this link: [Eventbrite tickets – Leighton Library – Story of the Restoration](#). Or you can pick up tickets from Peter Meldrum, newsagent, on the High Street.

Guests will be welcomed in the Cathedral by the Library's patron, Lord George Robertson. (Not the first person of that name to be associated with the Library, see the Editors' note on page 4.)

In this Leighton Letter:

- Gordon Willis tells us about the Leighton's first Librarian.
- Josh White continues his story of the life of a Leighton trustee in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century
- David Kirk tracks down memorials to Robert Leighton around the country.

Editors Frances and Hugh welcome comments and suggestions for articles. Email us at [leightonfriends@gmail.com](mailto:leightonfriends@gmail.com)

### News from the Executive Group

Thanks to the Restoration Group for their monthly updates on the works as they proceed. We look forward to the 1 June event and the chance to hear directly from the different experts involved.

Redevelopment of the Undercroft will be Phase 3 of the Restoration Project. We plan to create a new visitor facility, engagement space, and exhibition area for the social and economic benefit of the community and all visitors. The successful completion of these works will deliver:

- A vibrant and atmospheric space to engage the public and develop strong community links with local schools, local community organisations, and further afield.
- A fully accessible historic community resource that can be hired by local groups and organisations.
- Volunteering opportunities.
- Safeguarding the building and its contents for future generations as a valuable educational asset.
- Raising the profile and maximising the opportunities for the Library as a visitor attraction, contributing to the historic environment around The Cross in Dunblane.

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<sup>1</sup> Leighton Library Trust, Scottish Charity SC003010.

<sup>2</sup> Rosalind Taylor (architect), Scott Gillies (builder), Graciela Ainsworth (cartouche conservator) and Dr Kelsey Williams (Stirling University).

Anticipated costs are in the region of £175,000. We need to work hard to raise funds for this last phase of the Library restoration and re-development. All donations, small or large, will be most welcome.

At our 1 June event we will be encouraging attendees to sign up as Friends to help fund our annual running costs. We will also be seeking volunteers to assist in forward looking projects we are working on, and on the raffle and auction to take place at the Bridgerton Extravaganza Event – see below.

## **Bridgerton Ball Extravaganza comes to Stirling**

Fans of the Bridgerton series will be interested in this upcoming event over the weekend of 7 - 9 July at Stirling Castle in support of three charities, one of which is the Leighton Library. The event is the idea of Bridgerton super-fan, Cynthia Holden, Chair of the American Women of Central Scotland Group, who opened our American Atlas Exhibition last Spring at Dunblane Museum. Further details on the website: <https://www.stirlingbridgertonball.com/>

### ***Volunteers Needed!***

We are looking for volunteers to help sell tickets for the raffle which will be drawn at the Ball. There will also be an auction at the event - prizes include a 5 night stay in Kilbryde Castle, Ian Fennelly prints, Siabann and Ashfield Mill luxury soaps, handmade jewellery valued at £150, and many more.

Tickets for the raffle are available now and will also be available at the 1 June event, where we will have photographs of the gifts. We want to sell 1,000 raffle tickets so we need help to sell sell sell!

If you can help with this, please contact either

- Dan Gunn at [degunn@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:degunn@hotmail.co.uk) tel: 07727 220420
- Celia Aitken at [williamsfield62@gmail.com](mailto:williamsfield62@gmail.com)

Donations for both the raffle and the auction will be gratefully received by Dan or Celia.

## **Link with Horsted Keynes**

The editors were delighted to receive via a Friend of the Library a copy of the January “Parish and Parishioner” magazine of St Giles’ Church in Horsted Keynes, where Leighton is buried. (See David Kirk’s article later in this Leighton Letter.) There is a nice article on the Library and the Restoration project by parishioner Ann Govas, who says “I had the good fortune to visit the Library and it is a joy to behold.” Ann quotes sculptor Richard Deacon, who described it thus: ‘Humble on the outside, it is rather like Doctor Who’s Tardis with riches within, enabling travel in time and space.’”

## **Books and Borrowing Project**



As reported in previous editions of the Leighton Letter, the project includes an examination of the register of the Leighton Library’s borrowers in the years 1780 to 1840. Borrowers were typically people who had come to the area to take the spa waters and so is known as the ‘Water Drinker’s Register’.

You can catch up on the latest news on what the project has been up to this year so far: [Project News – Books and Borrowing 1750-1830](#).

