



# A TITANIC MEMORIAL



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THE ANDREWS MEMORIAL HALL

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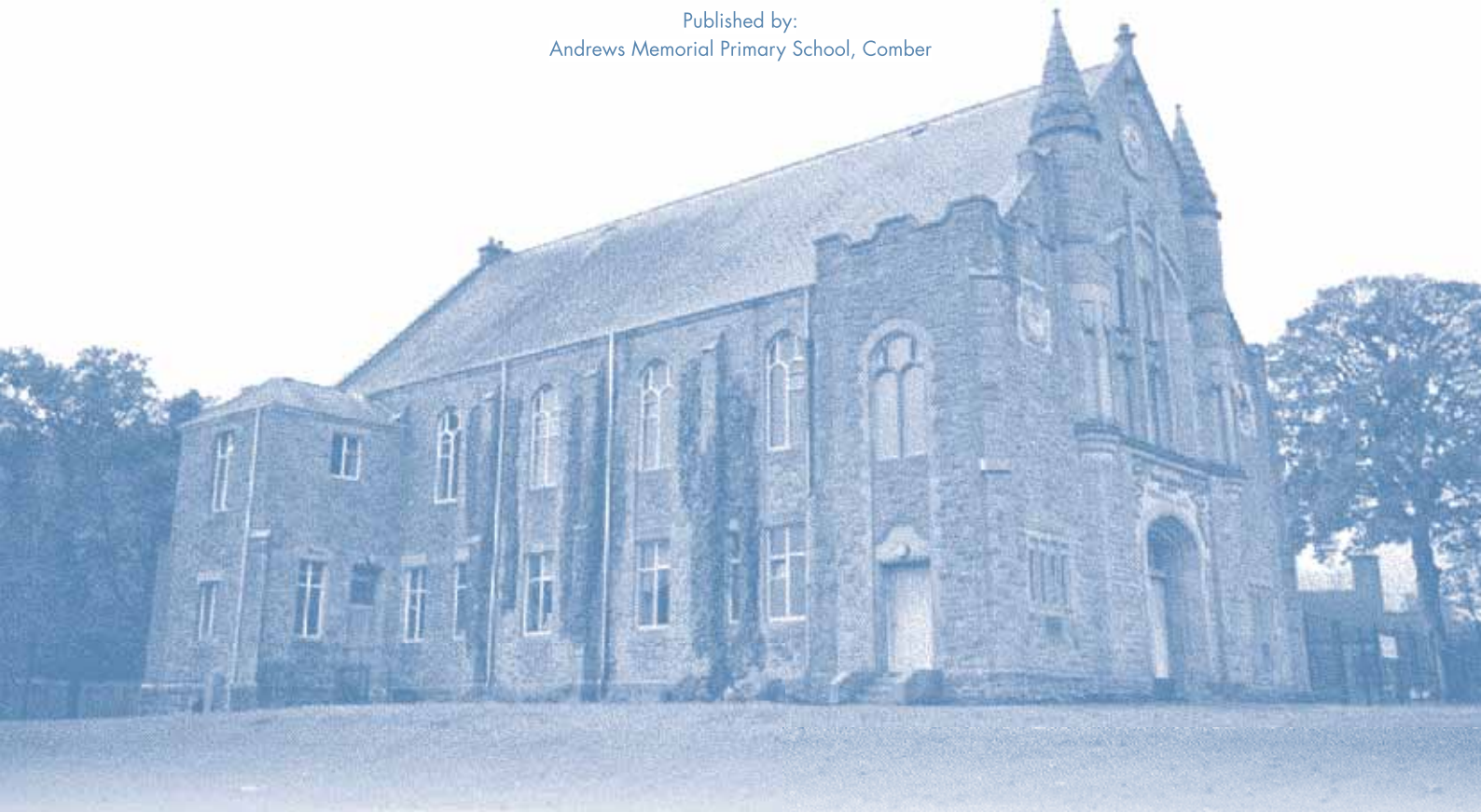
## THE ANDREWS MEMORIAL HALL

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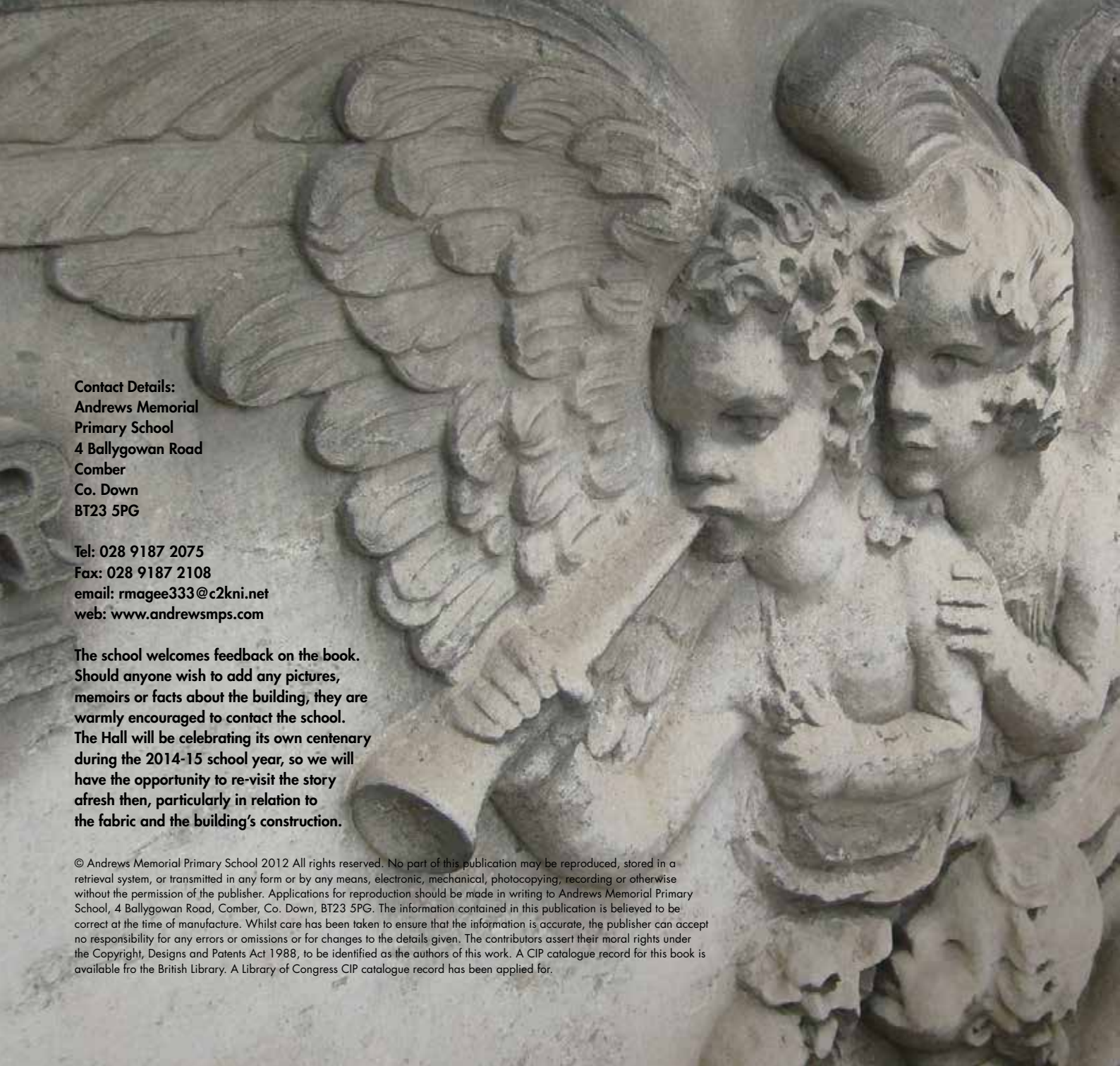
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**The school welcomes feedback on the book. Should anyone wish to add any pictures, memoirs or facts about the building, they are warmly encouraged to contact the school. The Hall will be celebrating its own centenary during the 2014-15 school year, so we will have the opportunity to re-visit the story afresh then, particularly in relation to the fabric and the building's construction.**

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## Foreword

John Andrews & Co. is very pleased to sponsor this innovative intergenerational project. The Thomas Andrews Memorial Hall was built as a tribute to Thomas Andrews and for the use of the whole community of Comber.

It is particularly appropriate that the children, who are our future, are now at the centre of the Hall's use, and it comes as no surprise that the pupils of Andrews Memorial Primary School, as ever inspired by their dedicated teachers, have made such a large contribution to this fine book, which is a memento and a legacy.

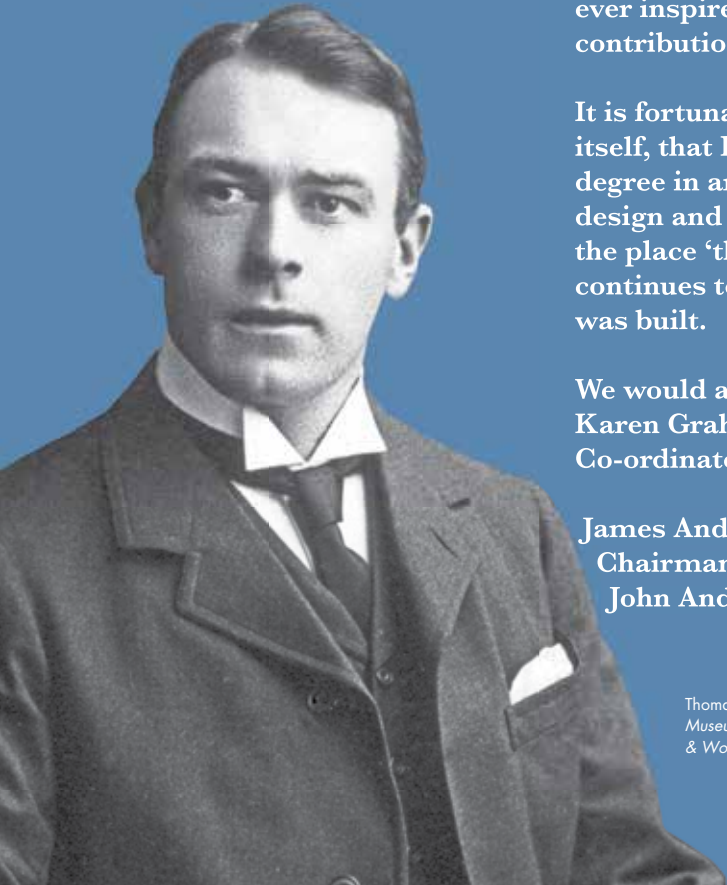
It is fortunate, too, that as we approach the centenary of the Hall itself, that Ralph Magee has been appointed as Principal. His degree in archaeology and his great appreciation of the Hall's design and history, have led him to work tirelessly to celebrate the place 'the Big Hall' has had at the centre of Comber life. He continues to encourage its use by the Comber people for whom it was built.

We would also like to pay special tribute to the hard work of Ms Karen Graham, the school's Intergenerational Learning Co-ordinator.

James Andrews  
Chairman  
John Andrews & Co

Thomas Andrews, October 1883. © National Museums Northern Ireland Collection Harland & Wolff, Ulster Folk & Transport Museum.

Building A Legacy



## Andrews Memorial Hall

A Andrews Hall is where we have our services.  
N Now we have our plays in the Andrews Hall.  
D Dancing happened here, it was really popular.  
R Renovation work has been done well.  
E Events are held here.  
W Welcomes all children and all guests.  
S Schools come together here.

H Harvest services are held here.  
A All people are welcome here.  
L Lots of people come here for social and school.  
L Lovely memories happened here.

By Madelyn Calvert & Michael McGrath. P5S



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Original architects' drawing of the West (front) elevation of the Andrews Memorial Hall, by Young and Mackenzie, Belfast. Reproduced with the permission of John Andrews & Co. Ltd.





## Preamble

Welcome to the story of our hall. On the following pages, you will read accounts of events in the hall, personal memoirs and the results of children's research. You will also find many pictures to accompany the text. We hope your own memories and discussions will be stimulated by what you read, as that's very much part of what a book like this is about. And please remember, we very much welcome anyone wishing to add to our archive material. All you have to do is contact the school.

As a narrative to the hall's history, we have selected the memoirs of Tom and Dianne Andrews. You'll find their words on the blue pages throughout the book. Their story touches many parts of the Hall's story and, crucially, extends to the building's role as part of Andrews Memorial Primary School. By way of introduction to their narrative, however, you may find the following information useful.

Tom is a son of Sir John Lawson Ormrod Andrews KBE PC DL. J. L. O. Andrews – or Jack to his close friends – was Chairman of the Trustees of the Memorial Hall when the need for a new Primary school in Comber was proposed. It was J.L.O.'s decision to allocate the land adjacent to the Memorial Hall, and the Hall itself, of course, for the use of the school, which opened in September 1973.



Principals together - from left Hugh Yeaman, Ralph Magee and Derek Henderson, pictured at the school's exhibition, Titanic Centenary - Building a Legacy, in May 2011.

J.L.O. also opened the new school building in 1979.

J.L.O. was a major public figure in Comber and N. Ireland, much loved and respected by all who knew him. As well as his business commitments, he was very active in politics, serving as a Minister in Health, Commerce, Finance and the Senate from 1957 - 1969, as well as Deputy Prime Minister from 1969 - 1972. His political career followed that of his father, John Miller Andrews, who was Prime Minister of N. Ireland from 1940 – 1943. John Miller was a brother of Thomas Andrews Jr, in whose memory our Hall was built.

J.L.O. and his wife, Elaine, had four children – John, Heather, Tom and James. John is the current President of the Belfast Titanic Society. He has provided additional material for the book and taken a great interest in the school's ongoing and expanding community work. Heather is a retired music teacher. She is one of many Comber residents who held their wedding receptions in the Hall.

J.L.O.'s youngest son, James, is the current Chairman of John Andrews & Co. and has been instrumental in securing sponsorship for this book. His wife, Liz, is a former Governor of the school and is the Andrews' family representative on the school's Titanic Centenary Planning Committee, whose names you can find at the back of the book. Her unwavering support of the school's work, and her passion for the intergenerational learning concept, has been instrumental in the success of our centenary-linked projects.

Tom was the first Andrews family member to serve on the new school's Board of Governors. His sister-in-law, Liz, succeeded him in 1994 and in 2009, his daughter-in-law, Fiona, became the third, and current, member of the Board of Governors. The school is proud to retain its close connection to the Andrews family and the fact that Fiona is only the third member to serve on the Governors, is an indication of the family's continuing support of this important role.

THOMAS ANDREWS JR  
SHIPBUILDER  
MEMORIAL HALL





## Introduction

A degree in archaeology, some time spent chipping bits off cathedrals and churches and more time spent looking at the bits under very powerful microscopes, isn't perhaps the most common route into Primary school teaching. However, that sums up my early adult life and I wouldn't have missed it for anything!

And coincidentally, when I entered this wonderful profession, archaeology was very much at the heart of the Primary history curriculum; the Mesolithic and Neolithic 'stone ages', the ancient Egyptians and the Vikings were familiar terms in many of our classrooms. In fact, they still are, so that first degree had more relevance than would at first seem to be the case.

The final phase of my degree saw me take a particular interest in medieval buildings, with fantastic opportunities to visit many of Britain's great cathedrals and castles. I loved the topic! Imagine, then, my sense of excitement and privilege, when, on being appointed Principal of Andrews Memorial, I became a guardian of

**Opposite page:** The main entrance to the Hall, as seen today. Praeger's 'cherubs' are still in very good condition (see page 29) as is the building itself. Built by Courtney Bros between 1913 and 1915, to the design of Young and Mackenzie Architects, Belfast, the Hall is a testament to the building skills of the time. The main fabric of the building is roughly dressed sandstone, with finely dressed sandstone around the doors and windows.



Crowd cheers as Titanic is launched - by Primary 3.

a very important, very special and very large stone building!

The Andrews Hall, however, was a very familiar building to me, for all three of my sons have attended the school. I was a regular member of the audience at the school plays, whether any of my own children were in them or not, as I suppose my chosen profession by then dictated a certain interest in how Andrews staged its shows. And, my goodness, they staged them rather well! As a P6/7 teacher, my own classes were always involved in school shows and I had become more involved myself, through helping behind the scenes. As a colleague once commented, "Ralph,

we'll always need piano movers, as well as players..."

You will be able to read accounts of various school shows and events held in the hall in other parts of this book. My role is to add to the Principals' sense of belonging, guardianship and responsibility for the building that is the beating heart of our school and, very appropriately, the focal point of the school's Titanic Centenary commemorations.

Just after I got the job at Andrews, I remember a mum commenting that the Titanic centenary was coming up in 2012, and that it could be a very exciting time for the school. How right she



The Grand Staircase of Titanic, by Primary 2.

was! And is! The publication of this book – our ‘learning legacy’ – represents the culmination of the current pupils’ work and study of both the legacy of Titanic, as well as the Memorial Hall. For, as we very quickly realised, the hall has been at the centre of Comber life for very nearly a century itself and, with all its uses, with all the memories of those who used the hall, with its current role in the life of the school, all of us in the Andrews Memorial community have a huge responsibility to preserve this building for future generations by celebrating its history with those who use it now.

From my early associations with the hall, through to the growing sense of responsibility, passion and determination to make the centenary a very special time for the school, I have become more and more interested in the community history of Comber. I very much hope that this book will add interest and knowledge on that front to all its readers. It is a ‘snapshot’ of our current knowledge and I am absolutely sure that there will be people querying why some information isn’t in the book. Well, to be frank, that’s because right from the very start of this project, we wanted to use primary evidence, that is we talked to the people who were there at the time. And

that can never include everyone, of course, so there will be gaps. However, there will also be reminders and new snippets of information which we hope will add to everyone’s sense of history – of the building and of Comber.

The intergenerational learning project we carried out with our P7 children and members of the local community during the 2010-11 school year, was a real highlight, and it brought home how significant a part the hall played in the life of Comber for all of its history before 1973, when the school opened.



This book is not all about history, however. It has to be a prompt for the future; for maintaining the hall at the centre of school life, for more community use of the building, for sustainable partnerships between the school and the local community, and for continuing to build on the legacy of Thomas Andrews. Some time following his death in tragic circumstances, his family and the people of Comber took a momentous and brave decision. They decided to build our hall and not a statue. It is to those people that we owe a huge debt and it is for those people that we continue to build a legacy.

We have attempted to include a wide variety of articles and photographs, which highlight the main uses of the hall since 1915. We have included articles and information gleaned from the people who were there at the time; we have also asked pupils of the school, past and present, for their thoughts and contributions on what the hall meant to them. As I noted earlier, our book is a 'snapshot' and we can only hope that it will entertain and inform you. But perhaps the most significant message to take from it is that we are at the beginning of a fantastic journey, not the end. We really believe that our mission statement, together

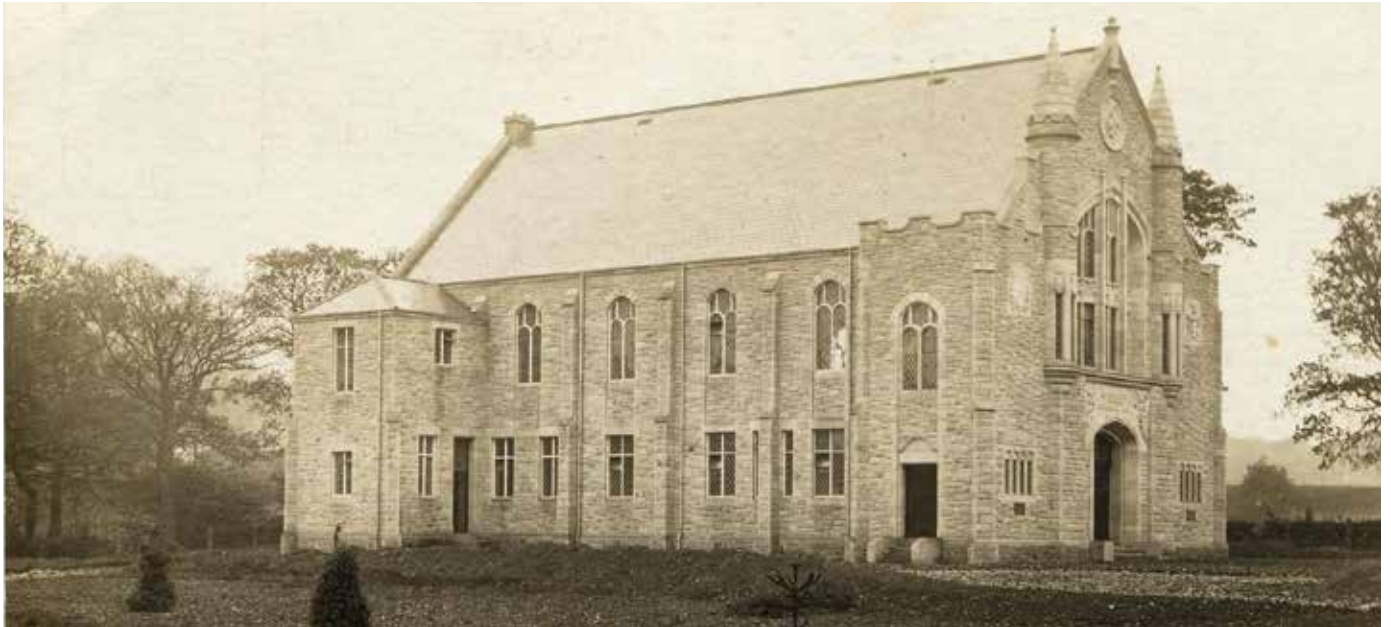
Primary 5 celebrate their 'big hall'.

with the theme that runs through the whole book – Building a Legacy – is true to and for everyone at Andrews Memorial.

There are stories yet to be told, stories yet even to happen. For now, though, come with us on this stage, we're sure you'll enjoy...

**Ralph Magee**  
**Principal from 2008**





## Our Memories Tom and Dianne Andrews

Tom, a great nephew of Thomas Andrews, was born in Comber and has lived within a short distance of the Andrews Memorial Hall all his life.

Dianne came to Comber almost 50 years ago as his young bride and for almost 20 years they lived in Ardara House, which was the home of Thomas Andrews during his early years. There was plenty of Andrews family history for Dianne to learn and the Memorial Hall stands as a lasting tribute for the people of Comber to remember Thomas Andrews.

