

## OUR AIN TOON

Tradition tells us that about the end of the 11th century, there was a man called Althamer, a seafaring man, who with his crew had the doubtful reputation of being pirates.

The story goes that their ship driven by hurricane winds was blown into the Firth of Forth, and wrecked on rocks, at what we now call Prestonpans.

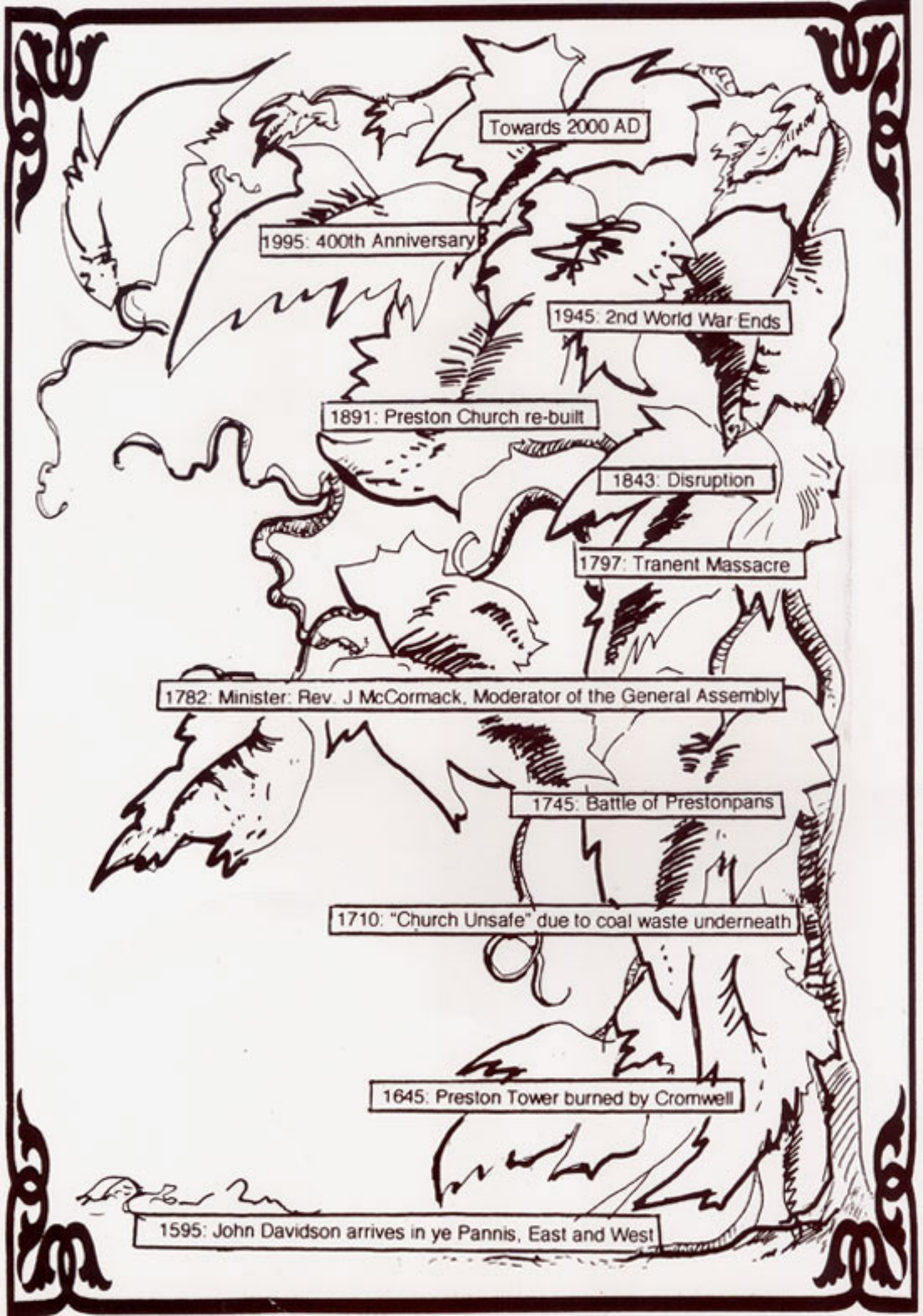


Unable to return to their old "trade", these ship-wrecked mariners, possibly of Dutch origin, decided to remain there, where they formed a hamlet naming it "Althamer" in honour of their captain. Thus when the Monks of Newbattle obtained a settlement in the district, they found the hamlet of Althamer occupied by villagers probably descendants of those original shipwrecked sailors. These villagers would mostly be engaged in the fishing trade, certain of their sons would seek employment in the newly established salt works (1189).

The original "gift" from "De Quincy of Tranent and Winton" was the land which ultimately became known as the "Barony of Prestongrange". A second gift of land in the meadows of Tranent, became known as Bankton. In these meadows the Monks grazed their sheep, they excavating peats as a fuel to produce salt. It was there that they came across what they called "Black Diamonds", in reality coal out crops between Bankton and Seton. And so it was that during the early years of the 13th century (1202-10), coal was discovered and excavated by these early settlers in the district. With an abundant supply of coal and an even greater supply of salt water, the salt industry flourished.

Around this time the name of the hamlet began to change. It had become Aldhamer, and after the arrival of the Monks, it became known as Prieststoun. Then as if in keeping with the new industry, it became "Salt Prieststoun", which was soon reduced to "Salt Preston". In the course of time, the word salt was dropped and replaced with the word "Pans", as in salt pans, and it soon became the town and by act of Parliament 11 July 1606, and Parish of Prestonpans.





Towards 2000 AD

1995: 400th Anniversary

1945: 2nd World War Ends

1891: Preston Church re-built

1843: Disruption

1797: Tranent Massacre

1782: Minister: Rev. J McCormack, Moderator of the General Assembly

1745: Battle of Prestonpans

1710: "Church Unsafe" due to coal waste underneath

1645: Preston Tower burned by Cromwell

