

IN THE BEGINNING 1899 – 1906

At the end of the 19th century Anniesland was an area where coal-pits and quarries, blaes bings and brickworks existed side by side with agricultural land. In 1899, at the Cross itself, there was only a smithy standing in an open field, with farmlands to the east. Bearsden Road did not exist. Great Western Road terminated at the Cross – beyond were green fields where cows grazed and bings of red blaes. The open ground now occupied by the church and hall was actually the site of an old quarry.

To the north was the village of Temple, with its church built in 1892. Scattered clusters of cottages, at Claythorne and down Anniesland Road, housed the families of miners and others employed at the local pits, as did the Knightswood Rows, where Knightswood Secondary School now stands.

But the Anniesland Cross area was on the brink of rapid expansion both as a commercial and residential area. New industries were attracting workers from other areas. During the 1890s a number of people migrated from Maryhill to the district. Among them were members of Maryhill United Presbyterian Church [now Gairbraid Church]. Their minister, the Rev William Duncan, encouraged them and others in the area to petition the UP Presbytery for the opening of a preaching station or ‘church extension’ at Anniesland Cross.

A note in the first Minute Book of the church records: ‘The Presbytery, in September 1898, when the petition was before it, having regard to the rapid increase of population in the district of Anniesland, giving promise of a vigorous congregation in the near future, granted the requests of the petitioners.’

Less than a year later – in August 1899 – a hall had been built [now the Old Hall] at a cost of £1,450 and church services had begun. The newly formed congregation had 47 members. The building was only a few months old when the union took place between the United Presbyterian Church [to which Anniesland Cross belonged] and the Free Church, to form the United Free Church of Scotland.

Building the Church

The first minister of Anniesland Cross Church was the **Rev Robert L Browning MA**, who was inducted in June 1900 and served for 25 years. In October 58 people joined the church. As the work of the new charge continued to prosper, it became obvious the hall would soon be too small to accommodate the growing membership.

A Building Committee was formed in 1903 to consider plans for the construction of a church, and in August 1904 these plans were put before the congregation and agreed. The cost, including fees, was to be about £5,000. Much fund-raising then took place, including a bazaar in the McLellan Galleries in Sauchiehall Street.

On 4 November 1905 the memorial stone, on the stair leading to the north gallery, was laid by John Stephen of Linthouse, a member of the famous Glasgow ship-building family, who was said to be a strong upholder of the United Free Church. Mrs Eliza

Stephen deposited a memorial casket in the wall. No records reveal what is in the casket, so there it remains for a future generation to discover!

The red sandstone, Gothic-style church, built by Badenoch & Bruce, was opened for worship in the summer of 1906. When members of the congregation stepped over the threshold, they found a U-plan interior with red pine panelled gallery and pews. The first Communion service took place on 21 October, when 214 members were present.

Thus, in the space of seven short years, the congregation, through their faith, vision and giving, were able to plant a church at Anniesland Cross. Little did they realise how strategic that location would become as the area developed during the next 100 years.

THE FIRST 40 YEARS 1906 – 1946

For the next few years, steady progress continued. Anniesland would have been a pleasant suburb in the peaceful and prosperous times before World War I. Those years were recalled by a member of Temple Church:

Temple and Anniesland district was really quite rural, being flanked by many farms. Green fields stretched for miles around, dotted here and there with coal bings. There were little stone cottages in Netherton which originally housed the local miners. As a child I was intrigued by the surnames of some of the inhabitants – Pol, Penny, Tripney, Trotter, Pepper, Shepherd to name but a few.

Mining seemed to give way to brick-making when Hurl's Brickwork took over. You will notice, even yet, many brick buildings in the district as a result. At one point there was a square of red brick cottages known as Skaterigg Square. It was demolished to make way for Barr & Stroud's new West Works. The Hurl family mansion was an imposing building standing on what is now the entrance to Dawsholm Park.

Gradually industries developed such as Maclehose's Printing Works, Barr & Stroud – optical rangefinders for the Navy, Robinson Dunn's wood yard, the brick field, Ioco rubber factory, Baird's Iron Work, Castlebank Dye Works, Birrell's Sweet Factory and Collar's Laundry.