**Pictures opposite page**

**Top:** Ardara House pictured from front garden.

**Bottom:** An early photograph of the Hall, viewed from the North-East.



Primary 1 prepare to listen and to learn, November 2011.

## Primary 1's thoughts on their 'Big Hall'

For our Titanic book, the Primary 1 children have been learning about the history and present day uses of The Andrews Hall. We had a wonderful visit from Eileen Gibb, a resident of Comber and font of all knowledge, to tell us her memories of days in the hall long ago.

After Eileen's visit, we went to see the hall for ourselves. We felt the walls inside and out. We climbed the stairs and entered the empty hall. The children looked around, used their senses and their imagination. We have tried to remember some of the things that we have learned and every child has made a statement about the hall.

Jennifer Connolly and Anne Knaggs  
Primary 1 Teachers



## Did you know?

**Natasha McGrath** Eileen took her baby to it.

**Rebecca Gabbey** You got Sunday School prizes in it.

**Eryn Otley** You got prizes in it.

**Megan McBride** It looks like a tower from the outside.

**Charlie McDowell** The Andrews Hall was opened at the same time that Eileen's mummy got her book as a prize.

'Our Big Hall' - pictured with their model are Mark Wylie, Aimee Thompson, Hannah McBratney and Zach Stevenson.

Eileen Gibb who has lived in Comber all her life visited the P1 children to tell them about how the Andrews Hall was used when she was a little girl.

The children were fascinated with her many stories. She is holding her own mother's Sunday school prize which was given to her at the same time as the Andrews Hall was opened.

**Joseph Orr** There was Sunday School there.

**Aston Jordan** The soldiers met there.

**Kobey Brady** There was B.B. there.

**Leah Kerr** You got baby food in it.



**Dylan Dunlop** There were soldiers there.

**Analise Morrow** They went dancing in it.

**Katie Phillips** You got baby food there.

**Holly Doak** It's for singing in.

**Lucy Rankin** It is big.

**Cara Logue** They got prizes in it.

**Charly Barry** We sing in it.

**Jack Childs** Babies were weighed there.

**Peter Anderson** You could have wedding receptions in it.

**Daniel Jewitt** It actually has a big roof.

**Aaron Boyd** There's P.E. in it.

**Daniel Moore** The walls are grey.

**Toby Russell** Eva and Ben play in the orchestra in the Andrews Hall

**Noah Jackson** The walls were stone.

**Matthew McKnight** I go to Jiminy Cricket's there.

**Matthew Peel** We sang in the Andrews Hall.



### **Primary 4 begin their tour of Thomas Andrews' Comber**

Thomas Andrews was born in Ardara House in 1873. He was schooled at home up to 11 years of age then he went to a school called Inst.

Ardara House had a tennis court and games room. The games room had wood that was also used on Titanic. They also had bee hives.

Ardara House is now apartments. There was a tennis court but now there are houses. Ardara

Primary 4 visit Ardara House, Comber, where Thomas Andrews grew up. Thomas' father, also named Thomas, built Ardara in 1871, just two years before Thomas was born. Although now converted to apartments, the sense of grandeur is still very much in evidence.

House is big, grand and posh. Ardara House is very old. The bee hives and the tennis court are no longer there. We went on a walk to find all of these facts out on the 14/11/11. Here we are outside Ardara House.

By Lauren Otle, Elle Horner and Reuben Scott P4.

Queen's Road with shipyard men leaving work, Titanic in background, May 1911. © National Museums Northern Ireland Collection Harland & Wolff, Ulster Folk & Transport Museum.



Much has been written or related about the tragic sinking of the Titanic on April 15th 1912. Many lost their lives and there are memorials elsewhere, including one at the City Hall, Belfast, where the names of shipyard staff who died in the tragedy are recorded.

Thomas Andrews was the senior representative of Harland and Wolff on board the Titanic. It is thought Lord Pirrie, the Chairman, would have been on the maiden voyage but for illness.



Donegall Square North, with the Titanic Memorial. (Later removed to the grounds of the City Hall.), 11th October 1946. © Belfast Telegraph Collection Ulster Folk & Transport Museum.





The Titanic was the  
biggest ship in the  
world!

Niamh Cumming P2.

Thomas Andrews designed the  
ship and it was built in  
Belfast at Harland and Wolff

Adam Bassett P2.

The White Star Line  
owned the Titanic.

James Ward P2.

It was going to New York  
in America.

Luke Ritchie P2

The Titanic hit an iceberg  
and sank.

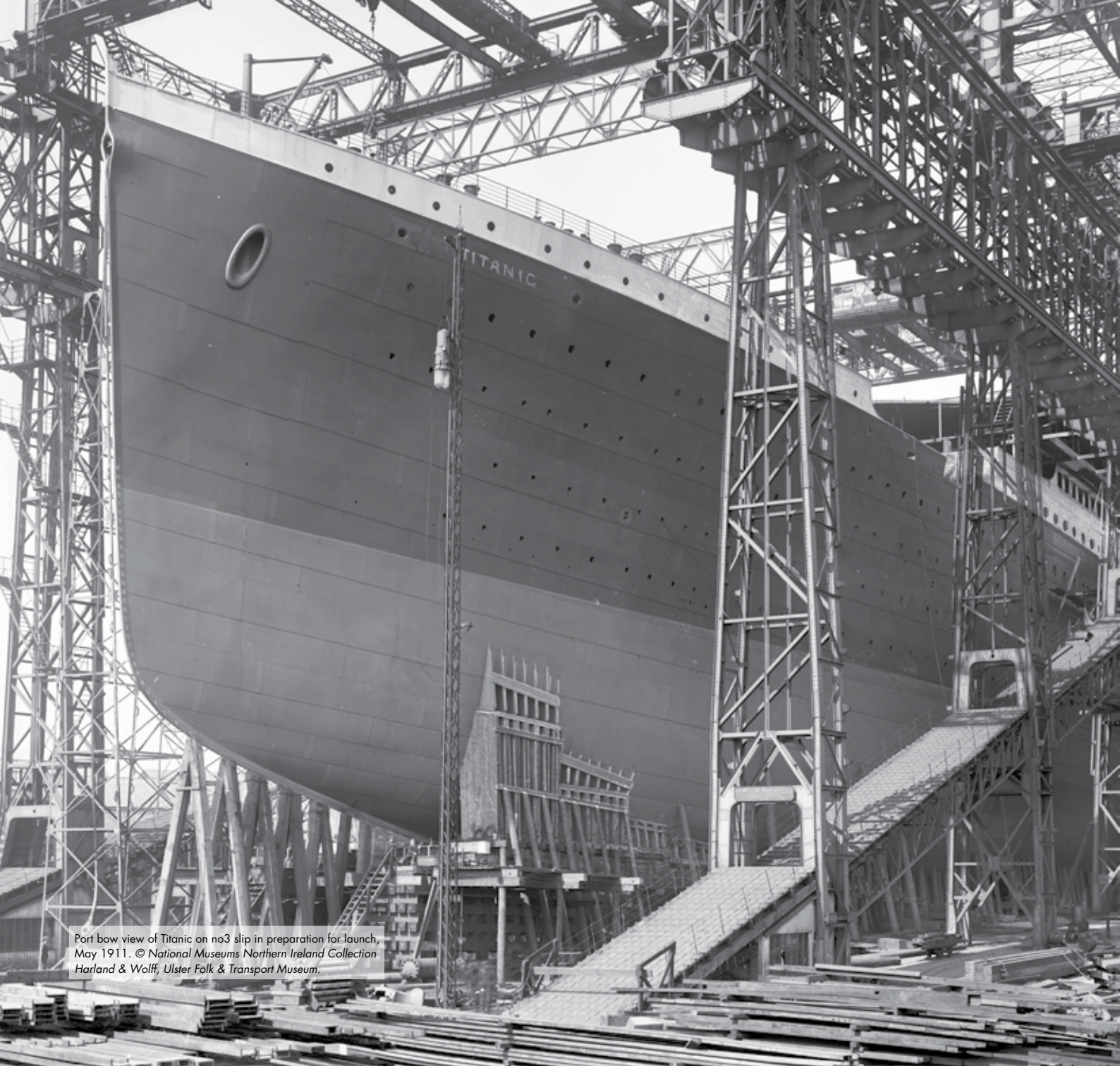
Andrew Long P2

There were eight  
lifeboats on each side  
of the Titanic.

Rory Wilson P2.



A copy of a 'Boarding Pass' for Titanic.  
Imagine the sense of excitement if you  
were holding one of these in 1912...



Port bow view of Titanic on no3 slip in preparation for launch, May 1911. © National Museums Northern Ireland Collection Harland & Wolff, Ulster Folk & Transport Museum.





Stern view of completed Titanic in Belfast Lough with tugs,  
2nd April 1912. © National Museums Northern Ireland  
Collection Harland & Wolff, Ulster Folk & Transport Museum.



The Andrews family cricket team, pictured in 1895. Thomas Jr (with moustache) stands at the back, his brothers, James and John, are first and second from left in the second row (from front). James became Lord Chief Justice of N. Ireland, John, the Prime Minister. The full line-up is (from back, left - right): Thomas Jr, Thomas James, John Jr, James, John M., Oscar, Cecil F, Ernest W, Sidney, Arthur M, Herbert W. The family won the match, beating North Down by 32 runs. Reproduced with permission of the Andrews family.



Harland and Wolff was the leading shipbuilder in the world at the time and Thomas, although only 39 years of age, was one of the Managing Directors. He had much experience in the design and construction of important ships such as the Olympic, Adriatic and Baltic. His career in Comber and Belfast is well recorded, but just as important

to him was his marriage to Helen (Barbour) of Dunmurry and his only child, Elizabeth Law Barbour Andrews (known throughout her life as ELBA).

Tom's father remembered playing cricket with Thomas at the age of six which illustrates, although a century ago, only two generations since Thomas' tragic early death.



A more recent 'Andrews family' photograph in front of the pavilion at North Down CC. Pictured after a Kwik Cricket tournament in 2007 are: **Back row (l-r):** Gareth Anderson, Katie Smith, Sarah Coleman, Natasha Adamson,

Catherine Sheridan, Katherine Beattie, Lewis Beattie, Hope Smith, Robert Smyth **Front row (l-r):** Niall Clarke, Ryan Andrews, James Magee, Jack Walker, Simon Hanna, Andrew Newell





apprentices  
 boiler makers  
 boatbuilders  
 bumpers  
 cabinetmakers  
 catchers  
 countersinkers  
 burners  
 cranemen  
 draughtsmen  
 drillers  
 electricians  
 fitters  
 frameturners  
 iron saw  
 joiners  
 labourers  
 loftsmen  
 machinists  
 painters  
 riggers  
 furnacemen  
 rigger  
 engines  
 Stagers  
 Shipwrights  
 Storemen  
 turners  
 welders  
 Estimators  
 Sails makers  
 Scurvers  
 toolsmiths  
 Turners  
 French  
 Polishers  
 Plumbets  
 Planers  
 Platers  
 Pilots  
 Pattern makers  
 Joiners

Venetian, Rhombus, Rockabill, HMS Onyx and Donax.

Orca, Coastal Hercules and Coastal Texas and Sea Quest, Imperial Star.

HMS Rhododendron, HMS Caroline and San Francisco, Ebano and Genova, Cliona and Eros.

Megantic, Gigantic, Oceanic, Britannic, Olympic and Titanic...

All built in Harland and Wolff.

Edward, Kyle, Kathryne, Laura, Kirsty.

**Left:** A Calligraph, illustrating some of the jobs in the 'The Yard'.

**Above:** A selection of ships built in Harland & Wolff.

R., Kntie Corken, Katie Murdoch, Tom Lappin, Adam Bruce, Leah McMillan

## Primary 6 focus on the vast range of skills present in Harland & Wolff's Belfast shipyard

Groups of children in primary 6 worked on three different activities in connection with Titanic's builders – Harland and Wolff or 'The Yard'.

The year group had looked at all of the different job titles at the shipyard and used these interesting and sometimes strange words to draw the shape of a boat – the ship being made by the names of shipbuilders!

A third group of children obtained a long list of ship names built by H&W. They were often exotic and unusual. By carefully selecting some of their favourites, these groups constructed poems which simply listed the ship names.

Gillian Barry and John Sandford  
Primary 6 Teachers



## Thomas Andrews and North Down Cricket Club

P.4 went to North Down Cricket Club. Cricket was the Andrews family's favourite sport. William was the biggest fan in the family. They used to use the ground of the cricket club to bleach and dry linen before it was donated to the cricket club by the Andrews family. Thomas Andrews and his brother donated a trophy to the cricket club for the best player in the seconds. We did not know there was a cricket club in Comber or that it had a connection to Thomas Andrews. We had our picture taken outside the club house.

Melissa McCance, Kayla Milligan and Alex Montgomery

Primary 4 pictured at the front of the cricket pavilion. The building retains many of its original architectural features and is still home to North Down Cricket Club, one of Ireland's premier clubs.



Detail of the pavilion clock.



Detail of Praeger's bronze casting of  
Thomas Andrews Jr – see Page 25.



Thomas Andrews Junior's parents, Thomas and Eliza of Ardara, and many friends in Comber, wished to provide a long standing memorial which would be of benefit to the people of Comber. Many of Thomas Junior's colleagues and friends among the employees of Harland and Wolff made donations towards the cost of a memorial. No doubt other friends and relatives such as his uncle Lord Pirrie contributed, too, and it was decided to build the Memorial Hall.

At that time there were few other such facilities, or even Church halls, available in

Comber, and it was before the days of cinema, TV and (almost) the motor car, so it was important for people to have locally a good hall where functions could be held or entertainment provided.

We have a replica mason's mallet (made of wood!) and a silver ceremonial trowel, both engraved, which were presented to Thomas' mother, Eliza, by the contractors on the occasion of the laying of the Foundation or Memorial Stone on January 14th 1914 . It is interesting to note that ELBA cut the first sod on 2nd October 1913, at the age of 3.



Memorial mason's mallet and trowel, presented to Thomas Andrews' mother.

## THE LATE MR. THOMAS ANDREWS, JUN.

### "Proposed Memorial at Comber.

The disaster in which the White Star liner Titanic and the bulk of her crew and passengers were lost was very forcibly brought home to the village of Comber by the fact that numbered among the victims was Mr. Thomas Andrews, junior, and the deep feeling of sympathy which was stirred in the breasts of the inhabitants was manifested when the heroic circumstances in which he met his fate were made known. There was a consensus of opinion at the time that steps should be taken to perpetuate the memory of the deceased in Comber, but in view of the efforts that were then being made throughout the Kingdom to aid the relatives of those who were lost in the disaster the Comber people stayed their hands, and at a subsequent date the Lady Mayoress's project for the erection of a suitable monument in Belfast to the gallant officers who had been lost, also served to retard the local movement. Nevertheless the matter was not by any means lost sight of. It has been recognised, more particularly in recent years, that Comber has been suffering from the want of a suitable public hall which would be available for general purposes. Any buildings in the town which have been utilised for public meetings are either connected with churches or with the Orange body, and it is felt that the accommodation and arrangements are not adequate to meet the requirements of the town, and that the erection of a public hall on neutral grounds would be appreciated by the inhabitants generally. When those who had been moving in the matter of the proposed memorial to the late Mr. Andrews thought it time to take definite action, a meeting of the principal inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood was convened by circular. A very satisfactory representation of those summoned attended, and after due consideration it was unanimously resolved that the memorial should take the form of a "Thomas Andrews, Jun., Memorial Hall." A deputation was appointed to wait on the Andrews family at Ardara, and they heartily approved of the form the memorial was taking, and expressed their deep sense of gratitude to all who were interesting themselves in doing honour to their son's memory in his native town. Thus encouraged, the committee decided to take the general inhabitants into their confidence

and convene a public meeting to approve of their action and consider the question of finance. It has been decided that to build, equip, and endow the hall a sum of £5,000 would be required. This, it was felt, was a considerable sum of money to raise, but the near relatives of the deceased, recognising the want of a public hall in Comber, and appreciating the desire of those who sympathised with them in their bereavement, have promised liberal support to the undertaking. So heartily has the project been taken up that the committee are in the happy position of being able to report that up to the present the amount promised has reached the satisfactory total of £3,400.

At the meeting held yesterday evening there was a good attendance amongst those present being—Messrs. James Allen, J.P.; James Shean, J.P.; G. B. Houston, J.P.; Dr. S. Wallace (coroner), Dr. Henry, Mr. C. P. Culverwell, C.E.; Mr. John Dunn, J.P.; Mr. John Allen, Rev. C. Manning, Rev. T. S. Graham, Rev. Thomas Dunckerley, Rev. Thomas McConnell, Dr. J. S. Steele, Messrs. D. E. Lowry, John W. Ritchie, Robert Milling, John A. Macdonald, Jas. Smyth, Alex. Caughey, David Munn (Cattors), Joseph Berkeley, Hugh Lindsay, Robert Paterson, S. B. McKeeg, David Munn (Ballyaloy), Joseph Montgomery, W. Magowan, Jas. Simpson, Jas. Niblock, James Hunter, John Murray, T. J. Macdonald, T. B. Williamson, D. A. Gold, F. J. Orr, Frank Finlay, John M. Orr, W. Withers, Joseph Hedley, W. M. Kitson, A. Douglas, Jas. Davidson ("Nimrod"), F. E. McRoberts, V.S.; John Niblock, R. J. White, A. E. Anderson, H. Conlter, M. Kerr, E. Walsh, D. A. Boyd, H. M'Morran, G. Sowerby, R. Murdoch, J. Rodney, S. Drake, D. Robinson, W. Pollock, Thomas M'Roberts, J. Graham, E. Dunsell, W. Cairns, J. A. Beattie, Alf. Geddis, James Proctor, and W. Savage.

Mr. G. P. Culverwell, C.E., in moving that Mr. John W. Ritchie take the chair, said they were met to do honour to the memory of a fellow-townsmen who heroically perished in the most appalling disaster that had ever occurred in the history of ocean travel. The circumstances of the Titanic tragedy and the manly action of Thomas Andrews throughout were too fresh in their minds to call for any re-description. The late Mr. Andrews belonged to a family which was closely identified with Comber, and the members of which had received from them and from other much wider circles of friends the utmost sympathy that words could express. But he was sure it was the wish of those present to go beyond words and to mark their practical and neighbourly sympathy by perpetuating the memory of Mr. Andrews in his native town in some tangible memorial, and that they would wish such memorial to take that form which would most commend itself to the feelings of his nearest relatives. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Robert Milling seconded the motion.

Mr. Ritchie, on taking the chair, briefly thanked the meeting for the honour thus conferred. Having reviewed the circumstances which had led up to that meeting, he explained that Mr. John Allen in a most generous manner had offered for the purpose the site of the old tanyard in the Square, free of cost. (Applause.) He reported the result of an interview a deputation had had at Mountstewart with Lord Londonderry, who had promised £100 towards the building fund and a lease in perpetuity at a nominal rent. At present the committee did not intend making a general public appeal for subscriptions, but preferred leaving it to those who were friends, admirers, sympathisers, or co-workers, and any desirous of joining voluntarily in this tribute to "Tom's" memory in his native town. The sum of about £1,500 was still required to attain the object in view, and the committee felt that the amount would be speedily raised once it was made known publicly.

Dr. Samuel Wallace, coroner, proposed the following resolution:—That this public meeting of the inhabitants of Comber and district, summoned by placard and here assembled, heartily approve of the proposal of the committee already formed—to erect, equip, and endow a public memorial hall to perpetuate the memory of the late Thomas Andrews, jun., in his native town, and we promise to assist to the best of our ability to raise the necessary funds." He expressed his entire sympathies with the movement, and considered the form the memorial was taking most desirable.

Mr. James Davidson, in seconding the resolution, said his heart was in the movement, as he had known the late Thomas Andrews since he was a boy, and had always predicted a bright and successful future for him. A monument had been raised in Comber Square to that great soldier, General Gillespie, one of their townsmen, who fell in the service of his country, and now they were about to perpetuate the memory of a townsman of their own which would be acceptable to his parents and immediate relatives, as well to his innumerable friends far and near, for he was not only a worthy son of a worthy "sirs," but beloved by all the thousands of workers on the Queen's Island with whom he came in daily contact. To the last moment he had tried to save others, and he lived now in history as one of the heroes who had given their lives to save others. (Applause.)

On being put to the meeting the resolution was passed unanimously.

The Chairman then called on the secretary to read the list of subscriptions already promised by the relatives and committee. This was substantially augmented by those present, and arrangements were made to canvass the town and district and place collecting cards in the hands of those willing to assist.

The meeting afterwards concluded.

How the Belfast News Letter reported the meeting to discuss the erection of a fitting memorial to Thomas Andrews, 1 October 1912. Article reproduced with permission.

### The text of the Memorial Plaque, Andrews Memorial Hall, Comber

This hall was erected and endowed in memory of  
Thomas Andrews, Junior

By the inhabitants of the town and district of Comber and other friends.

Born 7th February, 1873, at Ardara, Comber. He entered at the age of sixteen years upon his apprenticeship with Harland and Wolff Ltd, Shipbuilders. Through his industry and ability he became successively, works manager, head of the repair department and chief of the designing staff and ultimately in 1902 he was appointed one of the managing directors of the company.

He took a prominent part in the designing and construction of all the leviathan ships built by the company between the years 1899 and 1912 including the "Cedric", "Baltic", "Adriatic", "Oceanic", "Amerika", "President Lincoln", "President Grant", "New Amsterdam", "Rotterdam", "Lapland", "Olympic" and "Titanic".

He was lost on 15th April 1912, in the foundering of the "Titanic", which collided with an iceberg in the mid-atlantic during her maiden voyage from Southampton to New York.

His manly character and lovable disposition won for him in his brief life the affection and esteem of all who knew him.

When with that tragic suddenness the call came he died, as he lived, faithful to duty and gave his life that others might be saved.

Miss S Praeger, Charles Braithwaite ARHA  
George Wragge Ltd



Praeger's bronze memorial plaque to Thomas Andrews Jr.  
The plaque can be seen on the upstairs landing.



ANDREWS MEMORIAL HALL..

