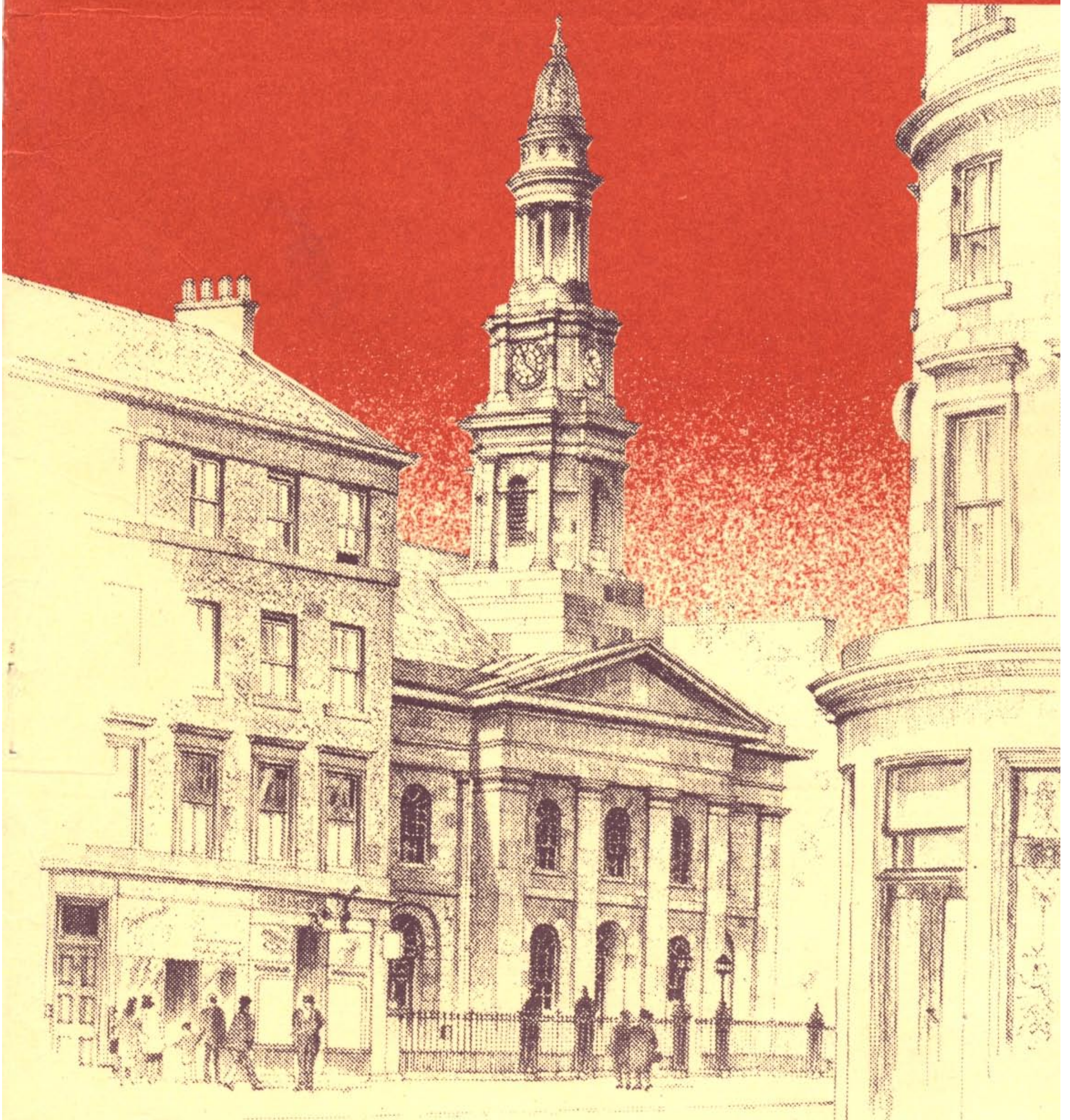


# The Story of the QUEEN'S HALL



“The Story of The Queen’s Hall” is a 16 page booklet that describes the early history of the building up until 1979. It was originally offered for sale at The Queen's Hall.

*Cover drawing by John Knight*

# The Story of the QUEEN'S HALL



## The Story of The Queen's Hall 1823 – 1979

H.M. The Queen unveiling a plaque at  
the opening ceremony on July 6th 1979,  
accompanied by the Chairman,  
Kenneth Newis, C.B., C.V.O.