You’ll find announced there the winners of the Creative Writing Competition, with a selection of the entries received, including Gillian Mellor’s poem inspired by the ‘Water Drinkers Register’.

At a project conference held at the University of Stirling on 17 April 2023, 'Reading and Book Circulation, 1650-1850', Josh Smith presented a paper entitled: "*The best theological library that I know in Scotland: The Borrowings and Borrowers of the Leighton Library, Dunblane.*"

Josh reported that the digitisation and transcription of all the planned Leighton Library borrowings for the project database is now complete. The database currently contains just over 140,000 borrowing records from 18 historic libraries in Scotland, of which 7,025 are from the Leighton Library. The Leighton's borrowing records show that 309 borrowers are recorded as using the library between 1780 and 1840, with a total of 814 books borrowed.

Having this data transcribed and digital will enable the project to do more advanced and sophisticated analysis of what books were being read from the Leighton Library in the eighteenth century and in other comparable libraries across Scotland.

## **The First Leighton Librarian**

(by Gordon Willis)

It is sometimes asserted that the first keeper of the Leighton Library was Robert Douglas, the Bishop's son. However, that is not the case. Step forward John Littlejohn.

Littlejohn, born in 1664 or a little later, was the son of the late minister of Blackford in the Presbytery of Auchterarder. His parents had an Edinburgh connection, having been married in the church of Holyroodhouse, which at that time served as the parish church for the Canongate. He appears to be the 'John Litaljohn' who graduated MA from Edinburgh University in 1684, the year after his father's death. He was enabled to proceed to postgraduate study at St Mary's College of Divinity, St Andrews University, by the award of the student bursary of the Diocesan Synod of Dunblane from 1684 to 1688, the maximum term. The bursary, which supported deserving sons of ministers, was worth £100 Scots annually (£8-6-8 sterling), a sum that severely strained the resources of the diocese, payment being frequently late. The recipient was required to produce an annual certificate of satisfactory progress from his professor, and to reside at the college for three complete quarters each year. Previous holders of the bursary included the folklorist and Gaelic scholar James Kirk, later minister of Balquhiddy and then of Aberfoyle.

When, in the summer of 1688, Bishop Douglas had to nominate the first keeper of the Leighton Library, John Littlejohn must have seemed the obvious choice. The librarian, wrote the Bishop, would be a divinity student and would hold the post for three, or at most four, years. He would be 'pious and sober, trusty, and of good behaviour'. Unlimited access to the library, the Bishop continued, would give the student a real advantage over his fellows, fitting him for advancement in the ministry to the fullest extent of his potential. This was a valid point, as Scottish university libraries in the seventeenth century were seen mainly as a resource for staff; student access as of right came later. Since one of the Leighton Library's rules specified that the keeper would have to attend the Library mornings and afternoons, every day of the week, minimal contact with the university was anticipated. His sights must have been on preparing for the next hurdle on the way to the ministry: the formidable process of tests conducted by his chosen presbytery. One burden not placed on the librarian was to catalogue Leighton's books. The Bishop himself undertook this task, which he probably regarded as a duty and a privilege in equal measure.

Leighton's executors originally envisaged a building with two adjoining square rooms: one for the books and the other for the librarian. However, their additional instruction to provide ample space for expansion of the collection evidently meant that the librarian's well-lit room had to be deleted from the plan. Was he therefore required to live in the undercroft? The answer is not to be found in Bishop Douglas's carefully-written Foundation Register (Leighton Library MS 1), but it *is* in an early draft inscribed in the tiniest of writing and preserved as Leighton Library MS 2. He was to be paid the interest on £200, from Whitsun 1688, 'as also the Vaults under the Library war to be for the use of

the keeper of the library, for his accomodateone in a Chamber, or otherways at his Letting'. Use of the undercroft was therefore a perk of the job; but there seemed to be no compulsion to live there. Littlejohn's salary of £10 sterling, plus a few shillings if he let the undercroft, would easily have allowed him to lodge more comfortably and companionably elsewhere. Barty in his *History of Dunblane* (p. 130) tells us that in 1712 a daughter of Sir James Campbell of Aberuchill paid £1 to board for a year with the delightfully-named Mrs Gowdielocks.

