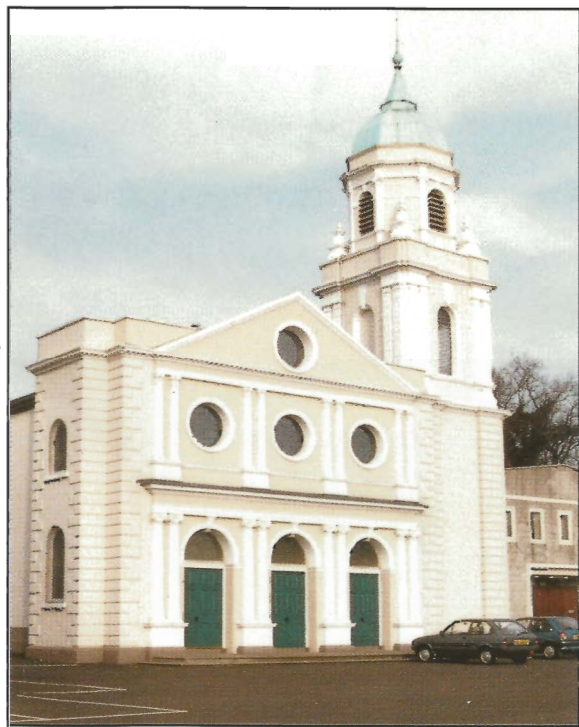
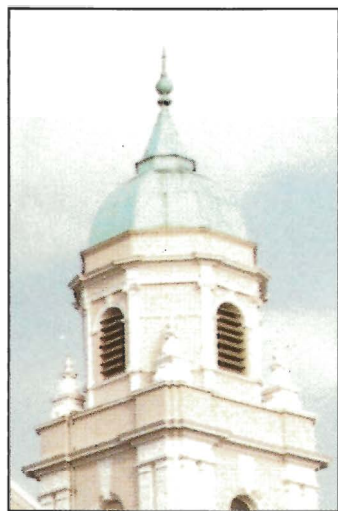


# Times & Tides



A History of  
Whiteabbey  
Presbyterian  
Church  
1833 - 1995

# ***Whiteabbey Presbyterian Church*** ***1833-1995***

A Record of the First 100 Years

*by*

Rev. W. B. McMurray, M.A.,  
*1833-1933*

*with*

Appendix by James H. Drennan  
*1934-1965*

Further updated by Hugh Beattie  
*1966-1995*

## **Preface to Third Edition**

In compiling the records of the past thirty years of our church at Whiteabbey I pay tribute to the work of Rev. W. B. McMurray and Mr. J. Drennan for their foresight in leaving, for succeeding generations, a record of the passing events of our Church life in the period 1833-1965.

To their records I now add another thirty years details in evidence that the light kindled on the Antrim shore at Whiteabbey, one hundred and sixty years ago still shines as brightly as ever, still proclaiming the Gospel Message and providing a haven for Christian Worship.

To the first two editions of the book I have added some items of historic interest and owing to the restrictions of overall space have made some deletions.

I must record the valuable support and assistance of Rev. J. S. Dallas, Messrs. Stewart McCullough, Jack Wilson and Derek Martin for his valuable photographic work, also Mr. J. Erskine of Stranmillis Library and Mr. R. Bonar of the Presbyterian Historical Society.

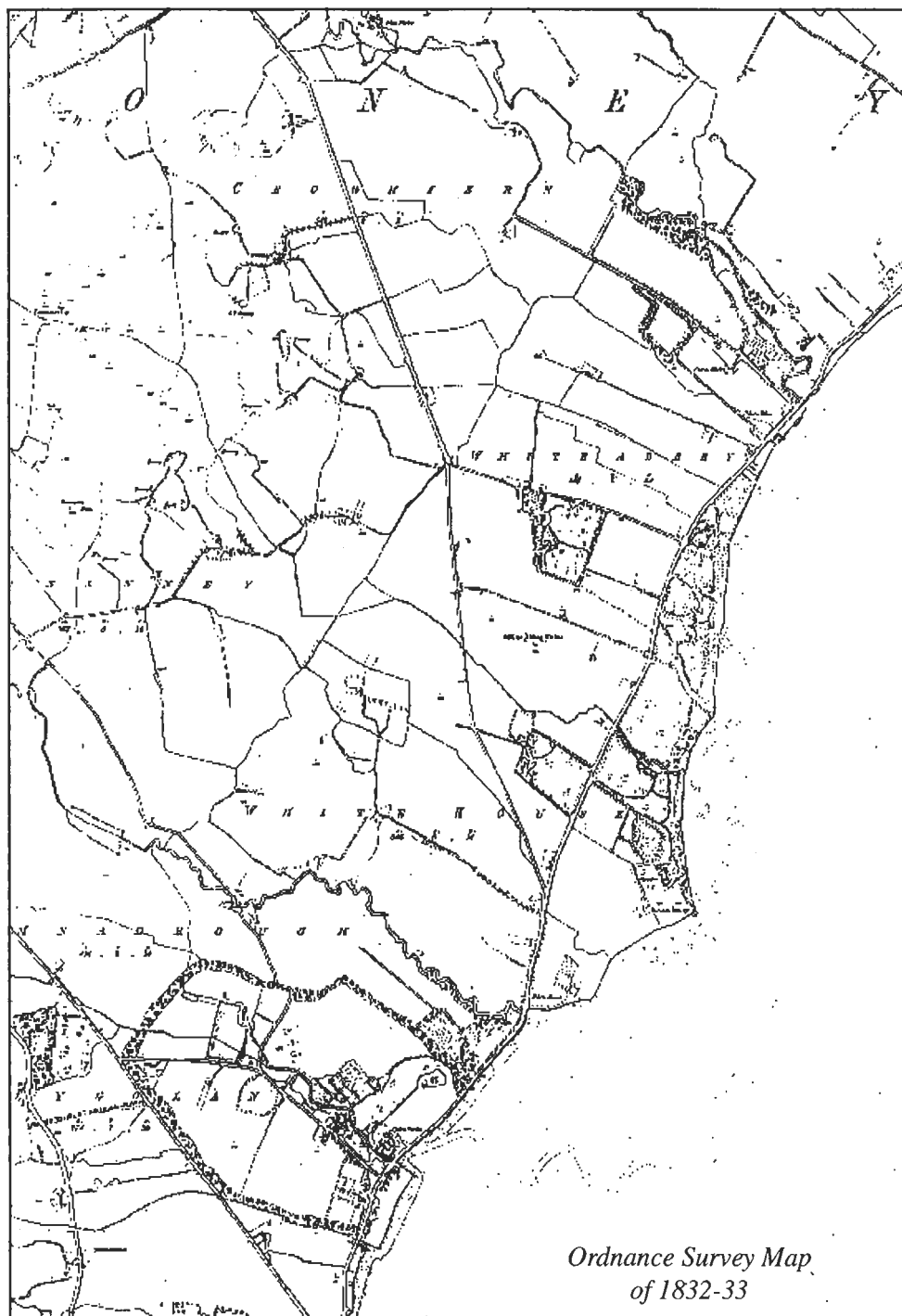
**H. Beattie.**  
**June, 1995**

## IN THE BEGINNING

One hundred years ago a light was kindled on the Antrim shore, and from that day to this, that light has stood as a beacon amongst us, throwing out its cheering and guiding, its cleansing and purifying beams into the darkness of the night. During all the eventful years of this surprising and marvellous century, Whiteabbey congregation has been a prominent and influential institution in the district; an organisation for the salvation of men and women, a sanctuary for the distressed in mind and spirit, a witness and a testimony to the great everlasting things that matter. To allow our centenary to slip past unheralded and unnoticed would evince a sad lack of gratitude on our part to God and to the faithful men and women who have tended the flame from generation to generation. At the request of the Session and Committee, I have undertaken to set down as clearly and as succinctly as possible, the circumstances connected with the origin of the congregation, the principal events in our history, and the main features of our congregational life in the century now completed.

In order that my readers may be in a position to understand the nature of the events leading up to the formation of the congregation, I shall have to ask them to bear with me while I give a short description and account of the situation in Whiteabbey in earlier days. We have the authority of the late Viscount Northcliffe for the statement that the coast road from Belfast to Portrush is the second road in Europe from the point of scenery. Such a remark will cause little surprise to anyone acquainted with this interesting and beautiful highway. What with its superb prospects of the hills and the sea, of the creeks and bays, of the succession of headlands, of the stretches of heathery moorland, without any sign of life save an occasional peatcutter, or an occasional mountain sheep - a more delightful road for a motor run cannot be imagined. But, at present, none of these pictures of nature's loveliness and grandeur are seen until the boundaries of our industrial villages are left behind.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, the road from Belfast to Carrickfergus could bear very favourable comparison with stretches of the road further down the coast celebrated for beauty. The handiwork of the builder had not yet defaced nor obliterated the old original landmarks of nature. The hills of Co. Antrim could be seen looking down in quietude and peace upon the waters of the Lough, to where across the tide, the fields and hills of Co. Down were standing, robed in their mantles of green. At Whiteabbey (so called from the Abbey of the Dominicans or White Friars in the vicinity) there were no streets of houses, no jetties, no mill, no factory, no bleach-green, nothing or next to nothing to obstruct or hide the traveller's view of the sea. The only houses abutting on the shore were a cluster of fishermen's cottages built near the spot where Coastguards' Row now stands. These humble habitations of the fishermen, with their boats drawn up on the beach alongside them, and the farm houses and other residences scattered here and there along the road, revealed and proclaimed the rural character of the district. It is with no feeling of surprise we read that to this locality,



especially to the neighbourhood of Greenisland, visitors came in summer time for recuperation and refreshment by the sea breezes.

Such was the local situation in the beginning of the nineteenth century. But this situation was not to remain unchanged. Forces were already in operation elsewhere that were to alter the character of the district. The industrial revival that followed the invention of the steam-engine, and the establishment of the factory system took place, altering the outlook of the people of the United Kingdom, and, incidentally, changing Whiteabbey from a district inhabited by a few farmers into a manufacturing area. Nothing so revolutionary as this industrial revival has occurred in the United Kingdom since the conversion of the people to Christianity. Life has been speeded up by the introduction of machinery, the population has increased enormously, a steady stream of migration began and has continued to flow from country places to the neighbourhood of towns; in many parts the whole face of the countryside has been altered, mills and factories, foundries, and furnaces springing up amidst green fields proclaim the fact that we are in the midst of a new era of civilisation - the industrial era.

This industrial revolution did not bring any immediate change or improvement to purely agricultural provinces. But Ulster was not wholly and entirely agricultural in character. Ulster was the seat of a flourishing cottage industry, the hand-loom weaving industry that gave employment to thousands of men and women. Ulster was, therefore, very favourably situated in being in a position to take full advantage of this wonderful invention. Her men of vision hastened to erect mills and factories where the workers could be assembled to attend the spindles and looms, driven by the help of this powerful new auxiliary - the steam engine. Most of these mills and factories were erected in the neighbourhood of Belfast. A mill was built in Whitehouse, subsequently another was built in Whiteabbey. In consequence of the opening of these new centres of employment, a large number of people came to reside in the district. These changes occurred a few years prior to the organisation of Whiteabbey congregation.

### **The Building of the Church and the Call of the Rev. William Campbell**

The question of the provision of religious ordinances will naturally suggest itself. What facilities for public worship were to be found in this district into which so many people had come to take up residence? The provision for public worship was most unsatisfactory; in fact, it was conspicuous by its absence. The nearest churches of any denomination were situated at Carnmoney on the one hand, and Carrickfergus on the other. No stated religious service was conducted in the large area comprising Whiteabbey and Whitehouse. The old residents, farmers and others had, as a general rule connections with one or other of the old established congregations. But these new people, the workers in the mills and others, who had lately built houses in the neighbourhood were in danger of drifting through the absence of a church in their midst. It is not an uncommon situation in a

freshly-opened district. It is a situation that is always fraught with spiritual peril. A statement is found in the records of the Synod of Ulster to the effect that religious services were commenced in the schoolhouse in Whiteabbey village in the year 1831. No information is to hand regarding the circumstances under which the spiritual needs of the people were brought under the notice of the Synod. But we know that there resided in Whiteabbey at this time a gentleman with a great love of God in his heart, and a great interest in the spiritual welfare of others - Mr. William Cairns, the father of the celebrated Earl Cairns. Mr. Cairns interested himself in these services, and upon his invitation many well-known ministers came down from Belfast to preach in the school-house on Sabbath evenings. Amongst others was the famous Rev. Dr. Cooke. With his customary vigilance and sagacity, Dr. Cooke saw a splendid opening for a church and the settlement of a permanent pastor at Whiteabbey, and warmly advocated the scheme whenever the opportunity offered. Moved by his persuasions, the people of the district became alive to the fact that the supply of religious ordinances was a problem that pressed for immediate solution, and they began to canvass and discuss the question of the erection of a church in Whiteabbey.

This was, of course, a step in the right direction. But before any such scheme could materialise, a very awkward question had to be answered, namely, the question of the denomination of the new congregation. With what religious body should this new congregation be connected? This was a very delicate question that might have led to grave misunderstandings; this was a boulder that had to be cleared from the path. The solution of this difficulty was found along lines that should serve as an object lesson to all districts and peoples inadequately or altogether unsupplied with religious ordinances. A vote was taken, and upon an examination of the votes it was ascertained that a majority of the householders in the district were in favour of the organisation of a Presbyterian congregation. And so the matter was settled. Of course we say, "a wise and proper vote." Still, we must surely pause a moment to pay a tribute to the many liberal-minded and generous-hearted people who voted with the minority. Naturally enough, they desired the establishment of a church of their own denomination, yet so far from throwing any obstacles in the way of the new congregation, or exhibiting any rancour at the frustration of their own hopes and plans, they threw in their lot with the majority, worshipping with the new congregation for several years and taking a leading part in the erection of the new church building. By this praiseworthy action, they anticipated in a measure the good time prophesied by "the Master," when there shall be "one fold and one Shepherd."

Much as I should like to go into details regarding the various meetings held in connection with the erection of the new church and the selection of the first minister, I must refrain through want of space. However, a few interesting facts may be noted. Let us endeavour to take these, as far as possible, in the order of their occurrence.

The first meeting of the Building Committee was held on the 22nd of January, 1833.

Messrs. John Rowan, Hugh McCalmont, Robert Thompson, John Thompson, Henry Lyons. William Cairns and Revs. Dr. Cooke and Hanna (deputies from the Presbytery of Belfast) were present. A memorial to the Presbytery of Belfast was drafted at this meeting, stating that there was already a subscription list of £561 towards building a house of worship, and there was every reason to conclude that it might with reasonable exertion be augmented to £800. There was also a list of about sixty seat-holders, and in the adjacent neighbourhood there were at least one hundred Presbyterian families who might be expected to become members of a new congregation, there were also in the neighbourhood several families of other communions from whom not only large subscriptions had been received for the building but from whose liberality permanent assistance might also be expected towards the support of a minister; therefore, the Presbytery was requested to take steps for the organisation of a new congregation and the erection, of a house of worship in Whiteabbey.

The prayer of the memorial was granted, and a congregation was organised in Whiteabbey. No time was lost in getting to work on the task of choosing a young man to come and exercise his ministerial gifts among the people of the district. After the usual preliminaries, Mr. William Campbell, a Scotch licentiate, was unanimously approved of, at a meeting held in Whiteabbey on the 26th of July, 1833. He was ordained on Tuesday, 12th November, 1833.