NEW BUILDING AT COMBER OF DOWN..

SECTION ON LINE A. A.

DRAWING 1/2 6..

Scale  $\frac{1}{8}$  1000 = 1 Foot..



It is fortunate that the building of the Hall was started at this time as the First World War began between June and August 1914. Had the start been delayed, the war might have prevented the building ever being constructed.

Mrs Helen Andrews, the young widow and mother of ELBA, carried out the opening ceremony in 1915. Her poignant words, published in the Newtownards Chronicle at the time, are reproduced elsewhere in this book.

The Newtownards Chronicle was very much a 'newspaper of record' during WWI. This was how the paper announced the news that many in Europe knew was coming. Britain declared war on Germany, 4 August 1914. This announcement appeared in the Chronicle on 8 August 1914.  
*Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.*

## BRITAIN DECLARES WAR.

### TEXT OF OFFICIAL STATEMENT.

The following official statement was issued by the Government on Tuesday night:—

"Owing to the summary rejection by the German Government of the request made by his Majesty's Government that the neutrality of Belgium will be respected, his Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin has received his passport, and his Majesty's Government has declared to the German Government that a state of war exists between Great Britain and Germany as from eleven p.m. on August 4."

**PROCLAMATIONS ISSUED.**

**Opposite page:** Original architects' drawing of the South elevation of the Andrews Memorial Hall, by Young and Mackenzie, Belfast.  
*Reproduced with the permission of John Andrews & Co. Ltd.*

## The Andrews Memorial Hall by P3

It is really big and huge and it is in memory of Thomas Andrews who designed the Titanic.

I am really looking forward to our play in the hall.

I will be really happy.  
by Cate James.

## The Andrews Memorial Hall.

by P3  
I think the Andrews Memorial Hall is a very beautiful and awesome hall.

It is a very special hall.

We have our After-School Jimmy Crickets club there. This year I will be in our Christmas play in the hall. I will be a wise-man and I will sing a solo and give the baby Jesus a present. It will be awesome.

by Jake Currett

## The Andrews Memorial Hall. by P3

The Andrews Memorial Hall is the biggest most wonderful memorial Hall in the whole of Northern Ireland. It is beautiful on the inside and fantastic on the outside. I love the lovely patterns and writing carved out of stone. It is hugemongus!

My memory of being in it is a play called "Bugsy". I thought it was funny when the bad guy from bugsy shot the boy who was sitting in the chair.

by Daniel Corbett

## The Andrews Memorial Hall. by P3.

The Hall is very special to me. I love it because I play football in it. It is the best hall because I am going up on the stage. I am really looking forward to our "Crumpy Sheeps" play. I will be really happy if I am a dancer on the stage.

by Harry Kane





**Above:** An early photograph of the Hall interior, probably pre-WW2. Note the gas lights on the walls. Some of these original wooden chairs survive in the gallery today. *Picture provided by Tom Andrews.*

### Rosamond Praeger and The Andrews Memorial Hall

Rosamond Praeger is responsible for two significant components of the Andrews Memorial Hall.

Most notably, she carved the 'cherubs' on the front of the building, as shown in the photograph of her working on them in her studio. There are three winged figures on either side of the recess above the main front door. They are carved in 'white' limestone, most probably Portland stone (from Dorset), very common in public buildings all over the British Isles.

**Right:** Sophia Rosamond Praeger MBE HRHA MA (1867 – 1954) working on the 'cherub' carving for the Hall. *Picture provided by Sandra Gilpin.*



On both sides, there are two upper figures and one lower. On the left, the upper left figure is playing a 'flute' behind one holding a small stringed 'harp-like' instrument. The lower figure on each side doesn't have any instrument. The front figure on the right is blowing a 'trumpet' or 'horn' of some kind.

Praeger is also responsible for the bronze memorial plaque inside the hall (see pages 22 and 25) significant not only in its likeness to Thomas Andrews, but also in its poignant text on his bravery and sacrifice on that fateful night in April 1912.

The personal qualities recorded on the plaque are those which, so admired, provided the impetus to build such a significant community-centred memorial.

## The Andrews Memorial Hall by P.3.

The Andrews Hall is the best hall in the world. It is very big. We have our service there and all the kids sing. My memory is of reading a prayer at Harvest time.

I am really looking forward to being in our play at Christmas because I will get to be on stage with one of the dancers.  
by Rebecca Dugan.

## The Andrews Memorial Hall by P.3

It is really big and huge and it is in memory of Thomas Andrews who designed the Titanic.

I am really looking forward to our play in the hall.

I will be really happy.  
by Cate James.

## The Andrews

### Memorial Hall by P.3.

I was a pig in the Harvest Service in the Andrews Hall.

I was an angel.

All the girls were angels.

I loved being an angel.

I did dancing in the Andrews Hall.

My Sister was in Annie.

I watched my Sister perform.

My Sister was good.

By Rachel Johnston.

## The Andrews Memorial Hall.

by P-3.

The Andrews Hall is named after

Thomas Andrews. It is really really big like a church. We have a big stage in it.

My memory about it was when I read a poem in our Harvest Service. It was a bit scary but it was fine.

by Liand Hathorne

Date	Name	Amount	Notes
1913	Brought Forward	1504 12 11	
Apr. 15	Joseph Montgomery Sub	5	
21	Samuel Watson Caulding Dept	10 15	
28	John Murray Comber	5	
"	Carrie Murray	1	
30	Rev. Thomas Munkersley	10	
"	Harry Bunderley	2	
May 6	Miss Annie Moore	2	
"	Miss S. Edgar	10	
10	Hamilton Coulter	10	
June 14	W. Blarney & Son Belfast	10	
"	William Queen's Island Co. Winton	3	
27	Alexander Macrae & Co. Glasgow	1	
July 2	Mrs Helen R. Andrews Belfast	200	
"	Rev. Wm. D. Andrews Dublin	500	
"	James Watson Fifth Island Collection	13	
"	Thomas Lindsay Derryport	1	
"	R. F. Corbett Belfast	1	
"	William McCalla	1	
"	George McCard	1	
"	James Davidson	1	
"	Richard Raabe	5	
"	James Hurst Dumanee	1	

Praeger was a very well known Irish artist who eventually became President of the Ulster Academy. She was the sister of the famous Irish naturalist, Robert Lloyd Praeger. She was born in Holywood, County Down, where one of her most famous pieces of work, 'Johnny the Jig' can be found between the maypole and the Priory.

Extract of the ledger recording the names of some of the subscribers to the building of the Hall. The total cost projected for building and equipping the building was £5000. Recent refurbishments, including the lift installation, total around £200000 – how times have changed! Picture provided by Tom Andrews.

Extract from the Newtownards Chronicle, 6 February 1915, reporting the opening of the Hall on 29th January 1915. The Mrs Andrews mentioned here is Thomas' widow. Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.

Assizes, 241 a held of the repected a R. ittee, made asure very- yable -class and l the y was items anner ation. action n the s.

## THE THOMAS ANDREWS, JUNIOR, MEMORIAL HALL, COMBER.

This hall, which has been erected in Comber by the inhabitants of the town and district and other friends, was opened by Mrs. Thomas Andrews, jun., on the afternoon of Friday, 29th inst. At the request of the family, owing to the war and other circumstances, the ceremony was informal and private. The key was presented to Mrs. Andrews by Mr. Mackenzie, of Messrs. Young and Mackenzie, the architects of the hall.

Mrs. Andrews, in declaring the hall open, said—Friends, in opening this Memorial Hall I would like to take advantage of the opportunity to express my very heartiest thanks to all the contributors for their great generosity, which is most deeply appreciated by me. Also, I wish to convey my warmest gratitude to the trustees and members of committee for the keen interest they have taken in all matters connected with the erection of this magnificent hall; and also the architects and builders for the time and thought they have so wholeheartedly devoted to the work. I hope this Memorial Hall will be a great benefit to the people of Comber, and I wish to add that it was very gratifying to me to be asked to open it.

The hall, which reflects great credit upon the builders (Messrs. Courtney Bros.) is built of handsomely-dressed stone, and is probably the finest building of its kind situated in any provincial town in Ireland. On the ground floor there are club rooms, consisting of billiard room, reading room, minor hall, committee room, kitchen, etc., and above these rooms is the main hall, which will comfortably seat about 700 people.

The intention is that the grounds, which surround the hall, will be laid out as a public park, which we are confident will be much appreciated by the people of the neighbourhood.

a com Mr. I soldi back. nume futur to pr Victo Wa the j Stree usual durin has n it las and g Co., w themse their pr consum Notwith commo cent. close and Ru ards dange contract pairs, a which longer hoped for s town excu. uphol surrou have be pearanc would holes o Cine tograp intere St. Acad The wet inv a s sul dis tha the



The decision of the Architects Messrs Young and Mackenzie, on all matters arising out of this Contract is to be final and binding on the Trustees and the Contractors.

Yours Faithfully,

Coubrey Bros

As trustees of the Thomas Andrews Junior Shipbuilder Memorial Hall we agree to the terms of the above letter and accept the offer of Messrs. Coubrey & Co. therein contained for the erection of the Memorial Hall.

Dated 15<sup>th</sup> September, 1913.

John Miller Andrews  
James F. Heenan

John Miller

John C. Culverwell

Robert Milling

James Andrews

David Quinn

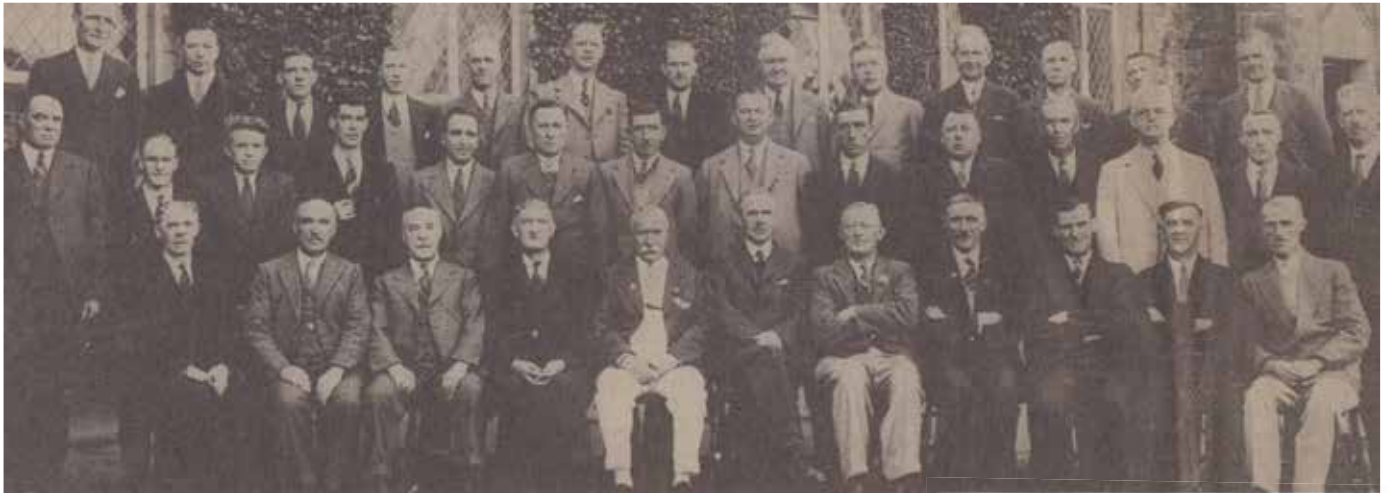
Letter from Coubrey Bros - the Hall's builders - countersigned by the Trustees, accepting the tender for the Hall's construction. Note the top signature is that of John Miller Andrews, Thomas' brother and future Prime Minister of N. Ireland (1940-1943). Letter reproduced with permission of the Andrews family.

A Board of Trustees, on which there were representatives of the Andrews Family, the Churches and Schools, was formed to organize the management and maintenance of the Hall and grounds.

A Caretaker was also appointed. Not the first, but the best remembered, is Mr James Frazer, who had previously been a flax sorter in the Andrews linen spinning mill opposite the Memorial Hall. Very appropriately, his son, Bert, is another contributor to this publication.



James Frazer and Mrs Robinson (from the Mill Office), pictured beside the bowling green at the Hall. James is trimming the edge of the lawn. Picture provided by Bertie Frazer.



Line-up of Comber and PGL and members in 1937.

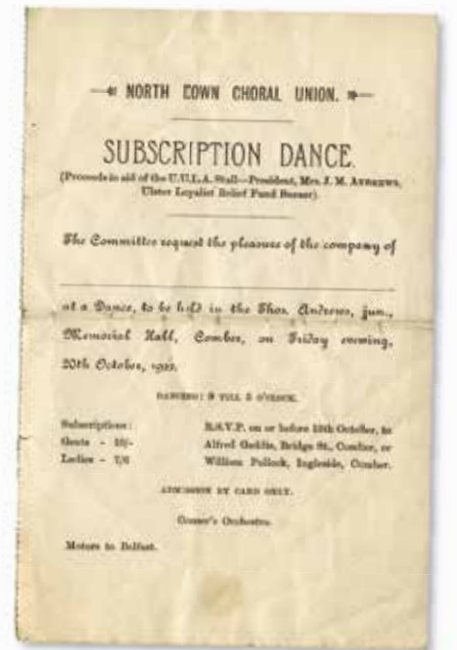
### Bertie Frazer's Memories of The Andrews Memorial Hall

William Keilty was the first Caretaker and served 19 years. When he died his son served for 3 years until 1936. My first memory of the Thomas Andrews Junior Shipbuilder Memorial Hall is when, as a very young boy, my father, James, was appointed by the Trustees to the position of caretaker. We lived in No. 8, now 32, Carnesure Terrace.

I remember playing on the swings and the merry go round which were in the Hall grounds. There was also a Bowling Green, Putting Green, Tennis Courts and a Billiards Club. The Billiards Club had a very successful team which won the Belfast & District Senior

billiards League and Charity Cup in the years 1930 & 1931. A member of the team was also Northern Ireland Billiards Champion. The Tennis Club had two courts and was winners of the Belfast and District Junior League in 1958.

The Bowling Club used the Hall green up until 1952 when they moved to Londonderry Avenue. According to records, the rent paid by the Tennis Club was £9.00 per season and the Bowling Club paid £4.00.



Invitation Card for a dance in 1922 – note the finishing time of 5.00am!



**Winners of the Belfast & District (Amateur) Senior League and Senior Charity Cup 1930 - 31**

**Back Row:** W. Frazer, J. Johnston, D.R. Young

**Front Row:** G. Spence, W.E. Bates, J. Frazer





**Back Row:** James Hunter, Bobby Steepon, Unknown, Johnston Oliver, Hamilton Carroll, David O'Prey, Bobby Bennett, James Kirk, Unknown **Middle Row:** Gerry Spence, Unknown, Bob Mawhinney, James Smith, Cecil Andrews, Bobby Bennett, Jim Newell, Unknown, Victor Houston. **Front Row:** Bobby Payne, Jack McKeag, Jack Oliver, William Spence, James Frazer, JLO Andrews (Captain), James Baxter, Unknown, David McCutcheon, Jack McGreghan, Clarke Edwards, Unknown.

**Right:** Newtownards Chronicle report, from 15 January 1944 on funds raised for local charities at a dance in the Hall organised by the RUC (Royal Ulster Constabulary). Also attending was the 'Lord Chief Justice and Lord Andrews'. The 'Lord Chief Justice' was James Andrews, Thomas' brother, born in 1877, four years after Thomas. He died in 1951.

**Below:** Comber Young Farmers raise funds for Prisoners of War. Both courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.

The Hall was requisitioned by the Ministry of Defence in 1941 and members of the South Staffordshire Regiment took up residence and were there until 1944. They paid £170.00 per year rent for the use of the Hall. My father told me about some English entertainers who entertained the soldiers during the war; some of them later became household names on Television and Radio.



R.U.C. DANCE.	
£80 FOR VARIOUS CHARITIES.	
This dance, which was held by the R.U.C. of the Newtownards district in the Andrews Memorial Hall, Comber, on Friday, 7th January, proved an outstanding success, and as a result, the organisers have been able to distribute the splendid sum among the following charities:—	
Ards District Hospital .....	£15 0 0
Newtownards Nursing Society .....	10 0 0
Comber Nursing Society .....	10 0 0
Newtownards Coal Fund .....	10 0 0
Fund on behalf of the Widow of the late Mr. W. Ballantine	5 0 0
Red Cross Prisoners' of War Fund .....	10 0 0
Newtownards Comforts Fund...	10 0 0
Comber War Comforts Fund ...	10 0 0
The following kindly sent subscriptions, receipt of which has not been previously acknowledged in the Press:—	
Lord Glentoran, Ballyalloy, Comber;	
Mrs. McGuire, Helen's Bay; M. A. Russell, J.P., Newtownards, and Mr. A. J. Kenny, C.P.S., Newtownards.	
BALLANTINE FUND	

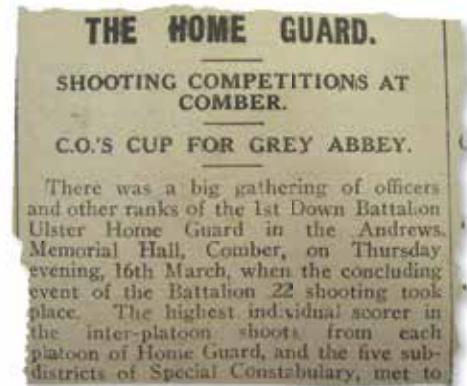


The Home Guard also used the Hall extensively and a Rifle Range was constructed. This ran diagonally from corner to corner with the butts at one end and the firing point at the other.

The rifles used were Lee Enfield-303 with a .22 Morris Tube. I remember being sent for after school by JLO Andrews and shooting on the range.

**Back Row:** Unknown, Unknown, Unknown, James Wallace, Tom Shanks, John Mills, Unknown, Unknown, Unknown, Sam Corry. **Middle Row:** Jim Lamont, William Shields, William Gamble, Unknown, Jack Mawhinney, Unknown, Unknown, James Miskelly, Jim Newell, Unknown, Sam Brown, James Coey. **Front Row:** Sam Cook, Unknown, John Shields, Victor Boyd, Joe Todd, James Headley, Stanley Watson, James Baxter, Hugh Todd, Harry Ritchie, Neil Potts Snr, Harry Ritchie Snr.

**Right:** An extract from the Newtownards Chronicle report on a Home Guard shooting competition, 25 March 1944. As described elsewhere, the Home Guard made extensive use of the Hall during World War 2. As Bertie Frazer describes, the hall interior was used as a range, hence the location of this competition. A young Bertie Frazer and John Andrews (Thomas' Great - Nephew) were among those who practised on the range. It is doubtful, however, if shooting will be added to today's extra - curricular programme! *Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.*







The Hall was used extensively by many organisations including the Petty Sessions Court, Dog Licences, Weekly Bureau (Dole) signing, Engineering Union, Fishing Club, British Legion, General Elections, Boxing matches; and Mickey White's film shows on Saturdays, when one could watch Laurel & Hardy, Charlie Chaplin, Abbot & Costello, Hopalong Cassidy and Roy Rodgers. The



Young Farmers' Dance, 1957. Courtesy of the *Newtownards Chronicle*.

dances were a highlight when the Tennis, Cricket and Young Farmers clubs ran very successful dances with upwards of 400-500 people attending; this was usually at Christmas, New Year and Easter.

After the War, and by the 1960s, when the churches built their own Halls, a lot of the revenue was lost to the hall and it became

Young Farmers' Dance, 1957 Sammy Leckey, Sammy McKee, Dennis Massey, Mary Massey and Jimmy Dempster.  
*Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.*



increasingly difficult to finance the upkeep. When a new Primary School was proposed for Comber, the Trustees of the hall offered the used of the Hall until the present Andrews Memorial Primary School was built.

The hall, of course, did not fall into disrepair; rather it became, and continues to be, the centrepiece of the school's own music and

drama performances. It is to be hoped that the community will also continue to use the building, particularly following the recent refurbishment work. It was, after all, built for everyone in Comber and the school is keen that that connection continues.

**Bertie Frazer**



Young Farmers' Dance, 1957 Isobel Corken, Sadie Glover, Jean Turner, Lilian Spence. *Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.*





In the period between 1918 and 1955 the Hall was fully used by many organisations, especially by the churches, holding regular functions, soirees, or meetings and fund raising events.

There were frequent dances, open to all comers, as well as other prestigious balls such as The Hunt Ball, Young Farmers' Ball and North Down Cricket and Hockey Club Ball. Other special events took place at Christmas, New Year and Hallowe'en, when the Hall had to be booked well in advance. The rules of the Trustees did not allow alcoholic drinks to be sold, but these events were successfully enjoyed by everyone.

There is a legend, take it as true or not, that some of these dances were all night affairs so that the revellers could go home on the first train in the morning!

**Thomas Andrews, Jr. (Shipbuilder)  
Memorial Hall.**

**TERMS & CONDITIONS OF LETTING.**

<b>Large Hall.</b>	
For Day Meetings up till 4 o'clock	... £0 10 0
" Evening Meetings, 7-11 o'clock	... 1 0 0
" " " 7-12 "	... 1 5 0
" Socials, 7 till 11 o'clock	... 1 7 6
" Dances, 8 till 10.30 o'clock	... 1 2 6
" " 8 till 12 o'clock	... 1 10 0
" " One hour or part thereof after 12 o'clock	... 0 10 0
" " All Night	... 3 0 0
" Bazaars, per day	... 5 0 0
" Dinners	... 3 0 0
<b>Minor Hall.</b>	
For Day Meetings	... 0 2 6
" Evening Meetings, 8 till 11 o'clock	0 7 6
" One Hour or part thereof after 11	0 2 6
" Committee Room 7 till 10 o'clock	0 2 6
" One Hour or part thereof after 10	0 1 0
" Kitchen (Gas or Boiler extra)	0 2 6
<b>Hire of Piano.</b>	
From 7 till 12 o'clock	... 0 10 0
All Night	... 0 15 0

For Non-Residents 50 per cent. extra, and for Political Meetings, Double Fees.

The Hirer to be responsible for all damage to the Hall, Furniture and Fittings during period of hiring.

**Opposite page:** Young Farmers' Dance, 1957. *Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.*

The 'Terms and Conditions of Letting' for the Hall. These provide an indication of the variety of uses. The Hall remains available for community use today - anyone wishing to use the Hall is welcome to contact the school.

