

ANN HILL RESEARCH

Interview with ALLAN and EDITH HODGSON

5th December 1986

Allan Hodgson (born 1926) and his sister Edith live at Toppinghead, and have done all their lives. Their mother, who died 3 months ago, was for many years church caretaker. Their granny also worked in the Manse. It follows that their knowledge of Church affairs is probably unique in the parish. Alan Hodgson has also been involved in numerous aspects of parish life - especially carpet bowling.

I got so much from the first interview that we agreed to go back the following Friday.

U.C.

Their father was a mason and a monumental sculptor. Their grandfather was Mr Turnbull, beadle till he died in the great-war in 1915.

Their Hodgson great-grandfather, John came from Penrith to Kirkpatrick Fleming.

School

Their mother used to say that the head was a horror - Mr McKerchar - very good with the boys but hard on the girls. She much preferred, indeed really liked Mr Christie (a turn up for the books!). Elizabeth Rae (? see Nelly Miller - 'Lizzy Rae') was in the same class at school, now lives in Carlisle, widow of John Graham, who was driving force in the church (42 St. Peters Drive, with a Mrs Frey - but may be reluctant to talk about the past).

The present school was built in 1881. Previously there was a wee school at Irvington (see Dave Mitchell), and one at Graham's yard, Holmwood. Their father said this house was the schoolhouse.

Their mother's mother had the soup kitchen and cleaned the school. Now a cousin Mrs Holt (n.s. Turnbull) cleans it. The local farmers used to supply free vegetables for the soup kitchen, and the butcher would maybe give a bone.

Mr Hodgson was at the school in Mr Hogg's time. He can't recall his first teacher, but later came Misses Guthrie and Young (his favourite - Gretna area), Mr Kennedy and Mr Hogg. He liked school, and lived too near to play truant. Hogg was a very strict old man. He then went to Gretna Township school.

Their father may have gone to Irvington. At that time he lived about the Five Road Ends. He left aged 12/13. I saw a photo of their father at school - all boys, an elderly master, with white side burns. They thought it might be Breconbeds.

Mr Hogg was a good singer.

Another photo was possibly Kirkpatrick Fleming school, with (?) Miss Crooks (later Mrs Jim Irving), who was the infant teacher when (?) Miss Hodgson went to school.

They had heard their mother mention other teachers - Miss Brown, Miss Bole.

When Miss Hodgson went to school in 1946, Mrs Irving took the infants, then Nelly Douglas (who travelled daily by train from Carlisle, belonged Langholm). W.J. Doull was the headmaster, but soon left, to be replaced by S.S. Hope. When her sister was there, Doull always had a school concert, but Miss Hodgson does not recall any in her day. Hope was easy-oasy. He was followed by David Mitchell, who still lives in Langholm.

After Mrs Irving, Miss Hodgson was taught by Miss Wishart. A Miss Inglis taught the infants, perhaps in the 1940's before Mrs Irving's return. She married and went to British Honduras with the camp manager (Mr Philips). Miss Douglas was still there in 1953, left when the trains stopped.

D. Mitchell came in 1953. No concerts in his time. In these days schoolmasters were almost automatically community leaders - church elders, perhaps would chair the hall committee, but the later teachers didn't want to. (I assume from the context that D. Mitchell was the last to be actively involved.) The next masters were Mackie (no relation of the farmers), Bennett, Gibson (young man), Ferguson (retired, in Kirtlebridge, treasurer of 'Firparkneuk') Mackie was from (?) Hightae (now deceased).

Church

See introduction. Their mother's father, George Turnbull, was church officer and elder (Funeral 19/8/1915 - see Parish Magazine for appreciation by John Walker). Their grandmother cleaned the church, then their mother, from 1954, now them. John Turnbull, the beadle, is their cousin. They had heard that John Walker had said that he and their grandfather had some grand times together. The family gravestone at the back of the church, behind the vestry, is one of the few still to have railings, put up in the 1930's to stop people walking over the grave. At one time there were a lot with railings, but the policy nowadays is to remove them.