Then, of course, there were the dairy farms – Pirie and Baird located on either side of Temple Parish Church. As we ran home from school we met the cows trundling over the cobbled road coming from the grazing fields at Dawsholm and finding their own way into the byres to be milked. And don't let me forget to mention the two piggeries – McMillan's and Buchanan's. Farmers came from far and near to buy the piglets.

Towering over this varied panorama stood Temple Parish Church and Anniesland Cross UF Church, very revered and respected edifices. The parish kirk bell summoned the people to worship on Sundays at 11.30am and 6.30pm and the response was very encouraging. The churches attracted many families who attended regularly, in complete family units, dressed in their Sunday best as a mark of respect. I remember my father wearing a frock coat and a tile hat.

Anniesland Cross Church ran a Band of Hope on a Friday evening and we all went to that and viewed coloured slides on the Magic Lantern. I remember vividly seeing 'The Pilgrim's Progress' and 'The Drunkard's Child'. Out of this venture a Junior Choir evolved which annually presented a cantata. Great fun and enjoyment without elaborate staging or dressing-up. Simple pleasures which have left happy memories.

By 1910 the size of the district had not increased for some years and membership of Anniesland Cross had settled at about 300. In that year the practice of members of the Kirk Session visiting the organisations within the church was started. At that time these were listed as Choir, Band of Hope, Women's Work Meeting, Sabbath School and Sabbath Morning Meeting.

Acquiring a pipe organ

In 1914 it was decided to order a pipe organ at a cost of £850 from a company in Wurtemberg, Germany. A few months after £500 had been sent with the order, war broke out, putting an end to any prospect of delivery. Astonishingly, the money was held there during the struggle, found intact and returned when the war ended!

The question of the organ was raised again in 1920, but this time it was decided not to order one from Germany. It was also agreed that the price of a new British-made organ (at least £1100) was too high. Around that time Berkeley Street UF Church was offering its pipe organ for sale, and this proved an ideal solution. This 50-year-old organ was bought and reconditioned and is in use to the present day.

World War I and its aftermath

The war also put an end to any expansion of the congregation. The church managed to hold its own and was busy caring for Red Cross refugees and the welfare of its servicemen. In 1918 Mr Browning went on a period of service with the YMCA huts in France, where he ministered among a large body of Chinese engaged behind enemy lines

Like the nation, Anniesland Cross Church now faced the puzzling and difficult problems of post-war readjustment. Various new ways were tried out in the church, some of which proved lasting, such as the introduction of individual Communion cups in 1920, a change which took place with surprisingly little opposition. In 1923 the membership stood at 345 and special evangelistic services were well attended. At this period it is recorded there was a good deal of distress and poverty in the district and assistance was given to those in need.

Mr Browning retired in 1925 at the age of 70, although he lived on as senior minister until his death in 1937. With the building of the Knightswood scheme and three tramway extensions under construction, he saw the congregation entering on a new stage of its history and the need for 'a younger and stronger man' to take charge of the work. That man was the **Rev C Howard Davies BD**, formerly of Sunderland, who was inducted in September 1925.

Growth of Knightswood

The new minister brought to his task energy and enthusiasm and is credited with a remarkable memory for names and faces. The situation confronting him began a new chapter in the history of the district and of the congregation. Anniesland until then had been an outpost of the city, but now new housing was spreading to the west.

In 1921 the Corporation of Glasgow had purchased land from the Summerlee Iron Company to build the great housing scheme of Knightswood, and already houses were springing up in the district. The nearest UF church was Anniesland Cross. Mr Davies and the Kirk Session resolved to seize this opportunity and made arrangements to visit all the new houses. These door-to-door visits added large numbers to the congregation.

Early in his ministry Mr Davies introduced the uniformed organisations which were to attract many young people to the church – Girl Guides, Brownies, Boy Scouts and Wolf Cubs. The first church parade of a uniformed organisation, the Girl Guides, was in November 1926. Around this time the minister ‘was authorised to issue a small two-page quarterly leaflet, dealing with important congregational matters’ – the origin of the church magazine.

The proposal to acquire a manse came before the Session and congregation during Mr Davies’s ministry. A house in Ancaster Drive was then available for £800 and a strong effort was made to get the congregation to buy it. This plan met with stiff opposition, however, and was finally turned down. The church was to remain without a manse for another twenty years.