Littlejohn in 1688 was a young man with a seemingly bright future. The Bishop was so impressed, to the extent of awarding him what amounted to a second bursary, that all being well he would surely have used his influence to advance Littlejohn's career. But the Revolution that occurred in December of that year was catastrophic for Scottish Episcopal ministers, who, if they wished to retain their charges, were required not only to embrace the new Presbyterian order, but also to endorse publicly the regime of William and Mary. Not one of the twelve ministers in the Presbytery of Dunblane - Jacobites to a man - complied. The Reverend Robert Stewart of Balquhider even joined the Highland army at Killiecrankie. Almost all were promptly deprived of their charges and were replaced, not always peacefully. Littlejohn, as a committed Episcopalian, would also have seen his prospects dissipate overnight. We simply never hear of him again, either in connection with the Library or the ministry. One would like to think at least that he gave up his post voluntarily, and was not forced out in favour of the Bishop's son.

#### **Editors' note:**

*Bishop Douglas nominated his son Robert as the second librarian. Gordon will give us the full story on that in the next Leighton Letter where you will find that the Bishop appears to have used his powers to nominate Robert as the new Librarian, even though (oh dear) he did not match the person specification so clearly set out in 1688...*

***Spoiler Alert!** Your editors couldn't help noticing in the forthcoming article that the lawyer the Bishop appointed to look after his family's interests was one **George Robertson**, former treasurer of Dunblane Kirk Session and the Library's legal adviser. In early 1700, Robertson informed the Bishop of several actions taken, of which some were to the financial advantage of his son Robert...*

## **William MacGregor Stirling: Minister, Historian, and Antiquarian**

(by Josh Smith)

*In the previous Leighton Letter, Josh outlined the life of Leighton trustee William MacGregor Stirling (1771-1833), minister of the Port of Menteith. In this piece, he examines William's borrowing from the Library and his career as a writer and historian.*

The Library's records reveal that William made 49 borrowings between 1797 and 1812, ranging from Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, which the Library once held as part of John Bell's *The Poets of Great Britain* (1777-83) in 109 volumes octodecimo, in 1797, to his final borrowing of John Drinkwater's *Siege of Gibraltar* (1790) on 10 January 1812.

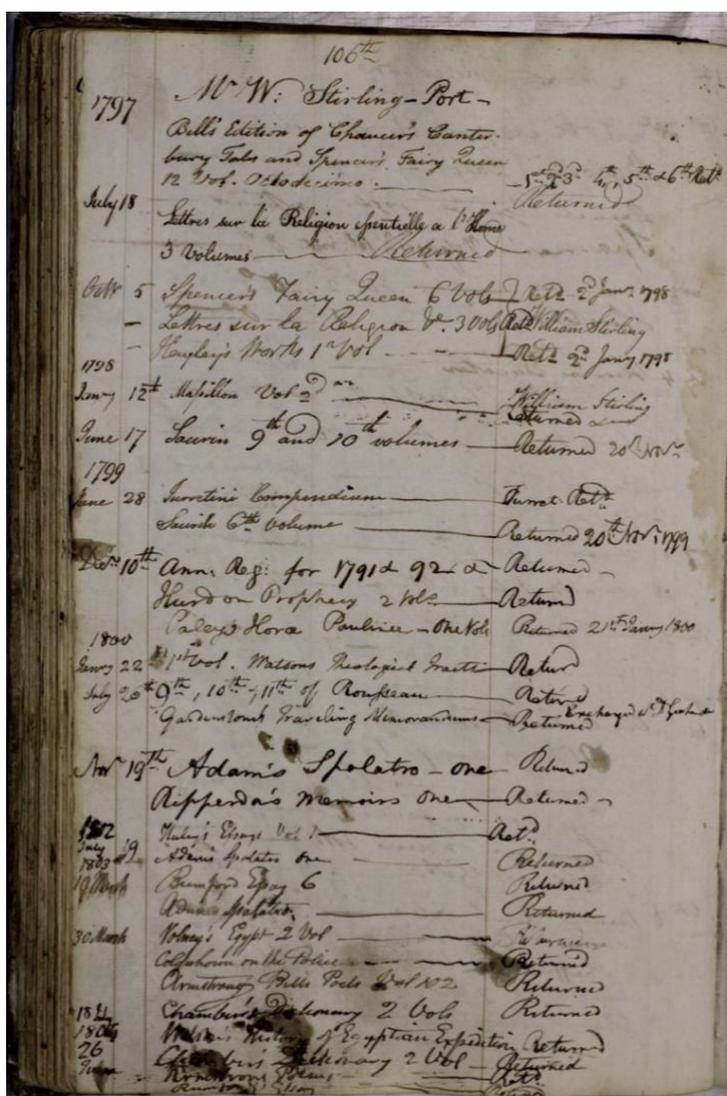
This tally almost certainly underplays William's total borrowings from the Library, and it is highly likely that any further borrowings he may have made after 1812 would have been recorded in a separate register, in use from 1811, for trustees only, which has now been lost.