It was no great ecclesiastical heritage into which Mr. Campbell entered upon the day of his ordination, as judged by the customary standards. To quote his own words regarding the situation: "At the period of my first settlement here the congregation was in the earliest infancy of its being, few were its members, and feeble was its condition. The place of our assembly was a small school-room, and this, it is true, was found sufficient at first to accommodate all in the neighbourhood who were disposed to worship with us. On the following summer, however, it was deemed necessary to enlarge our temporary place of meeting by a tent, which gave to the whole an appearance somewhat resembling the tabernacle in the wilderness - reminding us that we had not then arrived at a fixed and permanent condition as a church." It was the day of small things. But what of that! The little one sometimes becomes a strong nation. The little stream meandering down the hillside is augmented by the waters of other streams and fountains, it gathers strength, swells, and deepens, and finally becomes the broad river that bears the ocean liners on its ample bosom. A modest conventicle of people, meeting in an upper room, gathered converts and grew to such an extent that it became the greatest and mightiest institution the world has known - the Universal Church of Christ.

The foundation stone of the new church was laid on Saturday, the 28th of September, 1833, by Mr. Lyons, nephew of Mr. Henry Lyons, who had kindly presented the site for church, manse, schools, and "proposed graveyard" to the Committee. The work was pushed on with commendable vigour, and the building was opened for public worship by Rev. Dr. Cooke on the 10th of August, 1834.

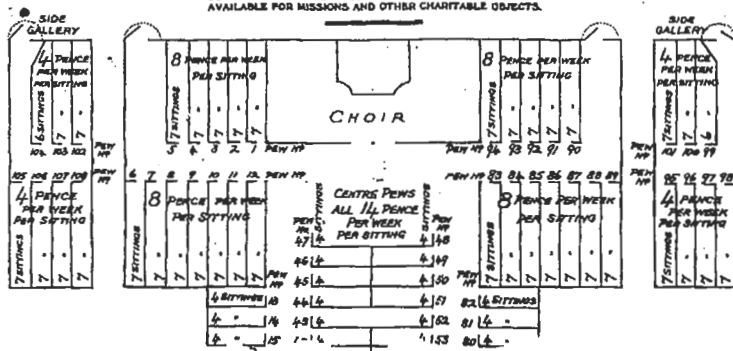


# WHITEABBEY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## PLAN OF SEATING ACCOMMODATION

SHOWING AVERAGE CONTRIBUTION PER WEEK PER SITTING  
REQUIRED TO MEET THE FIXED CHARGES ON THE CONGREGATION.

CONTRIBUTIONS IN EXCESS OF AMOUNTS INDICATED ARE  
AVAILABLE FOR MISSIONS AND OTHER CHARITABLE OBJECTS.



The Rev. William Campbell pays a very generous compliment to Mr. Cairns for assistance given in the various schemes for raising money to defray the cost of the new church structure. Towards raising the sum of £865, the price of the "neat, appropriate, and comfortable erection," all classes contributed, the newly-enrolled seatholders, local friends, seaside visitors, and last but not least, the members of the Building Committee. The members of the Building Committee not only gave handsome donations, but also acted as guarantors for the money borrowed from the Belfast Bank. When the debt had been reduced to £250, along with the minister they undertook and successfully accomplished the task of soliciting subscriptions to relieve the congregation of the burden. New congregations, as a rule have to tread the rocky path of debt for several years after their formation. Thanks, however, to the liberality of the people, and thanks to the kindly offices of these good friends, the way was made easy and plain for the office-bearers of Whiteabbey congregation. The burden of debt was lifted from their shoulders in the course of a few months.

But enough about these temporalities - these questions of 'ways and means and business arrangements! What about the spiritualities? What about the inner life, of this new institution? This church was erected with a view to its becoming a spiritual home for the people. Were the plans of its founders realised, and were their hopes fulfilled? Did this new church become a refuge from the storm, and a shelter from the heat, an habitation of the Spirit, a temple in which worshippers could hear in the stillness the voice that speaks from Heaven? Or did the plans and purposes of its founders miscarry? This young man had been chosen as pastor of the people. Did he turn out to be a real shepherd of souls, who, Sabbath by Sabbath, led the sheep into the green pastures of Divine Love, and made them lie down beside the still waters of Heavenly Truth? Or was it a case of the hungry sheep looking up without being fed? Testimony is borne to the

zeal and fidelity with which the minister discharged all the duties of his sacred office. "His people witnessed his anxiety to do in right earnest the work of his Master, and they were profited by his labours." A morning service was held in the church in Whiteabbey, and an evening service was generally held in the school-house attached to Mr. Grimshaw's mill in Whitehouse. As for the subsidiary activities and agencies, it was not, of course, the age for the multifarious and multitudinous congregational organisations, of which we have such a plethora at the present day. Such an item upon our church records as the purchase of a pair of snuffers for the candles in the vestry, helps to explain the scarcity of evening meetings. Life was simpler, more unpretentious, more primitive in those days, the equipment required for the conduct of many of our modern church activities was lacking. But even so, attention was given to vital things - to the preaching of "the Word," to the administration of the Sacraments, to the training and instruction of the children and young people in Sabbath school and Bible class. This work amongst the young was carried on at first in the church, and afterwards in the schools erected in the year 1839.

And now, if my readers will pardon me, I shall turn aside from the direct line of my story for a moment to describe very briefly two important happenings in the religious world that occurred about this time, one of which, as the event proved, was destined to deprive Whiteabbey of its excellent minister.

The Synod of Ulster and the Secession Synod united in the year 1840, to form the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Various Churches have united since this date, but the honour of having first unfurled the flag of union amongst Protestant people belongs to our Church. In this matter we have led the way. This union was a blessing to every one of the four hundred and thirty congregations connected with the two Synods. Every one of them received fresh inspiration and fresh power, every one of them was clothed with new dignity, every one of them was uplifted as the ships in the harbour are uplifted by the incoming tide. As an evidence of the fresh life that had come pouring into the arteries of the United Church we may mention that arrangements were made at the first meeting of the General Assembly for sending forth two missionaries to preach the Gospel in India - the first of all our foreign missionaries and for the vigorous prosecution of Home Mission work in various parts of Ireland.

This was the first momentous event in Presbyterian circles to which I wish to refer. The second was the disruption in the Church of Scotland in the year 1843. In that year, over five hundred ministers of the Church of Scotland voluntarily surrendered their all - all their living, their churches, manses, and endowments - and came out empty-handed into the wilderness as a protest against a great anomaly that then existed in the Church, namely patronage (the right possessed by certain local magnates of making appointments to vacant pulpits, even against the wishes of the people of the congregation! A few flagrant cases of unacceptable ministers being forced into vacant Congregations had brought this controversy to a head. The heroic step taken by this band of ministers

made a profound impression upon the whole Christian world, and was eventually the means of placing the charter of liberty in the hands of the members of the Church.

The cry of his distressed brethren touched the Scotch heart of Mr. Campbell. He writes: "When I first bent my steps to your shores there was an over-abundant supply of preachers in connection with the Church of Scotland, whilst there was a demand for additional labourers in the Church of this country; whereas now the reverse is the case. In my native land the harvest truly is plenteous, and the labourers few. This altered state of things has been chiefly brought about by the late disruption of the Establishment, and the formation of the Free Church of Scotland. Ever since that eventful period I am not ashamed to confess that, as a devoted son of the suffering and afflicted Church of my fathers, I have had a yearning desire towards her, and I was thus prepared to regard the call from the members of the Free Church at Alexandria, Dumbartonshire." Mr. Campbell did not pass the remainder of his days at Alexandria. After a period of service there, he resigned the congregation and sailed for South Africa, where he lived and laboured for the Master until old age, coming at last to his grave "as a shock of corn cometh in his season." We are pleased to have this opportunity of laying this memorial wreath upon his grave, and of honouring him as a good minister of Jesus Christ, to whom we are greatly indebted for laying the foundations of our Church so well and so truly. So ends the first decade of our congregational history.

## Rev. John Lyle

The tide of spiritual prosperity came rolling into the Church for several years after the Union, rising and swelling, moving forwards and onwards towards the high-water mark of the great revival. Presbyterians were in great heart, and full of hope and confidence in the future of their Church. The benches of the Theological College were packed with students. There was no dearth of licentiates. Five licentiates preached in Whiteabbey in view of the vacancy. Out of these five candidates for the pulpit, one of them,

MARRIED IN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, according to the Form and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church, by \_\_\_\_\_

This Marriage was solemnized between us, { James Lyle } in the Presence of us, { Thomas Gough } Henry Cooke

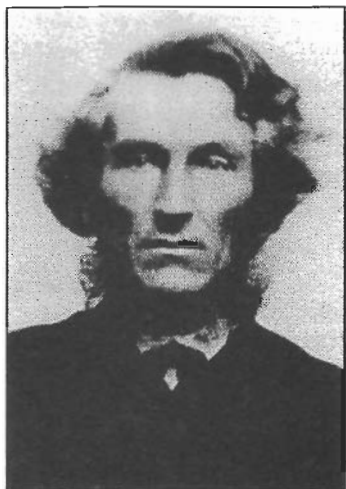
18.6.55. Marriage solemnized at \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Residence.	Rank or Profession of Father.
16	July 25 <sup>th</sup> 1848	John Lyle	Twenty	Bachelor	Minister	Whiteabbey	James Lyle	Gentleman
		Ezra West Young	Twenty	Minister		Abbeville	James Young	Gentleman

Married in the \_\_\_\_\_ Church, according to the Form and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church, by \_\_\_\_\_ by use, \_\_\_\_\_

This Marriage was solemnized between us, { John Lyle } in the Presence of us, { James Gough } Thomas Gough

Marriage certificate of the Rev. John Lyle. The one above is signed by Dr. Henry Cooke - the Black Man - whose statue stands at College Square in Belfast.



*Rev. John Lyle*

Mr. John Lyle, of Newry, so commended himself to the people, that he was requested to preach for a further three Sabbaths on congregational trial of his gifts. His preaching and deportment during this more extended trial came up to the standard of the people's expectations. A call was drawn out and signed by one hundred and seventy individuals, which was a great improvement on the twenty-seven individuals who had signed Mr. Campbell's call. Mr. Lyle accepted the call, and was ordained and set apart to the pastoral office on the 2nd of September, 1845.

The fifteen years of Mr. Lyle's ministry were years of growth and prosperity. They may be compared to those growing years in the 'teens in the individual's life, when he passes from the estate of boyhood and shoots up into the stature of manhood. In the course of these years, Whiteabbey grew and flourished, becoming a comparatively large and vigorous congregation. To this end various factors contributed. To name the first and most obvious - the railway was opened for traffic in the year 1848. The opening of the railway was, of course, a great asset to the whole neighbourhood. Prior to this time a stage-coach plied for hire between Belfast and Carrickfergus. Those who did not travel by this old-fashioned coach employed their own horses and vehicles, or else walked on foot. Owing to the inevitable slowness and difficulty in moving around, people were confined within very narrow geographical boundaries in those days. But the introduction of this new, speedy, comfortable mode of travel inaugurated a new era and encouraged a large number of folk to build residences along the shore and in other parts of our district. This was, of course, a great help and advantage to Whiteabbey congregation.

Also the great religious revival, afterwards known as the "59 Revival," occurred in Ulster during Mr. Lyle's ministry in Whiteabbey. To find any parallel for those extraordinary scenes of religious enthusiasm witnessed in Ulster during the summer of '59 we must go right back to the days of Pentecost. The hills and valleys, the towns, the villages and country places resounded with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. The depths of men's souls were opened in a wonderful fashion, their spirits were stirred and shaken as the trees of the forest are shaken by the winds of the tempest, their hearts were moved as the earth is moved by the shocks of the earthquake. When at length this season of spiritual uplift passed away - as all seasons pass away - many of its gracious influences remained to bless the Church for a generation and more.

Some ministers stood aloof from this movement, one or two took upon themselves the task of pointing out the blemishes of its enthusiasms, but Mr. Lyle seems to have been wisely guided in his attitude towards this great spiritual awakening. It is stated: "When

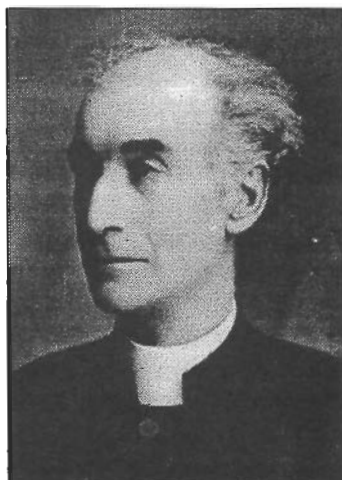
Revivalism commenced, and was so successfully carried on in the neighbourhood, Mr. Lyle acted with moderation and fairness. "This line of procedure brought a blessing to the congregation. Mr. Lyle writes: "God has raised up men of prayer among us: and in the Young Men's Evangelical Association for prayer, in the district prayer meetings, in the extension of family religion, in the deep earnestness of many, in the spiritual thirstings of not a few, in the increased attendances upon ordinances, in the evident manifestations of watchfulness, discipline of the heart, and, love as brethren, in these we have the cheering indications of 'spiritual revivings.'"

But a grave injustice will be done to the memory of a good man and an excellent minister if these words convey the impression that the success and progress of the congregation were due entirely to the favourable currents flowing around it at this period, bearing it onward and forward. There are ages of faith, and ages when the Church has to struggle hard to make its voice heard above the din and the tumult of worldly interests, but even under the most favourable conditions, even in a religious age, no congregation can flourish without the assistance of an earnest, godly, and hard-working minister. Mr. Lyle was a model minister, active and earnest, alive and awake to take advantage of the favourable situation. He was an indefatigable visitor in the homes of the people, a good preacher and a splendid teacher - a combination of qualifications calculated to ensure the success of a minister in any congregation, at any period. Various outward signs and tokens of congregational prosperity are mentioned in our records - a doubling of the modest stipend promised in the call, the erection of a manse in the church grounds, and a substantial increase in membership.

### **Rev. Robert J. Lynd, B.A.**

The Rev. John Lyle resigned the congregation and emigrated to the United States. His successor, Mr. Robert J. Lynd, a licentiate of the Coleraine Presbytery, was ordained on the 19th September, 1860.

Providence had endowed the Rev. R. J. Lynd with rich preaching gifts, which he had assiduously cultivated, and which he skilfully used. One of the last survivors of the company who "sat under" Mr. Lynd during his ministry in Whiteabbey - the late Mr. A. McFaul - described to me on more than one occasion Mr. Lynd's gracious and dignified appearance in the pulpit, the pleasant tones of his well-modulated voice, the eloquence of his sermons, his beautiful reading of the Scriptures. The Presbyterian ministry is essentially a preaching



*Rev. Robert J. Lynd*

ministry. Presbyterian people dearly love an eloquent preacher. Whiteabbey congregation had in Mr. Lynd a minister who was every inch an orator, a man who instructed and charmed his regular hearers with his sermons Sabbath by Sabbath, and one who was in great demand by other congregations as a preacher on special occasions.

It is interesting to notice that Whitehouse Presbyterian Church was built during Mr. Lynd's ministry in Whiteabbey. In the early days, a large number of the members of our congregation hailed from the neighbourhood of Whitehouse. Two residents in this locality figure very prominently in our early annals - Dr. McMechan and Mr. Grimshaw. The names of many other Whitehouse people are also found on the pages of our registers. This state of affairs continued until the opening of Whitehouse Church in the year 1867. But, from this date onwards, the numbers of our members in this district declined steadily, and at length completely vanished away. Happily, we have a large population in our area, "enough for all, enough for each," enough to fill all our churches to overflowing. A loyal and attached congregation began to gather round the minister of Whitehouse, but the members lost through the establishment of the new cause were soon replaced in Whiteabbey congregation. The minister found that he had enough work to occupy his attention and enough people to fill the church on the Sabbath day.

The ministry of the Rev. R. J. Lynd in Whiteabbey occupied almost the same space of time as the ministry of his predecessor - some fifteen years. His after career is noteworthy, as the Rev. Dr. Barron has written: "In 1875 Mr. Lynd resigned the charge of Whiteabbey congregation, and accepted a call to Academy Street Church, Belfast. He was subsequently called to Berry Street Church, Belfast, where his great gifts soon gathered a good congregation. From this place he was called to May Street Church. It was felt that Mr. Lynd's true place was as successor to Dr. Cooke and from that time forward, he worthily maintained the great traditions of that church." And, we may add, ultimately attained the highest position in the gift of the Church - the Moderatorship of the General Assembly.