## THE STORY OF THE QUEEN'S HALL

### The Building

The former church of Newington and St Leonard's, now the Queen's Hall, owes its origin to the rapid growth of the city southwards in the early years of the nineteenth century. Up to the 1750's the West Kirk (St Cuthbert's) had served all the suburbs and the area surrounding the old town to the west and south, but in 1756, Buccleuch Chapel was erected in the suburb of Bristo, beside the old windmill which had pumped water from the Boroughloch (now the Meadows) to brew beer for the citizens. By 1822, the area had expanded so much that the Kirk Session of St Cuthbert's appointed a Committee to investigate the state of the southern districts of the parish. They discovered that the total population of the area was 20,250, those over six years of age numbered 16,300 but that there were only 6,274 'seats' provided at places of worship, both Establishment and Dissenting. An extract from the first fundraising circular connected with the new chapel reads:

"When the Committee take into view, that such an immense population are nowhere provided with accommodation, that many individuals attend at Dissenting places of Worship from the impossibility of obtaining seats in any of those of the Establishment, that a considerable number who are furnished with seats have them in Churches at such a distance as would lead them to prefer a place of worship in their immediate neighbourhood, and that not a few, it is believed, who have stated that they have seats in Church, are only in the habit of finding a sort of chance accommodation in different places of worship, they consider themselves warranted in believing that there would be an immediate demand for the whole

sitting in a Place of Worship capable of containing Two Thousand persons."

Within eleven days donations of £630 and loan subscriptions for nearly £2000 had been received, but there were considerable problems finding the right site for the new Chapel. Eventually a site on the East side of Clerk Street, beyond Montague Street, was selected, but this was changed to a site on the opposite side of the street when it was found that a passage to the Meadows could be obtained at a "very trifling additional feu".

### The Architect

Robert Brown was commissioned to design the new Hope Park Chapel. Born in 1768, the son and grandson of wrights, Robert Brown was responsible for laying out the Easter Coates development for the Walker family, including Melville Street, Walker Street, Melville Crescent, Coates Crescent and the southern half of Manor Place. He was also responsible for Hopetoun Crescent, North West Circus Place, St Stephen Street and Henderson Row, among others. His only other public building was the Burgher Church, which stood between numbers 19 and 21 Rose Street, where he himself lived, next door to a bell-hanger!

Building costs in 1823 were just as likely to exceed estimates as they are today. The accounts of the joint Treasurers, John Waugh and James Howden show the original cost of building the chapel to be:

Price as per contract	£5420	0	0
Extra work by contractor	586	0	0
Architect's account	100	0	0
Contract/minute of feu	5	17	2
	<hr/>		
	£6111	17	2
	<hr/>		

Further expenditure on "Furnishings" included £42 for a stove, £65 18s 4d for a bell and £75 for gas apparatus. Obviously the fact that John Waugh and James Howden were joint Treasurers did not prevent relatively large orders being placed with their firms. Also in the accounts are "Extraordinary Payments" for:

Paid Waugh and Innes for Bibles and Psalm books £17 8s 6d

Paid J & W Howden & Co for Plate and Communion and Baptism Services £77 15s 8d

Paid Messrs. James Pillans & Sons for printing intimations £1 16s 6d

Paid Messrs Andrew Usher & Co for Communion Wine £6 2s 4d

Paid Messrs James Howden & Co for keeping the steeple Clock 1 year £6 0s 0d

The successors to James Pillans and Sons, the printing firm of Pillans and Wilson, still have premises in Bernard Terrace, less than 200 yards from the front of the Queens Hall. Andrew Usher's grandson made so much money from his wine and spirits business that in 1896 he gave £100,000 to build the hall in Lothian Road which bears his name, the big brother of the Queen's Hall! The clock which James Howden's firm kept for £6 0 0 a year was installed in 1827, paid for largely by public subscription from the residents of the South Side. They would have been able to see one of its four faces from a considerable distance until the building boom of the 1860's hemmed Hope Park Chapel in. One of the smaller items of expenditure was 3s for a 'sand glass', presumably to let the minister know when it was time to finish his sermon! There is no mention in the accounts of the pulpit pictured overleaf which is now in St Giles Church, Elgin.

Reproduced by permission of the Scottish Record Office



### The First Minister

The Church was at this time known as a chapel-of-ease, an expression used to describe new extension churches over which their founder churches kept a certain control. The first Minister was Rev Robert Gordon who was born at Glencairn, Dumfries-shire. After being licensed to preach, he became mathematical assistant to the Rector of Perth Academy, but in 1816 he was presented to the parish of Kinfauns. Here he remained until he was elected by the kirk-session of St Cuthbert's to be minister of the new chapel in Edinburgh. His power as a preacher at once filled the church with a large and influential congregation, and thus gave it a good beginning. He left in 1825 to be the minister of the New North Church, and went on to become Moderator of the General Assembly in 1841, and the first minister of the Free High Church at the Disruption.

