

## A Joyful Occasion - Our 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

A Joyful Occasion - the 125th Anniversary of the opening of St. Paul's Church, built between 1879-1881, the latest of 5 Churches dating back to 1128. Our history started with the founding of Lindean Church by 7 monks from Tiron, with the intention of forming an Abbey. However, when David became King on the death of his brother, the Bishop of Glasgow decreed that Roxburghe Castle was a more suitable venue for the Abbey. Lindean Church remained as the Parish Church until after the Reformation, surviving battles and plagues. Possibly a drift of population brought about its demise, and the second Church was built at Boleside although burials continued at Lindean - the ferryman being paid 4/- per year to carry coffins across the Tweed. This Church had a short life, from 1588-1617, although there was apparently a sizeable village around it.

Due to the success of the weaving industry, there was a further drift to Galashiels, and the third church (the Parish Church) was built in what is now the old Churchyard, parallel to Church Street, with the Manse on the opposite side of the road. The Glebe and the (Kirk) croft were Church grounds. Opened in 1622 (the congregation having met in the Tollbooth for a few years) it was to last for almost 200 years. For a time it housed the school, and the discipline of the church was very severe. Anyone stepping out of line was subjected either to the jugs outside or the penitent's stool inside. In the early 1800s the Old Kirk became dilapidated (the walls sinking into the ground) and so the 4th Church was built about 200 yards away, with its distinctive bell tower, clear glass windows and box pews. Dr. Robert Douglas was the incumbent Minister at the transition, - a remarkable man with tremendous foresight. He lent money to set up the Cloth Hall, and the subsequent success of the tweed industry resulted in the loan being repaid a year before his death. Sir Walter Scott, a friend, acquired the land for Abbotsford from him, and it was revealed that Dr. Douglas supplied much material for his novels. McLay Phin was minister in 1843 at the Disruption, when 158 members, and 58 adherents, walked out to form the Free Church which was to meet in the ballroom of the Salmon Inn, then a site near the cinema, and in 1879 at St. John's, where now stands Cornmill Court. This was demolished 105 years later and relocated at Langlee.

By the 1870s, when the tweed industry was at its height and Church attendances booming, it was felt that a new Church should be built as more room was required, and there was no Church Hall. An acre of ground was purchased from Gala Estate and plans were made for the erection of the 5th Church, namely St. Paul's. Red sandstone was brought from Belses quarry near Ancrum, and granite for the pillars from Aberdeen and Peterhead. A Willis organ was installed - the second pipe organ in Galashiels - and at the Opening Service on November 23rd, 1881, for the first time the congregation stood to sing, and sat for prayers. The preacher that day was Dr. George Scott and his sermon was The Good Samaritan, which was appropriate as Miss Arabella Douglas, the

youngest child of Dr. Douglas, gave £500 for the huge painted glass North window above the front door, in memory of her father. Unfortunately she died in 1879.

Dr. Gloag was minister, and because the Parish Church was still open, the new Church was named St. Paul's. Services were held in both Churches every Sunday, and the Evening Service was in St. Paul's. An Assistant helped the minister. There was a joint Session. Dr. Gloag wrote several books on the life of St. Paul, and he established the library in the town. Within the Church he presented the Communion Table and Communion Silver. In 1889 he was elected Moderator of the General Assembly. His portrait, by Sir George Reid, hangs in the Vestry, and the St. Paul window is a permanent memorial to him.

Dr. Hunter followed, and like his predecessors was far travelled - visiting Egypt and Simla. He was involved with the Cottage Hospital, Young Farmers, and the Cricket Club, as well as his Ministerial duties. His wife formed the Woman's Guild. His assistant, Walter Lamb, ran the Churches when Dr. Hunter was travelling, and all three are commemorated in Memorial windows.

Dr. Donald, in 1919, formed The Brotherhood - a meeting for men on Sunday afternoons, and brought many eminent speakers to the town, including D. P. Thomson and Eric Liddell.

In the early 20s the Schultze family from Brunswickhill donated money to erect the porch as a War Memorial; they lost 2 sons in WW1. The carving above the door is a replica of that at Amiens Cathedral. Money was also given for the suite of halls, and Mrs. Cochrane of Abbotshill laid the memorial stone, on October 29th 1927. Four years later, in 1931, saw the closure of the Old Parish Church, with great sadness. The 2 congregations joined and St. Paul's incorporated Old Parish in its name.

All kinds of activities have been held in the halls - badminton, dances, parties, sales, concerts, and many youth activities. The Church has been the focal point for so many Services commemorating significant dates in the history of the town, and in 2000, all the Churches combined for a memorable Millennium Service.



Can you remember the New Year's Day hockey matches, Church walks to Blackhaugh and The Three Brethren, sliding down the Eildons and Meigle on bin bags in the snow, basketball in the hall in the holidays?

So many people over these 125 years have been part of our Church Family, helping in so many ways - many quietly and diligently.

The next time you are in Church, take time to look about you - look at the carved collars on the pillars, the beautiful wood carvings, the Communion table, the windows in memory of those who have gone before us - all contributing something very special, something to be treasured in this most beautiful building, this House of God, in this year 2006.

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