In 1929 Mr Davies accepted a call to Burnbank Church, near St George’s Cross. During his brief but energetic ministry 300 members were added to the role. That same year Anniesland Cross decided to enter the union with the Church of Scotland.

Difficult Years

Mr Davies was succeeded in September 1929 by the **Rev D H Gerrard MA**, from Dundee, who found himself faced with a difficult situation in the first years of his work. The two new churches in Knightswood, St David’s and St Margaret’s, naturally drew away a number of the people from there who had been coming to Anniesland Cross, and so the membership dropped sharply.

The post-war boom had long since petered out and the slump of the inter-war period had well and truly settled on the country. The church’s finances were at a continually low ebb. Mr Gerrard tackled the task of uniting the depleted congregation: social events were organised which helped to bring people together and raise money for necessary repairs and improvements.

It was during his ministry that the switch-over from seat rents to free-will offerings began, and a new organisation was formed – the Young People’s Guild, or YPG. Its object was ‘to foster the interest of the younger members of the congregation who, having left the Bible Class, were wont to stray from the church’s influence’. Just before the outbreak of war in 1939 Mr Gerrard accepted a call to Fintry Church.

World War II

It fell to the next minister of Anniesland Cross Church, the **Rev Richard Cunningham MA**, a young man in his first charge, to steer the congregation through the years of the Second World War. His task was clearly a difficult one, since the war with its evacuees and separation of families, its Sunday work and duties, its blacked-out windows and shortages and rationing, made it extremely hard to keep a congregation together and continue its activities.

It was revealed after the war just how vulnerable Anniesland had been when it was discovered the Luftwaffe had aerial photographs of the area, probably taken from a German airship in 1938. Of course the proximity of the Barr & Stroud factory, employing thousands of workers, and the presence of gasworks, spelt danger right from the start.

In 'Range and Vision', a history of Barr & Stroud, the authors write: 'There was serious concern at the beginning of the war that Barr & Stroud would be designated a prime target by the Luftwaffe. Lord Haw-Haw, the Irish-American fascist who broadcast Nazi propaganda to Britain each day, was reported to have boasted that German bombers would destroy "that little toyshop in Anniesland".'

There was no attack on the Anniesland area, however, although stray bombs fell on nearby Crow Road and in Kelvindale, as the enemy concentrated on larger targets such as Clydebank.

During the summer of 1940 the hall of Anniesland Cross Church was used to house a number of Channel Island evacuees. Members helped to provide clothes and otherwise make them comfortable in their temporary home. A 'social hour' after the evening service was run for the benefit of young adults in the congregation and service men and women billeted locally.

The church railings had to go – they were required for the war effort. But internally improvements were taking place: the fine Communion table and chairs were added to the furnishings of the church.

It is interesting to note that the question of whether women should be eligible for eldership was raised in the Kirk Session in 1945. It was decided that the decision should be left to the congregation and the necessary voting papers were drawn up and issued. The result of this vote was that women should not be eligible for eldership. [It was not until 1966 that women were admitted to eldership of the Church of Scotland.]

Mr Cunningham was responsible for introducing two new organisations to the church – the Girls' Association and the Churchmen's Guild (later known as the Men's Guild).

Having steered the congregation through the war years, and preached to crowded pews at the VE (Victory in Europe) Day service, Mr Cunningham left Anniesland Cross in 1946 for St Andrew's Church, Nairobi. The increase in membership to just over 600, the highest total in its history till then, and the healthy state of the various organisations, are an indication of the energy he put into the work of the church. [After serving in Nairobi Mr Cunningham ministered in Jedburgh and in Garvald and Morham in East Lothian, retiring in 1978. He died on 10 December 1994.]

MINISTRY OF THE REV DR HARRY C THOMSON 1946 – 1971

[Although the new minister was the Rev Harry Thomson BD when he was inducted to Anniesland Cross Church in October 1946, he received a PhD degree from Glasgow University in 1955 and is referred to as Dr Thomson throughout.]

Dr Thomson came from a country parish in Perthshire, although he had been born and brought up in Glasgow. He and his wife Mary occupied the first manse to be acquired by the congregation at 111 Randolph Road, a terraced house with seven apartments which was purchased for £1,600.