## Nan Murdoch's Memories of 'The Big Hall'

I have many, many happy memories of the Andrews Memorial Hall. Here are just some of them...

### The Friday Night Young Farmers' Dances

These were held in the Andrews Memorial Hall from 8pm to 2am – real swinging affairs!!!

The young farmers worked hard all week, in all kinds of weather, and they were rarin' to go by Friday evening. Famously late due to milking cows, feeding calves, finding lost sheep etc.

and living far away the farmers usually didn't get there until about 9o'clock. By then a lively band was playing, row upon row of beautifully dressed, lovely young ladies were waiting to be asked to dance, and a table full of delicious food and drinks would be set up later when people were hungry! Mixed in with the usual quicksteps, waltzes, foxtrots, tangos and rumbas were lots of energetic Scottish dances, eight some reels, the lancers, the gay gordons etc. What fun it was to march up and down in the reels, swing round and round in the lancers and clap and stamp in the Gay Gordons. However dizzy this made us we didn't mind for we were young and full of high spirits and this was FUN. Usually there was lots of laughter

and flirting and shenanagins!! Everyone always seemed to be having a great time. No wonder Y Fs from as far away as Ballymoney, Doagh, Downpatrick, Lurgan and Portadown flocked to these AMH dances! It was a man's world there, they got to choose their dance partners (except for the one and only 'Ladies Choice') However, there were usually enough men to partner the ladies so everyone had a great time. Some fortunate farmers even met their future wives there. No wonder they were so popular.



**Left:** The Newtownards Chronicle advertisement for the Young Farmers' Christmas Night Dance as it appeared on 13 December 1957; the photograph on the **right** was printed in the paper on 3 February 1957 and shows Christmas Night revellers at the previous Christmas Night Dance. Both courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.





**Above and Above Right:**  
Young Farmers' Dance,  
1957. Both Courtesy of the  
Newtownards Chronicle.



## The Big 21st Party

As our 21st birthdays loomed ahead in the winter of 1956, my friend, Myrtle Johnston and I, decided that we were going to have a BIG CELEBRATION in (where else?) the AMH.

Since our fathers didn't believe in spending money on such a frivolous evening we planned it ourselves. Instead of gifts we asked our friends to help with the decorations, with the food preparation and with making a huge fruit punch spiked with a little cider. We hired the same swinging band as the Young Farmers' Club. By the time the dancing started at 8 o'clock the hall was looking very festive with lots of balloons, Happy Birthday signs and colourful streamers everywhere. A banquet of food, sandwiches, sausage rolls, savoury pies and trayfuls of baked goods for dessert was waiting to be consumed later. Myrtle in a cream silk dress, and I in an off the shoulder bright blue taffeta dress, greeted everybody and told them to have a great evening. To tell the truth, I don't remember much after that, just lots of happy dancing, joking, laughing, eating, drinking, swinging and singing with good friends from Comber, Newtownards, Dundonald and Belfast. We took lots of photos (none of which I can find!) We felt a great sense of happiness and well-being as we ushered in our 21st year and were happy that so many good friends had shared it with us. The world was now our oyster!

**Right:** A section of the 'large crowd' which attended a dance organised by the Newtownards Chronicle on 27 December 1957. Comber Rec, of course, are still going strong, although they have their clubhouse at Parkway in the town. Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.





## The Annual Girls' Brigade Gym Display

This was the highlight of the year for Second Comber Church GB members.

Rev. and Mrs. Jones with special guests and judges sat on the stage at the front of the hall. Parents and friends sat on the balcony or round the main floor where the Display took place.

After a winter of marching, learning new physical exercises, doing Drill Downs (O'Grady Says), vaulting over the Box Horse and studying bible stories in the church hall, it was exciting to perform in front of our parents and friends at this annual Display in the Andrews Memorial Hall.

A prayer and some welcoming words from Rev. Jones opened the Display. Next in neat GB uniforms, heads held high, GB members proudly marched up and down the Hall to good lively Tunes like 'The Grand Old Duke of York' and 'John Brown's Body lies a molding in His Grave'.

After this energetic start the serious competitions began...

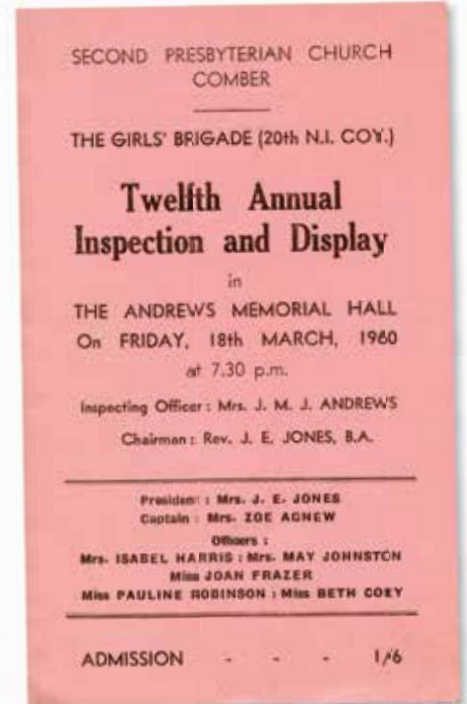
The physical exercise program was performed by different age groups carefully watched by judges who chose winners in each age group. Senior and Junior Drill Downs followed. In these, one only followed a command given by O'Grady. Girls who followed commands not given by O'G were eliminated.

As the pace quickened more and more girls had to leave the floor until only one girl, the winner, was left standing. O'G was always exciting and the winners received great applause for surviving to the end!

Vaulting over a Box Horse, after jumping off a springboard, was another challenging activity but we loved flying through the air and being caught on the other side.

The Grand Finale was the Presentation of prizes: silver cups, gold, silver, bronze medals, merit badges and books were given to the proud winners who went up on stage to receive them. Speeches, thank yous, and a prayer from Rev. Jones ended the evening.

Another happy year of G.B. activities was over!



An Invitation Card to the 1960 Annual Inspection and Display of Second Comber Presbyterian Church's Girls' Brigade Company. Note the 'inspecting officer' is Mrs J.M.J. Andrews, wife of John Andrews, Thomas' Great - Nephew.

## The Annual Boys' Brigade Display

The Boys' Brigade Annual Display was another similarly happy occasion for members of the Second Comber Boy's Brigade and their families and friends. Since my brother, Alex, was a member I regularly attended it.

During its church renovation, the Second Comber Church Services were held in the AMH. I remember how different this was from the regular church service - no pulpit, no organ, no special choir seats and no pews!! It was quite an experience to attend this much more informal service where Rev. Jones preached from the stage, the music came from a piano, the choir sang from special seats and the worshippers sat on chairs arranged in rows in the main hall. Somehow to me it always seemed more like a practice than a real service held in our own Church. Cutting round the Dam to attend this service was one of my best memories since this was forbidden territory in my family.

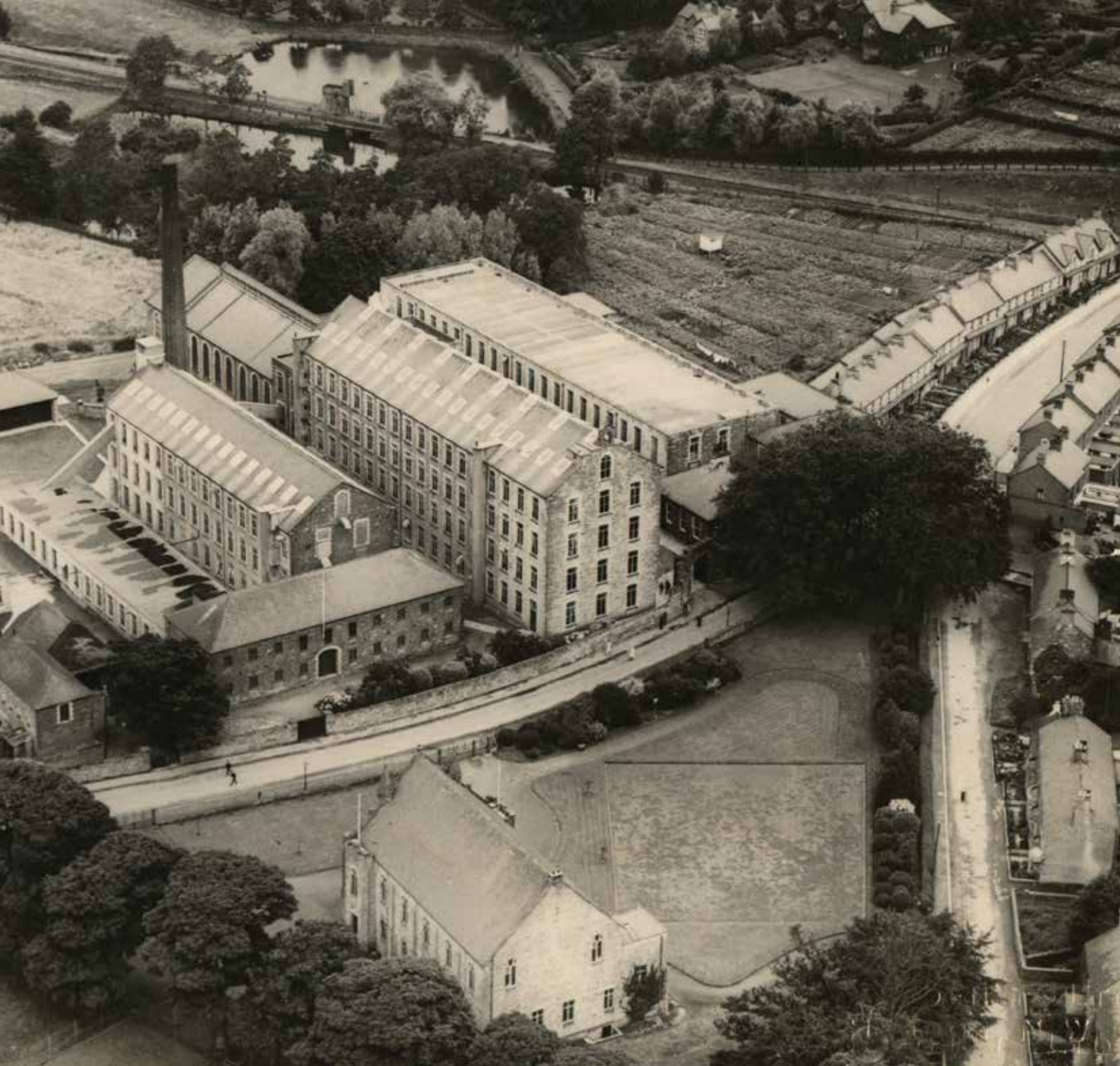
**Nan Murdoch**



**Above:** 2nd Comber Boys' Brigade 1950s.



**Left:** Boys' Brigade Annual Inspection and Invitation cards.





Tom's sister, Heather Andrews, had her wedding reception in the Hall on 9th April 1955. Tom also shared a dance party with some friends for their 21st birthday in 1960. The mill, itself, held a party for all the employees in 1963 to mark the Centenary of the Company.



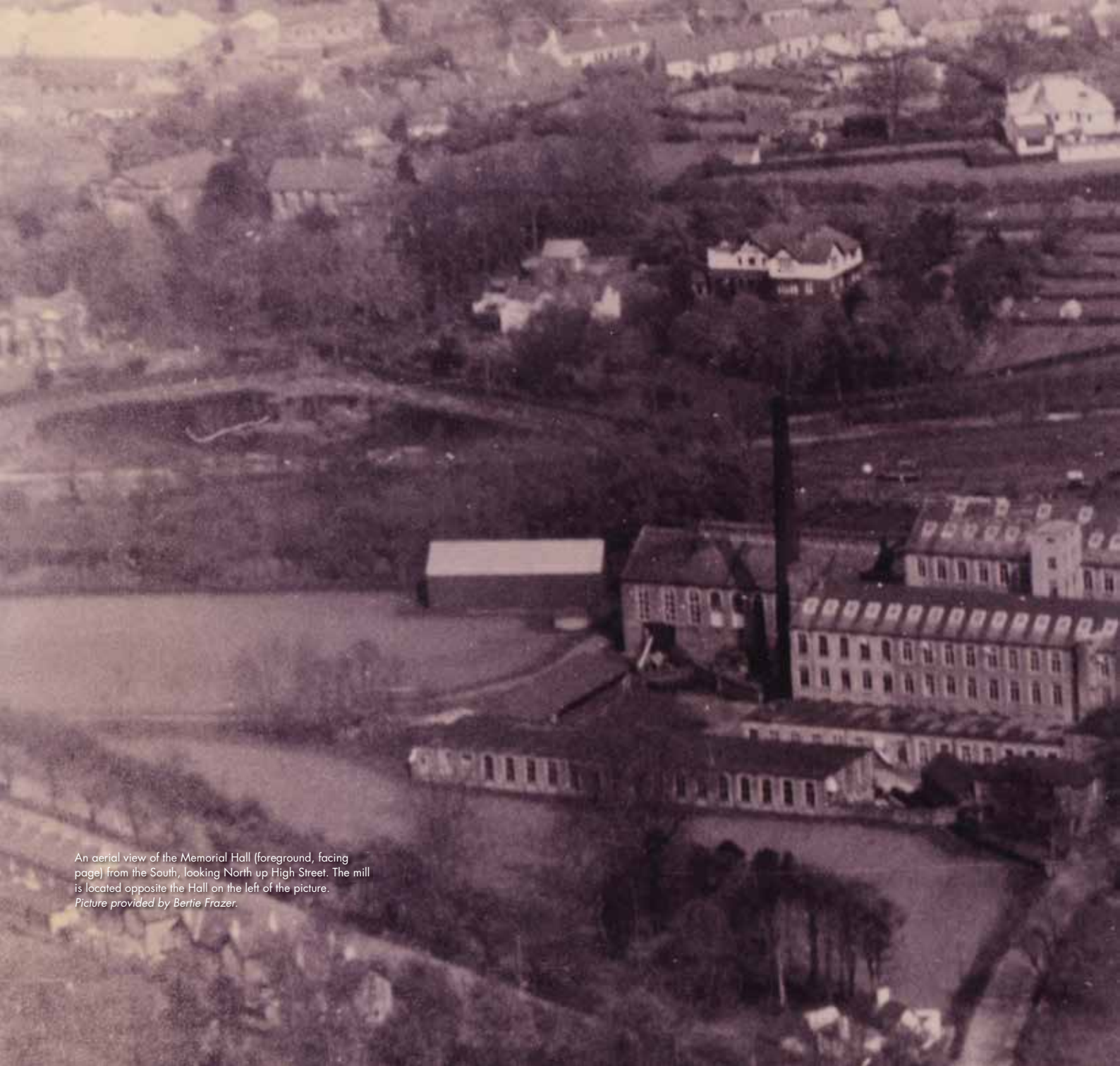
Invitation Card to the Centenary party for John Andrews & Co. Ltd, 1963.



Wedding reception of Heather Boyd, née Andrews and Trevor Dempster Boyd on Saturday 9th April 1955, in the Thomas Andrews Memorial Hall, Comber.

**Left to right:** Mrs Turtle, Jack Andrews, Janet and Austen Boyd, Rev Glynn Davies, Heather, Trevor Boyd and Chief Bridesmaid Cicely Vince (Heather thanking Mr Davies for performing their marriage ceremony).

**Opposite page:** An aerial view of the Andrews Mill from the South-East – note the railway track running West to East across the top of the photograph, which is now the route of the A22 Belfast Road (Comber bypass). *Picture provided by Bertie Frazer.*



An aerial view of the Memorial Hall (foreground, facing page) from the South, looking North up High Street. The mill is located opposite the Hall on the left of the picture.  
*Picture provided by Bertie Frazer.*



## **Bobby Orr's Memories of The Andrews Memorial Hall**

I was born at Ballydrain which is 3 miles outside Comber. My grandparents lived at 15 Brae Side Comber and I went to visit them every weekend. This is when I can first recollect seeing the Andrews Memorial Hall and the Andrews Mill. My Grandfather took me to the swings and the roundabout which were in the Memorial Hall grounds, close to the entrance of where the School now is. After this he took me to the Reading room in the Mill. To go here you had to be a member, which my grandfather was. As well as books to read there was a Billiard table and I also was given orange lemonade. As a member you could also pay to have a hot bath for a few pennies? All of this was in the late 1930s and early 1940s and little did I know then that these two places would pay such an important part in my life.

I started in Number 4 Spinning Room on the 14th November 1950 as Cage boy. I then worked my way through the ranks as it were from cage boy to roller boy, oiler Head oiler, Supervisor in Number 5 Spinning room when I was 18, Supervisor in the Carding room, Foreman in Number 4 Spinning room and finally to Production Manager in the Spinning and Winding Department. The last job was for 5 years until the Mill closed in 1997. I was "kept on" until 1999 to help take down the machinery so it could be shipped to mainland Europe.

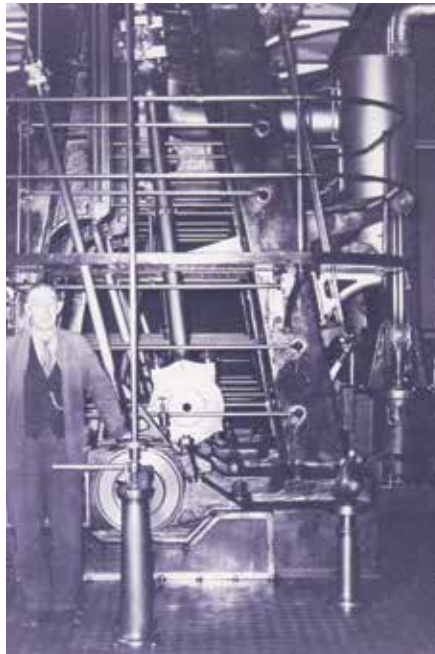


At this time, John Andrews and Company Limited moved to new premises at Ballywilliam, Comber. I went with them. The company has "The Clattering Ford" shop which still sells Irish linen and other products made from natural fibres.

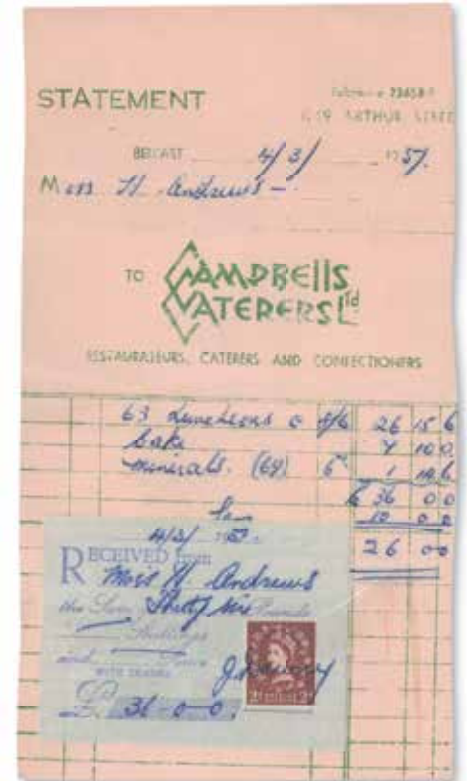
Much more important to me was that while I was working in the Mill I met Helen my wife of 55 years in 1952. Helen also worked in the Mill. We got married in 1957. We were able to book our Wedding Reception in the Andrews Memorial Hall through the Mill office. We had 63 guests who were all fed on the lower ground floor of the Memorial Hall. Our main photographs were taken at both the main entrance to the hall and then at the side of the Hall which now overlooks our home - a sight we awaken to every morning.

Helen and I had a wonderful time when for our Golden Wedding Anniversary we had our photographs taken in the same places at the Memorial Hall.

Other memories I have of the Andrews Memorial Hall are Girls & Boys Brigade displays. I must also mention the Saturday night dances and Concerts. We we live just across from the Hall our windows were kept open to listen to the music playing to the early hours of the morning.



Ned Skelton (Chief Engineer) pictured with the mill's principal steam engine, a 500HP triple expansion engine, built by Combe Barbour. The engine was actually designed for driving a ship's propellor.



The caterers' receipt for Bobby's and Helen's Wedding reception in the Hall. What would £36 get you now?

**Opposite page top left:** Bobby and Helen Orr 2 March 1957.

**Opposite page top right:** Bobby and Helen's wedding on 2 March 1957. These pictures were taken at the side and front of the Hall respectively.

**Opposite page bottom left:** Bobby and Helen Orr 2 March 2007.

**Opposite page bottom right:** Bobby and Helen celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on 2 March 2007. Once again, the photographs are taken outside the Hall, this time with their own family circle.

Front view of the Mill pictured from back gate at rear of bowling green.





Otilie Patterson, pictured well away from the glamour of the stage...

As time has passed these sounds have now changed to the sound of the children in the Andrews Memorial School laughing and playing during break and lunch times. At one time these were the sounds of 3 of our 4 children, who attended the school when it first opened.

The famous Blues singer Otilie Patterson was born in the house facing the side entrance to the Memorial Hall. She was best known for her performances and recordings with the famous Chris Barber Band in the 1950s and 1960s.



Otilie Patterson's house is located immediately beyond the second small cottage on the left looking up Mill View (Old Ballygowan Road) – both these small cottages are gone now and the houses in the foreground have had front bay windows added.



I have worked for the Andrews family for more than 61 years and have enjoyed each and every moment. My highlight was the presentation of an Alms dish for my service which was presented at the Andrews Company Christmas Dinner in 2010.

To the Andrews Family - Mr J M; Mr Jackie (JLO); Mr Willie; Mr Tom and Mr John; and then Mr James who I got to know more in the past 10 years along with Johnnie, I cannot say enough thanks to each and every one for their support, friendship and help during my 61 years of employment.

#### **Bobby Orr**



**Above:** Bobby and Helen photographed at the John Andrews & Co. Ltd Christmas dinner in 2010, on the occasion of Bobby's Alms dish presentation.