One candidate for Rev Gordon's replacement was one of the most famous preachers of the day, Edward Irving. A close friend of Thomas Carlyle, Irving became for a time the most popular minister in all London, his simple

presbyterian chapel being crowded with cabinet ministers and members of royalty. A deputation from the Kirk Session of St Cuthbert's went to London to try to persuade him to take on the ministry of the new Chapel, and were told that Mr Irving was in his study and did not receive visitors until 2pm! As a result of their interview, however, he was presented with a formal invitation to accept the charge in the summer of 1825. But although Irving was greatly attracted by the offer to return to Scotland, he felt obliged to stay with the congregation which had first called him. Had he accepted, his own career might have been happier, for in a few years his popularity in London dwindled as he became increasingly taken up with his studies in Bible-Prophecy and Apocalyptic. He returned at Assembly time in 1828 and gave a series of lectures at the unusual hour of six in the morning to appeal to the ministers attending the Assembly. The following year he gave a similar series of lectures in Hope Park Chapel, then on the outskirts of town. Crowds came to hear him, both during the first week, when he lectured at six in the evening, and in the second, when to avoid the meetings of the Assembly, he began at seven in the morning. They certainly received good measure, for the lectures lasted a couple of hours and Irving himself was satisfied that they produced a good and lasting impression.

In the event the vacancy at Hope Park Chapel was filled by the Rev John Forbes, who was in turn succeeded by the Rev Dr Runciman. During his ministry, the Chapel was elevated to a 'quoad sacra' charge by Act of Assembly in 1834 and became known as Newington Parish Church. After his departure in 1844 to St Andrew's Church in Glasgow, no regular minister was ordained and the congregation diminished accordingly. This state of

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affairs continued until 1859 when the Rev James Elder Cumming was appointed minister and the district served by the church was erected into a parish by the Tiend Court. In a weekly series of "potted histories" of all Edinburgh's churches, the Evening Express of 3rd May 1883 described matters thus:

"The church was at that time in anything but a flourishing condition, and required all the new minister's energies to put new life into it. It was not long before his earnest labours raised Newington Church into a condition of prosperity, and made it one of the most

prominent of the outlying churches in Edinburgh. In May 1871, he left to become the minister of Sandyford Parish Church: his successor was the Rev John Alison, the present minister."

### **Newington Social Union**

Some idea of the work carried on by members of the Church is given in a description by the Rev John Alison of the Newington Social Union experiment.

"The worst bit of Edinburgh consisted of two semi-detached tenements of brick of four storeys, containing eighty houses of one apartment . . . On a space of about 350 square yards there was a population as large as any one of fifty parishes in Scotland. The erection of such a rookery should not have been allowed . . . The character of the tenants became worse year by year till the police were often afraid to venture in and never did enter at night except in pairs.

The Kirk Session of Newington instituted a lay missionaryship with district visitors for that locality alone. First two or three houses were combined into a hall for religious and other meetings. At last an opportunity occurred of buying the whole property: A limited liability company, "The Newington Social Union, Ltd" consisting of persons connected with Newington Church was formed with a nominal capital of £3000. A sum of £437 14s was spent on structural alterations. The woodwork was stripped off and the walls washed with dilute carbolic. Insect life so abounded that two joiners gave up their places rather than endure what they carried home with them. New water cisterns and sanitary arrangements of the most approved kind were introduced. Dark passages were abolished and on the ground floor all houses were altered to enter from the open air . . . There are

now 22 houses of two apartments and 33 of one. All this was done at the sight of the Burgh Engineer. The rent of a two-room is 3/3d to 3/6d, and of a one-room 1/6d to 2/-.

A caretaker lives on the premises. He sees that the printed rules are observed, that the stairs are swept and washed and that the sanitary arrangements are attended to and disorderliness prevented. He is a tradesman and is at hand to attend to leakage of water, do joiner work or any other small jobs. He also collects the weekly payment of rent."