Sponsoring a new church

In 1946 the congregation was again coping with the aftermath of a world war. Servicemen and women were returning to civilian life. The post-war boom was short-lived, and rising costs presented spiritual and material problems.

Nevertheless church-planting was going on at a national level, and in 1948 the congregation undertook to sponsor the work in the new church extension area of Garscube-Netherton. There was significance in the fact that this help was given exactly fifty years after Gairbraid had sponsored the new church at Anniesland.

The hall-church of Garscube-Netherton was opened in June 1949, with Anniesland Cross providing elders, Sunday School teachers and leaders of organisations until the new congregation was able to supply its own. In the four years which followed, the congregation flourished and was granted full status as a church and parish in 1953. [Later named Netherton St Matthew's, it was united in 1982 with Knightswood St Margaret's and the building demolished in 1985.]

In 1948 Anniesland Cross Church bought the ground alongside its hall for £450. The area around the church was changing, as described by the Session Clerk: 'The eleven new prefabricated houses adjacent to our church have helped to make the surroundings brighter and more cheerful, and possibly, in spite of the unpromising nature of the soil, we shall soon be seeing gardens bright with flowers.'

Jubilee of Congregation, 1949

In 1949 Anniesland Cross Church celebrated the Jubilee of the congregation during the week 5 – 11 September. The preacher at morning and evening services on 11 September was the Rev David Steel [father of Lord Steel of Aikwood]. The evening service was held in the hall, where the first service had taken place in 1899. Among those present was the Rev Colin Nicol, who had attended Mr Browning's induction in 1900.

On the afternoon of 11 September there was also a Youth Parade Service. Dr Thomson described the whole day as memorable, and reckoned the total attendance over the three services 'must have passed the thousand mark'.

The first five years of Dr Thomson's ministry saw increased membership and all the organisations 'going strong'. There were 140 members in the Woman's Guild, with around 100 turning up for meetings, and 236 children on the Sunday School roll.

In April 1949 Dr Thomson welcomed 148 senior citizens to the first meeting of the Anniesland Friendship Club in the church hall, run under the auspices of the Glasgow Old People's Welfare Association for the whole area. [The club was initially supported by 'tea ladies' from five local churches and membership peaked at 223 in 1979. It is still going strong, and currently has around 60 members.]

As with the wives of previous ministers, Mary Thomson threw herself wholeheartedly into the life and work of the church, and so it was with great sadness that the congregation learned of her death on 29 November 1950, at the age of 38. A memorial service was held on Sunday 3 June 1951, at which the preacher was her brother, the Rev J Russell Anderson MA. At the service a brass plaque was dedicated to Mrs Thomson from the congregation and an oak lectern gifted by her husband.

In February 1952 King George VI died and the following June saw the coronation of Queen Elizabeth. It was decided that the church hall, now over fifty years old, was in need of several major repairs, which were undertaken during July and August.

Attention was next given to the church itself, which had last been decorated in 1938. It was decided to have it looking its best in preparation for the Jubilee of the building in 1956. The congregation were asked to contribute to a Redecoration Fund, which raised £1,116. When donations were added from two trust funds the total came to £1,416 – just £34 short of the amount required to build the church hall in 1899! Work went ahead in the summer of 1954.

All Scotland Crusade, 1955

Towards the end of 1954 preparations were being made in Glasgow for the All Scotland Crusade led by American evangelist Dr Billy Graham. When it opened in the Kelvin Hall in March 1955, several members of Anniesland Cross Church sang in the choir and a number helped with counselling, administration and stewarding.

As a result of the Crusade some new members were welcomed to the congregation, bringing the roll to over 900. But the biggest difference was seen in the numbers attending the church's mid-week prayer meeting which, because of renewed interest in the Scriptures, became a Bible Study group.

After his wife's death Dr Thomson had immersed himself in more work and further study, and in 1955 he was awarded a Doctorate in Philosophy by Glasgow University for his thesis 'The religious and cultural environment of Israel in the period of the Judges'. [Thereafter he published at regular intervals carefully researched articles on Old Testament themes in the name of the Glasgow University Oriental Society and the Society for Old Testament Study, and contributed to a series of booklets entitled 'Basic Certainties' by the Drummond Press in Stirling.]

In the summer of 1955 several members of Anniesland Cross met together to form the Boys' Brigade. In March 1956 the Boys' Brigade was enrolled as the 247th Glasgow Company and at the same time the Life Boys were officially recognised.