William's surviving borrowing record reveals that he read widely through the Leighton collection. Unsurprisingly, religious reading formed a major component, including theological works or sermons by authors including Thomas Burnet, Richard Hurd, William Paley, Jacques Saurin and Richard Watson. He also read works by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Edmund Burke and histories by William Robertson and Robert Henry. Somewhat, unusually for the typical Leighton reader, William was a regular borrower of poetry, not only Chaucer, but also John Armstrong, William Hayley and Edmund Spenser.

William was an active writer as well as reader and produced numerous publications throughout his lifetime. In 1815, he published *Notes, Historical and Descriptive on the Priory of Inchmahome*, a history of a ruined Augustinian priory located on an island in the Lake of Menteith<sup>3</sup>. It is here that William's borrowing of poetry from the Leighton may have encouraged him to attempt his own, as he did so with a series of verses, titled 'Inschemachame', in the introduction to his history. In 1816 he published a *Chart of British History*, followed by an edited second edition of William Nimmo's *History of Stirlingshire* (1817), first published in 1777, to which he added additional chapters and footnotes to bring it up to his own time, and a detailed map of Stirlingshire he drew himself.

Surprisingly, despite William's role as a borrower and trustee, none of his published works seem to have been purchased by or donated to the Leighton Library.

Although he edited a history of Stirlingshire rather than of Perthshire, Stirling did refer to the Leighton Library in an additional appendix, describing it as 'an inducement, additional to the mineral waters, to spend a few weeks at Dunblane'.

