



Jean Harris Remembered



Items of Interest

- Photos from our special wreath laying centenary event of March 4th 2005
- Historical photos
- Biographical information

District 1020 Archives—centenary edition

www.rotary1020.org.uk

Rotarians remember the wife of Rotary's founder 100 years later

March 4th 2005

Scottish Rotarians headed by President of Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland Gordon McNally (below right) and Southern Scotland District Governor David Buchanan (below left), today laid wreaths at the grave of Jean Harris, the wife of Paul Harris, who founded Rotary International in February 1905.

In 1910 Paul Harris married Jean Thomson, a girl from Edinburgh. To whom he always referred as his "bonnie Scottish lassie". Jean after his death, returned from America to Edinburgh and died here in 1963. She is buried at Newington Cemetery.



District 1020 Rotarians (from left to right) Denis Welstead, PDG Ian Geddes, Rodger Thom, DG David Buchanan, Iain Bainton, RIBI President Gordon McNally, Kenneth Miller, and Norman Scott gather for a simple ceremony on a cold March day

Rotarians all around the world are celebrating a century of service to their communities. Paul Harris in Chicago, USA founded the first Rotary club on 23rd February 1905. Ever since, Rotary's work has spanned the globe, with clubs in 166 countries and a membership of 1.2 million men and women from professions and business.

District Governor David and RIBI President Gordon



Why is Jean Harris buried many thousands of miles away from her husband?

In short, it is because her family are all buried in Newington Cemetery, including her parents.

Paul Harris, in 1935, told the story of how Jean's parents aged around 90 both said farewell to their daughter to return to Scotland in order to be buried in the "old soil". They had stayed in the USA for over 25 years but never became "American". Jean's mother wished to return in order to be buried in Newington next to her mother. So, now we have three generations of daughters at rest in this cemetery.



The First Lady of Rotary

"True to the traditions of her ancestors, she permits no cause which she deems unworthy to go undefended, and she can mobilize her spiritual forces in a second's time. Alleged Scotch (sic) parsimony is conspicuous in its absence from the heart of Bonnie Jean."

From the book entitled *The Founder of Rotary* by Paul P Harris, Rotary International 1928

Jean Harris's was born on the 8th of November 1881 and her birthplace is commemorated at 9 Cumberland Street, Edinburgh with this plaque donated by the Rotary Club of St. Louis, Missouri, USA in April 1978 on the suggestion of Alex C. West, a past President of Edinburgh Rotary Club.



Inner Wheel

Mrs Jean Thomson Harris (the wife of Rotary founder, Paul) was made an honorary member of the Edinburgh Inner Wheel club in 1946, in fact, its first honorary member.

Founder President of the Edinburgh Inner Wheel Club, Mrs W Winkler and her Committee, knowing that Jean was born and bred in the city decided that she should be invited to become an Honorary Member.

Replying to Mrs Winkler, Jean wrote from her home in Chicago in 1946 immediately accepting the honour. She said: *"I have been keeping in touch with Inner Wheel activities through the Rotary Service Magazine. Paul and I are amazed and thrilled at the magnitude of its benefactions. It seems miraculous after all you have been through. (A reference to WWII) May God bless your endeavour"*.

The Jean Harris Rose

By Cocker's of Aberdeen described as...*"a short growing plant, and a very effective one, with double flowers of bright orange salmon shaded peach yellow"*



Young Jean Harris

Paul and Jean visit the City of Edinburgh Chambers 1934

In March 1934, the HARRISES returned to Scotland to stay for a time in Ayrshire with Jean's brother who was now a minister at nearby Annbank. While there, they were greeted by members of the Rotary Clubs of Edinburgh and Dunfermline who had come to ask Paul if he would attend their weekly meetings. So, on April 4, they travelled to Edinburgh where Lord Provost Thomson had invited Rotary's

President Emeritus to attend and speak as the guest of honour at the banquet of the Assembly of the Lords Provost of Scotland. Highland pipers played the plaintive 'Road to the Isles' as the HARRISES ascended the steps to the City Chambers. For the 52-year-old Jean, who had left her city 25 years earlier, it was a most memorable homecoming. Unsure what to say to the Assembly, Paul decided that the

most appropriate topic would be 'Chicago'.

From "Paul Harris in Britain"
by Basil Lewis



Paul and Jean 'held up' in Australia

Fund-raising—Oz style!

The masked man on the right is past RI President Sir Angus Mitchell.



*"Of a' the airts
the wind can blaw
I dearly like the west
For there the bonnie lassie
lives
The lassie I lo'e best;
There wild woods grow and
rivers row
And monie a hill between;
By day and night my fancy's
flight
Is ever wi' my Jean"
"There's not a bonnie
flower that springs
By fountain, shaw or green;
There's not a bonnie bird
that sings
And mins me o' my Jean"*

Robert Burns

At the 1955 Convention in Chicago—50 years ago