Challenge of Church Extension

In 1956 Dr Thomson was appointed Church Extension Convener for the Presbytery of Glasgow, which opened his eyes to the need of these new areas. In his Pastoral Letter he wrote with great feeling about the opportunities that could be taken – or missed:

If you could see the picture of Church Extension as I do week by week – large tracts of the city's outskirts being turned up by the bulldozer, roads made, then houses begun and soon occupied; you would see for yourselves the great opportunity this gives the Church of Scotland....

Given a new church and halls, a new sense of community with the church as the centre, these new areas can make in years to come a great contribution to the life and strength of the Church. The largest Sunday Schools in Scotland, sometimes over 1,000 children, are to be found in these new charges... The trouble about this great opportunity is this, that you must grasp it early, while the people are still putting their roots down.... I am quite sure that the future of the Church in Scotland for the next twenty years or more depends on how we tackle this challenge now.

Jubilee of Church Building, 1956

The year opened with the good news that Anniesland Cross Church, now with a membership of over 900, was completely free of debt for the first time in nine years. Jubilee celebrations were held during the week 9 to 16 September. On Sunday 9 September the Rev Principal John Mauchline DD addressed the morning service, while the Rev J Russell Anderson MA addressed a special youth service in the afternoon.

Mrs Dingwall, Guild President for Scotland spoke at the Woman's Guild Service on the Tuesday. Lord Provost Mr Andrew Hood was one of the speakers at a congregational social on the Wednesday. A children's social was held on the Friday and Communion and Thanksgiving on the final Sunday.

The first Christmas Eve, or Watch-Night, service was held in 1956, the result of a proposal put to the Kirk Session by the YPG. Their case was presented persuasively by one of the young elders, who was a member of the YPG. That first service was attended by almost 300, and the Session Clerk was to report: 'This will now be a feature of our church life.'

At the Stated Annual Meeting in 1957 Dr Thomson reported it was taking him longer to visit all the members, because of the increase in membership. When he came to Anniesland Cross he could visit the congregation in 12 months – now it was taking him one year and nine months. He was on his seventh visit and in his eleventh year of ministry. [Dr Thomson continued regular visitation of the congregation right up to his retiral in 1971, giving notice of his intended visits in the church magazine.]

Add Your Railing And Your Chair!

The magazine in November 1957 invited members to help replace the church railings which had been cut down during the war years and resulted in 'all and sundry' taking a short cut past the main door every day. Donations of 10 shillings [50p] were requested for each railing. So successful was this appeal that after the new railings were in place a request was launched for a supply of 100 chairs to replace those 'on their last legs'. The cost of each chair was £1.11s 8d [about £1.60].

New manse

In 1959, after a period of illness, Dr Thomson was advised by his doctor to move to a smaller house as the Randolph Road manse was proving too large for one person. The Board readily agreed and purchased a flat in Ancaster Drive for £1,800, the former manse being sold for £1,500. The new manse was in the parish and had the twin advantages of being convenient for the church and easy to run.

During the summer months open-air services were held at Anniesland on Sunday evenings to reach young people frequenting the area, especially those with no church connection. Other churches in the district took part, and any enquirers were invited to the church hall for tea and discussion. Members of the Young People's Guild played a very active part in this outreach.

Heating of the church was a major concern at this time and the Board had lengthy discussions over the need to convert the coal-boiler to an oil-fired system. Work was due to begin in April 1960, but a 'burst' in the system during the winter brought the conversion forward and it was completed early in the year.

At the Stated Annual Meeting in 1960 the roll stood at 968. The Treasurer reported that Anniesland Cross had contributed £328 to Church Extension, and that out of the 2,272 congregations in the Church of Scotland only 54 had exceeded that amount. At the same time he pointed out that a Co-ordinated Appeal would come into force in 1961, which meant individual churches would no longer be responsible for allocating funds to various schemes of the Church – the money would be sent to Church headquarters in Edinburgh where a committee would be responsible for the allocation.

Church extension was again brought to the congregation's attention in 1960. 'Operation Last Lap' was an effort by the Church of Scotland to clear a debt of over £100,000 which had arisen through the building and staffing of new churches. All members were asked to give 5 shillings [25p] to clear off the debt by the end of the year.