### **Building of St Leonard's Church**

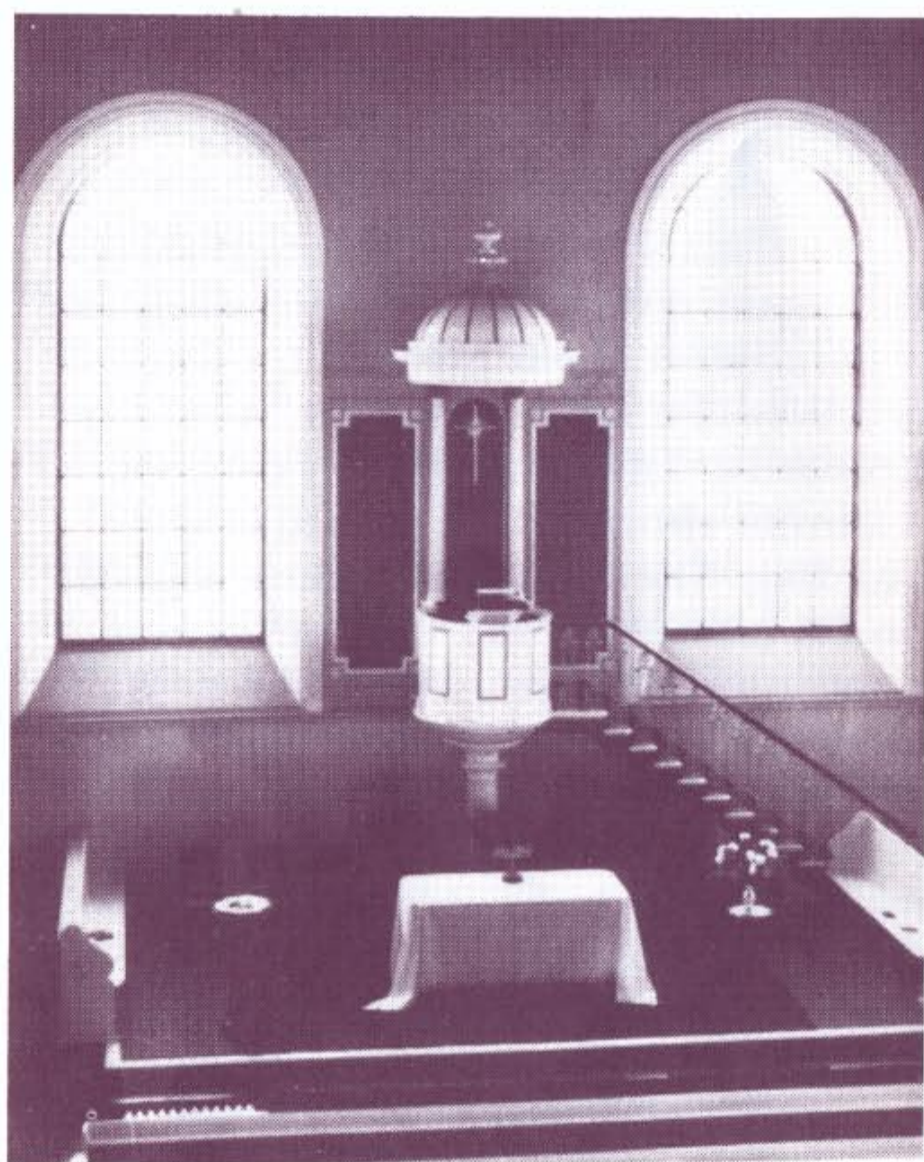
By the 1870's, the population increase had again resulted in overcrowding, and a proposal was put forward for the erection of a new church for St Leonard's. The congregation contributed a sum of about £1500 towards the building. The foundation stone was laid on 1st June 1878 and the church was opened on 6th April 1879. The new church was accidentally destroyed by fire six months after opening, but a replacement was quickly provided and the St Leonard's Church became a Parish Quoad Sacra in 1883, with the same motto as Newington Church, "Service First".

An extract from the Edinburgh Evening News of Saturday 21st April 1883 gives us a glimpse of another aspect of Church life at this time:

### **Newington Church Choral Society**

"Last night members of this society gave a recital of sacred music in Newington Church. The choir was occupied by the Rev Dr Alison, and there was a fair attendance. In the first part of the programme, Mendelssohn's cantata 'Lauda Sion' was given, and some of the

numbers were rendered in exceedingly good taste. This was especially the case with the soprano solo and chorus 'Sing of Judgement' which was really effective. Notice might also be taken of the soprano solo 'Lord of all time', given by a lady with a sweet voice, which she managed very skilfully. The chorus 'Save the people who adore Thee' was the best effort of the society, due attention being paid to shading, and



every feature in the number being carefully brought out. In the second part of the programme, the organ solos were particularly good."

The Forster and Andrews organ installed in 1873, was only the second organ introduced into an established church in Edinburgh, and out of 1300 members, only 7 objected to it. At this time (1883), the communicants of the

church numbered 1358, while the sittings were slightly below 1300. A district nurse was attached to the Church (she also fulfilled the duties of Bible-woman), and the poorer parts of the parish were visited by the ladies of the congregation. A Dorcas Society employed over 30 poor women and about 46 poor children got a free dinner once a week in winter.

Towards the end of the century, modifications were made in accordance with Victorian taste. Tinted glass was put in the windows, the pulpit was lowered, the high box pews were replaced with more comfortable seating, and the number of seats reduced. In its day, Newington was a fashionable kirk for the owners of the substantial new villas of the Southside; Thomas Nelson and his family were among the many supporters from the burgesses and merchants. Girls from the historic Trades Maiden Hospital, founded by Mary Erskine, sat near the organ in the south loft or gallery, while the boys from Robertson's Academy (behind East Preston Street) occupied the opposite pews. When the old seats were scraped during the 1950's restoration, several inscriptions were discovered cut surreptitiously into the wood — including the heart-moving "elle est partie" from some long dead youth who had watched in vain for the reappearance of his favourite maiden in the gallery opposite!