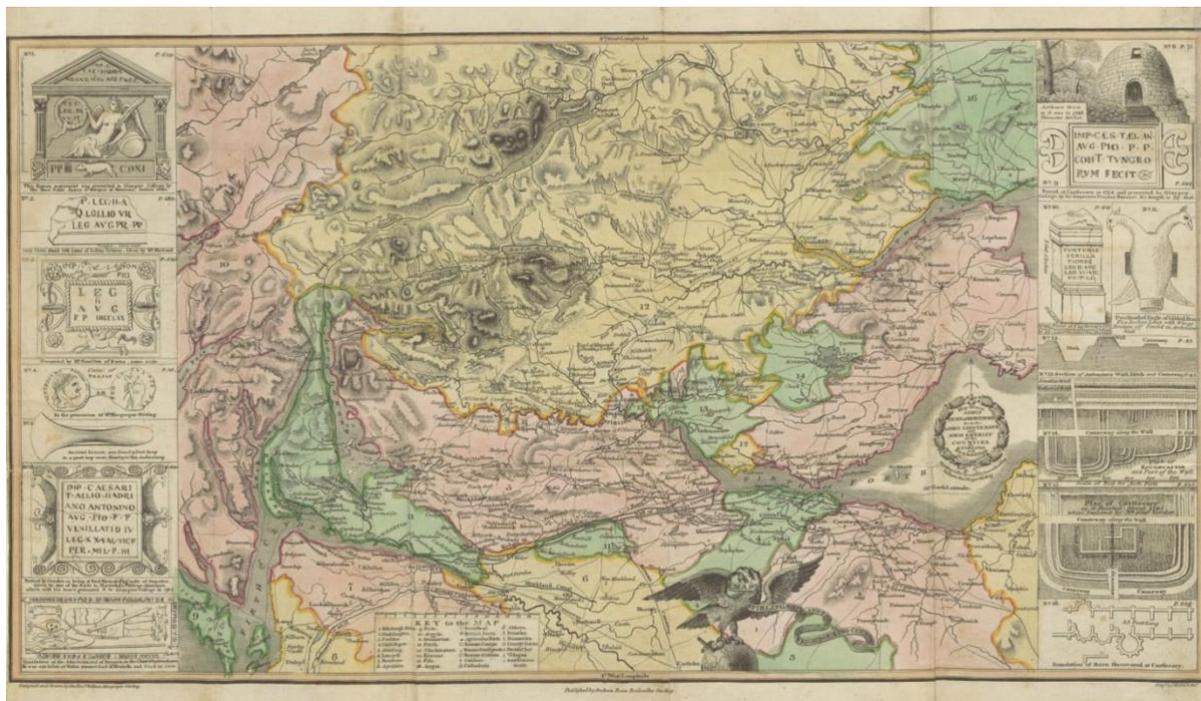


William's borrowing from the Leighton, 1797-1804. Leighton MS 27 (Register of borrowings, 1780-1833, p.106.)

William was also a forthright writer and willing to challenge disparaging and erroneous misconceptions regarding reading in Scotland and at the Leighton Library. He was critical of Richard Gough's translation of William Camden's *Britannia* (1789), describing it and Gough's perception of Scotland as having been 'observed incorrectly, noted hastily, and prepared for the press carelessly'. He noted that these deficiencies persisted in the second edition of Camden's *Britannia*, published in 1806, where it was claimed that 'Bishop Leighton's Collection of books is little used, a striking proof how little literature is cultivated in the northern province of Scotland'.

Stirling almost certainly had more to write on the Leighton Library. From 1818, he began acquiring material and undertaking reading to produce his own history of Dunblane, encouraged to do so by his printer and bookseller in Stirling, Andrew Bean, who promised the support 'of a great many Subscribers' were he to do so. In the end, the project did not come to fruition. Yet his correspondence demonstrates that he was part of a network of Perthshire residents who were united by interests in reading, history and antiquarianism and who all had connections to the Leighton Library. Stirling's role afforded him a privileged position at the heart of the Library's management. It is probably not without a little degree of satisfaction that he recorded in his own reading notes that 'The clerical trustees [of the Leighton Library] are the Rev<sup>d</sup> John Grierson of Dunblane, Dr Murray of Kilmadock, and William MacGregor Stirling of Port'.

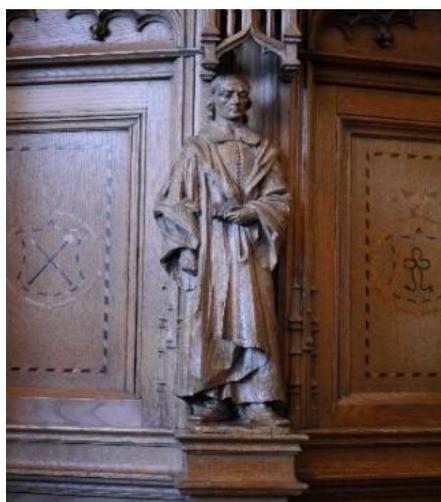
<sup>3</sup> William Stirling's history of Inchmahome Priory is digitised on Google Books: ([https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Notes\\_Historical\\_and\\_Descriptive\\_on\\_the/TSQvAAAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0](https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Notes_Historical_and_Descriptive_on_the/TSQvAAAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0))



The map of Stirlingshire and neighbouring counties drawn by William MacGregor Stirling himself that he included in the second edition of William Nimmo's *History of Stirlingshire* (1817).

## Memorials to Robert Leighton

(by David Kirk)



### Dunblane

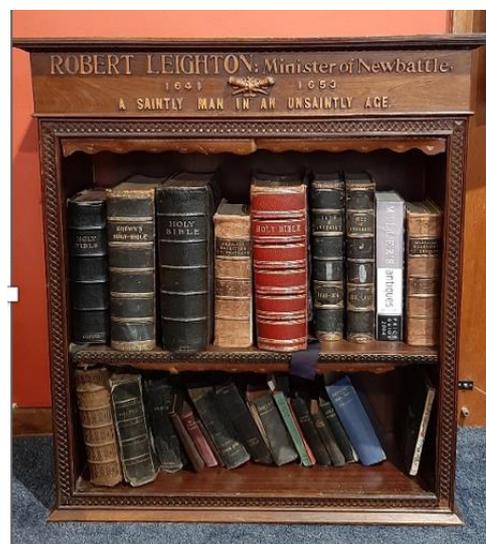
The 19<sup>th</sup> Century pulpit designed by Rowan Anderson for the refurbished Dunblane Cathedral depicts six figures of importance to the history of the building. On the left, flanked by John Knox and Principal William Carstairs, is Bishop Robert Leighton: however, dressed not in bishopric regalia but wearing the sombre robes of a puritan minister. Probably unrecognised by casual visitors to the Cathedral they may not appreciate his importance as Bishop of Dunblane and donator of the Leighton Library.