### **Rev. John Armstrong**

We now come to a poignantly sad and a tragically brief chapter in our congregational history - to the ministry of Rev. John Armstrong. Some ministers are distinguished for lengthened service in one and the same congregation. The record for brevity must surely be held by Rev. John Armstrong, who occupied our pulpit for only one Sabbath day. Mr. Armstrong was heard by deputation in his church in Academy Street, Belfast, where he had done a fine work, and gathered a good congregation around him amidst rather uncongenial surroundings. He received and accepted a call to Whiteabbey. On the Sabbath after his installation he preached twice, and on the Monday went for a short visit to his father's home near Broughshane. Here, during the week, a distressing attack of haemorrhage of the lungs came upon him. For some five months he fought a gallant but losing battle with his insidious disease. On the 26th of December the great adversary

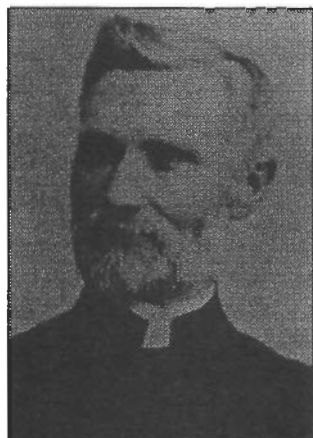
prevailed, and the eyes of the preacher closed in death. The members of the congregation were greatly discouraged by this disarrangement of their plans and purposes - and no wonder. The untimely and unexpected end of a good and useful life is always a great mystery, sometimes a great disappointment, often a great stumbling block to faith. We cannot see the reason for, or the good in, some of these strange dispensations of God's Providence. But the Hand that touches the cords never trembles, and never strikes a wrong note. These discords and pauses and breaks in life's music are brought in even though we cannot understand it here and now, they fit into the universal chorus of praise.

### **Rev. William Rogers, LL.D.**

The Rev. William Rogers, LL.D., was installed in Whiteabbey on the 16th of August, 1876. I do not feel very competent to pronounce any judgment on the qualities that caused William Rogers to be called the Robert Murray McCheyne of the Irish Presbyterian Church, or to set forth the reasons that moved so many people to apply to him that phrase that is sometimes thrown about rather indiscriminately, "the best man I ever knew." My reluctance in expressing an opinion is naturally increased and strengthened by the fact that my friend and neighbour, Rev. Dr. Barron, has published a biography of Dr. Rogers that has enjoyed a wide circulation. Also, I cannot forget that many who shall read these words enjoyed the advantage of having attended the church during his ministry, and, in some instances, were very closely associated with him in the work of the congregation in memory they can still see him passing down the village street they carry, and they shall carry in their hearts until their dying day, some words that fell from his lips in the pulpit, or in the course of private conversation. Keeping all these things in mind, it is surely the part of wisdom to see that my words should be few and, if possible, well-ordered.

I heard Dr. Rogers preach only on one occasion, and that at an early period in my life, when I was taking little interest in sermons and preaching. His text and the points of his sermon have passed away completely from my memory, but I still distinctly remember the saintly look and the solemn voice of the preacher, and the spell of the unseen world thrown round the audience in the course of the sermon. It is no wonder that many lit their candles at his torch, no wonder that they hailed him when living, and revere his memory now that he is gone, as the messenger of God to their souls.

William Rogers was a man of rare intellectual ability, a first class honour man at college, head and shoulders above the majority of his fellow students in point of



*Rev. William Rogers*

brains. But, like the great Apostle, he determined to erase from the tablet of his memory every name save One alone. As a consequence, he was never known, and he never wanted to be known, either as a scholar or as a pulpit star. But he was a great spiritual power, and a great soul-winner. In theology, he belonged to the Keswick school, and had he lived in the present day, he would have been a strong man on the Keswick platform. As his successor-once removed, who moves about amongst the people to whom he formerly ministered, I might write about his faithful and successful performance of the duties of pastor of Whiteabbey congregation, or of his labours as an evangelist. He was a great evangelist, both by word and pen. His little book entitled, "His Unspeakable Gift," has had an enormous circulation, and, from time to time, I have received letters addressed to him at the manse, testifying to spiritual blessing received through the perusal of its pages. He was also, a great missionary enthusiast. Dr. Rogers looked away across the boundaries of the homeland to the unlimited terrain beyond. He could hear the cry of the millions who sit in the shadow of darkness, calling for spiritual light. He endeavoured to answer that cry, and meet that spiritual need. The subject of a forward step in our mission work in India was first discussed at a meeting of the Clerical Prayer Union, held in the new manse at Jordanstown. The matter was brought under the notice of the members of the General Assembly, and finally resulted in the establishment of the Jungle Tribes Mission. In this forward step he was the moving spirit. He had the privilege also of indirectly playing a useful part in the establishment of the Qua Iboe Mission in West Africa. Mr. Bill, the first missionary to Qua Iboe, heard the voice of God calling him to far-off fields at a meeting where Dr. Rogers was speaking about the spiritual needs of the different parts of the world, and when afterwards the way was opened up, Mr. Bill went forth as the pioneer missionary to Qua Iboe.

The career of the Rev. Dr. Rogers provides another example and another illustration of the incontrovertible fact that no minister, no matter how gifted, how saintly, how consecrated to his calling, finds that life is "a sunny bank on which the primroses grow all the year round. "At some time or other, to a greater or less degree, all ministers find the thorns and briars growing along their paths, clinging to their garments, causing them pain, and impeding their progress. Dr. Rogers encountered difficulties at a certain period of his ministry in Whiteabbey, difficulties that caused him great perturbation of spirit. In the year 1886 owing to a misunderstanding and disagreement, arising through a clashing of opinion amongst members of the committee, a small but influential section of the congregation hived off from the main body, and founded the Congregational Church. As it has turned out, this Church has been a very useful and very helpful institution, which has made a very fine contribution to the religious life of the district. But at the time, and for a long time afterwards, this schism amongst our members was looked upon in the light of a regrettable occurrence, and was a source of grief to the minister and members of the congregation.

The Rev. Dr. Rogers had never been a robust man. After a painful illness, borne with



Christian fortitude, death came almost as a relief. The spirit of this true servant of the Lord forsook the tenement of his worn and weary body, and entered our Father's House above.

### **Rev. Robert K. Hanna, B.A.**

Isn't it wonderful when you come to think of it, that an Elisha can always be found to wear the mantle of Elijah, that someone is always prepared to pick up the torch that has fallen from the dead hand and lift it up on high, someone wonderfully well-fitted for the task! Mr. Robert K. Hanna, B.A., a licentiate of the Ballymena Presbytery, was ordained to the pastoral oversight of the congregation on 28th February, 1898, in succession to the Rev. Dr. Rogers. Mr. Hanna was only a licentiate, not a placed man. He had not enjoyed the advantage of the experience gained through having had a charge of his own. The call of a young, untried man to the pastorate of a large congregation is an experiment that involves the risk of failure. Mr. Hanna was no failure but a great success in Whiteabbey. The congregation reached the heights of its prosperity during his ministry.

The Rev. R. K. Hanna has his own peculiar strong points that commend him to the people, and make him a very effective and very successful minister. He has personality, whatever this mysterious charm is, he has it, and has it in good measure. Like the rest of our modern preachers, he has the note of deep-toned human sympathy in his preaching, the note that touches the cords, and evokes a response from the hearts of his hearers. He knows and feels that life is often very difficult, and that to live aright, to live victoriously along Christian lines, is a very difficult proposition for many people. His cheerful Christian outlook breathes a meaning and purpose into life, and makes him a very helpful preacher. Mr. Hanna came to Whiteabbey in the full vigour of his early manhood, full of hopefulness, full of zeal for the extension of the boundaries of Christ's Kingdom, full of Christian charity, and full of confidence in the Gospel as the key that can unlock

every door. The people gave him a warm welcome. To this day, those who knew him take an interest in him, and look upon him in the light of a personal friend.



*Rev. Robert Hanna*

Soon after Mr. Hanna's settlement in Whiteabbey, the renovation of the Church was taken in hand, and carried through at the cost of £5,000. Mr. Nicholas Fitzsimmons, a member of the church, was architect, and Messrs Stewart the contractors. Mr. Alexander McDowell, who had come to reside in the district a short time previously, and who afterwards became such a help and strength to the congregation, was one of the leading spirits in the undertaking. Many of my readers will be able to recall the great bazaar at Lismara, and other efforts put forth to raise funds to defray the cost of this renovation scheme.

We, their successors in the congregation, have a goodly heritage in our beautiful House of Worship, and we cannot forget all the love, all the liberality, all the labour poured forth by our friends in 1900 and following years to make such rich provision for our spiritual needs. Later on, Mr. Hanna, with the help of an assistant minister, stretched out his hands, first to the South, then to the North, laying hold of further duties, he undertook the work of Chaplain in the Abbey Sanatorium, and took charge of Knockagh Hall, Greenisland. Our schools, also, were rebuilt and refurnished during his ministry, through the generosity of the Whiteabbey Flax Spinning Co., and by the help of other friends, amongst whom Mr. Alexander McDowell and Mr. James Mackie, D.L., then a member of the congregation, must be specially mentioned.

Mr. Hanna's outstanding qualities of head and heart, his genial personality, his organising ability, his preaching gifts, have received recognition from the Church at large. Mr. Hanna received and accepted a call to Adelaide Road Presbyterian Church, Dublin, on 7th January, 1914. As might be expected, his ministry in the Metropolis has been highly successful, and he has also made a place for himself in the city as an influential citizen of Dublin. He has been called to the Moderator's chair, and the degree of Doctor of Divinity has been conferred on him by the University of Glasgow. But, better than all distinctions and all honours, "his bow abides in strength," he is the same useful minister, and he is still one of the most acceptable preachers who climbs the steps of an Irish Presbyterian pulpit.

### **Rev. W. B. McMurray, M.A.**

The writer of this little book was called from Maghera, a congregation that has been more or less distinguished for the scholarship of its ministers for the past eighty years, and was installed in Whiteabbey as successor to Rev. R. K. Hanna on the 21st of April, 1914.

I shall not detain my readers by dwelling at any length upon recent events that must be fresh in their memories. But one or two items are of congregational interest, and therefore call for mention.

The first of these is the Great War. When that terrible tempest arose and broke in fury upon the world in August, 1914, the young men of our congregation did not timidly search for a refuge, in which they might shelter from its stormy blast. On the contrary, at the blowing of the trumpet they rallied round their country's flag in large numbers. No less than one hundred and two of them answered the call, and of these fifteen paid the supreme penalty for their patriotism. During those grim and ghastly years our hearts



*Rev. W. B. McMurray*

went out to God in anxious prayer for our brothers on the battle front and on the dangerous seas, and our women laboured to make some provision for their comfort. When at last the storm had blown past, and peace and quietness reigned once more, our people raised a memorial to the men who had fallen, and showed their appreciation of the courage and endurance of all our men who wore the King's uniform by the installation of a pipe organ in the church, and the erection of a suitable tablet in the porch, at the cost of some £1,500.

I would remind my readers also of the destruction of the manse by fire on the night of the 31st December, 1921. This is also a matter of congregational interest. As the manse contained a great quantity of very dry material, including a large pile of sermons, the conflagration was so great and fierce that the appliances of the fire brigade were powerless to subdue it. A few fire-scorched walls and a heap of smouldering ruins were all that was left of the beautiful manse, built during the ministry of the Rev. Dr. Rogers. Great was the sympathy extended to those who had lost all their belongings in the fire and great was the kindness shown to them by the members of the congregation during the year when they were without a residence of their own. But the losses incurred through the fire are now forgotten. Owing to the wise provision of our Committee in the matter of the insurance of the property under its care, and owing to the skill and kindness of the late Mr. Samuel Stevenson, who designed and superintended the erection of the new house, and generously returned his architect's fee for the purpose of providing a new avenue and new gates, the congregation is now in the possession of one of the finest manses in the General Assembly.

Mention must also be made of an important ecclesiastical change that has taken place within our borders during the past two years. The work carried on at Knockagh Hall for some eighteen years, under the superintendence of the Session, with the help of our assistant ministers, Revs. Ritchie, Hall, Jamison, Stewart, W. F. S. Stewart, and also the late Rev. S. M. Shaw, of Loughmourne, and various Christian workers, has recently been taken over by the Church Extension Committee, with a view to the establishment of a Presbyterian Church in Greenisland. This new development in Church organisation is still in the experimental stage. But, from all reports to hand, the work is progressing very favourably, and high hopes are being entertained that in the process of time, a congregation may take root, grow, and flourish in this corner of the vineyard, and produce much fruit to the Master's glory.

## **Pillars in the Temple**

Having made this survey of our congregational history, from the ministerial point of view, the question arises: What about the men and women of the congregation, the rank and file, the commissioned and the non-commissioned officers of the army who have helped these leaders in the fight? Like other congregations, Whiteabbey has had its banner-bearers, whose names are worthy of remembrance. I cannot undertake to mention

all of them, and each of them separately, on account of the limitation of my space and the limitation of my information. A large number of husbandmen, several generations of them, have laboured in this end of the harvest-field, and gathered in the sheaves during the course of the century. I have already referred to two Dr. McMechan and Mr. Grimshaw - who watched so faithfully by the cradle of the infant church. We find also the names of various members of the Smith family, who were warm supporters from the foundation of the church; also Mr. Caithness, a member of Session and Superintendent of the Sabbath School; Mr. Stewart, Secretary of the Congregation; Mr. McCleery, manager of the mill and a fine church worker; Mr. Murray, Principal of the Boys' School; Mr. Charles Johnstone and Mr. James Johnstone, earnest Christian men and great helpers of the cause; Mr. William Bear, Mr. James Chisholm, and Mr. Malcolm Brown, whose portrait hangs in the vestry as an acknowledgment of the valuable services he rendered to the congregation as Session Clerk and Superintendent of the Sabbath School for many years. In more recent days we find Mr. David Megaw, our wise adviser, and useful Convener of our Property Committee; Mr. James Caithness, Principal of our Boys' School and Secretary of the Congregation; Mr. William Thomas, our talented musician. Each of these and all of these gave of their very best to the congregation, and laboured and prayed for the peace and prosperity of our spiritual Zion.

Whiteabbey people are proud, and justly proud of the fact that we have had, and have in our membership, gentlemen who have played an outstanding part in keeping the wheels of industry running, or have shown a fine public spirit in religious, social and philanthropic affairs, and in some instances have done both. For example, Mr. Edward Robinson, one of Belfast's great merchants; Mr. Andrew Henderson, J.P., through whose enterprise and ability, provision of work and wages has been made for so many of our people; Mr. F. H. MacLean, J.P.; Mr. T. T. MacLean and Mr. W. Caithness, Directors of Whiteabbey Flax Spinning Co., in which large numbers of our people have employment, a company which has always been so helpful to our congregation; Mr. John Wilson, J.P., High Sheriff for Co. Antrim. whose sons, Mr. William and Mr. Andrew C. Wilson, not only follow in his footsteps in the business world, but, like him, are warm supporters of our cause; Alderman James McKinney, another good friend of the congregation, a large employer of labour, a High Sheriff of the City of Belfast, and a valuable member of the City Council; Sir Crawford McCullagh, D.L., one of Belfast's successful merchants, who has worn the chain of office as Lord Mayor for six years, filling this high position with great distinction for two periods; Mr. Robert Clyde, J.P., a gentleman who is identified, and prominently identified, as Chairman, or President, or Treasurer with several religious and charitable undertakings in Ulster. He is a Trustee of the General Assembly, the Chairman of the Homes of the Blind; the Treasurer of the Portstewart Convention, and a member of the Board of the Qua Iboe Mission. Through all his career his charities have kept pace with his prosperity. As a member of Session and liberal supporter of our funds, he is a great strength to our congregation. Mr. R. H. Wilson, O.B.E., who has poured out his strength for the poor and distressed in the city of Belfast; Dr. David Wilson, the beloved physician, who is so considerate to the afflicted

poor in these our borders; and last, and in many respects the most remarkable of this distinguished list, Sir Alexander McDowell, the father and friend of our congregation for more, considerably more, than a quarter of a century. It is only the minister who is in a position to speak of the services that Sir Alexander rendered to our congregation. I need not mention the fact that he occupied a unique position as law adviser to the General Assembly, and that our ministers looked up, to him as their counsellor and friend. He was the joint-founder of the Presbyterian Old Age Pension Fund, the Irish Minister of Munitions during the war, not to speak of the legal, commercial, and political duties with which his hands were filled. His death left a great blank in our congregation.