Another indication of the mood of the age is reflected in the minutes of the Kirk session for 1892, when they "cordially approved of the arrangement made by Mr Thompson in draping the pulpit and the front pews of the gallery in black cloth on the occasion of the death of the Duke of Clarence."

In February 1897, Dr Alison requested the Session to appoint an assistant and successor, and accordingly



in 1898 the Rev Hugh Cameron was elected to fill this role. He remained in this position until 15th May 1932 during which time he and his wife produced nine children — James, Dorothy, Maud, Norah, Elizabeth, Marjorie, Ian, Hugh and Donald, all of whom survived infancy except for Hugh. Norah, Ian and Donald all later contributed to the Queen's Hall Appeal.

### **Newington and St Leonard's Churches Re-United**

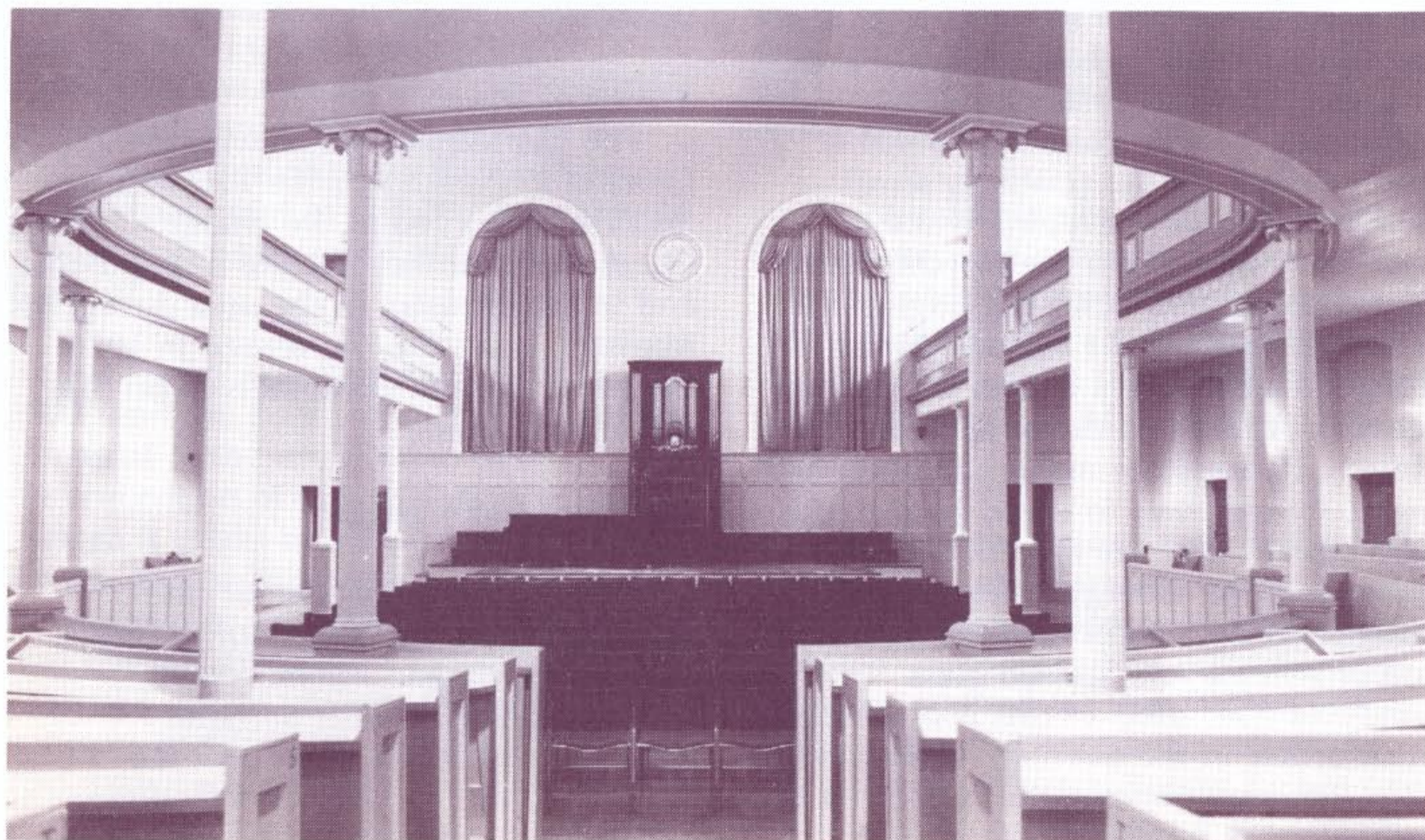
The re-uniting of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church in 1929 meant that there were thirteen Church of Scotland congregations between the Meadows and the Queen's Park south of the old city wall. A decline in population and the beginnings of a change in kirk-going habits accentuated the over-provision this represented, so that closure and amalgamation of some of these congregations became an urgent necessity.