1595: John Davidson arrives in ye Pannis, East and West

## GRANGE MINISTERS SINCE 1843

**CUNNINGHAM**      **William**      **1843**

**McKAY**              **Patrick**      **1879**

Buried in Prestonpans cemetery. Gained the CBE

**IVERACH**              **Donald**      **1899**

Translated to South Africa

**PHILIPS**              **John**      **1906**

"Excellent preacher"; well liked by congregation.

**WESTWATER**              **Alex**      **1913**

Son of a Fife miner, previously ministered in Borders.

**McLENNAN**              **Kenneth**      **1928**

Held in awe.

**LAWSON**              **Alex**      **1950**

A keen fundraiser

**TAYLOR**              **A.T.H.**      **1956**

A man before his time: left for mission work.

**KIRK**              **Harry** **1964**

Quiet, family man.

**HILL**              **Arthur**      **1970**

Friendly out going, gentlemanly minister.



<b>MORTON</b>	<b>Colin</b>	<b>1973</b>
A man for the people of Prestonpans.		
<b>HERKES</b>	<b>Moir</b>	<b>1988</b>
Our first woman minister		
<b>SIMPSON</b>	<b>Robert</b>	<b>1994</b>
"A fine-like Chiel"		



Salt Preston Kirk

Early Communion tokens fore runners of Communion cards.

(actual size 10mm across) made of pewter  
 these tokens gave the holder the right to Communion  
 unlike today where the card only registers attendance

**CARLYLE**                      **William**                      **1724**  
Was reputed to have watched the Battle of Prestonpans from the clock tower.(no mention of the battle was found in the church records of that time)

**ROY**                              **James**                      **1765**  
Translated from St.Cuthberts Chapel of Ease, Edinburgh.

**REID**                              **Mathew**                      **1768**  
Purported to have been a keen gardener.

**McCORMACK**                      **Joseph**                      **1771**  
Became Moderator of General Assembly

**TROTTER**                      **John**                      **1783**  
presented by John Hamilton.

**PRIMROSE**                      **Peter**                      **1796**

**CUNNINGHAM**                      **William**                      **1833**  
Started Grange Church at the disruption

**STRUTHERS**                      **J**                      **1844**  
Minister for forty years and a great historian, he is the source of much of the information known of our church.