Parish Visitation

In 1961 a large-scale parish visitation was planned for the autumn. Extra copies of the church magazine were printed for members to hand out to friends and neighbours. Under the heading of 'The Friendly Church', it stated: 'This is the name by which we would like our church to be known in the parish.'

Visits to the existing homes in the parish, preceded by a leaflet drop, took place at the end of November, leaving the new houses until they were occupied the following year. The first phase of the visitation revealed 100 houses in the parish were occupied by families already connected to Anniesland Cross Church, leaving 917 houses to be visited by the teams.

Analysis of the information gathered showed the number of people in the parish claiming no church connection to be comparatively small. At the March 1962 Communion 11 new members were received into membership by profession of faith as a direct result of the parish visitation. Total membership was now 1,004.

A fund to replace the organ was started in 1961, when it was estimated the cost would be around £1,700. Collection boxes in the shape of little model churches were issued to all households. At a special meeting of the Board in 1962, however, a far-sighted decision was taken – after considering the purchase of an electronic organ, which would be cheaper, it was unanimously agreed to go ahead with a complete renovation of the existing organ at a cost of almost £3,000. After the work was completed a special service for the dedication of the organ was held on 1 September 1963, by which time the full amount had been raised.

A congregational social to celebrate Dr Thomson's semi-jubilee in the ministry – he was ordained in Scotstoun West Church in 1937 where he was serving as assistant – was held in November 1962, when he was presented with a cine-camera and projector.

In 1963 the Kirk Session decided that morning and evening services would continue throughout the summer months, despite a trend elsewhere – 'Many churches close during July and August especially for the evening service. We believe this policy to be wrong.'

Young people from Anniesland Cross had been engaged in Seaside Mission work for a number of years and 1963 was no exception. In the church magazine those involved in the mission to Kirkoswald/Maidens in Ayrshire described in great detail their many activities, including parish visitation – 'a visit to every home, cottage, farm, caravan, and even a lighthouse, in the area Turnberry to Culzean.'

Dr Thomson suggested the forming of a School of Prayer in September 1963 – 'a group or groups of people (of all ages) who would like to learn, or to learn more, about praying together.' A good response led to the formation of two groups – one meeting before the Sunday morning service and the other on Thursday evenings. Prayers were included for those who were ill or in special need.

By 1964 membership had risen to 1,071 and it was decided to hold congregational 'At Homes' so that members could get to know one another better. These social events, held on four nights at the beginning of April, included films and publicity material showing the wider work of the Church of Scotland at home and abroad. Also in 1964 the 247th Boy's Brigade paraded to church for the first time with their own pipe band, just a year after they had begun fund-raising and appealing for gifts of instruments.

A tall story

A major concern for minister and congregation arose in 1965 with the announcement of a large-scale housing development at Anniesland Cross, right on the church's doorstep. Dr Thomson wrote: 'The Corporation plan to build a 21-storey block on the ground next to our hall, as well as 2 small blocks.... There are to be shops on the ground floor of the high block and altogether about 400 people will be housed in the new development, which is expected to begin in about a year and be completed in 1967-68.

'The Corporation wish to buy our piece of ground between the hall and the waterman's house, and are prepared to give us ground west of our hall on which we can build something to replace the hut and relieve the pressure on our accommodation.'

Dr Thomson, in fact, played a direct part in the negotiations with the Corporation. Discussing architectural and building matters was not new to him – his experience as Convener of the Presbytery's Church Extension Committee and later as Convener of Unions and Readjustments stood him in good stead. But his family background gave him additional experience – both his father and grandfather were well-known city architects. Dr Thomson would have required the wisdom of Solomon, however, to make sense of the following excerpt from Section 26(3) of the Land Compensation Act as quoted in the church magazine:

Subject to subsection (4) of this section, subsections (3) and (4) of section 25 of this Act shall apply where the provisions of section 23 of this Act have effect as applied by subsection (1) of this section as they apply where those provisions have effect as applied by sub-section (1) or subsection (2) of the said Section 25.

Building the New Hall

It had been obvious for some time that the church's hall accommodation was inadequate for all the organisations wishing to use it – sometimes three or four on the same night. Now here was an opportunity to build a new hall, and the Board lost no time in issuing an appeal for funds. An early estimate of the cost was £10,000 – with 1,000 members that would mean £10 per member over the next three years. Within six months more than half of that amount had been raised.