In 1932, the Rev Hugh Cameron was

obliged by ill-health and advancing years to resign his charge, so the General Assembly passed an Act reuniting the parishes of Newington and St Leonard's. The Rev William Liddle, minister of St Leonard's since 1913, became minister of the combined parish, and St Leonard's was sold to the Church of Christ for £3000. The money raised in this way was used to build a hall immediately behind the parish church, which is now the Lothian Room.

J. Jeffrey Waddell, a Glasgow architect was responsible for the plans for this new hall. The first plan involved the demolition of the Session House (now the artists' changing rooms) but this was considered too expensive, and the hall we have today was built and opened on December 8th 1934.

Little material change was to be made to the church until after the war when in June 1949 the Kirk Session were offered two fourteen foot high tablets which had been in Buccleuch Parish Church. These were accepted and renovated by Aitken



Dott and hung in their present position in the north and south entry porches where they were dedicated on March 17th 1950. One shows the Ten Commandments and the other the Lord's Prayer; such tablets were a common feature of Protestant and Reformed churches in Europe but are rare in Scotland. It is possible that they are the tablets referred to in the St Cuthbert's Kirk Session Minutes of January 13th 1758, to "lettering and gilding the frames on the wall on each side of the pulpit" at the then newly built St Cuthbert's Chapel of Ease, later known as Buccleuch Church.

Five years after the erection of these tablets in Newington Church, more ambitious plans for alterations to the church were proposed by the architect Ian Lindsay to remedy the by then unwelcome changes which had been made in the late Victorian era. On September 16th 1955 the Evening Dispatch announced a 'fund raising exhibition including a visual history of the parish and a photographic record of the Church from its earliest days'. The changes proposed by Ian Lindsay included a 'seemly chapel' under the north gallery for the relatively small numbers attending evening worship, with the minister and the worshippers round a long table after the original reformed manner. To balance this he designed a children's chapel for Sunday school purposes on the south side of the church. Perhaps the major alteration he made, though, was to revert back to the light colours and the original window patterns of the Georgian original and away from the darkness of the Victorian colour scheme and stained glass windows. The effect of this is made clear in an article in the Evening News of June 12th 1959, announcing the reopening on the following Sunday of the church.



"Following the modern trend in church decoration, the church has been stripped of its old dark varnish and repainted in pastel shades. This has proved very successful and the general appearance of the church has been improved enormously. Light meter readings have disclosed that there has been a seven fold increase in light values!"

The last Minister of Newington and St Leonard's Church was the Rev Matthew Shields, appointed to the charge in 1956. There was a further decline in population and in the industry of the area during his Ministry, and when he retired in 1976, the congregation was dissolved on 31st July of that year.

### **The Conversion Begins**

The closing of this parish church coincided with the search for premises by two of Scotland's most recent orchestras, the Scottish Baroque Ensemble (founded 1968) and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra (founded in 1974). These two groups, as well as the

Scottish Philharmonic Singers, (at that time all managed by the Scottish Philharmonic Society) had used various Edinburgh halls for rehearsals and concerts, but needed a permanent base in order to develop their talents. Those who are not performers themselves may not realise the importance to musicians of the surroundings in which they rehearse, but the distinctive sound of a particular orchestra can only be developed when the acoustics of their rehearsal place are suitable and consistent.

Initially the search was principally for premises for rehearsals, and various possibilities (including Belford Church) were considered. However, when it became known that Newington and St Leonard's Church was available, the Directors of the Scottish Philharmonic Society (who included several of the players themselves) began to consider a more ambitious project — the provision of a new concert hall for Edinburgh. They decided to commission the architects, Robert Hurd and Partners, to draw up plans, and planning permission was granted by Edinburgh District Council in the face of rival proposals for conversion into offices, in spite of the fact that the only known finance was a provisional grant of £35,000 from the Housing the Arts Fund of the Arts Council.

An appeal was launched early in 1977, and the public recognised both the potential of the project and the determination of the organisation, young though it might be, to carry it through. By the end of 1977 over £100,000 had been given or promised by individuals and £50,000 from the City of Edinburgh District Council towards the initial estimate of £350,000, and the architects had drawn up preliminary plans. The job went out to tender later in 1977 and the

main contract was let to Melville, Dundas & Whitson, who started work in February 1978.

During 1978 the funds were augmented with contributions from charitable trusts and business, from local authorities, the Historic Buildings Council and other government bodies, and continuing gifts and covenants from individuals, culminating in a grant of £200,000 from Lothian Regional Council who were given special rights in the use of the Hall. (This arrangement was inherited by the City of Edinburgh District Council in 1983.) This enabled the Society to commission some extra work, particularly in the back stage areas, which resulted in a postponement of completion until June 1979.