**Left:** Bobby receiving his Alms dish in 2010 from Mr Tom Andrews.



**Green Laid 1928**

**Members & Officials in 1937 start when entering NIPGL.**

**Back Row:** C Houston, J Patterson, T Frazer, S McKeown, H Watt, W Taylor

**Middle Row:** F McKibbin, J Irwin, T Lilburn, D Hogg, S Orr, J McIlveen, S Houston

**Front Row:** R Graham, G Mullan, J O'Prey, JM Andrews, W McKibbin, W McIlroy, G Strange.

The Comber Bowling Club, formed in 1924, held events on the lawns around the Hall and originally used the name of the Hall in their title. They also used the tennis court at Maxwell Court, the home of John M. Andrews, their founding Chairman and later patron, until his death in 1956. However, the grass was not the correct type for bowls and the Hall green could only be played in one direction. In 1952 the club obtained new and better facilities in Londonderry Avenue.

The Comber Tennis Club then had the use of, first, grass, but later, tarmac courts in the grounds of the Hall and also a clay court at Ardara. The mainstays of the Tennis Club at that time were Betty McLaughlin and her family, and Erskine and Maureen Willis.

Dianne became a member of the Tennis Club and played in many of the matches. The teams were invited by Dianne to Ardara for tea and buns after most of the home matches.





## Erskine Willis's Memories of the Tennis Club

My story starts with a man called Jack Coey in the year 1948, when I was 14 years old. I had been playing cricket at North Down Cricket Club and enjoyed the company at "the green", where I had also played hockey, since coming to Comber in 1947. Jackie Coey was a tennis player and he suggested that I have a go at tennis. So one evening I put on my "gutties", and went along to the Comber Tennis club's courts at the Andrews Memorial Hall. There I borrowed his racquet and had my first go at this game of tennis.

I was smitten and never went back to cricket, at least not as a player, although I have become an enthusiastic supporter of North Down Cricket in my later life.

Jackie Coey, in his late twenties, and always playing in long white trousers, was a very steady player, a left hander, and very hard to beat. He played number two on our first team and rarely lost a match. However, shortly after I joined the club, in a league match played at home against Cavehill club, he met his match! The player he encountered was a fourteen-year-old, the same age as me, called Peter Jackson. Jackie played his steady game but



North Down Cricket pavilion Comber 1909.



**Comber Tennis Club 1940's:** This picture features Billy McLaughlin, Maureen Bennett, Madge Frazer, Ralph Smith and Billy Allen posing on the roundabout. Picture provided by Erskine Willis.

Peter gave him a thrashing; this was one of my greatest memories, which I recounted to Peter Jackson when I got to know him and who by that time had become a Davis Cup player for Ireland!

From this beginning I played most nights of the week and enjoyed the game for my entire playing career. Some of my siblings followed me as tennis players at the club and one joined the neighbouring club at Castle Espie.

I got involved with the running of the club, becoming at various times, match secretary, captain of the club and treasurer. My wife, Maureen, became secretary immediately after we married in 1964 and continued for many years in this position. There was a senior and a junior section and up to a hundred members in total for many years.

The club was formed as "Comber Tennis Club and Croquet Club" in about 1922 with grass courts; in 1938 they were re-laid as a tarmac surface and officially opened by Lord Chief Justice of NI, James Andrews.

By the time I joined it the club was prospering. The only drawback was that it only had two courts, which limited our time for practice and for getting matches finished in one night.



**Comber Tennis Club Winners Belfast & District Junior League 1958**  
**Back Row:** E. Willis, J. Curtis, J. McKegg, W. McLaughlin, R. Frazer  
**Front Row:** A. McAlpin, M. Orr, L. Tynan, J. Frazer.  
*Picture provided by Erskine Willis.*



The Newtownards Chronicle advertisement for the New Year's Eve Dance in 1957, organised by Comber Tennis Club – as it appeared in the paper on 20 December 1957. *Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.*

#### **Comber Tennis Club Members 1958**

**Back Row:** Alex Gregg, Bert Frazer, Billy McLaughlin, Jimmy McKee.

**Front Row:** Margaret Orr, Margaret Adair, Betty McLaughlin, Ann Stevenson.

*Picture provided by Erskine Willis.*

We had a very successful run in the Fifties, winning our league on three occasions. Double summer time helped out (the clock was put forward TWO hours) as we were able to play up to almost eleven o'clock in summer evenings.

I have many happy memories of the long days spent, in a beautiful greenfield site, playing with and surrounded by many friends and their children. I enjoyed the lovely teas after the matches or at club tournaments. I enjoyed the friendly matches against Castle Espie, Ulster and Belfast Banks, the Boars (Campbell College) – as well as the excitement of the hotly contested league matches. However, many boring hours were spent sheltered in the hall on wet days, the boredom only slightly relieved by watching the billiard players! We then had to sweep the water off the courts. In hot weather the tarmac courts melted! James Frazer was the caretaker of the Hall and grounds, which he ran with a friendly but firm hand.

We raised money at supper dances in the Andrews Memorial Hall (The Big Hall), alternately with the hockey/cricket club and the Young Farmers' Club on the important dates of Christmas, New Year and Easter. We crammed over 400 into the hall when perhaps regulations allowed much less. The money we made kept our fees down or paid for repairs to the wire or painting the lines on the courts. Little did we know, but this was to be the highlight of the club's history.



In the late 1960s, the trustees of the hall became financially less and less able to maintain the courts and the building. The advent of the motorcar and the troubles of the late sixties put an end to regular play and travel to other clubs. After the Andrews Memorial Hall was closed we used an old Stables building across the road at the Andrews Mill.

During the seventies and eighties the club declined and, when the hall eventually became

a primary school, moved to council courts at the Leisure centre, off Castle St. It is still surviving, although on a much smaller scale.

I remain associated with Comber Tennis Club and was for many years auditor; I was president for a couple of years before handing over to a far more worthy person in Betty McLaughlin.

**Erskine Willis**





Alex Gregg, Jack Coey, Alan Simpson, Erskine Willis, with Jean Crighton and Sylvia Payne. At a dance in Big Hall about 1951. Picture provided by Erskine Willis.

**Tennis Club sale**

On Saturday last, the Comber Tennis Club held a very successful bring and buy sale in the Andrews Minor Hall when £63 was raised towards club funds.

The members of the club acted as stallholders and a cake, which was baked for the club by Mrs. Mary Minnis, was won in a prize draw by Mrs. Mary Dickson, Belfast.

**Match off**

The North Down first eleven was to have played the R.U.C. in Belfast last Saturday in a friendly

The Tennis Club were among the local sports clubs who regularly used the Andrews Hall premises, or in this case the Minor Hall, for a sale. Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle, 22 February 1957.



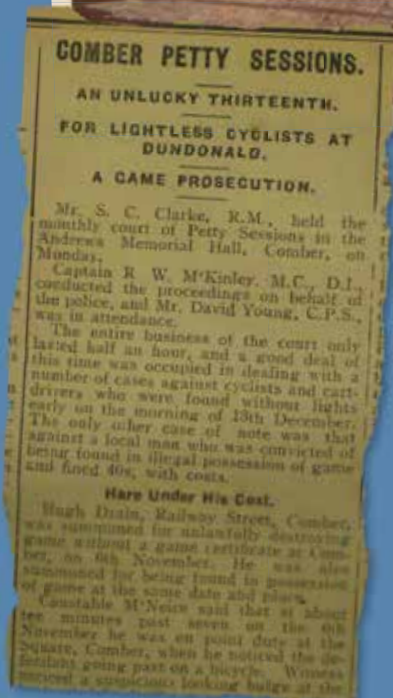
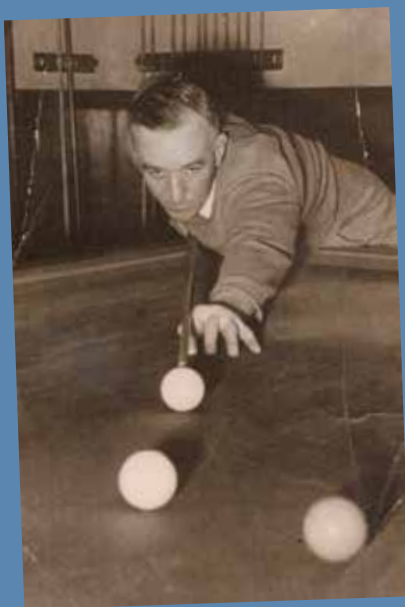
Robert Cooke (left) and Lawrence Rowan (right) receive their Queen's badge March 1968. Presenting this prestigious award are their mothers, the late Mrs Alice Cooke and Mrs Elizabeth Rowan.

**Right:** Bertie Frazer and his nephew Simon Halliday early 1960s.

**Bottom left:** James Frazer, Belfast and District Senior Billiards League Champion 1930 - 31.

There was also a children's play area in the grounds, with swings and a roundabout which some of us still remember enjoying in our first youth. There was also an active Billiard Club with three tables.

Other users of the hall and grounds included the Boys' Brigade, the Girls' Brigade, a baby clinic, boxing matches, the Petty Sessions and the Bureau.



**Above:** Beware of cyclists in Comber Square with suspicious bulges at the back of their coats. More than a raincoat might be lurking in there... *Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle, 4 January 1936.*



## Jean Browne's Memories of her 'Dance Hall Days'

My first impressions of the dances in the hall are very memorable. I was from Killyleagh and because my mum had lots of friends in Comber, I was allowed to go to the dances from the age of 14. You took the bus but we did not have enough money to pay for it so we borrowed someone's bus pass in the hope that an inspector would not get on.

On my first night, I thought it was the most glorious place ever! There were no halls in Killyleagh except for the Sunday School halls so this one was special. Albert Gray's band played every week and we thought they were brilliant!

Coming home, we had to run like mad to catch the bus. Any pocket money was spent on the dance, there wasn't even any money for a lemonade! If anyone had some money then they bought a bag of chips which was shared around 10 people!

That was our routine every Saturday night and we wouldn't have missed Saturday night at the Andrews Memorial Hall.

**Jean Browne, Grandparent, contributor to the Intergenerational Project 2010-11**



**Top left:** A Young Farmers' Dance, 1957. This picture features Jean McBratney, Bob Cunningham, Bertie Mostell, Norman Quinn and friends.

**Top right:** A Young Farmers' Dance, 1957. Both courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.

**Left:** Albert Gray and his band – a well-known 'resident' band in the Hall's 1950s and 1960s dance era. Photograph provided by Erskine Willis.



**Left:** A view of the dancers taken from the Hall balcony. The date is unknown, as is the whereabouts of the grand piano! Picture provided by Bertie Frazer.



**Above:** A Young Farmers' Dance, 1957. Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.



**Above:** A Young Farmers' Dance 1957. Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.

Jean Browne, pictured in 2011 during the school's first Intergenerational Learning project.

## Lawrence Rowan's Memories of 'The Big Hall'

Over the last one hundred years, Comber has seen many changes. All of the major industry has now gone but thankfully the town still has most of its character, in that streets and houses have remained virtually unchanged. One building has stood for most of that time, and for me and many others is the centrepiece of Comber. I am, of course, referring to the Andrews Hall – or the 'big hall' as it is affectionately known.

The Andrews Hall holds many memories for me, the earliest of which goes back to 1965 when Tommy Wilson was the caretaker and his son was in the Boys' Brigade. We were able to gain admittance to the hall on a Saturday morning and play snooker for a few hours. The hall was a mystical building back then, with quaint corridors and secret spaces. As a member of the Boys' Brigade in Second Comber, I took part in annual displays in the hall for many years in the late 60s and early 70s. I also remember people talking about particularly memorable 50th and 60th anniversary displays. Due to the size of the hall, when a display ended you were exhausted because of all the running about. If you were in an item on the floor, leaving by the front stairs, you had about one minute to change and appear on the stage from the back stairs, and vice versa!



**Above:** 2nd Comber Boys' Brigade pictured at their display in Andrews Memorial Hall 1959 - Diamond Jubilee of Company?



**Left:** Officers of 2nd Comber Boys' Brigade enjoying tea and buns after the display! Left to Right: Richard Regan, Dave Browne, Davy Richie, Bertie Frazer, Saunders Smith and Alec Todd, 1950s.



**Below:** 2nd Comber Boys' Brigade Company with Captain John Shiels in the Andrews Memorial Hall in late 1940s.

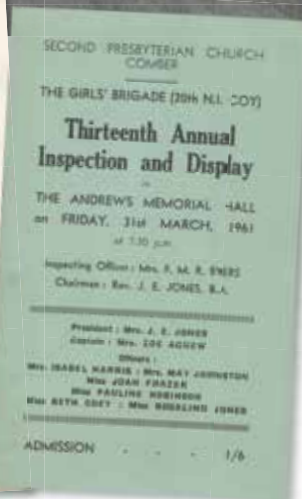
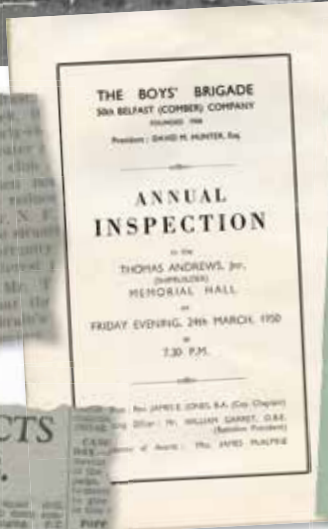
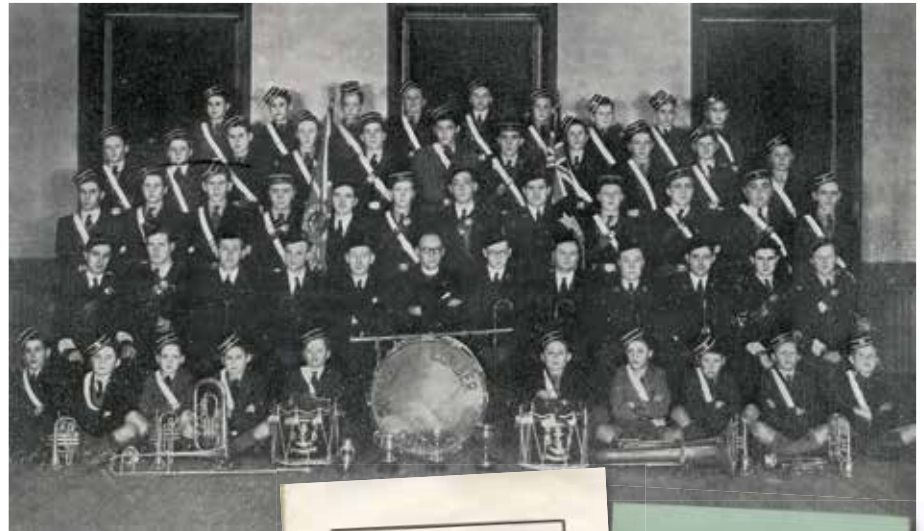
We also managed a quick dash from the hall to Harry White's shop at the bottom of Braeside for sweets - aiming to get back without being caught!

I can remember my father telling me of the wonderful displays held in the hall when he was a young man and Home Guard parades in which he was also involved.

Second Comber made great use of the hall as Girls' Brigade displays were also held there, as were the Sunday School Socials.

The history of the 'big hall' continues, of course. I have enjoyed my reconnection with its history over the last year and look forward to many years of enjoyment at events to come in this old and very special building.

**Lawrence Rowan**



The Inspection Cards tell their own story – provided by Lawrence Rowan; the 'snooker handicap' article is from the Newtownards Chronicle, 25 January 1957; the report on the Mayor's inspection was published on 5 April 1957. Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.



Sylvia Taggart (née Curry).

### **Sylvia Taggart's Memories of The Girls' Training Core**

I have very fond memories of The Girls' Training Core. We met in a little hut on the Main Street in Comber. We worked hard, went on trips but always had our displays in the Andrews Hall. We did marching and various exercises and it was lovely, especially if you won a medal or a cup for your efforts.



Rosemary Jess (née Murdoch) on the left and Meryl McInnes (née Curry).

It is lovely to have so many happy memories as looking at old photographs, many of our dear friends from the G.T.C. are no longer with us.

### **Sylvia Taggart (née Curry), contributor to the Intergenerational Project 2010-11**



Noreen McGreeghan (née Robinson).



Officers and Girls at Display in Andrews Hall 1953, Guest of Honour Lady Andrews.

**Front Row:** Margaret Donnan, Frances Smith, Ruth Savage, Marie Perrie, Naomi Swindle and Pauline Robinson.

**Middle Row:** Effie Thompson, Marion Mitchell, Ann Rogers, Lady Andrews, Lottie Fletcher, Sylvia Curry and Annie Horner.

**Back Row:** Noreen Robinson, Joan Glass, Rosemary Murdoch, Marie Donnan, May Watson, Ann Bailey, Margaret Watson, Gladys Smith, Betty McAlpin, Lilly Robinson and Maureen Heaney.





### Them... And us...

Hugh Yeaman, the first Principal of Andrews Memorial, tells a story of his early days in the school, when he was 'discovering' his new working environment and having a look around the Hall.

Upstairs, to the side of the stage, is a corridor leading to the back stairs and down to the kitchen. Tucked away on the other side of this corridor is a tiny room – a 'switch room' now used for general storage. Scrawled on the wall was the phrase 'Them played here'. This

Two photographs of Them, fronted by Van Morrison. Pictures reproduced with the permission of John Rogers.



isn't just any old scrawl, this is a reference to Them, the band fronted by the legendary Van Morrison! This room was used as a changing room, apparently – although not for more than a four-piece, I would suggest! Unfortunately,

the room has been painted at least once since that time and the graffiti doesn't survive. But the memory does, and Van has even mentioned it in recent discussions with his manager, John Rogers.

A rather nice link exists between John and the school nowadays, too. He has four grandchildren currently attending. I wonder do Ellie and Jack, Chloe and Thomas, know all about their granda's famous musical connections, not only to this hall, but way beyond Comber!

John remembers Them playing in the Hall, as well as many other bands. Our building was one of relatively few suitable venues outside Belfast, but this side of the Hall's history is really waiting to be told. We'd love to hear more – there must be old advertisements, handbills, photos, maybe even autographs out there that would add to our history in yet another and no doubt very colourful way!

**Ralph Magee, in discussion with John Rogers**

### **Gary Savage's Memories of Black Sabbath**

The Andrews Hall, or 'the big hall', as we all knew it, was very much part of my childhood. I was a member of the Tennis Club and played as a junior – on the same team, no less, as Karen McGreeghan! During the summer months, I spent a lot of time camping by the river and fishing for trout in the river which runs behind what is now Andrews Memorial Primary. 'Match days' were big days, too - the two hours each way, jumpers for goalposts

football games, with a lot more than 11-a-side teams! Our pitch was where the school now stands.

On one 'normal' messing around kind of day, a few of us were playing tennis on the courts beside the Hall when we heard a bit of a racket from inside. Like any teenager, we were curious, so crept in and up the stairs to the hall itself. A band, a pretty 'heavy rock' kind of band, were playing, but stopped once they spotted us. Looking back, I'm surprised we didn't get short shrift and chased from the building, but the guys let us all have a 'go'. My pal, John Young, was with me that day and his younger sister and brother, Ann and Roy, became the band's drummer and bassist! I can't remember if anyone took the microphone, but I really wish we had, knowing now who the singer was...

For we were told afterwards that the band that we were 'jamming' with was none other than Black Sabbath, and the singer was Ozzy Osbourne – nowadays known to a younger generation as 'Sharon's husband! Back then, however, he was one of the great rock vocalists.

I can't remember the exact date, but it was before 1979, when the new school building was opened. Presumably Sabbath were playing in Belfast and needed a hall for a

practice session. I have no idea who the connection to Comber was, but thanks!

The early 1970s weren't the most popular time to visit N. Ireland, so having a band of that calibre in Belfast was a big deal. To see them in our big hall, makes the memory even more special. Autographs? We didn't even know who they were, but the craic was great!

**Gary Savage**

#### **Footnote**

We would love to confirm that the band Gary and John saw was Black Sabbath. Our leads have been both positive and negative, but someone out there must be sure. What we are certain about, is that the Andrews Hall was a significant venue on the local gig scene in the 1960s and beyond. The story of Them we include here is verified.

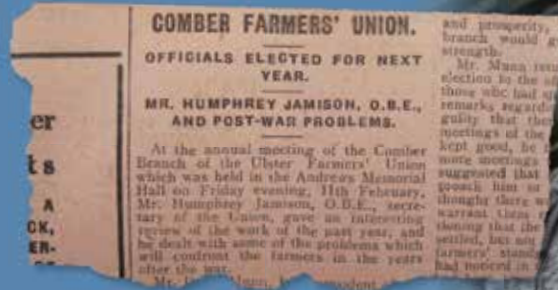
We'd love to hear more about bands that played in the hall, so maybe there are many stories yet to tell. Time to get in touch? We think so!