## **A Democratic Church**

The principal end in view at the time of the foundation of Whiteabbey Congregation was to make provision for the spiritual needs of the workers in the new centres of employment. This was the main item in the programme of those who organised the congregation. This part of the programme has been kept to the fore in all our church work and arrangements. During the whole century, Whiteabbey Congregation has been a people's church, a church of the people, and a church for the people. The working people have responded nobly to all appeals, and have cooperated with the minister and with their brethren and sisters who have been labouring for their spiritual improvement. They have supported the church with their offerings, they have supplied most of the audience on Sabbath Days and at week-day meetings; they have kept the altar fires burning, and have built up the music beneath and around our ordinances of religion. A democratic institution is in a state of stable equilibrium. Whiteabbey is a very democratic congregation. This is one of the secrets of its health and strength.

The women of the congregation are also a great strength to our organisation. What would church life be without the presence and assistance of women? A band of holy women followed our Lord in the days of His flesh ministering unto Him. From that day to the present date women have been His best friends and most faithful followers. A great company of women gather around Him still, sitting, like Mary, close to His feet to catch every word that falls from His lips; rising, like Martha, to minister to the needs of the Lord and His disciples. For generations, it is true, the sterner sex has managed to keep women modestly and silently in the background in Church affairs. But latterly, within the last two generations, women have stepped to the front in the Church, as in other departments, and have proved that, occasionally, Priscilla is more efficient than Aquila. The women of our congregation have been most helpful. Our appeal to them for assistance never falls on deaf ears.

We are rich in young people, never richer than at the present moment, young people with great possibilities of life and service. These young people are so multitudinous in our splendid Day School that they are pushing and pressing out the gables and walls of the building with their increasing numbers; and in our Sabbath Schools - while their

numbers are not so great - we have the joy of seeing a large company of young people apparently "receiving with meekness the engrafted word that is able to save their souls. " A strong, vigorous, healthy tide is flowing in all our youth organisations, our Bible Classes, our Auxiliaries, our Company of Guides, our League of Loyalty, our Tennis Club, and last, but not least, our Choir, a tide that promises to send the fresh currents flowing far up into all the channels of our congregational undertakings in the years to come. We thank God upon our knees for the big company of children and young people within our gates, and we hope and pray, we believe that, as we are their helpers now, so they shall be the helpers of our congregation in after years, when we are gone.

The Presbyterian Church administers its affairs and discharges its functions through office-bearers chosen by the people, under the guidance of the Spirit of God. These office-bearers are the people's representatives, and act in the people's interests. Our Session and Committee are a great help to the congregation and a great comfort to the minister in all his works of faith and labours of love. Although, according to the strictly literal interpretation, the word 'elder' connotes an old man, one who is supposed to be a repository of wisdom gathered in the course of years, one of our elders, Mr. William McKinney, is a young man. From our experience of his value to the congregation, we are led to hope that other young men of a suitable type may, in days to come, be also appointed to this high and most responsible office.

With the permission of my readers I feel that I must choose out four 'key-men' from Session and Committee for special mention. Mr. Edward W. Browne the dean of all our workers. Mr. Browne, despite his wonderfully fresh appearance, has almost fifty years of Christian work to his credit. It would be difficult to exaggerate the value of his services to our congregation. He succeeded Mr. Malcolm Brown as Superintendent of the Morning Sabbath School, and afterwards Sir Alexander McDowell as Clerk of Session. For several years he has occupied both offices. He is ungrudging in his labours for the Sabbath School, and his fine knowledge of Church law and his appreciation of Presbyterian customs and traditions make him an ideal Session Clerk. Mr. Francis H. MacLean, J.P., our Treasurer, who stands guard over our 'war-chest' with such fidelity and scrupulous care. Mr. MacLean has been a tower of strength to the minister ever since his first appearance in the district. Nothing is a trouble to him that means any advancement of the interests of the congregation and for any labour, he never looks for, or expects that anyone shall say "thank you". His beautiful residence is ever open for the entertainment of those, especially of those ministers who come to render any service to our church. We are thankful for all the work he has done on our behalf, especially for the lead that Mrs. MacLean and he gave us in that very successful movement to raise funds for the re-decoration and repair of our church property a few years ago. Mr. Robert Withers, J.P., the Secretary of our Freewill Offering Scheme, an exacting and laborious position. Mr. Withers is very helpful in all undertakings designed for the good of our people and neighbourhood. He is a warm supporter of our congregation, and is most regular and faithful in his attendance at the ordinances of religion. He is a

man who is always on the spot, always watchful to hold out the hand of friendship to the stranger who enters our gates, always ready with his pleasant smile and cheery word to encourage our people to contribute to our funds, and, if necessary, smooth away the little difficulties or misunderstandings that may occasionally arise. Mr. James H. Drennan, our excellent Church Secretary, has put his fine business training at our disposal in an ungrudging fashion, greatly to the benefit of the congregation. We are indebted to him at every Committee meeting for skilfully laying the lines along which the train can run in safety and comfort, and also for many valuable suggestions and help towards various improvements in our church machinery. Mr. Drennan is a loyal Presbyterian, a generous contributor, and enthusiastic helper in the work of the congregation. These four gentlemen who hold these important offices are rendering fine service to the congregation. I have mentioned them not only on account of their own worth and work, but also on account of the offices they hold.

We have, however, many other pillars in the temple, who are both a strength, and an ornament to our church, for example, Mr. David Wallace, our Secretary of the League of Loyalty. Mr. Wallace occupies a place of his own amongst us as the Barnabas the encourager of others, as the man who is continually saying to his neighbours: "Come thou with us and we will do thee good for the Lord has spoken good concerning Zion." The value of such an one to a congregation cannot well be overestimated. Mr. William Sharpe, the faithful teacher of the Morning Bible Class for girls; Mr. John Withers, the teacher of the Young Men's Bible Class; Mr. James Neely, the efficient and successful Principal of the Day School and the Convener of the Property Committee, the Leaders of the Girls' Auxiliaries; Mrs. John Wallace, the Captain of the Girl Guides; Mr. Ernest Moore, our talented Organist and Choir Leader; Mr. Robert Macauley, the Leader of the Boys' Auxiliary, Mr. Bertie Craig, Captain of the Tennis Club; Mr. Robert Miskimmin, our devoted Church Officer. We thank God and take courage at the remembrance of all these helpers and of all who are assisting them in our work for the Kingdom.

People are, perhaps, more inclined than formerly to move about from "tent, to tent, and from one tabernacle to another." But change and movement are apparently no new feature in the life of our district, and in the life of our congregation. The Rev. John Lyle, in the course of an address delivered in the year 1859 stated: "The fluctuations in the locality few fully know. Five congregations during these fifteen years have been beneath my care."

What changes have taken place in our membership in the course of the century! What a crowd of pilgrims have stooped to drink of this "brook by the way"! Some of them have completed the journey, and have passed through the gates into the City, some of them have become separated from us through the changes of this changing life, some of them are still connected with our fellowship. At this Centenary season we think of them all, we thank God for every remembrance of them, and pray that, by His mercy, we all may

be safely gathered home at last, to meet a reunited people in the presence of our Saviour.

## **A Changing World and an Unchanging Gospel**

The century 1833-1933 has seen greater changes in the conditions that control and govern human life and human circumstances than any century since the world's grey fathers first walked forth on earth's green sod. We can even go a step further and declare, without any fear of contradiction, that greater changes have occurred in this century than in any five, or even ten, consecutive centuries in the world's history. Humanity has been on the march, journeying forward towards a wider liberty and a fuller life, with the words "new light, new right, new might" emblazoned on its banners. As the Rev. Dr. Richards, in his presidential address at the meetings of the Pan-Presbyterian Alliance, in Belfast, in the month of July, put it: "In the last century the human spirit has been swinging itself free from superstition, political, social and religious, as it shook itself free from various Eastern superstitions in the period of Greek enlightenment. Science and learning "have discovered fresh continents, opened up fresh skies, and enlarged the boundaries of human knowledge"; invention and discovery have made life pleasanter, more desirable, more agreeable, more interesting for a great mass of the people. It has been a marvellous and wonderful century. Solid and convincing arguments may be brought forward in favour of the proposition that there shall be even greater changes and greater improvements in the human lot in the years to come. But, even so, even should the circle of life and light be widened out very considerably, the darkness of mystery shall still cover the question of man's destiny. Without that word, the greatest and mightiest pronouncement that ever fell from human lips, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you." "Man walketh in a vain show and man is disquieted in vain."

Many things have changed during the century, so many that we seem to be living in a new world, but the Gospel is still the same, the power of God unto salvation. The needs of the human soul are still the same. The preacher in 1933, like the preacher in 1833, must still acknowledge "Lord, to whom can we go if not to Thee? Thou, and Thou alone, hast the words of eternal life."

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."



# APPENDIX

## Gleanings from Old Records

On 25th January, 1833, at 5 Donegall Square, Belfast, Messrs. Wm. Cairns, H. McCalmont and J. Thomson met and agreed that plans and estimates for a Meeting House at Whiteabbey, to accommodate 350 persons, capable of enlargement by gallery or otherwise to seat 500, should be asked for from the following architects "if they consent to give them to the committee gratuitously," Messrs. Miller, Smith, Duff, Jackson & McGuigan.

At a meeting held on 30th March, 1833, at same address, Henry Lyons, Esq., of Old Park, in consultation with Wm. Cairns, Esq., of Whiteabbey, agreed to having a lease of the ground (2 roods 28 perches Irish Measure) intended for the site of the Meeting House, drawn up, granting it rent free for lives renewable for ever. Mr. Cairns and the Rev. Dr. Cooke were named as Trustees.

On 5th July, 1833, Rev. Dr. Cooke and Mr. Cairns visited Kilmore (Co. Down) and inspected the Meeting House being built there at a cost of £800 without gallery or £1,060 with gallery. Accommodation upwards of 700 persons. The plan, similar to that furnished by Mr. Smith for Whiteabbey, did not include but prepared for, a Vestry Room.

At 5 Donegall Square, Belfast, on 20th August, Messrs. Lyons and Cairns met Mr. Smith whose plan, altered in accordance with opinions expressed, had been approved, and considered estimates for the work. Mr. John Thompson, of Newry, whose tender was lowest of seven received, was declared contractor at £865 4s. 2d., with Mr. Smith as architect.

On 23rd September, 1833, Mr. Thompson, being satisfied with the arrangements made for his payment for work done, was bound under a penalty of £5 5s. 0d. per day to have the building finished and given up on the 1st of July, 1834.

At a meeting of the Building Committee held on 29th July, it was agreed that the proceeds of the collection (£74 2s. 10d.) at opening of the Meeting House on 10th August, be reserved for purposes not included in building already estimated for - such as additional work, levelling, fencing, etc. The following gentlemen were invited to collect at the opening ceremony - Sir Robt. Bateson, Bart.; Lieut.-Colonel Mun, 74th Reg.; Henry Lyons, Esq.; Francis Tumky(?), Esq.; Hugh Montgomery, Esq.; John Rowan, Esq.; John Cunningham, Jnr., Esq.; George Langtry, Esq.; Wm. Pirrie, Esq.; James Orr, Esq., and Robt. Grimshaw, Esq.

At the Committee meeting held on 16th October, 1834, the Rev. Wm. Campbell in the

chair, James Thomson was proposed by Dr. McMechan, seconded by Mr. Wm. Lethem, as a fit person to act as singing clerk at a salary of £7 (seven pounds) "and in addition £3 (three pounds) for his trouble in collecting the seat rents and keeping the accounts, which may afterwards be raised to £5 as soon as circumstances will admit."

James Taggart was appointed as sexton at a salary of £5 (five pounds) per annum. "It was understood that the weekly collections would be adequate to pay the above and also several other incidental expenses."

On 22nd November, 1834, the Rev. Wm. Campbell handed in the following proposals, viz.: "As it would neither be doing justice to myself nor successors to fix the salary at what the house can at present raise after deducting the interest of the debt, I make the following proposals and leave the Committee to decide during my absence.

1. If you agree to fix the salary at £70 per annum I shall give up £10 towards the payment of the interest until the debt be liquidated.
2. If you fix the salary at £75 I agree to give up £15, and
3. If you fix the salary at £80 per annum I agree to give up to the amount of £25 for the payment of interest until the debt incurred by the building of the Meeting House be paid off."

"The Committee, having considered the proposals, resolved that the salary be £80 (eighty pounds stg.) per annum on the condition that Mr. Campbell return the sum of £25 (twenty-five pounds) yearly until the debt due for the building of the house be liquidated."

"On this resolution being submitted to the Rev. Wm. Campbell he observed that in making the proposal of giving up part of his fixed salary he meant it for the payment of interest and not the liquidation of the debt itself. In this way he hoped that as the debt would be lessened by subscriptions and collections, the burden would also be gradually lessened or removed off his shoulders. But if the Committee were of opinion that he should continue to give up the £25 out of his salary until the debt be fully liquidated he would acquiesce in their resolution from a conviction that as the gentlemen of the Building Committee had hitherto exerted themselves they would still use their influence in raising new subscriptions."

Whiteabbey, 28th March, 1836: "Resolved that the Committee having undertaken the collection of the Stipend from the 1st of February last, instruct the Treasurer to pay the singing clerk the sum of two pounds at May next, to be continued quarterly, being an advance of £1 (one pound) per annum on his original salary, in consideration of his taking charge of the congregational Library."

February 7th, 1839: "Resolved that in future Mr. Campbell be requested to appropriate such fees as may be received from the registration of marriages and baptisms to the relief of the poor belonging to the congregation."

May 28th, 1839: Committee agreed that the ground should be surveyed for a site of School House and a plan for same procured.

July 3rd, 1839: "School House plan approved. Messrs. Andrew Boyd, Robert Hendron, S. G. Getty and Rev. Wm. Campbell appointed a sub-committee to contract with the different tradesmen for the erection of the School House and also superintend the work."

August 5th, 1840: Miss Agnes Morrison appointed mistress of female school.

October 14th, 1840: Rev. Wm. Campbell read a correspondence into which he had entered with the Commissioners of National Education from which it would appear that a probationary grant of £8 per annum had been secured for the male and female schools, commencing September, 1840.

December 2nd, 1840: "Mr. Thos. McIlroy appointed (majority one vote) to be Master of the male school."

July 15th, 1841: "Resolved that a reward be offered to any person or persons who may give information as to the breaking in of the Vestry Room."

Congregational Meeting, Whiteabbey, 3rd March, 1844. Mr. Hendron in chair. Resolved unanimously: "That at the meeting of the Belfast Presbytery to be held in Belfast on Tuesday next a hearing of the following probationers be prayed for, viz.: Messrs. Laurence Campbell, John Lyle, Davis and Speers."

That the stipend proffered be £50 (fifty pounds) annually. Messrs. Miller and John Johnston were appointed Commissioners to attend the Presbytery.

Sunday, May 5th, 1844: "Resolved unanimously that an invitation be presented through the Belfast Presbytery to the Rev. John Lyle of Newry to preach in this place for three successive Sabbaths on Congregational trial of his gifts with a view to a call to be our pastor."