**SMITH**                              **George**                      **1899**  
Helped many a poor family from the pockets of his voluminous coat.

**AYRE**                              **Logan**                      **1916**  
Long serving minister who became a community institution. Last minister to be buried in church yard

**BELL**                              **Robert**                      **1938**  
Well respected minister whose family played a lively part in church and community.

**SMITH**                              **C**                      **1949**  
Preferred to be known as "Bill" rather than "the Rev."

**McPHAIL**                      **Peter**                      **1958**  
The much loved "man with the bicycle clips."

## MINISTERS SINCE 1595

**DAVIDSON**                      **John**                      **1595**

Built the original church.

**KERR**                              **John**                      **1605**

Was told by Davidson in his youth to change his ways as he would succeed him in his ministry. He was minister for some 39 yrs.

**KERR**                              **Robert**                      **1638**

Second son of the above helped his father from 1638 without increase in stipend.

**OSWALD**                      **John**                      **1648**

For his time it was strange for a minister to translate from Edinburgh to a country charge.

**COOKE**                              **Patrick**                      **1654**

Selected in 1670 as one of "the Bishop's Evangelists" to enlighten Presbyterians in the West.

**MONEYPENNY**                      **George**                      **1673**

Was ordained a Presbyterian in England.

**BUCHAN**                              **James**                      **1676**

Deprived for not taking the "test" of 1681.

**RAMSAY**                              **Robert**                      **1682**

Deprived for not reading the Proclamation enjoined by the Estates.  
Was removed by force and his library sold to cover this expense.

**MONCRIEF**                              **John**                      **1687**

Denounced for keeping conventicles, and translated to Edinburgh.

**ANDREWS**                              **George**                      **1694**

Represented Presbytery at sitting of Parliament 1695, fell out with Sir William Hamilton and was translated in 1699

**HORSBURGH**                              **Robert**                      **1702**

Complained of subsidence in 1710 and congregation was forced to meet in a barn at Preston.





**Prestongrange Sunday School**

In 1984 the hall was sold and is now converted into six houses. Grange Church then became Prestongranger Church Hall. However spiralling maintenance costs eventually decreed that it too be sold. St Andrews Episcopal Church bought it and it now flourishes as a Church again in its own right.

Now we have no hall; the Sunday School meets in the Infant School, the Womens' Guild meets in Harlaw Hill Day Centre; some meetings are held in the Vestry some in the Church itself -- Who knows -- maybe in the future some small building will spring up and be the centre for all the variety of activities that make up Church Life.

Ah well ----- its' a thought!



Communion jugs used to hold Communion wine.

These jugs made of pewter would have been used to fill the Communion Cups during the service.

Today glass phials are used purely for hygiene.



## PRESTON CHURCH HALL

The small building across from the Church which was formerly Preston Church Hall was built at the beginning of the century for the princely sum of £834.13s.4d. Many different organisations and groups over the years have used it and the walls have reverberated with children's laughter at Christmas parties, riotous applause at Kinderspiels, musical evenings, dances plays and pantomimes once even gasps of astonishment and awe when "Scot of the Antarctic" (yes the original film) was shown to a packed hall. Add to this the lingering aroma of school dinners and you have some idea of the versatility of "THE HALL"

Lodge Thorntree 1038 used it as a meeting place before their premises were built and their annual ball was held in the hall.

The Church Literary and Debating Society was formed in 1939 and ran successfully for 10 years, at one time boasting 100 members.

In 1949 Preston Church Drama Club, formerly a section of the Guild and Lit. became a club in their own right and enjoyed many years of local "fame". A full stage was built complete with Proscenium Arch which could be stored under the platform. Lighting was installed and twice a year the little hall was transformed into a miniature King's Theatre.