However in the other places where he served during his eventful life it is often easier to find more tangible remembrances.

### Newbattle

His reputation as a preacher was established during his ministry in Newbattle. Although his church was rebuilt and that building is now being sold by the Church of Scotland, his pulpit has been preserved and is currently being restored.

The Ordnance Survey also depicts on the map of Newbattle "Archbishop Leighton's House" (although there is doubt as to whether he actually lived there). His memorial inscription is, perhaps appropriately, on a bookcase, now housed in the modern Mayfield and Easthouses Church.



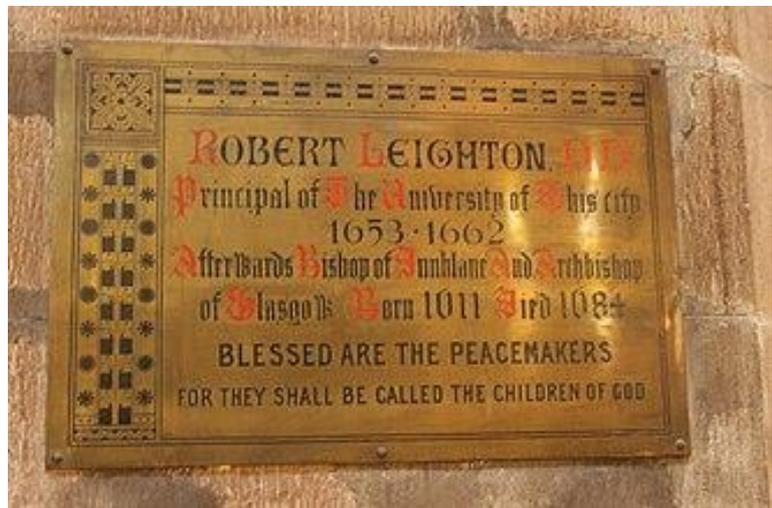
## Edinburgh University

His tenure as Principal of Edinburgh University is recorded in a history of the University as one who *“In learning, in just notions of religion, and in true piety without ostentation ... was not surpassed by any of his predecessors ... In arranging and conducting the complicated business of a university, he had few equals, and no superiors.”*



The image on the left, held by the National Galleries of Scotland (and reproduced with their permission), identifies him simply as “Archbishop of Glasgow” although the inscription seems to refer to him as Principal of the University. Its origin is obscure and other than a portrait in the University’s collection of dubious provenance, there is little else to remember him in the University itself.

However, during his principalship he regularly preached in St Giles Cathedral, where he is remembered by the plaque below:



## Glasgow Cathedral

In Glasgow Cathedral, as in Dunblane, his name appears on a plaque among a list of Archbishops. Although his tenure as Archbishop of Glasgow was relatively brief, he does have the distinction of having in addition this specific memorial.

## Horsted Keynes

In Sussex he is buried in the graveyard of St Giles' Church, Horsted Keynes, where he is remembered by an annual commemorative service.



These memorials acknowledge the impact Leighton must have had wherever he served. If in Dunblane Cathedral itself recollection is more muted, we do have in the town what is indisputably his finest memorial, the Library and his unique and eclectic collection of books. We should anticipate the refurbishment of the Library as an additional tribute to him and his memory.

*Acknowledgements: Thanks to June Payne, Leighton Library Volunteer, Stephen Willis, Archive and Library Assistant, Edinburgh University and to Mabel Curie, Session Clerk, Newbattle, for their help.*

## Note from Editors:

Coincidentally we recently chanced upon another monument at a house in Culross in Fife where Leighton is reported to have lived. Situated in the town's Mid Causeway, he is said to have stayed here during the time that he was Bishop of Dunblane.



## And finally...

Do keep an eye on the Leighton website <https://www.leightonlibrary.org.uk> where you can find excellent photos, videos, latest news, and links to press articles. You can also read about the history of the Library, the books, and Robert Leighton.

**Friends of the Leighton Library:** If you know of someone interested in signing up as a Friend, an application form can be obtained by emailing [leightonfriends@gmail.com](mailto:leightonfriends@gmail.com)