Dr. McMechan and Mr. John Queery were appointed Commissioners to the Presbytery to meet on Tuesday, 7th inst.

Monday, 3rd June, at 7 o'clock: The Rev. Adam Montgomery attended as deputed by the Presbytery and having opened the meeting proceeded to enquire whether the congregation were unanimous in their wish for Mr. Lyle, in which case a poll would be unnecessary. There being no opposition, Mr. Montgomery declared Mr. Lyle duly elected.

30th October, 1845: Resolved to raise singing clerk's salary from £8 to £10 per annum and to give the Sexton's wife (Mrs. Taggart) a gratuity of 5s. per quarter for keeping the Meeting House clean.

Sunday, 16th August, 1846: At meeting of Committee called by Mr. Lyle, Mr. McIlroy (Master of Male School) expressed his wish that the School Fees should be raised to the following scale, viz.:

Reading and spelling . . . . .	2s. 0d. per qr.
Reading and spelling, with writing and arithmetic . . .	2s. 6d. per qr.
English Grammar with above . . . . .	3s. 0d. per qr.
Extra branches as Algebra, Geometry, etc. . . . .	5s 0d. per qr.

At the General Meeting of Congregation held on Wednesday, 27th March, 1850, in the Meeting House, Mr. Lyle in the chair, it was unanimously resolved "That should any member or members of Committee be nominated and approved for the Ruling Eldership of the Congregation, and accept of that office, that he or they be thereafter incapacitated from serving on the Committee."

6th May, 1852: "Resolved that a sub-committee be appointed to wait upon the monied gentlemen of the neighbourhood to solicit subscriptions in aid of the erection of a Manse. That the committee consist of the following persons viz.:- Messrs. Hunter and Stewart for Whiteabbey district, Dr. McMechan for Whiteabbey and Whitehouse and Mr. Walker for Whitehouse to Parkmount and onwards. Dr. McMechan to act as treasurer for Manse."

30th May, 1852. Meeting of Congregation. Moved by James Johnston, Esq., of Whitehouse, seconded by Dr. McMechan and passed unanimously "That the Committee of the Congregation do proceed forthwith in the erection of a Manse on the Congregational property, the cost of which is not to exceed the sum of three hundred and fifty pounds. Resolved that they (the Committee) be further empowered to borrow any sum of money which may be necessary for the erection of the building; that when completed the Minister is to reside therein, on condition that he pay them the interest of the debt thereon, that when the debt is paid off he is to continue to occupy the same as long as he remains the officiating Minister of the congregation, at a nominal rent of one shilling per annum."

Architect - Mr. R. Young (brother-in-law of Mr. Lyle).

Contractor - Mr. Thomas Byrne.

Dr. McMechan reported an interview he had with Edward Cooley, Esq., of Merville, with respect of the loan of £200 to assist in the erection of the Manse. "Resolved that the loan of £200 from E. Cooley, Esq., be accepted of on the terms offered by his letter to be hereafter inscribed. Also that the Committee agree to give Dr. McMechan and Mr. Robt. Walker a letter of indemnity (they having agreed to give a promissory note) on the terms of his letter as above referred to."

This cosy building served as a Manse until the Ministry of the Rev. Dr. Rogers. His Ministry saw the erection, on the Manse Road, of the more pretentious residence which was destroyed by fire on the 31st December, 1921.

Miss Cameron, of Sprayfield Terrace, Shore Road, Jordanstown, whose reminiscences are like echoes sounding down the corridors of time, remembers clearly the old manse while it was occupied by Dr. Rogers and subsequently by one Andy Kennedy, a commercial traveller, who, in addition to vending watches and clocks for John Graham, Jeweller of Carrickfergus, and providing mangles and other household equipment for the neighbourhood, also kept a pet deer which grazed in the church grounds and was greatly admired by the then rising generation.

In the year 1900 Mr. Hunt, a member of the congregation, who resided at Seaview Terrace, Jordanstown, purchased and demolished the building. Mr. Kennedy transferred his headquarters to Tyne Terrace, Jordanstown.

### 1933-1965

The members of Whiteabbey congregation being justly proud of their heritage felt impelled to mark their centenary year in a manner worthy of the occasion.

With this end in view a meeting, presided over by the Rev. W. B. McMurray, M.A., was held on the 15th May, 1933, in the Schoolroom.

At this meeting it was decided that two special services of thanksgiving be arranged. The first on Sunday, 12th November, 1933, to be conducted by the Right Rev. William Corkey, D.D., Moderator of the General Assembly, and the second on the 19th November, 1933, at which the Very Rev. R. K. Hanna, D.D., an ex-Moderator and former minister of the Congregation, should be the preacher.

These services were conducted as arranged and the special offerings amounted to £173.

It was the desire of the Congregation that a bronze tablet be erected in the vestibule of the church to commemorate the event and that the sum of £100 be donated to the Royal Victoria Hospital with the request that the names of the Rev. W. B. McMurray, M.A., and Mrs. McMurray be added to the roll of Life Governors.

To meet the anticipated outlay a bazaar was held on Friday and Saturday, the 1st and 2nd days of December, 1933.

On Friday the opening ceremony was performed by Lady Dixon, Mr. Robert Clyde, J.P., being in the chair.

Mrs. R. J. McMordie, Lady Mayoress of Belfast, declared the sale open on Saturday, Alderman James McKinney presided.

The venture was very successful and realised the satisfactory sum of £290 7s. 3d.,

which after the Memorial Tablet and Hospital donations had been provided for left a considerable sum which was ear-marked for the construction of a Ladies' Parlour.

## Day School

It had become increasingly evident that the existing school buildings could not provide accommodation for the number of pupils seeking admission. Consequently on the 12th June, 1933, a meeting of Committee was convened to consider whether it would be advisable to enlarge the buildings or approach the Ministry of Education with a view to having a new school erected.

A sub-committee composed of Rev. W. B. McMurray, M.A., Messrs. E. W. Browne, W. McKinney, F. H. MacLean, S. Phyllis. R. E. Wilson and J. H. Drennan (Convener) was appointed to consider the matter in all its aspects and to submit a report of its findings.

The sub-committee met on 3rd August, 1933, and arrived at the unanimous decision that the existing buildings should be retained for the use of the congregation and that the Ministry of Education be asked to provide adequate school accommodation for the district.

This decision was submitted to the General Committee on 4th September, 1933, who approved and instructed the Hon. Secretary to write the Belfast Regional Education Committee informing them that the school buildings, which are church property, had cubic space for 304 pupils while there was a daily attendance of 320. Complaints of



*Whiteabbey Primary School*

overcrowding had been made, the population of the village was increasing rapidly and many children already had been refused admission. The buildings were required by the congregation for meetings, and the enlargement of the premises had been considered and rejected as impracticable.

The Belfast Regional Education Committee, having considered the application, decided to refer the letter to the Belfast Rural representatives - Messrs. Parkes, Bell, Craig, Torrens, Dr. Reid and Rev. M. Harrison.

To expedite matters the congregation on 22nd June, 1934, agreed to transfer the schools to the Regional Committee, and Mr. M. B. Davison, LL.B., was instructed to complete the transfer subject to the consent of the Belfast Presbytery, which consent was granted on 8th October, 1934.

On 4th November, 1934, grounds of 'Glenavna' were selected as a site for the proposed new school.

The new school was opened at Easter 1939 by the Minister of Education, Dame Dehra Parker, M.P. Chairman, Sir Crawford McCullagh, Bart., D.L., Lord Mayor of Belfast.

Whiteabbey at this time suffered a grievous loss through the death on 5th July, 1939, after a short illness, of Mr. Robert Miskimmin our esteemed church officer. His appointment dated from 9th December, 1914, and by the unostentatious, quiet and conscientious discharge of his duties at all times he became so immersed in the work of the congregation that we were inclined to take him for granted.

It would be difficult to estimate the value of his services to our community.

He was a man of robust common sense who knew his business and was always prepared to stand up for his convictions and who grudged no labour in the faithful performance of his duties.

His son, Mr. William Miskimmin, was chosen to fill the vacancy and is the present holder of the office.

### **Knockagh Hall**

Mr. McMurray in his record refers to the progress made towards the establishment of a Presbyterian Church in Greenisland.

A further step to this end was taken on 6th March, 1936, when the following resolution, moved by Mr. E. W. Browne and seconded by Mr. Andrew Wilson, was passed at the Annual Business Meeting of Whiteabbey Congregation:- "We hereby hand over free of

charge the hall known as Knockagh Hall to the newly-established Greenisland Congregation, to be used by them for Congregational purposes or to be structurally altered or disposed of as may suit the requirements of the Congregation. The Congregation of Greenisland to be responsible for all charges in connection with the transfer of the hall and for all future liabilities connected therewith."

A certified copy of this resolution was forwarded to Mr. Hugh A. Moat, 'Woodvale', Greenisland, Hon. Secretary of Greenisland Presbyterian Church, who replied thanking Whiteabbey for the free gift.

## War

Subsequent church records reveal little of more than casual interest till the Autumn of 1939 when the hounds of war began howling and straining at the leash.

When the dreaded catastrophe overwhelmed us Whiteabbey Congregation and village responded eagerly to the challenge.

### 1914-1918

Burnside, Edmund E.	Major, Samuel.
Campbell, John	McDonald, James
Coulter, Samuel	McKeenan, John
Erskine, William	Sloan, Samuel
Harkin, Andrew	Smyth, William John
Harkin, William James	Stewart, Samuel
Haveron, Robert	Thomas, Phil Henry
Houston, Thomas	

### 1939-1945

Currie, Robert James	Nicholl, George J.
Frazer, R.	Nicholl, George, Jr.
Hazlett, Colin	Smyth, William James Wilson
Morrison, Robert	Stewart, Robert
McIlwaine, Andrew	Thom, David M.
Neely, Noel Montgomery	Vance, Hugh

"They are not tasting death, but taking rest, On the same holy couch where Jesus lay,  
Soon to awake, all glorified and blest, When day has broke, and shadows fled away."

**Rev. H. Bonar, D.D.**



In addition to the 128 members who volunteered and were accepted for the fighting forces many were employed in the manufacture of munitions of war. The church premises were made available to any organisation calculated to relieve suffering, provide comfort or in any way make the terrors of the conflict more bearable.

The church hall was open during seven evenings per week, and was availed of by evacuees, Home Guards, Special Constabulary, A.R.P. Officials and Military Authorities. There was also a first-aid centre, while a canteen was provided for the use of, and greatly appreciated by, the young men serving in H.M. Forces and quartered in our neighbourhood.

No games were allowed on Sundays in the canteen, but an epilogue was conducted each Sunday evening by one or other of the local Ministers or other qualified speaker.

Other historians have recorded the heroic deeds of those who excelled in the bitter struggle, but it is fitting that we should here remember our friends in the Congregation who laid down their lives in the fight for freedom in the two World Wars.

### **Lengthening Shadows**

The Rev. W. B. McMurray, M.A., retired from active Ministry on 7th October, 1946, after having discharged the duties of his sacred office for more than 32 years in Whiteabbey and neighbourhood. As senior Minister he continued to act as Chaplain to Whiteabbey Hospital and although residing in Belfast he was no stranger in our village where he had many friends.

His exceptional scholarship was admired by his brethren in the church who showed their appreciation when in 1950 the Presbyterian Theological Faculty conferred upon him the Degree of Doctor of Divinity.

His friends in Whiteabbey presented him with the appropriate hood.

At the October, 1947, communion Mr. McMurray dedicated a beautiful communion table and chair presented to the congregation by the McKinney family in memory of their father, who had been a Bible Class leader and a member of Session for many years.

Miss McKinney provided a hand embroidered cloth and a wine pourer for use at Communion Services.

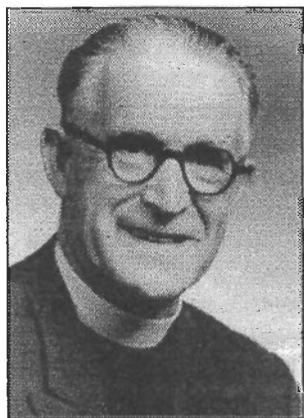
Dr. McMurray entered into rest on 23rd June, 1960, after a short illness and thus closed a notable ministry of 46 years in Whiteabbey.

The Church was crowded for the funeral service at which the Rev. W. F. S. Stewart of Whitehead delivered an address in appreciation of a kindly man who feared God and loved righteousness.

The remains were borne from the church by elders of the congregation and as the funeral procession moved along the village street on its way to the Carnmoney Cemetery it was watched by many whose hearts were heavy with sorrow at the loss of an old and trusted friend, who "spoke the word of God with boldness". - God buries His workmen but carries on His work.

### **Rev. Samuel James Wylie, B.A.**

The Rev. S. J. Wylie, B.A., from Glendermott Presbyterian Church, County Derry, was installed in Whiteabbey on Thursday, 27th March, 1947. The opening call to worship was given by the Rev. W. N. Maxwell, M.A., Moderator of Presbytery. The charge to the Minister was read by Rev. W. P. Hall, M.A. Others taking part were Rev. A. F. Moody, M.A., D.D., Clerk of Presbytery, Rev. J. McVicker, B.A., Rev. Prof. R. L. Marshall, M.A., LL.D., Rev. W. B. McMurray, M.A., and Rev. S. H. Nicholson.



*Rev. Samuel Wylie*

At this time great changes were taking place in the area surrounding Whiteabbey. Many new houses were being erected and hundreds of new families were settling in the district. During the year 1948, 100 families were added to the membership of the congregation.

The demand for seating accommodation now became so keen that the Committee decided to abolish the system of allocating seats in a particular pew and declared Whiteabbey a "Freewill Offering Church".

On Sunday, 29th May, 1949, an afternoon Sabbath School was inaugurated at Fernagh for the Abbot's Cross Area, under the Superintendentship of Mr. M. McN. Gray.

Increasing years are usually accompanied by increasing infirmities and our church property having survived to a ripe old age, began to show symptoms of decay which called for prompt attention. The most urgent was the 'woodworm' infestation and in 1950 the Committee instructed Messrs. J. P. Corry & Co., Ltd., Belfast, to undertake a three year scheme for the eradication of the pest.

Funds are required to fight even a losing battle and with the object of raising the necessary cash a Summer Fete was held on the Primary School premises, Manse Road, on Saturday,

24th June, 1950. The weather could have been more favourable, but the net total of £136 8s. 7d. was realised.

On the 24th September, 1950, that gracious Lady, The Countess Granville, wife of the Governor of Northern Ireland, accompanied by Lady Mary Levison-Gower worshipped with us at the morning service.

Mr. W. R. McBride, Clerk of Session, presented the members of Session and Committee to her Excellency on her arrival at the Church.

## **Altered Horizons**

The necessity of defining parish boundaries relative to the new Church at Abbot's Cross had been under consideration for some time and on 3rd March, 1952 a copy of the map, kindly provided by Mr. R. H. Rankin, having the agreed boundaries marked clearly in red ink was forwarded to Rev. J. W. Johnston, M.A., Convener of Church Extension Committee.

The following boundaries between Whiteabbey, Whitehouse and Abbot's Cross Congregations were fixed: "Macedon Point to the railway tunnel underneath the main road - Belfast to Carrickfergus - thence along the Railway to a point in line with the Sanatorium boundary proceeding along the Sanatorium boundary to a point on the Doagh Road, approximately three hundred yards south of Cloughfern Corners and turning right down Station Road to first entrance on left, being Prince's Park, proceeding straight along centre of Prince's Park to corner of Bleach Green property following the boundary of King's Park and Bleach Green to the end and thence in a straight line to the end of Monkstown Road."

## **Manse Road**

The Fee Farm Grant under which the Manse property was held contained a Covenant by which the Whiteabbey Flax Spinning Co. Ltd., undertook to keep the approach roads in good repair.