The hall was a popular place throughout the week as you can see

**SUNDAY:** Beginners Sunday School, Sunday School, Bible Class, Youth Fellowship.

**MONDAY:** SCHOOL DINNERS  
Rechabite Friendly Society, Brownies, TOC H.

**TUESDAY:** SCHOOL DINNERS  
Creche for Young Wives Group, Brownies

**WEDNESDAY:** SCHOOL DINNERS  
Womens Guild, Brownies.

**THURSDAY:** SCHOOL DINNERS  
Drama Group, Lodge Thorntree.

**FRIDAY:** SCHOOL DINNERS  
Guides

**SATURDAY:** Coffee Mornings, Jumble Sales, Dances, Parties  
Wedding Receptions.

## Prestongrange Organ

The organ was originally installed at the end of the north aisle at the turn of the century by INGRAM & COMPANY of EDINBURGH, HEREFORD and LONDON.

The pipe work was moved to its present location in the former Laird's Loft with a detached console in the choir area. A complete rebuild was undertaken in the mid 60's but was not completed. Over the past 20 years or so, modifications have been carried out by the tuner and organist so that there is now a fairly complete specification. There are 3 separate sections in the organ, Known as THE GREAT, THE SWELL and THE PEDAL.

The GREAT has 6 stops and provides the basic organ tones.

The 8 stops of the SWELL are placed inside a large box with shutters, controlled by a pedal at the console to give a crescendo effect.

The 5 stops of the PEDAL department give the BASS sounds.

The pipe lengths vary from 16 feet to smaller than a pencil.

From the Session Minutes

**4th March 1899**

*It was agreed that an organ be introduced and proposed that Mr William White be appointed as Organist and Choirmaster and paid £25 per annum.*

*It was further agreed to appoint Mr Wallace as Organ Blower at the cost of £4 per annum. He would be required to work both services on Sabbath, Choir practice and any extraordinary requirements.*



## **Tables for the Hall**

Functions and Fairs require tables that can be folded and stored when not required. "Get the material and we will make our own tables" These were the words of the late Alex Taylor who organised a squad to work in the hall mainly in the evenings. Wood was measured and cut to size - nails and screws and hinges were made available. The scene in the hall resembled a factory conveyer belt as bits and pieces were assembled and put together, then nailed or screwed into place. At the end of the project the church possessed 20 folding tables which have been well used by the church and other outside organisations. It is a tribute to the workmanship of the volunteers that most, if not all, of these tables are still in use.

Those who took part in these projects experienced enjoyment, satisfaction, a feeling of achievement, and great sense of fellowship in working together for the church.

## **Tom McKinlay's "Revenge"**

Remembering young days, those of us of "a certain age" often recall McKinlay's Shop, visited as much for the owner's sense of humour - "come in - get out" - as for toffee apples and cinnamon sticks.

Around the age of eight or nine I used to look forward to Tom's round with his horse,\* which loved to eat the foliage from the tree at our gate. Tom preferred that she was not fed on these particular leaves and would go away after I had given her a generous helping, with a smile and "I'll get you one day for that, Margaret."

In 1989 after finishing arranging the church flowers I decided to weed the area by the vestry while my daughters finished practising some music in the church. To the sound of this music I fell into Tom's grave as the earth gave way. Lying there I remembered stories of how he had jokingly marked out this spot as his final resting place. Did I hear a horse's whinny and Tom's chuckle?

\* Blossom? Primrose? Who can Remember?

## **The Sunday School Trip**

The Sunday School Trip has always been the highlight of the year although the mode of transport has changed greatly.

In the early 1900's the trip made the "long" journey to Prestongrange House in a horse drawn cart.

By the 20's transport was the tram car along to Eskside on the last Thursday in June or by steam train to Gullane.

In the fifties and sixties the Sunday School hired a whole train to wonderful places such as Peebles, North Berwick, Burntisland stopping in every siding. Children carried tinnies on a string round their necks. Mothers, aunties and grannies carried shopping bags, flasks and sandwiches and it didn't rain.....often.