The Board agreed to employ the same architects as the Corporation, Messrs Jack Holmes and Partners, and engaged a private contractor for the building work. The Corporation paid £1,250 for the piece of ground they took over, and the church was to pay annual Feu Duty of £20 for the ground on which the hall was built.

Keeping an eye on what was going on, Dr Thomson reported to the Stated Annual Meeting in 1968 that work had commenced on the site adjoining the church – boring had been carried out and the contractors were now pumping out the water in the old workings and pouring concrete into them in readiness for piling.

By the Spring of 1969 the multi-storey building was rising beside the church and the new hall had reached roof level. By this time, with the inclusion of fees and furnishings, the cost of the hall had risen to around £16,000.

The opening and dedication of the new hall took place on Sunday 5 October 1969. 'It is a creditable achievement for the congregation to have raised over £10,000 in four years without falling short in our givings to others and I am confident that the remaining debt will soon be paid off,' wrote Dr Thomson.

While the new hall was under construction, congregational life had continued and the organisations were commended for meeting any difficulties with patience and good humour. In 1967, because of the dilapidated state of the hut in which they were meeting, the Beginners' Section of the Sunday School was given permission to use accommodation at Westerlands, the sports ground at Anniesland then owned by Glasgow University.

One parent recalls a Sunday when the Sunday School did not meet there, however. A loud boom alerted residents at Anniesland to the fact that one of the gasometers nearby was on fire! Homes in the area were evacuated, but the incident was not as serious as first appeared, and the residents were allowed to return after a few hours.

In 1967-68 Dr Thomson was Moderator of Glasgow Presbytery. After visits to many different churches and attending annual meetings of various public bodies he noted it was 'interesting to see how the Church makes some sort of contact at least with many sides of the life of Glasgow'.

The young people of the church collected almost £200 for the ongoing Hall Fund in 1970 when they took part in a sponsored walk from Anniesland to Strathblane and back – a distance of 20 miles, with a shorter option of six miles to Bearsden Cross for young children or the less able. Organisers estimated a total of 1,596 miles had been covered by all walkers that day!

The Treasurer was already looking ahead to the change to decimal currency in 1971 and anticipating some confusion when halfpennies, half-crowns and ten-shilling notes disappeared. 'It is so important that we do *not* replace our half-crowns with the lesser new ten pence pieces only,' he warned.

Visitation of the newly occupied flats in the multi-storey block, named Anniesland Court, began early in 1971. Members of the Young People's Guild put leaflets through the doors and teams of visitors from the congregation called on their new neighbours.

Retiral of Dr Thomson

The congregation learned that Dr Thomson was to retire in September 1971. During the summer the church and Old Hall were redecorated at a cost of £1,000. A farewell social was held on 29 September, and Dr Thomson's final service was on 3 October – exactly 25 years to the day when he was inducted on 3 October 1946.

After his retirement Dr Thomson worshipped at Broomhill Parish Church and spent the closing years of his life as a resident in Balmanno House until his death on 29 October 1999 at the age of 88. A quiet, scholarly man, he is remembered with affection by older members of the congregation.

His 25 years at Anniesland Cross are summed up by one member: ‘He was so academically gifted and yet with such a simple, easily understood and so telling pulpit delivery. But also a man with a backbone of steel – especially if you were trying to do something about which he wasn’t happy! I don’t think that in our youth we fully realised until much later just what an influence Dr Thomson had been in our lives and how well he had prepared us for whatever we were called on to do.’

In an obituary in *The Herald* the Rev Bill Ferguson of Broomhill Parish Church mentioned another side to his character, well-known to the congregation: ‘This gentle figure also had a passion for cars and driving them at high speed. He frequently borrowed his brother Sandy’s racing green souped-up MGB GT sports car. On travelling to meetings at 121 in Edinburgh he loved arriving there in record time having managed to clip a few minutes off his previous best.’

The obituary concluded: ‘Harry Thomson was a remarkable Christian gentle man. He exemplified all that was best in the Christian ministry. His greatest characteristic was his humility. It was not that he pretended he was very bad – it was simply that he had forgotten that he was very good.’