John Shields, Claude Edwards and David McCutcheon  
with Thompson sub machine guns in early 1940s.  
*Picture provided by Bertie Frazer.*



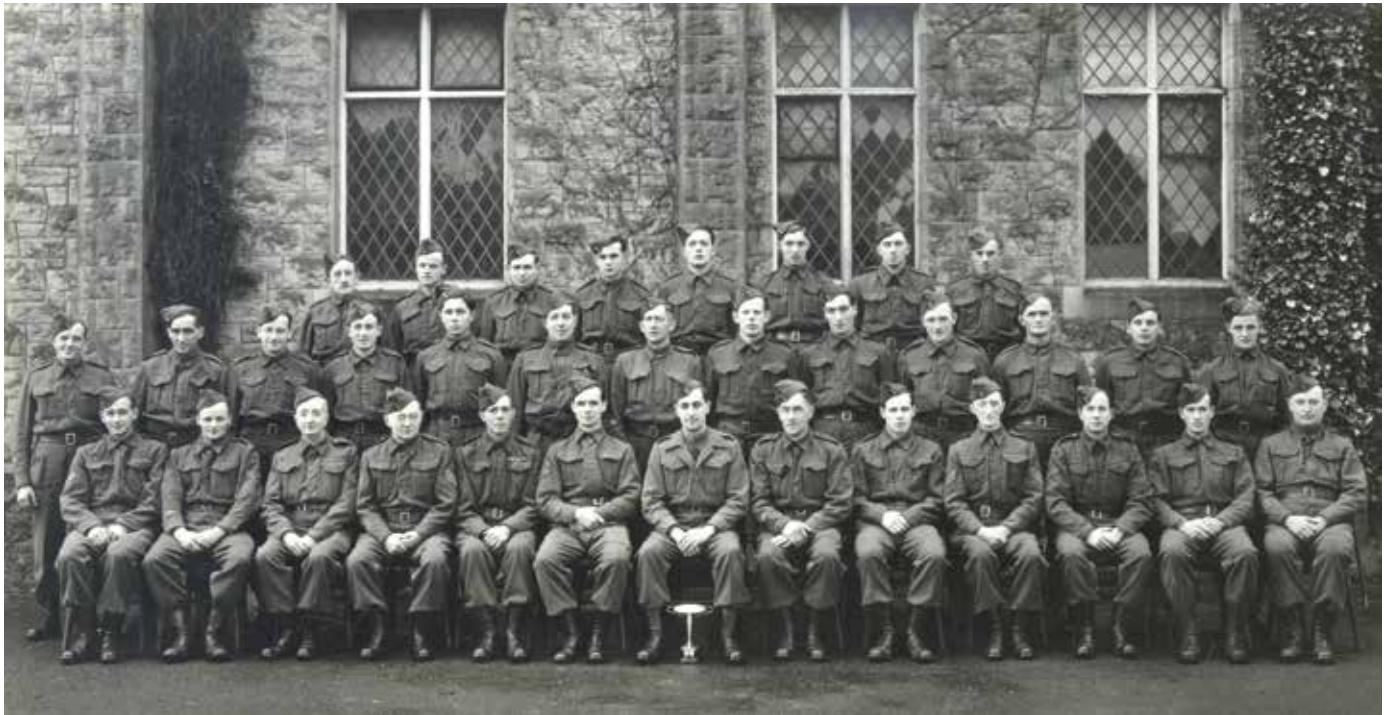
During the Second World War the Hall was used as a billet by a part of The South Staffordshire Regiment while preparing for D-Day, when they had a .22 rifle range inside. The Comber unit of the Home Guard also had a base in the Hall. In later years, for a few months around 1970, the UDR held training sessions there.



Comber Farmers' Union news, as reported in the Newtownards Chronicle, 19 February 1944. Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.



Soldiers from the South Staffordshire Regiment pictured with Tommy Calvert in front of his horse-drawn bread van. The troops were billeted in the Hall during WW2. Picture provided by Bertie Frazer.



The Home Guard, photographed at the side of the hall. A fabulous collection of old photographs outside the hall can be viewed today in Hugh Mawhinney's butchers, in Comber Square. *Picture provided by Bertie Frazer.*

Like any uniformed organisation, the Home Guard were subject to inspections and training exercises. This article, from 8 April 1944, reports on one such occasion. Note the 'Second in Command' was Lieutenant N. Nevin, Mr Norman Nevin, who later became Principal of Comber Primary School and a very highly regarded local historian. *Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.*





The Home Guard, very early 1940s.

*Picture provided by Bertie Frazer.*

**Back row:** Tommy Carroll, Unknown, Hugh McGreeghan, Unknown.

**Middle row:** Unknown, Unknown, Jack McKeag, Unknown, Jim Newell, Unknown, Steve Thompson, Unknown, Unknown, Unknown.

**Front row:** James Spence, Bob Mawhinney, Wilson Larwy, Unknown, Harry McCormick, Robert Johnston, James Headley, Unknown, William James Baxter, Addy Thomson, Unknown.





The current 'new' school building under construction in July 1978. The building was opened by the Rt. Hon. Sir J.L.O. Andrews KBE, DL on 10 December 1979. A further extension was added in 1983.

In the years coming up to 1970, the Churches had provided their own halls and TV was in every house, so many of the demands on the Hall for leisure and entertainment dwindled away.

Around 1970 the Education authorities realised they had not anticipated the growth of Comber and urgently needed a new school. They wrote to J.L.O. Andrews, requesting he provide them with a site for a new school on his farm land at Maxwell Court.

He concluded that the best site would be the land beside the Hall and the new school would be able to use the Hall for classrooms while new buildings were constructed. The Hall would also be available thereafter for the school's own special occasions. This idea enabled the school to be

formed much quicker than on a green field site. There were considerable legal arrangements to be made to enable the Trustees to hand over their responsibilities to the Department of Education.

The Mill had run its own school in earlier years and Tom, as a then Director of the Mill, was privileged to be a member of Andrews Memorial's School Management Committee or Governors for many years. This coincided with the term of office of Mr Hugh Yeaman, who gave long and valuable service as the first headmaster.

#### APPOINTMENT OF PRINCIPAL

Mr. Hugh Yeaman, Londonderry Road, Newtownards, has been appointed Principal of the new Comber Primary School.

Hugh Yeaman's appointment as reported in the Newtownards Chronicle, 5 July 1973.  
*Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.*



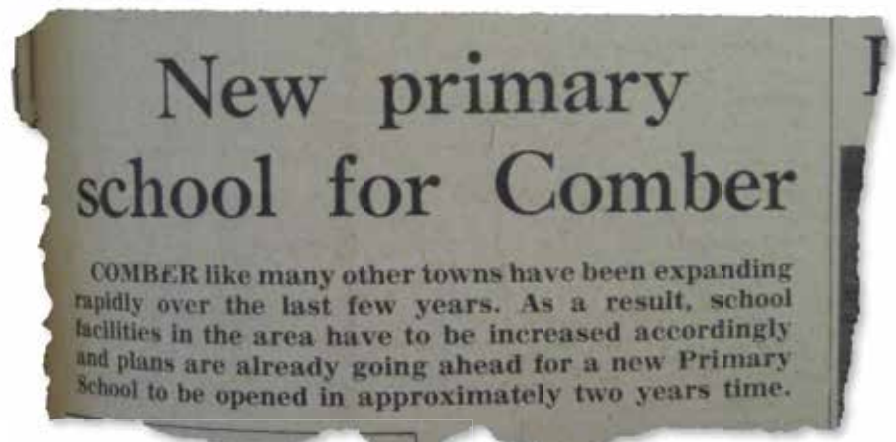
## Hugh Yeaman's Memories of Andrews Memorial Primary School

September 3rd 1973 saw the commencement of a new era in the history of the Andrews Memorial Hall. That day saw the opening of the new primary school to serve the western part of Comber and outlying areas.

The Down County Education Committee, the forerunner of the S.E.E.L.B, had decided in May of that year, after much prevarication, to proceed with the provision of a new primary school to cater for Comber's growing population. At the end of June I was fortunate enough to be appointed as first Principal of the new Andrews Memorial Primary School.

However, it initially was not a school in the conventional sense as there was no school building. This is where the Memorial Hall came to the rescue. While the new school building was being constructed on the adjacent site, which was to take a further three years, the Hall, together with several temporary classrooms around it, was to suffice as teaching spaces.

On being called to attend Education HQ a few days after my appointment I was to learn that no provision had been made to order books, equipment or furniture for the new school! Those tasks would fall to me - with less than eight weeks to the opening. Needless to



How the Newtownards Chronicle reported the establishment of a new Primary school for Comber on 28 June 1973, with accommodation in the Memorial Hall and 'pre-fabricated classrooms'. Andrews Memorial Primary School opened in September 1973. *Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.*



Andrews Memorial Primary School Edinburgh trip 1976. Included in the picture are: Graham Chambers, Alan Dugan, John Martin, Andrew McFarland, James Coulter, Avril Edgar, Heather Magee, Lesley McIlveen, Colin Moore, Michael Quinn, Kenneth Massey and Derek Jamison.

say that only about half of what was needed arrived in time. However all was not lost, thanks to the generosity of the then Principal of neighbouring Comber Primary, the late Mr. Norman Nevin. In characteristic fashion he provided us with adequate supplies of what was required. I also spent the weeks prior to the opening visiting homes in the area to assess exactly who would be attending the new school and seeking a caretaker, cleaners and a road crossing patrolman. It was a busy time!

The staff of four teachers, and I as a teaching principal, welcomed 166 rather bewildered pupils to their strange new surroundings. In the main hall upstairs we had two classes separated in the middle by a row of steel cupboards. There was another class in the minor hall downstairs. Only two of the temporary classrooms, better known as huts, at the rear of the hall were ready. It was a trying time for all concerned, pupils, parents and staff alike, though it must be said that all pulled together to ensure that regardless of the surroundings, the school soon settled to provide a happy and secure learning environment which has lasted to the present.

The use of the Andrews Memorial Hall as a school did not initially meet with the approval of everyone in Comber. Quite rightly many saw it as a community hall for the use of the people of Comber. The use of the hall in the early 1970s had greatly diminished since the





Primary 1, 2 and 3 pupils pictured during a Christmas nativity performance. The pianist is Ellie Leckey. Note that in those days, the performance took place in the 'New' School Assembly Hall, not the Andrews Hall, Newtownards Chronicle, 16 December 1982. *Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.*

halcyon days of previous decades when it had been widely used for a variety of events. It was with this in mind that the Andrews family had agreed that the hall should become an integral part of the new school, thus bringing new life to its historic walls. The fears of the critics were

allayed when it became obvious that the hall would still be available to the community when not required for school activities.

Over the following years the school progressed both in pupil numbers and reputation as a progressive and successful partner in education in Comber. I know that this is due in no small measure to the work and commitment of generations of pupils, parents and staff. I also like to think that the Andrews Memorial

Hall has played and continues to play an important role in this success. I feel privileged to have been associated with the new era in the illustrious history of this grand old building. I wish it and the school good fortune in the years ahead.

**Hugh Yeaman**  
**Principal, Andrews Memorial Primary School**  
**1973 - 1994**

## Derek Henderson's Memories of Andrews Memorial Primary School

The Andrews Hall – what magical memories it holds for me. I'm sure this historic building means many things to many people but to me it speaks of talented children, committed teachers and proud, supportive parents.

The final assembly, prior to my retirement, was obviously a very special time for me. The scrapbooks made and presented by each class, the kind words spoken and the very generous gifts I received, made for a very moving occasion and a permanent reminder of the fourteen happy years I spent at Andrews. I can remember during that assembly reflecting on many of the special times I had enjoyed in the Hall during my time at the school. Here are some that may bring you back, too...

The nativity plays with the P3 children acting their hearts out, ably supported by the P2 choir and the 'angels' and 'stars' from Primary 1. The family atmosphere on those memorable December mornings reminded everyone present that there was indeed 'something special going on.'

The often nostalgic end of year assemblies, when we distributed awards for outstanding achievements and said farewell to our P7 children, wishing them 'bon voyage' to the



Primary 3 angels. The 'Gigantic Star', December 2002

strains of 'One more step along the world I go.'

The Carol Services were very special occasions. The Hall was always packed with parents and friends to witness the various choirs and musical ensembles thrill everyone present with their virtuosity and tell the Christmas story in a childlike but very meaningful way. Some of the songs by the

choirs, 'Remember the children' and 'Shine away', to name but two, will linger long in my memory.

The many brilliant school productions which showed what children can achieve if they work hard under the guidance of such committed and talented teachers – take a bow Mrs Knaggs and Mrs Barry! The very professional sets by Mr Sandford and the





Andrews Memorial presents 'The Gigantic Star', December 2002.

wonderful costumes by Mrs Moorhead and others left a lasting impression. All of the shows were memorable to some degree, but the stand out memories for me include Claire Colhoun's performance in Oklahoma, Matthew Knaggs singing 'Tit Willow' in The Mikado, Joshua Burnside leading the march of the Bold Gendarmes in 'The Pirates of Penzance' and Hannah Sloan's portrayal of Fagin in 'Oliver' – one of the best performances by a primary school pupil that I have ever seen.



On the left, the happy couple...

When I think of the Hall now, one thought springs immediately to mind – a sense of togetherness. At Andrews Memorial there has always been a committed, hardworking body of teachers and support staff working alongside a group of parents genuinely interested in the education and development of their children.

I am grateful for the kind invitations to return to some of the special events in the school and

On the right, the shepherds and townsfolk.

every time I set foot in this historic building many wonderful memories come flooding back. To quote some lines from Wordsworth, "The music in my heart I bore, long after it was heard no more."

**Derek Henderson**  
Principal, Andrews Memorial Primary School  
1994 - 2008



Andrews Memorial presents  
'The Mikado', June 2003.

**Top left:** (l-r) Ashleigh Harris,  
Ashleigh Hamilton and  
Melanie Jess.

**Bottom left:** Pearce Jamison

**Top right:** Matthew Knaggs

**Bottom right:** (l-r) Connor  
Burnside, Conor Robinson,  
Conor Martin, Tanner  
Whiteside, Neil Armstrong  
and Robin Mairs.

## Remembering Titanic – a piece of Andrews Memorial history

When teaching in Comber Primary School in the spring of 1973 I was asked if I would help to set up a new school in Comber. I readily agreed to the challenge and began my long association with Andrews Memorial Primary School. On Monday 3 September 1973, the school opened with Hugh Yeaman as principal. I began teaching P1 in a temporary room overlooking the river – in fact, I ended my teaching career in that same room in 2004. I taught for 26 years in Andrews Memorial PS as I spent five years out of teaching to raise my family.

When the school opened, the Andrews Memorial Hall was used to accommodate two classrooms as well as being the base for administration and school lunches. It remained in use for one or two classrooms and the hall upstairs was used for PE and school productions.

In 1989 I was appointed co-ordinator for History, EMU and Cultural Heritage. I always had a natural affinity for History and the Andrews Memorial Hall was the perfect setting to further my interest and knowledge in Titanic and the Andrews family. When organising the school History Scheme, I ensured that 'Titanic' would be part of our P4 studies. Throughout



Part of the Titanic commemorative exhibition, staged by the pupils and staff of Andrews Memorial in March 1992.

the years, this continued to be the focal point in our P4 history. Every year, the interest of both children and parents continued to produce new stories of relatives or friends who had worked on Titanic.

The first Titanic exhibition was held on 11 and 12 of May 1982 in the Andrews Memorial Hall to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the loss of the ship. Each year group produced booklets depicting life on board the Titanic.

This included studying the class system that existed on board the ship and the differences between first, second and third class. Models of the ship were produced by each year group for display at the exhibition and life in Comber in 1912 was also explored.

A major exhibition was held in 1992 to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the sinking of the ship. The staff worked hard together, spending hours organising this





**Above:** Mrs Eileen Watt, school secretary, with the exhibition programme.

**Left:** Viola Thompson and Hugh Yeaman.



event – many enjoyable evenings were spent in the Andrews Hall to ensure no detail was overlooked. We were extremely fortunate that the Andrews family, the school PTA, parents and friends of the school gave us their full support and lent costumes and artefacts from the period.

The exhibition opened on Tuesday 24 March 1992 and was held over a period of three days. Due to the interest of the whole community and extensive media coverage, it was a huge success.

My passion for Titanic continues and as a member of the Committee of the Belfast Titanic Society I involve myself in a number of events, particularly enjoying those connected to local schools.

In 1992 at the first meeting to form the Belfast Titanic Society (then the Ulster Titanic Society), Chairman Una Reilly said: "What happened to Titanic was a disaster – She was not." I am delighted that Andrews Memorial Primary School continues to be involved in remembering such an important ship - the greatest of her time.

**Viola Thompson**  
**Teacher, Andrews Memorial Primary School**  
**1973 – 2004**  
**History Co-ordinator**

## Tales in Time - Karen Graham

When I was asked to write a short piece for this book an image of my late father, John McGreeghan, immediately came to me. He was standing at full height looking at me smiling and saying, "Oh dear, do they know what they have done???"



Karen's father, John McGreeghan  
Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.

My earliest memory of the Andrews Hall is when at the age of nine my family moved into a new house in Railway Street. My father was walking me around to Harry White's shop not long after we had moved in. Passing the Andrews Hall he explained the story behind it. It was a story that was punctuated by snippets of how several family members worked to the Andrews family, either in the Linen Mill or on the land; not least my father himself who had worked as Tipstaff to the late Lord Chief Justice, Sir James Andrews. The Andrews Hall was clearly a building that was a very important piece of Comber's history. It was also a place that I was to respect along with the Andrews family name.

The grounds of the hall were a child's paradise, and those of us from Railway Street who played together spent many childhood

hours on the bowling green or on the roundabout. I even remember entering a talent competition playing a duet on the piano with my friend Pauline Orr. And guess what, we won a prize! I also remember winning a prize dressed as an Indian squaw in a fancy dress competition!

While playing, we often stopped for a breather and watched the tennis players, hoping one day to join them. Matches were played on what is now the P6/P7 playground. On one match afternoon we were playing a chasing

game and I managed to get my finger jammed in the door of the ladies toilet in an attempt to avoid being caught. I now have a twisted finger to remind me that we should not have been using the Hall for one of our games!

The wife of Tom Andrews, Mrs Dianne Andrews, was a member of the tennis club and allowed her clay court to be used for matches. I never lost a match on it, as using back-hand spin meant the ball died spectacularly on landing!



Betty McLaughlin 1950s.

Early teens saw myself and others queuing early for Second Comber Church's BB display. The early arrival was to ensure a seat at the back near the window ledges, so that when the bugles and drums arrived you could perch on the ledge to get a better view of the boys while they played. Of course their musical talent was appreciated also!

Late teens saw the weekly Blue Lamp Discos in the hall. This was a disco run by the police using a flashing blue light, hence the name "Blue Lamp". Hours were spent preparing to go to these as it was the place to "check out" the talent. For many weeks I had my eye on a particular young man, but regrettably he didn't notice me until the week before Comber Civic Week when it was decided that the Civic Queen would be chosen from the young ladies at the Blue Lamp Disco. I ended up runner up to the Civic Queen and the guy that I had admired for weeks asked me to dance - success! Alas, no date followed, but I am one of several who was asked out on their first date in the grounds of the Andrews Hall - to the Balmoral Show no less!

Many years later and here I am teaching in my 23rd year at Andrews Memorial Primary School. So much of my life has evolved around this amazing building, that it is a real privilege to be writing about my life and "The Hall". It is great to see more and more community groups coming back to use the hall and renewing



**Above:** The 1976 winners of the Ladies Knock - Out Cup from left: Jean Bowers, Karen McGreeghan, Fiona Wolsley, Anne Hawthorn and Elaine Irwin.



**Left:** Karen as a teacher at Andrews Memorial Primary School during the school's 1992 Titanic Exhibition.

Comber connections to the building. I have no doubt that many future happy memories are being played out there on a weekly basis; each one to be treasured, each one building on the incredible legacy that the hall has given, and will continue to give, to the people of Comber.

**Karen Graham (née McGreeghan)**  
**Teacher, Andrews Memorial Primary School**  
**from 1988**  
**Intergenerational Learning Co-ordinator**





Cycling Proficiency in 1976 (l-r)  
Heather Moore, Unknown, David Hanna, James Jelly,  
Lesley Browne, Eunice Vance, Unknown, Colin Rea,  
Unknown. Courtesy of Newtownards Chronicle.

## John Martin's Memories of Andrews Memorial Primary School

Due to the growing population in Comber, a second primary school, Andrews Memorial, was opened in September 1973. It started with just 5 classes; P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5.

I was in P4 at Comber Primary School, but transferred to the new school for the start of my P5 year.

I had made lots of friends at Comber Primary, but found that everyone was very friendly at the new school and I settled in quickly. In those days we had a classroom on the ground floor of the Andrews Memorial Hall along with classrooms in portable buildings around the hall.

As I was a little older and the school was close to where I lived near the duck pond, I was allowed to ride my bike to school. I had a red Raleigh Chopper bike which was fantastic as it had 3 gears and great big handle-bars.

We used to have our sports-day and play our football matches on the bowling green right beside the hall.

Some of the teachers I can remember are Mr Yeaman (Principal) and Mr Reddich along with Mrs Bailie and Mrs Lynas. Mrs Bailie taught us music upstairs in the main hall where she used to sit at a piano in the corner.

We had a lovely caretaker at the school called Mary Young who lived just around the corner in Railway Street.

We had lots of after-school clubs and I can remember taking Mr Reddich's club for craft-work which I really enjoyed. Mr Reddich also took us for Cycling Proficiency which we used to do on the tennis courts.

In P7 we went on a school trip to Edinburgh which was really fun.

At the end of P6 we had our sports day and prize-giving. I was extremely fortunate to be the very first person to receive the Nevin Plaque for Character. I got a little trophy to keep and my name was engraved on the first name plate on the main plaque.

Mr Nevin was the principal of Comber Primary School and was the principal when my dad went there as a pupil in the 1940s.

My mum and dad were very proud when I was given this award. I still keep my trophy on my bookcase at home to remind me that having good character and attitude is still important.

You can see me in the photograph above. When I left Andrews Memorial I went to the Royal Belfast Academical Institution (Inst.) school in Belfast and then on to Queen's University.



A selection of proud sports day winners, as pictured in the Newtownards Chronicle in June 1976 – (back l-r) Derek Jamison, John Martin, Alan Dugan; (front l-r) Linda McGreevy, Lesley McIlveen, Gillian Lowe; (foreground) Ann Hanna. Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.

Today I work for a computer software company where I specialise in software designed for mobile computers like iPhones and iPads. I get to travel and meet people all over the world as part of my job.

I've been to countries such as America, Canada, Spain, Australia, France, Switzerland and Germany.

I will always remember my years at Andrews Memorial Primary School with great fondness and pride.

**John Martin**  
**Andrews Memorial Primary School**  
**1973 – 1976**



# The Andrews Memorial Hall

by P3.

I think the Andrews Memorial Hall looks like a castle.

It is really, really, really big.

My friend Liam thinks it is a Dragon's castle but he's only three.

I Love it.

I am really looking forward to being in the Christmas play.

I am very excited.

I Love to be in the Andrews Hall.

by Olivia Porter

# The Andrews Memorial Hall.

The Andrews Hall is special to me  
it is lovely.

It's a Titanic building.

I Love it.

I am really looking forward to our play in the Hall.

I will be an angel and it will be fun.

by Emma shaw.

# The Andrews Memorial Hall by P3.

At our Harvest Service in the Andrews Memorial Hall I read a prayer and we sang songs.

My mum and dad watched me.

I was proud of myself.

People decorated the Andrews Hall with Titanic things.

by Coral Masters.

# The Andrews Memorial Hall

by P3

The Andrews Memorial Hall looks like a church. It

has angels on it and the

Windows are arched. It is

really cool. by Reuben Burnham.