## A Brighter Church

One of the biggest projects undertaken by voluntary labour was the scraping and cleaning of the church pews. This entailed removing the dark paint from all the pews a particularly messy job to bring them back to a natural wood colour. Volunteer squads of men and women undertook this task over many weeks, scraping off the old paint, cleaning up the resultant mess, washing the floors, and finally coating the pews with a clear wax covering. The wood around the organ pipes and the front of the balconies grained professionally by Mr Jardine, painter, free of cost.

All this work, coupled with the removal of the coloured glass from the windows, brought a brighter and fresher look to the whole interior of the church.

A dance was held to mark the end of this long and arduous task. It was aptly named "The Scrapers' Ball!"

## The Tower



The building known as the Tower was at one time part of the Prestonpans Soap Works property. Although badly in need of internal structural repairs it was purchased by the church for (£40) ?

Then under the guidance of Jimmy Scott and the late Alex Taylor a squad of men set to work to make it into a useful building for church purposes. The whole inside was gutted until only the four walls remained. Work was organised over many weeks, the volunteers turning up in regular rotas helping with structural work, joinery, electrical installation, painting and general labouring etc. When the job was finished we possessed a useful

building consisting of an upper floor room, a ground floor room, small kitchen and toilet facilities. Presumably because of its outside shape it became known as "The Tower".



Seat Rents also provided some income 6/- per annum 3/- being payable in May and November. The Co-op dividend was given out then so there may have been method in the Treasurers madness!

The Session agreed in 1961 to appoint women to the Deacons Court and thus it came about that three were admitted on 24th February that year, the first in the town to hold office

### **Some of things I missed**

1. In connection with communion

The Preparatory Service on Friday night and the Thanksgiving Services on Sunday Evening and the white cloths on the pews

2. Psalms and Paraphrases The service invariably began with one or other

3 Hymns we sang in Sunday School which were omitted from the Third Edition

(a) Lord a little band and lowly. (b) Do no sinful action

Hymns which were included but rarely sung

(a) The morning bright (b) God of Heaven, hear our singing

and many, many more.....

At this juncture the names were changed, the Parish Church becoming Preston Church and the United Free, Grange Church. and the ministers exchanged pulpits in July and August each year in order to have a holiday.

At three years we went to Sunday School meeting at 3pm in the hall, which was heated by large coal fires and lit by gas. Sometimes we were given small cards upon which was printed a text to be learned for the following Sunday. The Senior Sunday School sat Bible Examinations set by 121 George Street. Certificates (Pass, Merit or Honours depending on results) were presented in church along with a book or Bible.

On a few occasions we held a kinderspiel, children from the Parish Church taking part too. The highlights in our year were the Sunday School picnic and the Christmas treat. The picnic was held on the last Thursday in June, the school being closed for the day and the local shopkeepers on their monthly holiday. We all had either an enamel or tin mug usually tied round our necks with a length of tape. By 1930 the Sunday School met just after the morning service. Most of us went to church first and were members of the Young Worshippers League our cards being stamped at the church door by the office-bearer on duty. At the evening service after electricity was installed, the beadle always switched off the light except the two near the pulpit, just before the minister began the sermon. I never had the courage to enquire why this was done and can only assume it was to save electricity, thus reducing the subsequent bills. The walls were painted green and cream horizontal stripes. I do not think present day painters would approve!

Many gifts were donated to the church over the years, including in my time, the three stained glass windows on the north side in memory of Mr Westwater, Mr Meek who had been Session Clerk and for the hundredth anniversary. This was due to be installed in 1943 but was postponed until after the war.

We even had an electric organ a far cry from the first I remember. It was a memorial to those killed in the first world war and a boy, usually from the Sunday School sat behind a curtain operating the pump. The original harmonium stood beside it, but it ended its days in Sam Burns yard.