The affairs of the Company were now in the hands of a Liquidator and owing to neglect the Manse Road was in a deplorable condition and becoming impassable.

The unsatisfactory results of protracted and energetic efforts by Mr. Malcolm B. Davison, LL.B., Hon. Solicitor for the Congregation to have the terms of the Covenant implemented, led to the holding of an extraordinary General Meeting of the Congregation after the morning service on 8th June, 1952, at which the following resolution proposed by Mr. William Scott, J.P., seconded by Mr. W. R. McBride, was passed unanimously: "That the Education Board of the Belfast Presbytery as our Trustees be authorised to

institute proceedings to enforce the performance of the Covenant by the Lessor in the lease of our Manse to keep the two roadways leading thereto in good repair and condition at his own expense, this Congregation to be responsible for all legal costs in the proceedings authorised."

The proceedings commenced in November, 1952, but were held up by the illness of the Liquidator and the action was settled by consent on 19th April, 1953. Damages to be paid to Antrim County Council towards cost of having Manse Road made up and adopted by said County Council.

It is interesting to note that on 7th December, 1953, it was decided to change the time of Evening Worship from 6.30 p.m. to 7 p.m. for a trial period of three months commencing first Sunday in January, 1954. The experiment was a failure and the time of meeting restored to 6.30 p.m.

In February, 1954, a Recording Unit was acquired so that anyone prevented by illness or old age from attending a service could have it repeated at home on request. Operation of the unit was entrusted to Messrs. R. H. Rankin, D. V. Martin and Jack Wilson.

### **A Call to Service**

At the beginning of May, 1954, an announcement by the Property Committee asking for volunteers to use their skill and spare time in renovating the Church property resulted in a band of eager workers giving freely of their best throughout a long Summer during which a very fine platform was erected in the Church Hall, the Kitchen was re-modelled and refurnished, the Choir Room enlarged, electric lighting installed and several painting jobs carried out by voluntary labour.

The Church interior was painted and some external repairs were attended to by Contractors.

To affix the seal of success on a glorious Summer's achievements special services were held on Sunday, 10th October, 1954. The visiting Preacher in the morning was Rev. James Dunlop, M.A., of Oldpark. The Rev. J. Crozier, M.A., of Elmwood, conducted the evening service at which Mrs. David Wilson switched on the electric light.

The Bible Class presented an oak table and two chairs for use on the new platform in the Lecture Hall.

Special reference is made in the church records to outstanding assistance rendered by friends of the Church, some of whom were not members of the congregation. These include Messrs. J. Warke S. S. Logan, Robert Orr, R. G. Dillon, Harold Rankin, Robert Ardis, James Gault, Robert Little, Ernest Humphries, and Howell Bros., in addition to

members of the Bible Class, Boys' Brigade, the Property, Finance, Ladies' and General Committees.

### **"No Cow No Care"**

For some years past the Manse, by its size and cost of upkeep, had been a source of worry to both the occupier and the owners. It was decided on 2nd May, 1955, to sell the property. This proved more difficult than was anticipated and it was not until, 2nd September, 1957, that a sale was completed and the proceeds (£3,000) invested in 3.5 per cent War Loan.

It had become obvious by March, 1958, that the Church buildings would be inadequate to cope with any great increase in membership of the various organisations, consequently the erection of a New Church Hall became a focal point in all financial discussions and a Hall Committee, with Mr. Jack Wilson as chairman, was appointed to make the preliminary arrangements.

Thanks to Messrs. R. H. Rankin and D. V. Martin the year 1959 saw the installation of Hearing Aids in some of the pews and a loud speaker in the vestibule. The Reid family presented a Baptismal Font in memory of their parents Ebenezer Martin Reid and Mary Elizabeth Reid.

Several other acceptable gifts were presented to the congregation during the period covered by this review. These included a pair of massive Brass Vases for flowers, by Mrs. Grieve in memory of her husband John Donaldson Grieve, 4th February, 1945. A pair of ornate Silver Dishes was added to the Communion Plate by Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Crawford in 1951. A Lectern and Pulpit Fall by the members of the W.M.A. in January, 1962, and a pair of beautiful Communion Cup Trays by an anonymous donor in 1965. A similar gift of Communion Cup Trays was donated by Miss Grace E. Drennan, in the same year.

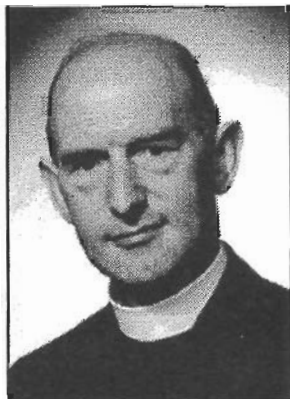
### **Winds of Change**

The year 1959 brought the resignation of Rev. S. J. Wylie, who in November accepted a call to Scarborough Church, Calgary, Alberta, after a Ministry of over 12 years in Whiteabbey. He had proved himself to be a man of untiring energy, a favourite with the young, and endowed with a sympathetic understanding of the special needs of the ailing and infirm. In addition to his very evident qualities of heart and mind he possessed to a remarkable degree a forceful and convincing brand of oratory which endeared him to his hearers and resulted in a flood of new families seeking connection with our church. During his Ministry in Whiteabbey he introduced several innovations, one of which, the Children's Church under the guidance of Mrs. Colbert, has proved outstandingly successful.

In 1953 he exchanged pulpits with the Rev. Frank S. Morley Ph.D., (Edin.), B.D., of Grace Church, Calgary, Alberta, Canada and during subsequent holiday seasons similar exchanges were made with Canadian clergymen.

The call of the wild seemed to become louder each successive year and it was with little surprise, although with much real regret, that we learned of his decision to exchange the gentle zephyrs of the Emerald Isle for the biting blasts of the Canadian Rockies,

Rev. James Shepherd Woods, B.A., B.D., was called from Ebrington Presbyterian Church, Londonderry, and was installed in Whiteabbey as successor to Rev. S. J. Wylie on the 19th May, 1960. The Moderator of Presbytery (Rev. W. J. Thompson, B.A.) conducted the service. The Rev. C. G. Thompson, B.A., B.D., read the scripture and preached the sermon. The Rev. W. P. Hall, M.A., D.D., carried out his duties as clerk. Rev. W. B. McMurray, M.A., D.D., Rev. W. A. Montgomery, M.A., and Rev. James Nutt, B.A., also took part in the ceremony.



*Rev. James Woods*

The Congregation has continued to thrive under the guidance of Mr. Woods. His pulpit ministrations evince careful and enlightened preparation. His addresses to the children are very acceptable and designed to encourage the habit of regular attendance at the Sanctuary. His solicitude and attention in times of sickness and sorrow are beyond reproach and are greatly appreciated. The morning services are very well attended, his hearers feeling that they are being fed on the choicest of the wheat. While the spiritual needs of the congregation are being so well supplied the temporalities are not being neglected.

For some years a process of voluntary liquidation could be observed by the discerning eye.

First the Day School was placed in the lap of the Ministry of Education, then Knockagh Hall was given away. Next the Manse was disposed of and the Manse Road headache relieved, but now the wind is blowing in a different direction and in 1960 we find the congregation in the Real Estate Market. A plot of ground beside the church has been secured on lease for a Car Park, and a delightful site overlooking Belfast Lough and the Co. Down hills purchased and a well proportioned, comfortable Manse in keeping with present day requirements, erected thereon. The Manse property is freehold and cost £5,817 15s. 7d.

Meanwhile the need for a new church hall had been emphasised so energetically and the work had progressed so well that on 30th January, 1965 the Moderator of the General

Assembly, Right Rev. James Dunlop, M.A., D.D., performed the foundation stone laying ceremony on the site in the church grounds where the first manse formerly stood.

While the erection of the new hall proceeds apace we turn aside to record the ordination of Mr. John Terence McCullough, B.A., and his induction as assistant minister of Whiteabbey Presbyterian Church on Wednesday, 12th May, 1965, at 7.30 p.m.

The previous occasion on which a similar service was held in Whiteabbey occurred on 28th February, 1898, when Mr. Robert K. Hanna, B.A., a licentiate of Ballymena Presbytery was ordained to the pastoral oversight of the congregation.

Mr. McCullough's ordination was conducted by a Commission of the North Belfast Presbytery and was largely attended, many friends of Mr. McCullough and visitors having augmented the congregation to witness the impressive and dignified ceremony.

To add to the pleasures of this merry month a Commission of the same Presbytery met on Sunday evening, 30th May, 1965, and licensed Mr. John Carson Lee as a Probationer for the Ministry. Mr. Lee was a product of Whiteabbey where he rendered faithful service as a teacher, a Bible Class leader and a member of the Kirk Session.



*The Manse overlooking Belfast Lough*

On Sunday, 26th September, 1965, a similar Commission met in the church at 6.30 p.m. for the Ordination and Installation of Elders. This Commission, consisting of the Rev. A. S. Cromie, M.A., LL.B. (Moderator of Presbytery), Rev. J. S. Woods, B.A., B.D. (Whiteabbey), Rev. Robert Allen, B.A. (Acting Clerk), and Rev. John L. Wynne (Ballysillan), in accordance with the laws of the Presbyterian Church ordained and installed Messrs. Hugh Beattie, William Bill, Hugh Crockard, Derrick Johnston, John Gibson Kennedy, James McClelland, John Millar, Robert Hugh Rankin and James Ross to be ruling elders in Whiteabbey.

Time has kept marching on and the Hall Building Committee has managed to keep in step, with the result that a beautiful, substantially built, well equipped and comfortably furnished suite of Halls now stands in the church grounds, a monument to the perseverance and hard work of the few entrusted with the planning and oversight of the undertaking.

The following, under the chairmanship of Mr. Jack Wilson, acted on the building Committee: Mr. and Mrs. T. Agnew, Mr. N. Burns, Mr. H. Beattie (Hon. Treasurer), Mr. and Mrs. J. Colbert, Mr. J. Connell, Mrs. M. Buchanan, Mr. D. Johnston, Mr. J. G. Kennedy, Mr. J. D. Martin, Mr. A. E. Reid and Mr. J. Welch (Hon. Secretary). Mr. E. A. Reid freely gave his services as Supervisor of the work, while Mr. Robert Ardis accepted responsibility for the electrical fittings and Mr. Ernest Humphries the plumbing installations.

Those whose lot it had been to bear the burden and the heat of the day must have glowed with pleasure and the satisfaction of a good job well done when on Saturday, 30th October, 1965, the Halls were declared open by Mr. James H. Drennan, a senior elder, and dedicated by the Rt. Rev. S. J. Park, M.A., D.D., Moderator of the General Assembly. Others taking part in the service included the Minister, Rev. J. S. Woods, B.A., B.D., the Moderator of the Synod of Belfast, Rev. W. Chestnut, M.A., D.D., the Moderator of the Presbytery of North Belfast, Rev. A. S. Cromie, M.A., LL.B., the Rev. J. Nutt, B.A., and the Rev. W. P. Hall, M.A., D.D.

Mr. Jack Wilson, Chairman of the Building Committee, in a comprehensive statement referred gratefully to the assistance and advice rendered to the committee by the building contractors, represented by Mr. E. J. Patterson of Messrs. Patterson and Crawford Ltd., by the architect Mr. G. McKnight, A.R.I.B.A., and the quantity surveyor Mr. Robert J. Love, F.R.I.C.S.

Those taking part in the ceremony were thanked by Mr. A. McDonald, Clerk of Session and Mr. E. A. Reid, member of Committee.

The members of the Building Committee were heartily congratulated on the outcome of their labours which resulted in the congregation of Whiteabbey becoming possessors



of a suite of thoroughly up to date buildings of which any congregation might justly be proud.

Approximate cost of New Halls - £33,000.

In recognition and appreciation of the services rendered by Mr. Jack Wilson, chairman of the Building Committee, who not only whole heartedly placed his time and experience at the disposal of the congregation but also contributed much manual labour free of charge, it was decided that the Minor Hall should be known as 'The Wilson Hall'.

Thanksgiving services to mark the opening of the new halls were held on Sunday, 31st October, when Rev. K. D. Harvey, B.A. (McCracken Memorial, Belfast), preached in the morning and Rev. W. J. McKinstry Wallace, B.A. (1st Bangor), in the evening and on Sunday, 7th November, at which the Rev. J. H. Withers, B.A., B.D. (Fisherwick, Belfast), was the preacher.

From Monday, 1st November, to Friday, 5th November, services were conducted each evening in the New Hall. Theme: "The Christian Challenge in 1965." Addresses were delivered by the Rev. Glyn Owen, B.A., B.D. (Berry Street, Belfast), Rev. David Burke, B.A. (Hamilton Road, Bangor), Rev. David Armstrong, B.A., H.Dip., Ed. (C.S.S.M. and Scripture Union), the Very Rev. James Dunlop, M.A., D.D. (Oldpark, Belfast), and Rev. Victor Lynas, B.A., B.D. (Gardenmore, Larne).

The New Halls, in addition to providing more comfortable accommodation for the Sunday Schools and Children's Church, should be a boon to all the Youth Organisations.



*Mr. Jack Wilson*



*Mr. James Drennan*

The Boy's Brigade (under the captaincy of Mr. John McD. Beattie), the Life Boy Team (Mr. R. B. Irvine, Leader in Charge), the Brownie Pack (Miss Jean Anderson, Brown Owl), and the Girl Guide Company (Miss Eileen Saxton, Captain), will find the larger floor-space very suitable for displays, while the Badminton Clubs (Miss Pamela E. McKenzie, Secretary), and the Bowling enthusiasts should be able to enjoy their pastimes in comfort.

Few churches are in a position to place such a fine stage at the disposal of those members who wish to develop in genial surroundings, their talent for Dramatic Art.

'Whiteabbey' administers its affairs and discharges its functions through office-bearers chosen by the Congregation from its active members. The Session co-operates with the Minister in the spiritual oversight of the Congregation.

The temporal and financial interests of the congregation are well cared for by a committee who devote much time and ability to the wise guidance of the business affairs of the church. The following held office in 1965: Mr. T. Agnew, Mr. John Connell, Mr. N. Cummings, Mr. C. J. B. Duff, Mr. H. Green, Mr. R. B. Irvine, Mr. S. R. Kernohan, Mr. D. Martin, Mr. J. D. Martin, Mr. E. A. Reid, Mr. S. J. Reilly, and members of Session who are ex-officio. Secretary, Mr. J. Welch; Treasurer, Mr. J. Ross, F.C.A.

There is also a Ladies' Committee which is called upon when funds are to be raised or a social function to be catered for and in all emergencies with which the general committee is unable to cope without assistance. Needless to say the required help is always forthcoming.

Those at present acting on this committee are: Mrs. T. Agnew, Mrs. I. Anderson, Mrs. W. J. Bamford, Mrs. H. Beattie, Mrs. J. McD. Beattie, Mrs. W. Beattie, Mrs. A. Bodles, Mrs. M. Buchanan, Mrs. N. Burns, Mrs. J. Colbert, Mrs. H. Crockard, Mrs. C. J. B. Duff, Mrs. J. D. Martin, Mrs. J. McClelland, Mrs. A. McDonald, Mrs. T. Neill, Mrs. F. R. O'Neill, Miss M. Rowan, Mrs. J. Welch, Mrs. O. Wilson.

These committees are ungrudging in their labours and it would be difficult to exaggerate the value of their services to the congregation.

The Sunday Schools are capably managed by the Superintendents and a band of devoted teachers who spare no effort to convey the Gospel Message in an attractive and intelligent manner to the children under their care.

It would be impossible to rank too highly the services rendered to the Congregation by those who quietly and conscientiously spend several hours each week in counting and recording the Free Will Offering Contributions and whose activities are seldom exposed to the glare of the limelight unless an oversight or a mistake has been discovered.