### Julia Orr's Memories of Andrews Memorial Primary School

My first memory of the Andrews Memorial Hall was during my P2 year which coincided with the 70th anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic. Until then the Hall was just an old building at the other side of the school grounds that seemed to have little to do with school life.

In 1982, all that changed. The school became an industry of work toward the anniversary. Our year was tasked with collecting the tops from Smarties tubes to make portholes for the model of Titanic that we were making for an exhibition in the Andrews Hall. During that year the whole school also saw "A Night to Remember" in the assembly hall, shown by the Spence brothers who run the Tudor cinema. It was a truly moving experience which affected some of the students more than others.

I was aware that the BBC was going to be filming from the school on the night of the exhibition. I remember attending and believe this to have been my first memory of being inside the Andrews Hall. I didn't realise it then, but there was a great feeling of history in the hall which I still feel to this day. The most vivid memory I have of that night was three or four dressmaker's dummies on the stage with period dress on. I also remember seeing two of my classmates on television, one of which became very emotional when recounting the viewing of the film.

After 1982 I recall a Hallowe'en disco being held in the hall at which I won a prize for "dancing". I was quite stunned as I remember just jumping around like a lunatic! The hall came more into use during my later years in Andrews for concerts, school productions and class TV programmes which were shown in what I believe was once a billiard room. I

The Primary 1 pupils photographed during their visit to Crawfordsburn Country Park complete with their buckets and spades. The picture was published in the Newtownards Chronicle, 24 June 1982. *Courtesy of the Newtownards Chronicle.*

remember one year going up the back stairs for a Carol Concert and being behind stage which I found strange.

Since 1982 The Andrews Hall and all things Titanic have become a fascination for me. To think that a man from Comber designed such a wonderful ship and that his legacy lives on in such a beautiful building is a great credit to the town. When I attend school events in the hall I always find myself looking around, up and down at the beautiful structure and thinking that our school has such an amazing asset of which few, in fact none, can boast.

**Julia Orr (née Keery)**  
**Andrews Memorial Primary School**  
**1980 - 1987**

## FACTS

The men had to use three million rivets to keep Titanic together.

When Titanic was launched a champagne bottle was not smashed on her because Bruce Ismay did not believe in it.

When Titanic left Belfast a fire was burning in one of the coal bunkers just in front of boiler room no.6. This fire was finally put out the day before the ship sank.

**By Matthew Hamill. P5F**

Titanic has two sister ships called Olympic and Britannic.

Thomas Andrews was the chief designer of Titanic.

Titanic was built in Belfast and then set off on its maiden voyage.

**By Tara Croskery. P5F**

## CHOOSE A ROLE AND DESCRIBE HOW YOU WOULD HAVE FELT IF YOU HAD BEEN ON BOARD THE TITANIC

I feel very proud that I am on the maiden voyage of the Titanic. I am a 2nd class passenger. My 2nd class passenger ticket was £34.00. My cabin was located on the saloon deck.

Hello my name is Eva Russell. I'm in 1st class on Titanic the biggest ship in the world. The view just standing on the deck is incredible.

As a first class passenger on board the Titanic my suite was beautifully decorated. It was fitted with modern appliances such as telephones and heaters. It had bedrooms, a toilet and a bath with running water. I felt very comfortable and enjoyed my luxurious style of travelling.

**By Kyle McBride, Eva Russell and Joshua Bradshaw. P5F**

### Hannah Sloan's Memories of Andrews Memorial Primary School

Snapshots from my family photo albums take me back to my early school years at Andrews Memorial Primary School. Many hours were spent in the Andrews Hall rehearsing for Christmas nativities, Harvest services and special assemblies, both as a member of the choir and orchestra. My most vivid memories are of the preparation for the primary seven performance of 'Oliver Twist'. The success of that performance was the highlight of my P7 year and was a lovely way to end my many happy years at Andrews Memorial.

**Hannah Sloan**  
**Andrews Memorial Primary School**  
**1998 - 2005**

Andrews Memorial presents 'Oliver', 1996. The scale of the production is evident and the school remains extremely proud of its tradition in staging shows of the highest calibre. Three members of staff are also on stage here - can you spot them?







Welcome to

# Andrews Memorial Primary School

**Building a Legacy**

[andrewsmps.com](http://andrewsmps.com)

Tel: 028 927 2

Dianne's nephew and niece, Ben and Celia Ferres, both attended the school.

The Andrews family continue to serve on the school's Board of Governors, with Fiona Andrews the current serving member. This continuity is important in maintaining the family's links to the school that bears its name. It is also most appropriate that the original ideas of the contributors to the building costs of the Hall, and the objectives of the Trustees, continue through the Hall's place at the heart of Andrews Memorial Primary School, which remains of such great benefit to the people of Comber.

The Governors remain able to let the Hall be used by approved local organisations for appropriate events. Through the name of the school the memories of Great Uncle

Tommie are enhanced and preserved, and he would rightly have been very proud of this wonderful building and its long and memorable history. Indeed, the Hall itself will be celebrating its own centenary in 2015.

Tom and Dianne Andrews



Dianne Andrews' niece Celia Ferres and nephew Ben Ferres both attended Andrews Memorial Primary School.

## The Gang's All Here

In 1982 I was Cub Scout Leader (Akela) of the Friday night Pack (1st Comber, Inler), having helped set them up as a split from the main Pack (Thursday night 1st Comber, Scrabo), which was getting too big to exist on its own. I have great memories of this happiness and fun we all had in running two ganging shows (Scout and Guide shows written by Ralph Reader, of whom more later). Before I share these memories of the Andrews Memorial Hall shows let me fill in the background to these events.

The then Rector of St Mary's Church of Ireland, Comber, the Reverend Derek Swann, was concerned that the Scout and Guide groups belonging to the Church were not as involved with each other's activities and business as perhaps they should be. To do something about it he felt that some sort of combined effort would forge new links between the two groups. That effort, he felt, could be a Gang Show involving Scouts and Guides of all ages.

The youth groups in the church were going from strength to strength, numbers wise, when the Rector approached me to ask if I would consider producing and directing a Gang Show, involving the whole Group. Why, you may ask, or not as the case may be, would he ask me? Well my background in Scouting stretches from 1955, when I joined as a Wolf



'Bring your own hat night' did not work well...

Club (that should evoke memories for some of you out there: DYB, DYB, DYB etc) to that "present" date in 1982. Part of that Scouting career saw me appear on the stage in the Belfast Gang Shows from 1965 to well into the late eighties. So my experience was wide, but maybe not my talent - not for me to say (letters, emails and texts to....). To cut a very long story short, I said yes; a young man of 34, with all the zest and vigour necessary for such a task (oh happy days!)

Perhaps it would be useful to share with you the history of Gang Shows, potted version, of course. Ralph Reader started his "showbiz" career in Hollywood, California working in the

"moving picture industry" and by all accounts did very well. He returned to Britain and wrote and produced the first Gang Show in 1932 in London's Scala theatre. At the outset of World War Two he was enlisted into the RAF and soon reached the dizzy heights of Squadron Leader. His talent and experiences were put to good use organising Gang Shows for the troopers in the various theatres of war around the world. Many great stars of our time started out in Ralph's Gang Shows (Peter Sellars, Harry Secombe, Spike Milligan, Richard Attenborough to name but a few. As a postscript Ralph spent many years as a youth growing up in Mageramourne, Co Antrim and never lost his love of Northern Ireland or indeed buttermilk.



Programme of the first Gang Show, 1982 - great value!



The 'Gang' in 1982.

So now it was Comber's turn to join the ranks of the Red Scarf, a symbol used by Ralph to show that members of Gang Shows had earned a special place in Scouting. Ralph Reader not only saw the shows as an extension of the Scouting Movement, but he gave all his services free, gratis and for nothing! Over 100 boys and girls of all ages were in the show, Cubs, Brownies, Scouts and Guides; as well as many more from the junior sections, Beavers and Bunnies. I assembled a team to help me and without them it would not have been the success it was. Wrong as it is to single out one

person for special mention I have to thank, with heartfelt love, my wife, Leslie, who not only co-ran the shows but held me together when things got hairy. All credits and names appear in the programmes, copies of which I still have. The sin of omission is always present and those I missed in the programmes I heartily thank you now.

It must be said that the venue chosen, the Andrews Memorial Hall, proved more than valuable in making the task easier. It was a perfect location for a large Show involving



many people of all ages. The stage itself was big enough to house such a pageant; although repairs had to be made as the Hall had not been used for such a purpose in many years. Curtains had to be purloined and wiring erected for same and a set of steps, still there to this day, to accommodate exit and entrance front of stage. The back staircase and rooms below were perfect to hold the "wee" ones (of which there were many) and downstairs also provided plenty of dressing room space.



'The West is Wild' - some of those halos have slipped over time.

Rarely used for such events, this magnificent memorial to Thomas Andrews came to life and was home to, well, not a cast of thousands, although at times it felt like it. It was essentially fun and we all had our own good times to remember. It really felt that the Hall was enjoying the company of happy children and adults and was an integral part of the event.

Needless to say the co-operation between the various groups in St Mary's went from strength to strength and we all got to know each other a lot better. Adults (kids then) still come up to me in the streets of Comber and say "Hey remember the Gang Show, happy memories!"

Like all theatrical experiences these shows gave kids and adults alike a chance to realise hidden talents, meet new friends and most of all have fun together. My son, involved in both shows, began to realise on the stage of "Andrews" that he had a direction to go in life and would follow that dream because of those Gang Shows. He is now Artistic Director of Glasgow Repertory Company. Shakespeare is their raison d'être but I like to believe that the Andrews Memorial Hall events set Gordon Barr on his successful path; although I suspect that Shakespeare had some influence as well.

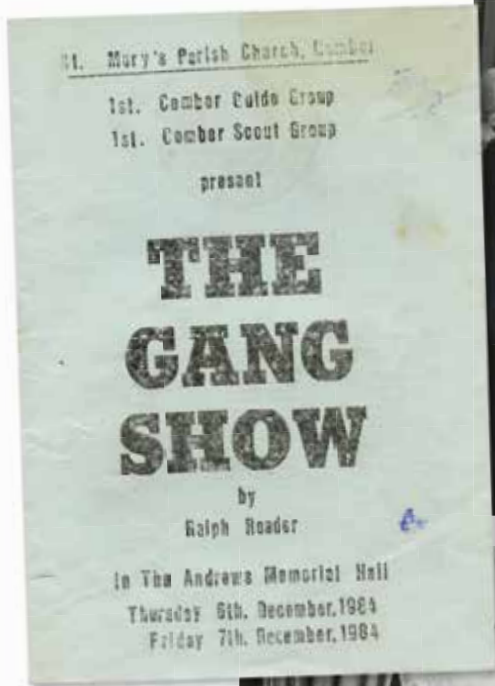
So, to finish, great memories, great successes, great shows. I have no fear in saying that Comber was a different place for the people involved in the Gang Shows and we all view the Andrews Memorial Hall with great fondness.

**"Thanks for the memories..."**

**Shows held in the Andrews Memorial Hall  
8-10 December 1982 and 6-7 December 1984**

**Alan Barr**

Programme of the second  
Gang show, 1984 - had the  
price increased?



'Bringing in the sheaves.'

The Brownies - where are the  
cubs we were promised?





## An Introduction to The Intergenerational Learning Project

Early in 2011, the P7 children met with some of the more mature residents from Comber in an intergenerational programme created to give both sides an opportunity to get to know to each other better.

We decided that due to the Titanic celebrating its centenary, that we would use the Andrews Memorial Hall as our main focus for the programme.

Our visitors turned up faithfully for each visit, sharing with the children stories of happy times spent in the Andrews Hall.

**Opposite:** Rosemary Jess (née Murdoch) and her P7 colleagues get to grips with making their Christmas cards, November 2011. The hand reaching in from the bottom of the photo belongs to Jean McCaughey (née Browne)!

The children prepared a questionnaire and used this as a building block to get information and what an amazing experience it was for everyone involved! The children loved it and our visitors always spoke very highly of them. They were excellent ambassadors and I thank them all for their enthusiasm, passion and hard work.

I also thank all the visitors who participated in the programme. Andrews Memorial has made some wonderful new friends!!!

**Karen Graham**  
Intergenerational Learning  
Co-ordinator



# Andrews Memorial Primary School



2010  2011



## Primary 7 (2010 - 11) - our first 'Intergenerational Ambassadors'

Lauryn Adair  
Zoe Baird  
Stephanie Black  
Timothy Browne  
Robert Bruce  
Michael Burgess  
Laura Cairns  
Rachel Cairns  
Saul Calvert  
Megan Chambers  
Jessica Collin  
Philip Dugan  
Glenn Gibson  
Taylor Gilmore  
Hannah Johnston  
Robbie Johnston  
Samuel Kingsbury  
Rebecca Long  
Morgan Lyttle  
Rhys Madden  
Caitilin Maguire  
Rebecca Mannus  
Emily Martin

Christopher McCann  
Abbie McCartney  
Benjamin McClurg  
Rhys McInerney  
Anna McVicker  
Joel McWilliams  
Aaron Migan  
Zoe Murdoch  
Jessica Sayer  
Joel Scott  
Lucy Symmington  
Ethan Topping  
Harry Walker  
Megan Weir  
Laura Wilson



These pictures show 'the two generations' learning together. Above, they are making Christmas Cards together, below it's 'story time' about the 'Big Hall'.



## The Intergenerational Learning Project

This project was at the heart of the pupils' learning in the build-up to this book's production. It was the principal method by which we were able to hear the stories about the Hall from those who were there at the time.

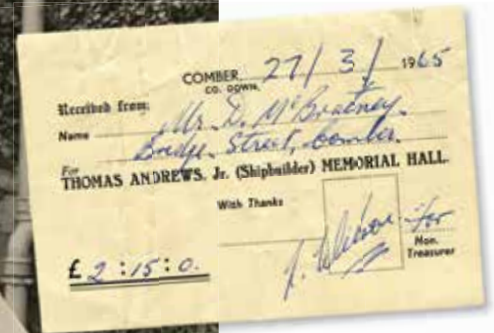
With Karen Graham as the indispensable link between the children and the elder citizens of the community, we set about creating a programme of events that focused, first of all, on everyone getting to know one another, before finding out about each other's uses of the Hall and the experiences of both the older and the younger generations.

The first day saw everyone working together to make a Christmas Card, designed by Adrienne Savage, one of the school's Primary 2 teachers. This activity was designed to get everyone talking. Naturally, the children were able to help with the more dextrous tasks – and their elders with some of the more subtle design tips!

The next session began to focus on finding out about the Hall's past through the Primary 7 children acting as interviewers; finding out about some of the events that took place in the Hall and, crucially, about those that the 'interviewees' were actually present at. While many of these stories were just 'ordinary memories' for many of the participants, by



**Left:** Thomas and Grace McBratney, the date is 27 March 1965.



**Above:** The original 'letting receipt' for Grace's and Thomas' wedding reception, in the Minor Hall (downstairs) of the building.

**Right:** Grace McBratney (née Thompson) as she is today, talking to Hannah and Sarah about her wedding. Hannah is Grace's granddaughter.





Maureen Horner (née Heany) sharing the story of her wedding. The two accompanying photographs show how she and her husband, George, looked on that special day. The photographs were taken outside the Andrews Hall.



the end of the session they had begun to feel that they really did have a story to tell – and so did the building! The children were actively engaged throughout; they really helped to tease out the memories. There is no doubt that both generations found the process interesting and valuable.

Further sessions saw the children using a questionnaire to guide their discussions, as well as a musical afternoon where the young learned, and older reminded themselves, of 'When I'm sixty-four'. Anne Knaggs, our Music Co-ordinator, guided everyone through the music session in her own inimitable style!

We must also acknowledge the input of **meltdown designs**, our website managers, for their production of a video which captures the learning process taking place and incorporates some of the interviews. This video can be viewed on the school's website, via the 'Titanic Centenary' tab on [www.andrewsmys.com](http://www.andrewsmys.com).

While we have tried to include as much material as possible in this book, there are - and will be- many more stories that aren't here. Please contact the school if you have a story to tell, or a photograph we can add to our archive.



## Wedding Receptions

The Andrews Memorial Hall was a popular venue for wedding receptions. Our teacher's mum and dad Noreen and Jack McGreeghan had their reception there in 1959.

Today people have a 3-course sit down meal but in the Memorial Hall, outside caterers set up a buffet of sandwiches, buns and tea. Sometimes salads were made or sausage rolls heated. There was no dancing after the reception, the bride and groom left for their honeymoon and everyone else went home.

## Linda Lytle

Linda Lytle, one of our parents, has fond memories of the hall as it was her school from P5-P7. Linda was in the first class in the new Andrews Memorial Primary School. Mr Yeaman was principal and his son was in Linda's class.

She remembers the Tuck Shop where crisps were 1 1/2p! She learned to cook "Ranch house stew" and "French toast" in the kitchen with Mrs Esler. Another Teacher, Mrs Bailie, taught her 'flower arranging' and she loved this.

Linda's parents met through the events of Comber 'YFC' in the hall.



**Above:** Eileen Gibb composing her thoughts prior to being interviewed.

**Right:** Eileen Gibb (née Rodgers), c. 1958, one of the adult supervisors at 2nd Comber Presbyterian Church's 'Sunday School Social'. Included in the photo are Maurice Jelly, Dereva Savage, Gwen Campbell Baker (Galene's brother), Tom Jelly, Patsy Heaney, Geraldine Court, Shirley Edgar, Heather Orr, Jane-Mary Cathcart and Galene Baker.



Lorraine Murray sharing her stories with P7 pupils in 2011.



Lorraine Murray (née Hamilton) and her husband, Robert, pictured on their wedding day on 19th March 1965.

# Mischief

- One source who shall remain nameless told us that as alcohol was banned from all of the dances, some people actually hid bottles deep in the ivy growing up the walls of the hall!!!
- Drew Hogg told us about William Kielty (Buffalo Bill) who looked after the grounds. Some of the children used to go into the Bowling Green even when they knew that they were not allowed to. Buffalo Bill would rap a window with a penny and the children knew they had to run.
- Another nameless source told of couples sneaking around to the back of the hall for a quick kiss.
- For another source, mischief meant trying to get out of the house to go the Dance with make-up on.
- Stamping feet during the dance was not allowed so some of them did that and others would go up to the balcony to drop tickets on the people below!!
- Playing “chases” through the hall was not allowed, but some did and one female teacher almost lost the top of her finger in the door of the ladies bathroom playing chases!
- Sliding down the banister was not allowed but that didn’t stop some from having a go when no-one was looking!
- A story was told of a man who always managed to sneak into the dances! How? He climbed up the spout on the side of the hall onto the roof where there was a trap door into the upstairs balcony! He was always seen coming down the stairs but never seen going up.





Tom and Hazel Allen, two of our 'ever-present' intergenerational contributors. It is Tom's sister's wedding that is pictured below. He and Hazel are in the picture too...

There is absolutely no doubt as to the learning potential and genuine value of this type of project. Many schools have taken up the mantle of late, in lots of interesting ways, and in the Ards Borough Council area, Linking Generations has been behind much of the funding. Andrews Memorial secured £500 to undertake its initial programme reported on here and the school looks forward to undertaking many more projects in the future. Our thanks go to Vicki Titterington who provided the initial support and interest in our project – and kept us believing!

### Ralph Magee



The wedding of Miss Betty Allen to Mr Desmond Wright took place in Comber Methodist Church. The service was conducted by Rev Irvine and the reception was held in the Andrews Memorial Hall on 28 March 1964. Tea was served by the kind neighbours of Dunsy Way where Betty lived. It was sandwiches and buns but very much appreciated by all who were guests at the wedding! *Picture provided by Rodney Allen.*

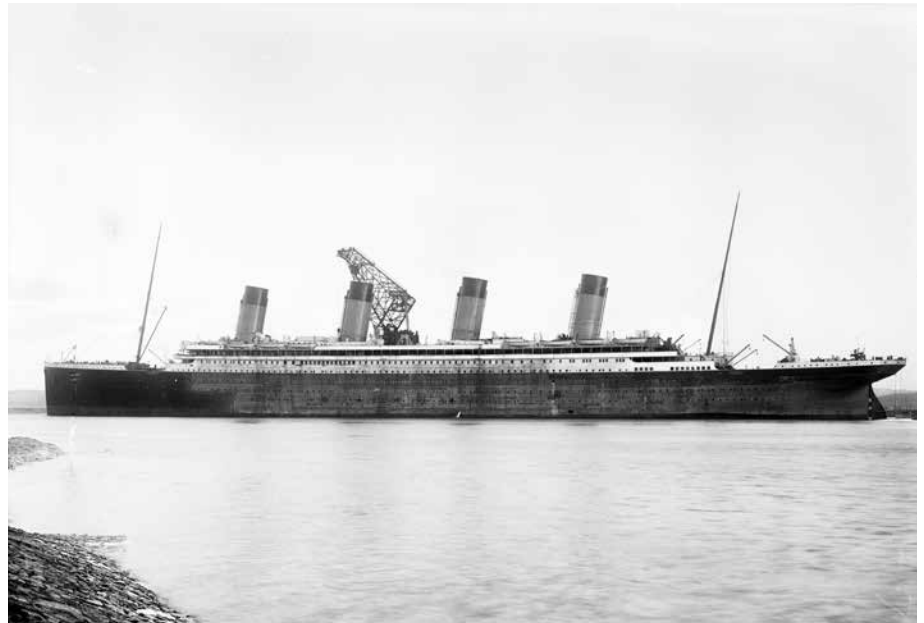
## Beyond the Door

Three children called Lottie, Joe and James volunteered to help Mr Dugan clean the Andrews Memorial Hall. When they were almost done, Joe shouted, "Hey! I've found something!" The others climbed the stone stairs leading to the wooden balcony.

"What is it Joe?" asked Lottie.  
"I've found a tiny door! Let's look inside," said Joe.



Could this be the door?



Titanic port near profile during outfitting at Thompson deepwater wharf, October 1911. © National Museums

Northern Ireland Collection Harland & Wolff, Ulster Folk & Transport Museum.

Lottie thought for a moment and suggested that they leave it alone. James on the other hand, was up for a little adventure!

Joe slowly turned the brass handle and pushed the squeaky door open for all to crawl through. Suddenly they were falling down and down until finally slowing down, they landed on solid ground.