### **Problems of Transformation**

Confidence was boosted at this critical stage by a decision by John Drummond, the Director of the Edinburgh International Festival, to use the new hall for a number of recitals in the next Festival, thus confirming the importance of the hall in the future musical life of Edinburgh.

The fundraising in itself gave rise to a large number of entertaining musical events, notably a benefit concert given by James Galway, and a gala evening at Hopetoun House in June 1978, which set the style for future S.C.O. promotions there.

The problem facing Larry Rolland of Robert Hurd and Partners was to preserve the main features of this 'A-listed' building, while providing the facilities required for the comfort and safety of the audience and performers. The original architect, Robert Brown of Edinburgh, in his design for the church

successfully combined solidity with unexpected lightness and grace, and these are features which are retained in the re-styled auditorium shown in its original state in the photograph above. Both exterior and interior are 'A-listed', and it was felt that it was essential to preserve the horseshoe shape by retaining most of the pews, with some modification for comfort.

The Victorian organ had been removed before the building was purchased by the Scottish Philharmonic Society, and part of the instrument is incorporated into the organ in Nicholson Square Methodist Church. This gave the opportunity of reinstating the seating in the centre gallery. In the side galleries, in spite of altering the rake of some seats, and providing promenade areas, it proved impossible to give all seats a complete view of the stage without severely altering the structure. Flexibility for performances was achieved by removing the central pews and providing moveable seating and an extendable stage, to allow for different scale performances, even for some in the round.

The acoustics were tested at an early stage both by experts and by musicians and found to be excellent for a building of this size. In the conversion, the aim has been to alter this natural acoustic as little as possible, with the object of achieving a sound which is warm but clear. Double-glazing was necessary not only to make the hall suitable for recordings, but also to avoid disturbing the neighbours! In view of the size of the two West windows it was decided to provide curtains here instead of double-glazing, which also cut out the glare from sunlight during daytime performances. The roundel between these windows was designed and donated by the Architects.

Photograph by Sean Hudson



## The Clock

From the Evening Express of May 1883 we learn:

“The spire contains a clock whose movements have been eccentric for some time, but have now stopped altogether. The explanation is that the works have been worn out by 56 years' service. It was provided in 1827, mainly by subscriptions from inhabitants of the district. A movement for a new clock is being initiated, and the Town Council have promised in that event to bear the expense of lighting it.”

The mechanical workings were unfortunately stolen just before renovation started (presumably just for their scrap value) and replaced with electrical mechanism.

Even at this stage costs inevitably increased as the scope of the work required was fully assessed and some of the particular difficulties were realised. For instance, ventilation involves large ducts, and the structure of the galleries made it very difficult to fit these between the joists. It also involves large and noisy equipment to extract air mechanically. Fortunately there was just sufficient space in the base of the tower, but a large aperture had to be created for the

equipment to be swung in from a crane, and very sophisticated techniques used to ensure that the system was virtually silent in the auditorium. Great care was taken to ensure that the other services were fitted as unobtrusively as was possible — consistent with efficiency and a limited budget.

The original windows on the North side were modified to allow for a complete new extension, providing box office, cloakroom, toilets and kitchen, and giving access from front of house to backstage. The various ancillary halls to the church underwent transformation: the vestry became a changing room for performers, the session house was extended upwards (the only direction possible!) to provide rooms for soloists, conductor and management as well as the female changing room, and the former kitchen became a store. The large hall built in the 1930's is now a bar/restaurant area, which is also used for serving, for informal concerts and for meetings. (This area was named the Lothian Room in 1982, in recognition of the special part that Lothian Regional Council had taken in the establishment and development of the Queen's Hall.)

A smaller extension was built on the South-West side to provide a multi-purpose room for meetings and hospitality. An incidental advantage is that by incorporating a fire escape into this a roof garden has been created for use on occasional sunny days. This room was named the Canada Room in recognition of the support provided for The Queen's Hall by the Canadian-Scottish Philharmonic Foundation. The hall is the Scottish base for their work of promoting closer cultural links between the two countries.

The building was enhanced externally by stone cleaning and general repairs,

and internally by the installation of a fine English chamber organ, made by William Gray in 1810 for a house in Norfolk, and restored by Christopher Dickens.

### **The Naming of the Hall**

A great deal of thought went into choosing a name for the Hall. It was considered important to make a clean break with its ecclesiastical history (St Leonard as the patron saint of prisoners did not seem entirely appropriate anyhow), and the name 'Philharmonic' belonging to the Company was felt to give an impression of too large a scale. The name of 'The Queen's Hall' seemed appropriate for a capital city, and continued the tradition of the Queen's Hall in London which, before its destruction in the blitz had fostered such a surge in popular appreciation of classical music.

Permission was sought from Her Majesty The Queen to use this name, and she graciously consented early in 1979, and agreed to open the new concert hall during her visit to Edinburgh in July.