The talented Choir (Organist, Mr. J. Niblock, L.T.C.L.) whose loyal devotion to the Church is most praiseworthy, not only leads the worshippers with efficiency and dignity in the praise services, but also by special efforts from time to time contributes considerable sums towards the maintenance of the Sacred Edifice.

Our old church is still strong and vigorous and we go forward through our second century with renewed hope and confidence in God, feeling that we now occupy a vantage-ground for doing His work. Much has already been accomplished but we must not fold our hands in self-satisfaction as if we had done great things and nothing more were required. Rather let us raise our Ebenezer saying "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" and greatly encouraged and strengthened - face the challenges of the future ascribing unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, all honour and glory, dominion and power for ever and ever.



## **1966 - Forward Again**

The year 1966 marked a period of consolidation and strengthening of church activities under the supportive influence of the Rev. J. & Mrs. Woods. The outstanding advantage of the fine new hall enabled the various organisations, particularly the youth movements to flourish. The financial task was to eradicate the outstanding balance on the hall fund of £25,879.

On the closing day of the year Mr. W. Miskimmon, church officer, died suddenly, after twenty-seven years of painstaking service. His loss was keenly felt by the whole congregation.

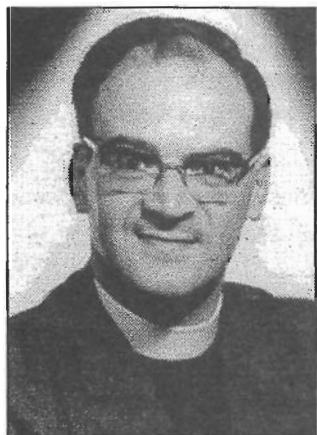
Whiteabbey congregation, again supported the Church Extension Committee by supplying two members of the Kirk Session to serve on the Interim Session of the newly formed Monkstown Church. They were Messrs. R. H. Rankin and A. Bodles.

Many changes took place during 1967. Rev. J. S. Woods felt called to relinquish the onerous duties of Whiteabbey for the lighter charge of Portaferry, taking up duties there on 1st January, 1968. Evidence of the ministerial activity in Whiteabbey may be seen by the fact that there were 25 baptisms, 19 marriages and 30 deaths during 1967. In all the Rev. Woods service in Whiteabbey, his devotion to duty was unsurpassable and his term of duty laid down a solid base in both spiritual and temporal matters.

Mr. J. H. Drennan, compiler of the 1933-1965 portion of this history and a tower of strength in congregational work, Mrs. F. O'Neill, President of the W.M.A. for a considerable period and Mrs. J. Colbert, Leader of the Senior Bible Class for many years, all passed to Higher Service during this year.

## **Strength From Scotland**

Presbyterian ministerial history once again repeated itself as it had often done before in that Whiteabbey Presbyterian Church was pleased to call the Rev. T. H. Smail from Thornlie in Scotland to be installed on 6th September 1968. Mr. Smail brought a fresh mind and quick wit to his work among the congregation.



*Rev. T. H. Smail*

A notable appointment during 1969 was that of Mr. Gerry Gilpin as Leader of the Young Peoples Fellowship, from which followed much fruitful work among the youth of the congregation.

Another congregational stalwart passed to Higher Service during this year, Mr. James Colbert died on 9th May, 1969.

On 7th May, 1970, our church choir had the distinction of gaining first place in the Hymn Singing Class at Carrickfergus Musical Festival and bringing back the cup as a token of their dedication to congregational praise under the excellent leadership of Mr. Denis J. McDowell.

The strength of youth work was evident in that in 1971, as well as a mini-mission in our own congregation, several of our young people witnessed to the power of Christ to change lives, in places as far apart as the south of England, Denmark and Afghanistan. The Annual Kirk Session Conference held that year at Portrush was led by Rev. David Bailie of West Church, Bangor.

The 16th November of that year was to witness a Presbytery Visitation from which the 'Findings' portrayed a healthy congregation.

Fellowship in the recreational field continued successfully, the Badminton Club winning the John Pepper Knock-out Cup, much credit being due to the organisational prowess of Mr. David Macartney. The Bowling Club, aided by such stalwarts as Mr. Samuel Reilly and Mr. Wilson Stewart again had a very successful year and gave generously to the Hall Building Fund and Church maintenance.

## **Fresh Fields**

It was with sorrow and a great sense of loss that the Kirk Session learned from the Rev. Smail during 1972 of his decision to leave Whiteabbey, after four years of sterling work to take up an appointment with the Fountain Trust in London. The Reverend S. E. M. Brown of Abbey Church, Monkstown was appointed Convener in charge of the vacancy. This year also saw the demise of the afternoon Sunday School, due to diminishing numbers. Mr. W. R. Barron, senior member of the Kirk Session and a lifetime member of the congregation left for New Zealand and was presented with a gold watch, just before he departed from Northern Ireland.

A less welcome visitor to the church building namely, dry rot, became visible at that time. This problem together with cracked coping on the front of the church was tackled successfully with energy and efficiency by the Congregational Committee.

## **New Pastor**

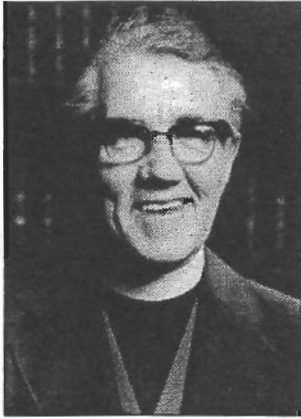
The 10th May 1973 saw the installation of Rev. Ivor Lewis, B.A., to the charge of Whiteabbey Presbyterian Church. During this year the interior of the church underwent a marked physical rearrangement. Due to a pressing need to repair the 50 year old organ more room was required to accommodate the 1,400 pipes. The side gallery on the Jordantown side was chosen as a replacement site and the organ case which was extensively damaged by woodworm was replaced by a new louvred screen. This meant the opening up of the whole front area of the church and the restoration of the chancel. The electric lighting was brought up to modern standards, the walls repainted and the ceiling re-varnished.

Also Mr. James Ross resigned as Hon. Treasurer after 20 years of excellent service and was replaced by Mr. James Gamble.

## **Sure and Stedfast**

Mr. R. A. McFetridge completed 29 years as Captain of the Whiteabbey B.B. Company in 1977. These special events in that year portrayed his high level of dedication and organisational ability, a reunion for past members, a thanksgiving service by Rev. J. S. Woods, B.A., B.D., and the 40th Inspection and Display. Parents of the many boys who have passed through the company have cause to be very grateful for the sterling moral leadership of Mr. McFetridge.

The strong spiritual base of the congregation during this period was reflected in the generosity of their financial support to the material needs of the church fabric. Total income doubled between 1974 and 1977 while missionary and charitable contributions were more than doubled.



*Rev. Ivor Lewis*

## **Time Bears**

During 1978 Rev. Ivor Lewis took seriously ill and eventually his death on 28th August terminated a very fruitful and blessed ministry in Whiteabbey. Mr. Lewis did not spare himself in his service to the congregation, his pulpit ministry being outstanding while his visitation of the sick and elderly brought help and comfort to many as did his loving care of the bereaved. Mr. Lewis' ministrations were not confined to his own parish and many an alcoholic or drug addict benefited from his helpful guidance.

That year also saw the passing of Mr. Malcolm B. Davison LLB., a highly respected member of the community and an elder of the Kirk. Mr. Davison was honorary solicitor of the church for many years and his advice on legal matters was much appreciated by his colleagues in the Kirk Session.

Another sad loss occurred in the passing at an early age of Mr. John McDonald Beattie who passed into the presence of his Master on 10th January, 1979. He was a most gifted man whose abilities were given in full measure to the church of Christ. He served as an elder for more than twenty-three years, was one time captain of the B.B. Company and was a devoted superintendent of the morning Sabbath school. Also he was a member of the church choir, where as bass soloist he frequently brought pleasure and blessing to all who heard him.

For every remembrance of these outstanding servants of God we give thanks.

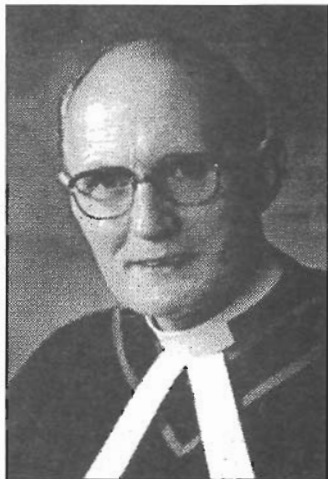
The Rev. J. A. Fullerton of Carnmoney undertook the duties of interim moderator during the vacancy. Despite a heavy workload in his own parish he gave fully of his time and energy to Whiteabbey. Fellowship through recreation was also very evident. In addition to very successful Thursday evening sessions the Indoor Bowling Club with the aid of a generous sponsor ran their ninth annual Husband and Wife tournament with a record of 300 pairs. The proceeds from this fine organisational efforts by the stalwarts of the Bowling Club were divided between the Church Fabric Fund and the Christian Aid African Refugee Fund

## **New Leadership**

The diligence of the Hearing Committee was rewarded when their unanimous choice of a call to a minister was accepted by Rev. J. S. Dallas, M.A., B.D., Dip.Ed. who was duly installed on 28th June 1979. Just previously on 10th June, 1979 another important

occasion preceded this, as Mr. Howard E. Lewis was licensed as a probationer for the ministry by a commission of the North Belfast Presbytery.

In September, 1979 Mr. Alfred McDonald resigned as Clerk of Session on leaving the district to live in Portstewart. His outstanding qualities of kindness, tolerance, wisdom and diplomacy over a period of 21 years were universally appreciated. He was also Superintendent of the Morning Sunday School for many years and had organised after church meetings on Sunday evenings and also a number of very successful weekend conferences at Castle Erin, Portrush. Mr. J. Welch, after 20 years of highly efficient and dedicated service as Hon. Secretary duly replaced Mr. A. McDonald as Clerk of Session, Mr. David McCartney taking over the duties of Hon. Secretary.



*Rev. J. S. Dallas*

During 1980 further evidence of God's grace was reflected in the numbers, 32 in all, of new communicant members mainly young people coming forward and professing their faith and becoming full members of the Church. Many of the youth were also busy that year attending preparation classes and then going out to canvas for the Youth Reach coffee bar and week of mission.

Mrs. McMurray, widow of a former Senior Minister, Dr. W. B. McMurray, passed away. She had, during her husband's active ministry taken part in the Girls Auxiliary, Girl Guides and Women's Missionary Association and although in her ninetieth year she had still maintained an interest in the work and witness of the congregation.

## **150th Anniversary**

Looking at Whiteabbey Presbyterian Church in 1983, one hundred and fifty years after its foundation, it is evident immediately that the flame of faith, lit so many years ago, has shone faithfully and widely ever since. The month of September saw the welcoming to the pulpit of past ministers and assistants. This was followed by a 'Festival of Faith' conducted by Mr. Michael Perrott which saw eighteen of our members coming to the point of publicly expressing their faith in Jesus Christ. Important major renovations and extensions were carried out, resulting in a new suite of rooms at the rear of the church giving excellent modern accommodation, Ministers Room, Choir Room and the Johnston Room. These additions are commemorated by the following tablet placed therein. "This extension built during the year of the 150th anniversary of the congregation was opened by Mrs. Eva McNeill and dedicated to the Glory of God by the Right

Reverend T. J. Simpson, M.A., LL.B., D.D., Moderator of the General Assembly. 15th October, 1983 Minister Rev. J. S. Dallas, M.A., B.D.”

Mr. Robert McFetridge already doing much good work undertook the duties of pastoral assistant.

A record must also be established of the passing of Senior Elder, Mr. W. Rogers Johnstone. His death broke a link with the past as he had such a clear memory and a great interest in people and was a mine of information on the history of the congregation and district. He loved Whiteabbey Church and took a great interest and pride in its work and well being.

### **Generous Benefactor**

During 1985 the general financial position of the church was eased by the receipt of £16,280 from the estate of the late Miss Violet King, an outstanding lady, who during her lifetime gave such dedicated service to society in the field of nursing and ultimately in her capacity as Matron of Whiteabbey Hospital.

Also during that year Mr. James Gamble tendered his resignation as Honorary Treasurer after twelve years of much appreciated efficient financial oversight. Mr. Michael Pogue undertook to act as Mr. Gamble's successor.

Evidence of a caring and witnessing congregation was truly evident in 1986 when in the autumn of that year a six week lay training course of visiting, counselling and witnessing was organised and most ably led by the Rev. W. A. H. Graham, Director of the Presbyterian Christian Training Centre. The attendance of over forty people each week encompassed a relatively large proportion of young people.

Also in that year Mr. W. Beattie and Mrs. P. Foster presented a beautiful music stand in memory of their mother, the late Margaret (Cissie) Beattie who was a lifetime member of the Church Choir.

### **Changing Scenes**

On 12th December, 1986 the congregation lost a most exemplary elder, Mr. Bill Moore, who attended Public Worship twice every Sunday and took a keen interest in all the congregational activities. He was ordained in 1966 and after joining Whiteabbey was installed in 1980.

The afternoon Sunday School at Fernagh has stood out like a beacon light for the Christian teaching of the young. This great work has largely been made possible by the wonderful efforts of Mr. W. J. Bamford who carried on for over 35 years, week by week, first as a



teacher and then as superintendent. As Mr. Bamford now tendered his resignation Mr. Richard McChesney was appointed as his successor.

One outstanding effort to improve the financial status of the Fabric Fund was made in 1987 by Mr. Stewart McCullough who organised an auction which raised £3,750 which sum together with donations from organisations and members succeeded in reducing the adverse balance of the Fabric Fund from £32,000 to £12,850 in that year.

In addition, not neglecting their responsibilities to others, the congregation generously exceeded their target to the United Appeal, the total raised being £6,248. The World Development Appeal was also magnificently responded to, donations amounted to £3,468.

Two other posts saw changes after many years of devoted service, Mr. Victor Harper resigned as Covenant Secretary after eighteen years and Mr. Jack Wilson resigned after magnificent service for thirty-eight years as Convener of the count teams.

### **Faithful Servants**

January, 1988 saw the passing of Mr. Maurice Bailie, who had given outstanding service to the congregation. Elected to Committee in 1967 and F.W.O. Secretary in 1969 for over fifteen years he copied out by hand the list of subscribers for the annual report and also did a most appreciated amount of work for the Indoor Bowling Club, the B.B. and many others.

Also the horror and trauma of the violence which had affected our Province for the past twenty years was brought home to the congregation in the untimely death of Mr. Wilson Smyth as the result of a terrorist bomb. Wilson served on the Committee for several years and his practical help and expertise were greatly appreciated.

In September of that year an important United Witness Week was conducted by Mr. Michael Perrott. The congregations of St. Patrick's, Jordanstown and Whiteabbey Methodist joined with the Whiteabbey congregation under the theme "Christ in today's World". One tangible proof of the success of these meetings was the establishment of a Sunday morning Hour of Prayer (8.00-9.00 am).

At the Harvest Thanksgiving Service, the Rt. Rev. D. Godfrey Brown, the Moderator, particularly congratulated the choirmaster Mr. McKay and the choir on the high standard of music at the service.

It was with sadness that it became known that Mr. and Mrs. Thompson McNeill had decided to retire and go to live amongst the beauty of the North Antrim Coast. No husband and wife team could have participated more fully and contributed more ably to

the life of Whiteabbey congregation than Mr. and Mrs. McNeill over their twenty three years of faithful service.

### **Wonderful Generosity**

During 1988 an unexpected and most generous legacy, out of the estate of the late Miss Ruth Barrie was left to Whiteabbey Church.

Much to the surprise and appreciation of everyone the amount of this wonderful gift amounted to approximately £250,000.

The Church Committee lost a very active member during 1989 when Mr. Victor Harper passed away. For eighteen of his twenty years service on the Committee he had been Covenant Treasurer and was a regular attender at Committee and Finance Sub-Committee meetings and together with his wife Peggy was part of that loyal band of men and women from whom the Count Teams on Sunday evenings are drawn.