"Where are we?" asked Lottie.  
"I've no idea," said James.

All three children were clearly dazed by their fall, but began to get clearer vision and they discovered that they were in the Harland

and Wolff shipyard. But there was clearly a problem! The shipyard was packed with busy workers and unbelievably, there in front of them was the magnificent gigantic Titanic.

"Oh my goodness!" cried James, his eyes glued to the magnificent spectacle in front of him.

Lottie wanted to explore! All three had so many questions in their head about the ship, but wandering in the shipyard in a school uniform wasn't a good idea. So they hunted and managed to borrow some old clothes to blend in.



Titanic first class suite bedroom 'B60', March 1912.  
© National Museums Northern Ireland Collection Harland & Wolff, Ulster Folk & Transport Museum.

James wanted to see the first class cabins as he had heard that they were the last word in luxury and they most certainly were.

Lottie headed to view the swimming pool and the gym. Joe wanted to see where Captain Smith stood. On the bridge he began talking about the captain and the other workers looked at him, thinking he was mad, as the captain hadn't been appointed yet!

Looking around was one thing, but their main aim had to be finding their way back! They couldn't see a door but they did see



Titanic first class gymnasium, March 1912 © National Museums Northern Ireland Collection Harland & Wolff, Ulster Folk & Transport Museum.

End view of Titanic port main engine near completion in engine works erecting shop, May 1911. © National Museums Northern Ireland Collection Harland & Wolff, Ulster Folk & Transport Museum.



a large store cupboard and went to look inside. The moment they opened it a purple portal appeared. All three children were pulled towards the portal. They felt a floating sensation and with an abrupt bump, they landed back through the door into the balcony. They lay dazed for a minute and then they heard Mr Dugan shout,

"Get up and get some work done!"

**Jonathan Service, Kyle Ross, Emma Rankin, P7**





## What now for the Andrews Hall?

This building is special in many ways, to many people. While we can genuinely claim it as the beating heart of our school, others may feel that it's just somewhere 'we used to go...'

However, with the reinvigorated sense of community history we all feel in 2012, and with the stories we have included in this book, let's aim high together and hope that the spirit captured in these pages can once again be enjoyed by all of us in 'our big hall...'

Ralph Magee

**Opposite:** Bringing the Hall into the 21st century – builders surveying the window prior to 'breaking through' to install the lift, February 2012.



## The Hall in the 21st Century Ralph Magee

A B2 listed building it may be, but the Andrews Memorial Hall had a major access problem. It had no lift and, with modern-day accessibility requirements, simply didn't meet the acceptable standards for school or community events.

One of the school's aims through its commemoration of the Titanic Centenary, and its 're-engagement' of the Hall with the community that first enjoyed it, has been to campaign for an upgrading of the facilities, as well as an increase in its use by the community.

It is fantastic that the lift, incorporating a new internal fire escape, is on site as this book is published. The school is grateful for the support of the South Eastern Education & Library Board in its funding for this refurbishment work, and the architects, Alastair Coey Architects, for their design.

Finally, the Hall can genuinely be viewed as a viable 'small arts venue' within the area. Ards Borough Council, for example, has already shown a commitment to this idea through the staging of 'Titanic, Men of Steel' at the 2011 Festival of the Peninsula, and the play will once again be performed in April 2012.



Primary 1 children re-visit their Hall to see the crane lifting the new steel structure which will hold the lift into place.





With the building now housing **Jiminy Cricket's After-School Club and Pre-School Group**, the building is in use all day, every day, from Monday to Friday, as well as during school holidays. The school continues to use it for all its own plays, as well as for PE. Of course, the school also welcomes enquiries from groups interested in using the Hall. It really is time to bring the building back into a whole community focus; to continue to develop it in the way those forward-thinking and ambitious first Trustees saw its potential, and to build on

the legacy of that most famous of Comber's sons.

The Titanic did sink and the loss of life was catastrophic. However, this centenary period has, at last, seen this Province, and this town, start to celebrate and recognise the tremendous talents, energy and skills of past generations. We should be proud and we should look forward; the Andrews Hall stands as a reminder of talent and of community, not as a footnote to tragedy.

The Hall pictured in February 2012 during the lift installation. The structure is taking shape on the left with access at ground and first - floor levels. The last remaining remnants of the old fire escape can be seen on the rear elevation. The old door will be rebuilt as a window, using original stone, thus returning this elevation to its original form.



## The Contributors

This book is the result of a huge team effort - just how we believe things should be done at Andrews Memorial.

On the following pages we include every pupil, and every staff member, the governors and the members of our Titanic Centenary Planning Committee.

Every name is significant because every member of our school community has made a contribution to this book.

It is impossible to include the work of every child, however. What you read here is merely a

sample of the children's work, but every child took part in the research and the writing.

The adults named here have supported this project throughout. More importantly, they support the children every day.

This book is about a building's role in the life of a community - a community now represented by the children and staff of the school.

We are proud of every single member of that community and hope you agree that they have done justice to the memories of past generations and their love of Comber's 'big hall'.

**Opposite:** A Christmas party during the 1940s? The origin of this photograph is unknown, but it certainly captures the atmosphere of the occasion. Suggestions, please...



## Andrews Memorial Primary School Pupils 2011 - 12

### Primary 1

Peter Anderson  
Charly Barry  
Sophie Boal  
Aaron Boyd  
Kobey Brady  
Freya Burrows  
Daniel Campbell  
Rowan Cartmill  
Jack Childs  
Charlotte Corbett  
Joshua Corbett  
Holly Doak  
Dylan Dunlop  
Charlie Finlay  
Rebecca Gabbie  
Robbie Hewitt  
Georgina Hill  
Zach Hull  
Noah Jackson  
Daniel Jewitt  
Aston Jordan  
Cameron Kelly  
Leah Kerr  
Jonathan Kyle  
Lucy Langford  
Tillie Logan  
Cara Logue  
Megan McBride  
Reece McCorran

Charlie McDowell  
Natasha McGrath  
Matthew McKnight  
Hannah McMeekin  
Matthew McQuitty  
Daniel Moore  
Analise Morrow  
Joseph Orr  
Eryn Otley  
Adam Peel  
Matthew Peel  
Katie Phillips  
Claire Rainey  
Lucy Rankin  
Florence Rebbeck  
Toby Russell  
Ethan Spratt  
Matthew Todd  
Leon Yildiz  
Nathan Young

### Primary 2

Katie Baine  
Adam Bassett  
Evie Bovill  
Katie Bramley  
Matthew Bruce  
Sarah Corken  
Tyler Costanzo  
Daniel Craig

Niamh Cuming  
Max Edgar  
Victoria Ferguson  
Michael Gabbie  
Jordan Graham  
Stephen Harvey  
Cameron Hawke  
Holly Kidd  
Evie Lappin  
Andrew Long  
Hannah McBratney  
Sophie McBride  
Jessica McCarter  
James McConnell  
Aimee McKnight  
Evie Mitchell  
Abigail Murdoch  
Michael Payne  
Luke Ritchie  
Thomas Rogers  
Rachel Scott  
Zach Stevenson  
Paris Strickland  
Aimee Thompson  
Maheer Uddin  
Philip Vidamour  
James Ward  
Ben Watson  
Rory Wilson  
Mark Wylie

### Primary 3

Lawson Adams  
Reuben Allen  
Sarah Best  
Albin Biju  
James Boyd  
Reuben Burnham  
Ellie Campbell  
Adam Clements  
Daniel Corbett  
Andrew Corken  
Scott Corken  
Adam Donnelly  
Rebecca Dugan  
William Dugan  
Kobi Dunn  
Kathryn Finlay  
Erin Freeburn  
Jake Garrett  
Rhianna Geddis  
Jessica Gillespie  
Sophie Hamilton  
Liana Hawthorne  
Natasha Hegan  
Hannah Hill  
Sophie Hoey  
Robert Horner  
Cate James  
Rachel Johnston  
Harvey Kane  
Will Kirkpatrick  
Jackson Laing

Michael Lytle  
Coral Masters  
Ben McDowell  
Katie McMeekin  
Alicia Meeke  
Ashley Milligan  
Ethan Mowbray  
Freya Murray  
Toby Parke  
Jamie Phillips  
Hannah Pollock Chan  
Olivia Porter  
Ellie Presho  
Zarah Rahilly  
Chloe Ramsey  
Ruby Rebbeck  
Emma Shaw  
Katie Stevenson  
Charlotte Symington  
Aaron Tully  
Thomas Vidamour  
Alex Young

### Primary 4

Jack Adair  
Megan Adair  
Michael Baird  
Zara Banford  
Christopher Barry  
Adam Boyd  
Rachel Bradley  
Emma Campbell

Ellé Corbett  
Katie Crossen  
Dylan Cumming  
Robbie Davidson  
Finn Forsythe  
Lucy Gabbey  
Dillon Graham  
Samuel Green  
Jade Hillen  
Elle Horner  
Ethan James  
Rosalind Jamison  
Michael Jewitt  
Matthew Lusty  
Joshua Lytle  
Connie Magee  
Ellie McBride  
Melissa McCance  
Erin McConnell  
Lewis McCormick  
Nicolas McCoy  
Dara McCracken  
Murphy McDade-  
Moore  
Ryan McGrath  
Matthew McKibbin  
Katie Migan  
Kayla Milligan  
Alex Montgomery  
Jessica Murdoch  
Rebekah Orr  
Lauren Otley  
Daniel Rankin

Rose Rebbeck  
Morgan Robinson  
Reuben Scott  
Laura Sharp  
Nadia Shohid  
Jamie Spratt  
Alexander Strange  
Erin Tumilson  
Muhee Uddin  
Ellie Van Giesen  
Charlotte Walker

### Primary 5

Adriana Baronaite  
Joshua Bradshaw  
Alicia Brady  
Madelyn Calvert  
Rebecca Carlile  
Thomas Corken  
Tara Croskery  
John Devenny  
Ellie Doak  
Emily Gibson  
Corey Graham  
Matthew Hamill  
Emma Hamilton  
Megan Hamilton  
Rhianna Hawke  
Felicity Johnston  
Faye Laing  
Sophie Long  
Travis Madden

Adam Matchett  
Abigail McArthur  
Kyle McBride  
Jack McCabe  
Joshua McClure  
Dalzell  
Dylan McGrady  
Michael McGrath  
Danielle McVeigh  
Anna Mitchell  
Georgia Mitchell  
Steffi Murdoch  
Jake Murray  
Abigail Oakman  
Andrew Rankin  
Chloe Rogers  
Eva Russell  
Hannah Stevenson  
Taylor Swain  
Erin Thompson  
George Tipton  
Elizabeth Walker  
Molly Walker  
Jonathan Watson

### Primary 6

Courtney Brown  
Joshua Browne  
Adam Bruce  
Patrick Burke  
Ben Calvert  
Alice Collin

Adam Cooke  
Ben Cooke  
Katie Corken  
Olivia Davidson  
Rebekah Donnelly  
Bailey Dunn  
Lauren Finlay  
Eve Gilmore  
Nicole Hamilton  
Lara Hanafin  
Lachlan Henry  
Jane Hill  
Joshua Hill  
Edward Johnston  
Ezra Jordan  
Nicole Kane  
Karl Kirkpatrick  
Tom Lappin  
Bethany Lyttle  
Thomas McCartney  
Kirsty McCormick  
Kathryne McGrath  
Lewis McInnes  
Reece McKibbin  
Cameron McKnight  
Leah McMillan  
Logan Milligan  
Sara Moreland  
Katie Murdoch  
Laura Niblock  
Eve Porter  
Jack Presho  
Elyssa Rahilly

Attiyah Rahman  
Rebecca Sayer  
Nisa Shohid  
Kyle Smyth  
Ethan Thompson  
Lee Umphray

### Primary 7

Joanne Allen  
Lydia Anderson  
Shauna Barrett  
Lisa Barron  
Alen Biju  
Daniel Corken  
Matthew Dempster  
Amy Devenny  
Natasha Dugan  
Taran Forsythe  
Chloe Gibson  
Victoria Gillespie  
Ben Gilmore  
Calum Gilmore  
Matthew Hamilton  
Hannah James  
Sophie Larmour  
Andrew Linter  
North Lucas  
James Lusty  
Ewan Magee  
Jared Magee  
George Marshall  
Kirsten McBride

Mark McCance  
Alexandra McCoy  
Bradley McCracken  
Lois McCracken  
James Morton  
Benjamin Murphy  
Joel Orr  
William Orr  
Dean Parke  
Emma Rankin  
Alex Robinson  
Garrett Robinson  
Kyle Ross  
Jay Rowan  
Benjamin Russell  
Jonathan Service  
Katie Sharp  
Sam Sheridan  
Marc Topping  
Samuel Tougher  
Erin Wylie

## Board of Governors 2009 – 2013

### Representing the Transferors

Mrs F Andrews, Canon J Barry PhD, Rev I Gilpin and Mrs J Jamison (Vice Chair)

### Representing Parents

Prof T McCance and Mr A Rebbeck

### Representing the SEELB

Councillor Mrs M Craig (Vice Chair, retired 2011), Dr L Boyce and Mrs C Nixon (Chair)

### Representing the Teaching Staff

Mrs J Hanafin

### Hon Secretary to the Governors

Mr R Magee

## Teaching staff 2011 - 12

<b>Principal</b>	Mr R Magee
<b>Vice Principal</b>	Mr J Sanford
<b>Head of Early Years &amp; Foundation</b>	Mrs J Lowry
<b>Head of Key Stage 1</b>	Miss E Rodgers
<b>Primary 1</b>	Mrs J Connolly Mrs A Knaggs
<b>Primary 2</b>	Mrs J Lowry Miss A Savage
<b>Primary 3</b>	Mrs V Allen Miss E Rodgers
<b>Primary 4</b>	Mrs J Hanafin Mrs R Van Giesen
<b>Primary 5</b>	Miss H Fisher Mr M Skimin

### Primary 6

Mrs G Barry  
Mr J Sandford  
Ms K Graham  
Mr J Sandford

### Primary 7

## Non-teaching staff 2011 - 12

### School Secretary

Mrs E Boulwood

### Building Supervisor

Mr B Dugan

### Classroom Assistants

Mrs L Lutton  
Mrs C Moorhead

### Crossing Patrol

Mr W Allen

### Supervisory Assistants

Mr W Allen  
Mrs E Bradshaw  
Mrs M Leckey  
Mrs L Lutton  
Mrs S Reeve

### Cleaners

Mrs J Spratt  
Mrs S Weir  
Mrs W Bowman  
Mrs E Bradshaw

### School Meals Staff

Mrs S Weir  
Mrs M Blair  
(Cook/Supervisor)

### Breakfast Club

Mrs I Orr  
Mrs E Robinson  
Mrs V Smyth  
Mrs E Bradshaw  
Mrs C McKibbin

## The Titanic Centenary Planning Committee

The school initialized contact with a variety of organizations during the 2009-10 school year in preparation for its planning of the Centenary during 2011-12. Following feedback and informal discussions, the school requested support from parents and Governors in establishing a Planning Committee to coordinate a series of celebratory and commemorative events.

The committee has members representing the staff, parents, Governors and the local business community. Its members are listed below; contact can be made through the Principal.

### Committee Members:

Rodney Allen	Parent
Liz Andrews	Representing the Andrews family
Nathan Hamill	Parent
Rev Ian Gilpin	Minister of Comber Non-subscribing Presbyterian Church & Governor
Karen Graham	Teacher
Ralph Magee	Principal
Lesley Moreland	Parent
Julia Orr	Parent
Andy Rebbeck	Parent & Governor
Dr Christopher Stange	Businessman & Consul of St Vincent & the Grenadines



## Acknowledgements

Like the Hall itself, this book represents the legacy and commitment of a whole community. The difference is that the book brings the building's history up to the present day, with contributions from the children who now regard it as home. It has been part of their school, after all, for almost forty years! The wonderful similarity is that the community that used the hall also helped us tell its story. That is the true legacy of intergenerational learning.

The history of the Andrews Memorial Hall has never been written. This simple fact is behind our passion for producing this book.

Our first acknowledgements must go to the Primary 7 pupils from the 2010 - 11 school year. It was their hard work, their enthusiasm and their commitment that set us on the road to intergenerational learning. While no longer pupils at Andrews Memorial, they all deserve our thanks and recognition. That's why all their names are listed in the relevant section.

To all our current pupils, from the youngest at 4, to the eldest at 11, we owe a tremendous debt. They are privileged, we think, to be at this wonderful school at a particularly special time in its history. We have asked them to engage with this story, to produce their own work, to record their thoughts - both creative

and factual - and to listen and to learn. They have lived up to all our expectations!

Of course, in acknowledging the pupils, we must also acknowledge their teachers and their parents. The teachers in Andrews love the Andrews Hall. All have the rewarding experience of seeing their own pupils perform on its stage. However, all have now learned about, and contributed to, this history of the hall through all its years, not just the forty or so that it has been part of the school.

While all members of staff have supported the children, one person's contribution cannot be left unacknowledged. Karen Graham, as our Intergenerational Learning Co-ordinator, has been at the core and at the forefront of all that has been successful about this project. Her dedication, her determination to succeed and her willingness to go way beyond the call of duty, have kept us all on our toes and allowed us to get the job done. It is most fitting, then, that Karen, a native of Comber, and one of our senior teachers, has been afforded the opportunity to write her own story.

Our parents have made a huge contribution in a whole host of ways; encouraging their children, supporting the school in this special year; writing their own stories or making connections to members of their family. We have relied on them a lot and we are extremely

grateful. We also hope, like us, that they are justifiably proud of what we have all achieved together.

For Rodney Allen, one of the parent members of our Titanic Centenary Planning Committee, we owe particular thanks. His commitment towards liaising between the school and the book designers has smoothed the whole production process. To Leslie, Roisin, Laurence and Sharon at Leslie Stannage Design, thank you for your interest, your perseverance and your patience in producing such a significant piece of work.

Intergenerational learning demands a positive and effective engagement between generations. In our case, we have come to rely on members of this community, some of whom are personally linked to our pupils, some of whom have been enlisted by friends, and some of whom have been actively sought out! Quite simply, had they not committed to this project it would never have taken place. This book would never have been published and the story of this incredible building and its place in the history of Comber would never have been written. Some of their names are included in the text and some appear in pictures, both in their youth and in their blossoming elder years! We hope that each and every one is as proud of the results as we are!

Not only must we thank everyone for their stories, we must also acknowledge their contribution of pictures and newspaper cuttings. While we have tried to acknowledge these in the text, we may not always have been successful. Please forgive us.

The Newtownards Chronicle has been a 'newspaper of record' in this area since 1873. We have used its pictures and reports throughout the book and wish to acknowledge the help of Belfast Central Library in allowing us access to the archive. The Chronicle is still very active in reporting all kinds of community events and is a valued supporter of all our schools. So, to the staff we see the most, Bobby Torrens and Jonathan Coates, the photographers, a huge thank you. To all those behind the scenes, we know and appreciate your continued efforts on behalf of the community.

We are also indebted to National Museums Northern Ireland for permission to reproduce Titanic images on the front cover, inside front and back cover, and the following pages: Foreword, 13, 15, 17, 108 and 109.

Naturally, the individuals who have actually written the narrative material deserve particular recognition. We sought those who we know have a story to tell, who we know have special affection for the Hall and who have strong connections to it. The book is a testament to

those connections and to the efforts of each and every one of the contributors, although we must make special mention of Bertie Frazer, as, not only has he written his own memoirs, he has provided many pictures for a range of events.

The book is not a reference book. Rather, it is a series of personal memoirs from those who used the Hall. We want the reader to talk about what's in the book, as well what isn't. Those discussions are an important legacy of such a project!

We must acknowledge the support given by the Comber Historical Society, in particular two of its eminent members and local historians, Mrs Sandra Gilpin and Mr Desi Rainey. Through the Chair, Mrs Kathleen Coulter, the school began this journey way back in 2009. With the seconded co-ordination skills of Mr Erskine Willis, the Society was a key partner in the school's very successful launch centenary celebrations in May 2011. Sandra and Desi have always been willing to add to our knowledge of Comber and the Hall, as well as help identify people in photographs. Erskine has also been ever-present in his support. As well as writing an article, he has provided photographs and information about a range of events.

Finally, our acknowledgements turn to the Andrews family itself. Through the current

Chairman, James Andrews, we secured sponsorship for the book's design and production. James' wife, Liz, a former Chair of Governors of the school, has been a member of our Titanic Centenary Planning Committee since the inception of the project, as well as a driving force behind the intergenerational concept. Fiona, as the current Andrews Governor, has played her role through the school's Governors' support of our work. Her father-in-law, Tom, the first Andrews to serve on the (then) new school's Board of Governors, has provided key parts of the book's narrative, along with his wife, Dianne. To John, the current Chair of the Belfast Titanic Society, we owe a special thank-you. He has become a regular and very welcome visitor to the school, not just in relation to this book. As an avid supporter of many community-centred projects, he has brought visitors to the Hall, liaised on our behalf with users of the Hall, contributed material for the book and, just as importantly, added his own stories and memories to add colour to those of others.

We are all tremendously proud of our efforts. We acknowledge all those who helped, in any way at all, and we hope you, the reader, have enjoyed your journey, and your discoveries, along the way. Please do come and visit us again, soon.

**Ralph Magee**





This book tells the story of a community and of a building that helped shape that community; a building, indeed, that is still at the centre of young people's lives in Comber.

The Andrews Memorial Hall, built in memory of Thomas Andrews Jr, Titanic's chief designer, is a testament to the respect in which he was held in the town in which he grew up. Built by his family and friends, and with contributions from the public, the 'big hall' has been in continuous use since it opened in January 1915, less than three years after that fateful night in April 1912.

As a community building for Comber, the hall was at the centre of public life in the town for many generations, perhaps most famously as a dance hall in the 1950s and 1960s. It was home to all the churches' youth group displays; to many wedding receptions and all kinds of public meetings; even to a baby clinic and petty sessions' court. The Home Guard used the Hall during WW2 and a regiment from South Staffordshire was billeted there before departing on the D-Day offensive.

Now part of Andrews Memorial Primary School, it continues to host the school's many and well-renowned drama and music events.

It is a building with a long and lasting legacy; a building with many stories to tell!

£10.00