There were times during the spring of 1979 when it seemed impossible that the work would be finished on time, but with electricians and other trades working night and day, the deadline was met, and the painters disappeared out of the back door almost at the moment when Her Majesty The Queen arrived at the front.

### **The Opening Ceremony**

On Thursday July 6th 1979, the three groups of musicians who had been so closely involved with the project combined to entertain those who had supported the campaign since 1976. This was the programme:



Her Majesty the Queen arrives at the Queen's Hall at 8.00 p.m. and is welcomed by the Lord Lieutenant of Edinburgh, Mr Kenneth Borthwick. She proceeds to the stage in the auditorium where She is invited by Mr Kenneth Newis, Chairman of Scottish Philharmonic Society (Newington) Limited, to open the Queen's Hall by unveiling a plaque commemorating the occasion.

A posy is presented by Miss Rachel Haldane.

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM arranged for this occasion by Malcolm Williamson, Master of the Queen's Music, for The Musicians of the Scottish Philharmonic Society, conducted by the Master of the Queen's Music.

**The Scottish Philharmonic Singers**  
Chorusmaster: Ian McCrorie

**The Scottish Chamber Orchestra**  
Conductor: Roderick Brydon

TE DEUM IN C MAJOR *Josef Haydn*

**The Scottish Baroque Ensemble**  
Director: Leonard Friedman

SONATA NO. 5 IN G *William McGibbon*

BRANDENBURG CONCERTO NO. 3  
IN G *J.S. Bach*

ENGLISH LYRICS *Malcolm Williamson*  
Baritone: Alexander Garden

**The Scottish Chamber Orchestra**  
Conductor: Roderick Brydon

SYMPHONY NO. 35 IN D MAJOR K385  
"HAFFNER" *Wolfgang Mozart*

The event, which was televised, was a festive occasion, and the only noticeable hitch was when the plaque slipped off its easel as it was being removed from the stage to its permanent position. Luckily, Her Majesty was amused!

There is no room in this account of the Hall's history to cover fully its activities since that auspicious day. An indication of its expansion is that in 1979/80 there were 100 musical performances in the hall and 50 in the Lothian Room. In 1983/84 there were 180 public musical performances in the hall, 25 in the Lothian Room, and other activities (conferences, meetings and functions) had grown from nil to over 50, not counting rehearsals and recording sessions.

There is however no doubt that for this transformed building the story has only just begun.



## Management

The Queen's Hall is owned and managed by a limited company with charitable status, The Queen's Hall (Edinburgh) Ltd (formerly The Scottish Philharmonic Society (Newington) Ltd). Its Board of Directors includes representatives from the Scottish Chamber Orchestra Ltd and the Scottish Baroque Ensemble Ltd and from local authorities. The Chairman, Kenneth Newis, C.B., C.V.O., and the Administrator, Ursula Richardson have been with the Company since its formation in 1978.

The Hall is financed (as at 1984) by income earned from hire of the hall and from bar and catering activities, backed up by grants from the City of Edinburgh District Council and the Scottish Arts Council.

## The Friends of the Queen's Hall

The Friends of the Queen's Hall was formed in 1981, under the chairmanship of Max Harper-Gow, to provide a focus for supporters of the Queen's Hall. The Friends do what they can to help the management maintain the Hall's position as the friendliest and liveliest concert hall in Edinburgh. Members look after information points in the Hall, especially during the Edinburgh International Festival, and help in various ways to ensure that everything runs smoothly. They meet together at events held exclusively every year for the Friends and their guests. If you would like to become a Friend, further details are available from the Queen's Hall.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks to Andrew McGregor and Joy Beer for original research, and to the Rev Edwin Towill, the Rev Matthew Shields and Ursula Richardson for their contributions.

Collated and edited by  
ROSEMARY BURNETT.

**T**he Queen's Hall, with its soberly pilastered and pedimented front, is every inch a dignified public building amid the tenements of Newington. Cast-iron railings and filigree gatepiers politely keep the passer-by at a distance. The classical steeple, in whose four stages the squarest of belfries is modified into the most graceful of domes, is a useful landmark. It also gives away the fact that the hall was designed as a church — the Hope Park Chapel (1823). The architect was Robert Brown, who also designed the west-end terraces of the Walker estate (1813) from Coates Crescent to the North.

Inside, splendid twin stairways carry you up to the gallery. Or you can go straight inside. It is a lovely hall nearly as broad as it is deep, with a big acanthus 'rose' in the centre of the square ceiling and four small ones in the corners, all tied together by a delicate moulding. The horseshoe gallery with its panelled front is held up by very slim leafy-topped columns. Comfortable Georgian pews are held in place except in the body of the hall. In place of the pulpit the Georgian chamber-organ by William Gray (1810) occupies the focal position.

COLIN McWILLIAM



The Queen's Hall (Edinburgh) Ltd., 5 Hope Park Crescent, Edinburgh EH8 9NA. Telephone: 031-668 211