We had several organisations The Boys Brigade, Sunday School Parents Association, Wives Group, Bible Class at 5pm before the evening service and the Woman's Guild (previously called "The Work Party" I think the name was changed at the Union in 1929. The ladies sewed and knitted throughout the winter and held their Annual Sale of work in the spring, always on a Saturday afternoon. They also started a Drama Group, but because of the small number it only lasted two or three years. However, Preston Church started a similar group and I can think of two, not so young ladies from the Grange Guild who joined them and were given quite big parts. There was a mission at Cuthill run by the Home Board of the Church of Scotland.



## Memories of Grange Church - some Extracts



I have been asked to put down on paper my memories of Grange Church. This is more difficult than at first thought but I will do my best. So what better way than to start at the beginning.

I suppose the beginning for me was the Disruption in 1843 when my great grandmother walked out of the Parish Church with the minister the Rev. William B. Cunningham and many members of the congregation .

They met in the Malt Barns owned by Mr Hislop, Castlepark who gifted the land upon which the Free Church was built. In 1929 I remember when the congregation was asked to vote regarding its future ie whether it wished to remain within the United Free Church or "go back in" Although a few churches up and down the country remained "Free" Prestonpans decided to be reunited .

It was about this time, known as the disruption, that the Rev William Bruce Cunningham along with his followers "split" from Preston Church to form what was to be known as the Grange Free Church. These two churches were to remain as separate charges until 1981, when they united to form the present Prestongrange Church. In later years members of the Roman Catholic faith who had worshipped at the monastery at Drummore, eventually built St. Gabriel's church. (3rd April 1966).

It is also worth recording that around 1917 the Salvation Army came to Prestonpans and finally took up a permanent residence in the then empty Grange Church Hall, while the Grange Church itself is again now being used as a place of worship and is known as The New Saint Andrews Episcopal Church.

In 1899 after years of discussion, a Town Hall was built in Prestonpans.

The two collieries in Prestonpans, Prestongrange to the west and Preston Links to the east, in order to accommodate their increasing workforce, built housing for their employees at "Cuthill" and "Crown Square". Other schemes built to house miners and their families were the tenement building at the bottom of "Robertson Avenue" known as "Honeymoon" also North and South Crescents.

In due time the local council built several new housing schemes, until the fields between "Salt Preston" and Preston were no more, and Prestonpans stretches from the sea shore right up to the newly rebuilt "Colonel Gardiners House" at Bankton.



In recent years local industry has declined. The coal mines are gone, "Prestonlinks" being the last colliery to produce coal in East Lothian. On this site there is now a Power Station. The electricity produce from this station is made by coal partly supplied by the near by open cast coal site, at "Blindwells". The other supplier is Monktonhall Colliery which is owned and worked by a company of miners, some of whom are local men.

And so having survived battles, wars and economic recessions, Prestonpans Town and Church still flourish and will continue to do so for many years to come.



The production of coal fostered an industrial revolution in Prestonpans the monks being eventually replaced by private owners. Thus we had the Meek family responsible for the salt trade which continued until the mid 1960's.

Prestonpans soap works continued production till after the second world war, when the introduction of detergents brought about the demise of this local industry.

The numerous small breweries in and around Prestonpans were eventually replaced by "Fowlers Brewery". Fowlers beer was at one time very popular both locally and elsewhere, "Fowlers Wee Heavy" being universally popular, sadly these are no longer available.

Another important local industry, was the "Gas Works" at Cookies Wynd, gas was produced here from coal, right up to the formation of the Gas Board.



There were several potteries in Prestonpans, Bellfields being the best known. Prestonpans pottery is still much sought after and is in great demand by the various collectors.

Bricks, pipes, tiles, glass, rope and various chemicals such as oil of vitriol are a few of the commodities which were at one time produced locally Prestonpans.

Indeed the harbour at Morrison's Haven was at that time one of the busiest on the Firth of Forth. As business flourished so the town

grew and soon the small hamlet built along the shore at Prestonpans began to extend inland.

The church built by the Rev John Davidson was soon proving to be too small. The then minister the Rev Joseph McCormack was responsible for the church being altered and with the addition of galleries was then able to seat 900-1000 people. The church was again renovated in 1891, when a heraldic panel was revealed.