At the end of June of that year Mr. Stephen Moore relinquished the superintendency of the Sunday School in view of his studies for the ministry. He had filled this post with enthusiasm and ability and was replaced by Mrs. Vivienne Orr to lead the highly motivated staff in this very important work.

### **Fernagh Sunday School**

Fernagh Sunday School came under the authority of the Session of Whiteabbey Presbyterian Church in 1953 although it had been established before that as a Community S.S. in the Fernagh Community Centre by a group of interested people from the Methodist, Church of Ireland and Presbyterian backgrounds.

Until the day it closed in 1989 it continued to serve the whole community, regardless of denomination, with the aim of teaching boys and girls about Jesus Christ and also reaching out to their parents in love.

Mr. John Simms was appointed as the first superintendent in 1953 by Whiteabbey Church and was succeeded the following year, 1954, by Mr. Irvine Anderson, who served faithfully until 1970. During his time of leadership two departments were formed and Mr. Jack Wilson became the first leader of the Primary Department. Mr. William Bamford succeeded Mr. Anderson as superintendent and served in this capacity until 1987 when he was followed by Mr. Richard McChesney who led the Sunday School until it had to be closed due to the loss of the Community Centre in 1989.

Over the years many teachers and hundreds of children passed through the S.S. and one of the best features of the work was the bond of fellowship which developed, which

drew past pupils back as teachers, and also as parents of a new generation of pupils. Many of the pupils went on to serve the Lord in various churches in this country and as far away as New Zealand. One example is Mrs. Vivienne Orr, who started attending Fernagh S.S. as a tiny member of the primary department, grew up through the Junior and Senior Classes and the Bible Class, became a teacher and then the leader of the Primary Department and is presently the Superintendent of the S.S. in Whiteabbey Presbyterian Church.

Tribute must be paid to a much loved superintendent, Mr. William Bamford who served in that capacity from 1970 to 1987, very ably supported by his good wife, Jean. Also to another cornerstone of the Sunday School, Miss Margaret Neill, who gave such wonderfully dedicated service, both in teaching and in musical direction from 1954 to 1986.

Music and drama were very important in the S.S. both as a means of worship and as methods of teaching. The Harvest Services, Christmas Services (with Nativity plays) and Praise Services were a way of reaching out into the Community and involving parents who perhaps had no church connection. They were also attended and much enjoyed by many other good friends from the estate and from the church. One of the most notable of these was the 25th anniversary service held on 5th March, 1978 when the Sunday School celebrated the faithfulness of God and of his son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, with the theme, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever." That was the message proclaimed in the Fernagh district by the Sunday School for nearly forty years.

### **Additional Help**

The pastoral witness and service in the congregation was strengthened during 1990 when on 20th June the student Assistant Minister of Whiteabbey, Rev. Robin Greer, was licensed to the Christian Ministry in his home congregation of First Ahoghill. This was followed in October, by the addition of a Deaconess, Miss Jean Gwyn, who in addition to a wide experience of Christian work brought a friendly and outgoing personality which made her a most welcome visitor in the homes of congregational members.

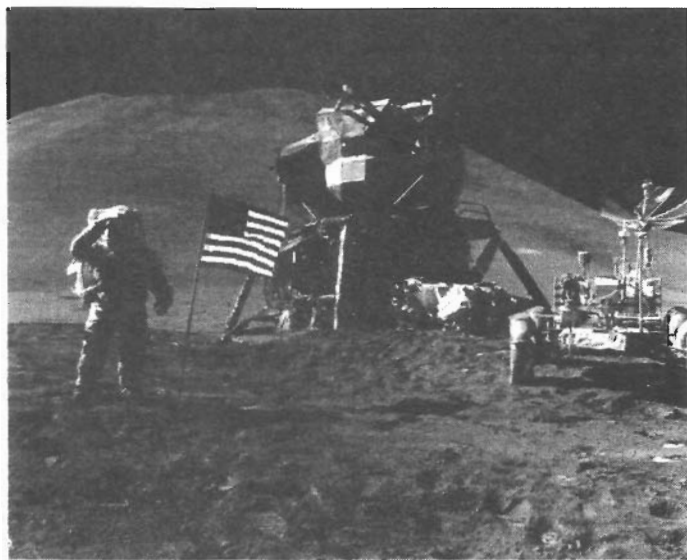
But despite this increase in pastoral strength the congregation lost a stalwart and most caring Christian gentleman in the passing of Mr. Frank Robert O'Neill, Senior Elder. Frank joined Whiteabbey in 1963, coming from Bangor and was soon co-opted to the Kirk Session. He was by profession a teacher and for many years led the Senior Bible Class. He was a keen supporter of the Overseas Mission of the Church and was also active in caring for and organising the elderly and infirm.

During that year also Mr. Derek Martin accepted the post of full time Church Officer.

His care and concern for the centre of Presbyterian worship in Whiteabbey is evident for all to see in his dedicated service in the upkeep and preservation of the varied facilities.

Congratulations were extended to Mr. Stephen Moore on his appointment as Student Assistant in Rosemary Congregation and also for gaining the award of Top Student in his year in the Union Theological College.

On 10th to 13th September an event took place which was of special significance to the Presbyterian Church as a whole. This was the Coleraine Special Assembly held to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Union of Synods in 1840. This Assembly brought together over 850 representatives from all over Ireland for worship and fellowship. The most important objective was to give our church the opportunity for reflection regarding our Christian witness in the nineties. The outcome was a document called the 'Coleraine Declaration' in which three areas, ministry, life and worship within the church were examined and sent down for study and consideration throughout the Church. The following quote from the Assembly Report is worthy of note: "God make us mindful of Christ's living presence in our midst, leading us where He wants us to go, no longer conformed to the world, its mind set and lifestyle, but transformed by the Spirit's renewing power."



TO WHITE ABBEY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

JESUS WALKING ON THE EARTH IS MORE IMPORTANT  
THAN MAN WALKING ON THE MOON  
9 DEC 1990

Jim Irwin Apollo 15  
HIGH FLIGHT FOUNDATION

Col. Jim Irwin, Moon Astronaut, preached at Morning Service on 9th December, 1990

## **Activity**

1991 began with the Ordination of Mr. Robin Greer and his installation as Assistant Minister on 24th January. Then on 6th February the Rev. David Stanfield was installed as Presbyterian Chaplain to the University at Jordanstown. On 13th June Mr. Stephen Moore was licensed as a Probationer for the Presbyterian Ministry and on 19th September Miss Jean Gwyn was commissioned and inducted as Deaconess in Whiteabbey congregation.

Noteworthy was the fact that during this year twenty-five new communicants came forward, including eleven young people on profession of their faith.

It was with great regret that at the beginning of 1992 Mr. Roy McKay resigned from his position of organist and choirmaster after over twenty years dedicated service. Throughout these years his much appreciated sensitive playing enriched each service in which he took part.

Another, perhaps unseen, but very important financial task has continued, over the years, to be willingly carried out by Mr. Stewart McCullough. His administration of the Covenant scheme has effectively contributed to the financial support of Whiteabbey Presbyterian Church.

## **Service**

With effect from 31st March, 1991 Mr. Robert McFetridge resigned as Pastoral Assistant after eight years of most conscientious visiting, especially of the elderly, the sick and those in hospital. The deep gratitude of the congregation is due to Mr. McFetridge for this and his many other areas of service in Whiteabbey Presbyterian Church.

No church function can be completed satisfactorily without the generous support of the ladies of the congregation in catering for the occasion. In this regard Whiteabbey is particularly fortunate in having the whole hearted support of a willing band of helpers. In particular the excellent long term efforts of Mrs. Esther McClelland and also Mrs. Marjorie Torrens in their organising responsibilities in this respect are much appreciated.

## **From Hand to Hand**

In mid-1992 Mr. David McCartney, Honorary Secretary, retired after almost 12 years of excellent service during a time of much renovation to which he paid much care and attention.

Also this year saw the retiral of Clerk of Session, Mr. Jack Welch after 12 years of devoted service, which had been preceded by 20 years as Hon. Secretary. In all these

responsible duties he gave meticulous care to detail which meant that everything he undertook was carried through smoothly and modestly.

Mr. Stewart McCullough was appointed Clerk of Session and brought a wide experience of service to this appointment from his years as missionary in Malawi and manager of the Church's Bookshop.

Autumn saw the welcome arrival of new student assistant Mr. William Henry, B.Sc., whose home church was Hydepark, Co. Antrim.

On 20th December the congregation said farewell to senior assistant minister, the Rev. Robin Greer and his wife Alison, following his 'call' to Tandragee, Co. Armagh.

After 12 years of dedicated service as Secretary of the League of Church Loyalty, Mrs. Jean Bamford was succeeded by Miss Hannah Bennett. Jean gave very faithful service in this important work among the young.

This year saw an unprecedented amount of renovation work carried out on the Church and Hall. This included the eradication of dry and wet rot, replacement of the heating system, rewiring both buildings for fire and intruder alarms. We are indebted to our Property Convener, Mr. Richard Lutton for truly professional assistance in this work and also to Mr. Derek Martin our Church Officer for his interest and attention during this time.

During the year two gifts were kindly given to the Church.

Mr. Bob Bingham gave a table in memory of his wife and Mr. Edward Mercer an overhead projector in memory of his wife. The Committee also gave approval for secondary glazing to the Church.

## **As Time Goes On - 1993**

Congregational thanks were due to Mr. Cecil Oakes for acting as Minute Secretary during the vacancy for Congregational Secretary. This post has been ably filled by the appointment of Mrs. Norma Whan.

A Session record of a tribute to Mr. Jack Welch who died on 9th June, 1993 reads as follows: "Jack Welch was highly esteemed by his colleagues on the Session and by the whole congregation. A true servant of Jesus Christ and His Church. Jack not only gave of himself unstintingly to Whiteabbey as a Sunday School Teacher, Congregation Secretary



*Mr. Jack Welch*

and as Session Clerk for the past 12 years but also supported the wider work of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Always dependable and meticulous in carrying out his responsibilities he brought to the congregation a stability and a quiet assurance of the love of God to those who put their trust in the Saviour. The Holy Spirit in his life was not evidenced by outward exuberance but by the obvious gifts of the Spirit in his daily life.

We give thanks to God for his life and service and assure his widow, Eveline, of our continued support and prayers.”

In the autumn of 1993 a week of special services and events were held with the Very Rev Dr Godfrey Brown being the main speaker. These were designed to appeal to all sections of the congregation and ranged from breakfasts to an evening of looking at the congregation's history and the way lives had been changed through the work of the Holy Spirit.

## **1994 - Towards Peace**

On Friday 28th January Mr. Wm. Henry BSc., BD was ordained and installed as assistant minister of the Congregation.

During the year a statement on the Northern Ireland situation put out by the Synod of Belfast was studied and commented upon by the Kirk Session. After a number of serious terrorist incidents in the Newtownabbey area a letter was sent by the Kirk Session to St James' Parish Council condemning the actions of the paramilitaries concerned and assuring the parish of our desire to live in harmony with our Roman Catholic neighbours. This was greatly appreciated by the Parish Council which responded in a similar vein.

A monthly Saturday morning meeting for prayer for our land was commenced during the year and at the request of the Moderator of the General Assembly Whiteabbey was one of the congregations organising days of prayer for peace.

In the autumn of 1994 the paramilitaries on both sides of the conflict announced ceasefires.

## **The Close of Another Chapter**

A major event before the retirement of the Rev. J. S. Dallas in June 1995 was the Service of Dedication and Thanksgiving on the 11th March conducted by the Very Rev. Dr. Andrew Rodgers to mark the completion of major renovations and refurbishment of the church and the gifts of furnishings by members of the congregation.

The refurbishment included repainting, secondary glazing, carpeting, resiting of the

organ, a new pulpit, an organ case, electrification of the Church bell, provision of new chairs for choir and ministers room and a cabinet for communion plates and cups.

The organ casing was the anonymous gift of two members of the congregation, the communion cabinet was donated by Mrs. Eveline Welch in memory of her husband, the chairs were donated by various members of the congregation in memory of loved ones. The chairs in the ministers room were dedicated to the memory of the Rev. Ivor. Lewis; the electrification of the bell to Miss Violet King, the pulpit to Miss Ruth Barrie and the pulpit fall to Mr. Wilson Smyth.

Much of the credit for the supervision and encouragement of the work of renovation and refurbishment of the church goes to Mr. George B. Owens and the Rev. J. S. Dallas. For this exceptional year of activity, George carried the dual roles of Finance and Property Convenors.

On Sunday, 11th June, the Rev. J. S. Dallas preached his last sermons as minister of Whiteabbey congregation. The following tribute in the name of the Kirk Session was given at the Farewell Evening on the 16th June, 1995.

### **Rev. J. S. Dallas M.A., B.D., Dip.Ed.**

“In the Rev. Joseph Dallas Whiteabbey had a minister who, while being a strong upholder of the reformed faith and well versed in the doctrines of the Church, nevertheless found no difficulty in reaching out in friendship and fellowship to other denominations. He encouraged the congregation to do likewise believing that in so doing we in no way compromised our beliefs but emphasised our common faith in God, the Father and Creator, Jesus Christ, Son and Saviour and the Holy Spirit, our Guide and Comforter.

“He recognised the importance of the family in Christian education, the responsibility of the congregation for the nurture of children through Sunday School, Bible Class and youth organisation, so that making a decision to serve and follow Christ, while momentous in anyone’s life, could also be the climax of the working of the Holy Spirit over many years and through many influences.

“His vision of the Church was much wider than his many responsibilities in the congregation and community of Whiteabbey. He encouraged us to be interested in the wider work of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and through this encouragement we more than met our responsibilities to the United Appeal and gave generously to the annual World Development Appeal and other emergency appeals. He was convinced that a congregation which gave high priority to the needs of others did not neglect the maintenance of its own property but could keep both in balance to the glory of God. The state of repair and decoration of the church buildings in 1995 was due in no small measure to his encouragement and drive.



“Despite having major heart surgery Mr. Dallas did not slow down in the years leading up to his retirement. As well as his duties as minister of the congregation he also served as chairman of the board of Whiteabbey Primary School, Chaplain to Greenisland Hospital until its closure and he undertook various responsibilities in the Presbytery of North Belfast.

“In all his work he had the support and concern of his wife, Patricia to whom Whiteabbey also owes a great debt of gratitude. She set us all an example of loyalty and devotion not only to her husband but to the congregation, its services of worship and its organisations.

“Well aware of the ever increasing pace of change in the youth scene Mr. Dallas facilitated experiments and ideas to meet the needs of the times in worship and Christian education while at the same time he guarded us against the dangers of trivialising the gospel or adopting transient gimmicks. His width and depth of knowledge of contemporary theology as well as his love for the writings of theologians from past generations were evidenced not only in his sermons but also in his guidance of the Kirk Session when particular problems and issues were being addressed.

“He may have regrets about the things he did not achieve in his various ministries but God does not require us to be successful but to be faithful and we have no doubts as to the faithfulness and devotion of the Rev. Joseph Dallas to his Lord and Master and to the congregation of Whiteabbey.”

**Stewart McCullough**  
**Session Clerk**

## **Here and Now**

As the dawn of a new century comes ever nearer and we attempt to examine where Whiteabbey Presbyterian Church stands in the year 1995 one finds a congregation of faithful Christian people banding together, still worshipping their Lord and Master as their previous generations had done, still thankfully protected from the elements in a beautiful sanctuary.

Very many organisations cater for the spiritual and physical interests of both young and old, ably led by worthy people who unfortunately are too numerous to pay individual tribute to in the confines of this available space.

As well as the written work of this history of Whiteabbey Presbyterian Church contained in this publication another more unique record exists in the form of recordings of the spoken word of our ministers since 1952. Amongst his other many worthy tasks Mr. D. V. Martin has carried out this time-consuming task and anyone interested in recalling particular services should have a word with him.