Their granny used to work at the manse and milked the cow for Mr Walker. Mr Graham was greatly regarded in the parish. As his gravestone says, it was erected by the parishioners. Mr Hodgson has a pair of carpet bowls, going back to the formation of the club, which belonged to Mr Graham. They have a mother of pearl disc with 'D.G.' When he died his grandmother got the bowls, which she kept in a bag, hanging from a hook in the ceiling. She wouldn't let anyone use them until at last their uncle persuaded her. But he found they were no good. They'd hung too much and had lost their correct weight - as Mr Hodgson has confirmed. Made from lignum vitae.

The historical notes on the church were made by John Grimson, and have recently been re-issued.

Mr Hodgson was christened by Mr Walker, the ^Sunday before he left (There were actually 3 christenings on the same day - 29/8/26 - Peggy White, daughter David and Janet Turnbull; Allan H. - son of William and Georgina Turnbull; Margaret Lockhart, daughter of Edward and Leah Jane Cork, Fauldingcleugh).

He remembers Mr Fyffe as an awful nice wee man, died in 1938 (~~Do not print name of Fyffe as it is a private matter~~). He was a worrying sort, with a lovely garden. Some of the daffodils he planted are still there. He didn't farm the glebe, as Walker had done - but used to go around, on occasion, in clogs. In these days there was an outer and inner glebe. The church still has the outer glebe (between Notwen and DunsKellyrig). It was 15 acres, but has been reduced.

Eric Duncan next. Jim Irving said he used to play tennis with his lasses. Very clever, nice, easy to get on with. Still had Bible Class (as had McKenzie). He is possibly still alive. He gave up the ministry to teach or lecture. Had a young family. (Now living in Stirling.)

Mr McKenzie was a plumber to trade. Nice, more 'ordinary', clever, approachable, no airs/graces. Rode a bike (Duncan hadn't a car either). From Papa Westray, to Fauldhouse, Aberdeen. Now lives in Edinburgh, has daughter in Wetheral. Left 1954.

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railings effectively finished the choir, for Miss Wyllie and Miss Graham wouldn't sit there. (I think Miss Hodgson said some of the younger ones continued for a time, but the choir broke up). It wasn't a big choir, so a few leaving it would destroy it.

Still a Bible Class, and Cartwright tried to set up a youth organisation, the Boys Brigade, which didn't last long. There was a story about Cartwright coming across a book in Edinburgh which had a lot of Kirkpatrick Fleming church history in it. He said that the book said the Kirkpatrick Fleming pulpit had once been at 2 levels, the upper level being used for the sermon. This is supposed to be a very unusual feature which was occasionally found in Scotland. (I have found no sign of this in the Heritors' Records, where they talk about 'the pulpit' - singular - but that doesn't contradict the story). Mr Cartwright went to Orkney, died almost at once.

Mr Grimson has just retired - see December Life and Work. From about 1962 to 1966 or so. By now no choir, no Bible Class. In 1962 Alan Hodgson became an elder.

Dr Horsburgh, possibly the best preacher of them all, died on 5/11/1967 after only 5 months, of a brain hemorrhage. He'd been for 10 years in South Queensferry, 15 years in Oban, and said he hoped to stay 15 years in Kirkpatrick Fleming. Very clever, hard working. He had 2 gowns, his blue PhD gown being his 'happy gown' for weddings, harvest thanksgiving.

After a long vacancy, James Gregory, a Londoner, now in Blantyre, here 9 years. He loved hill walking, which always somehow came into his sermons.

Black came on a 'terminable appointment', and ran into difficulties over his strict interpretation of rules for baptisms and so on. There was only one baptism in his 18 months. Very religious, could preach, and some sympathised with his stand. Nonetheless, difficult to co-operate with because he wanted his own way. Wouldn't come to Sunday School (before church) - said he needed the time to prepare himself for church service - but still insisted he was in charge of it. But many said you couldn't get a nicer man to come into your house.

By now financial considerations helped to promote the Union, so that Kirkpatrick Fleming and Gretna are a Union and services are held once a month. There is still a Sunday School - around 21 children (compared with 90 about 40 years ago). It is run by Miss Hodgson her two sisters and Moira Cowan (Hollie). Her sisters

