



Jean Thomson Harris

It appears that fairly little was known about Jean Thomson before she married Paul Harris and on her return to Edinburgh. Perhaps the inclusion of lady members into Rotary has a major bearing in the matter, but considerable Rotary interest is growing. The following is a brief history of her life in Scotland.

Jean Thomson - born - 8th November 1881 at 9 Cumberland Street, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Parents - John Thomson 35 from Logiepert — Forfarshire
Anne Thomson 29 from Peterhead (Youngson)
Married - St Nicholas in Aberdeen 20th June 1873



9 Cumberland Street - Edinburgh



33 Cumberland Street -Edinburgh, as it is today.

1891 - The Family moved to 33, Cumberland Street, a house situated behind a local shop located at the end of the block, many years later, the shop front was built-up to enlarge the size of the house (see light stonework in the Photograph). The 1891 Census shows Jean s father still as a furniture packer, Jean at 9 - a Scholar, her elder sister Anne aged 16 now a Dressmaker, brothers John aged 13 an Apprentice Clothier and Alexander aged 11 also a Scholar. A further son (James aged 6) and daughter (Mary aged 5) having now arrived.

1892 - The tenement houses in a street named **Comely Bank Avenue** were newly built and the Thomson s rented one of the flats in No. 81. To move into a new house must have been a great thrill for the Thomson family. It obviously made a great impression on Jean herself. During this time Jean, her brothers and sister most probably attended **St Bernard s School in Dean Park Street** in Edinburgh —The other schools now in the area were either not built or have no records of the Thomson family. Although the building still exists, it is now used as a **Teacher Training Centre**. On leaving school Jean served for a time as lady s maid with several well known families in the Edinburgh.



Comely Bank Avenue - Edinburgh (as it looks today) No.81 is located beside the red Mini.

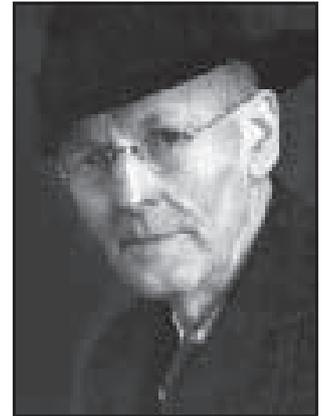
By **1905** the family had departed from Comely Bank Avenue — various members heading for Canada and eventually settling in the USA. Jean s Brother John, trained in the ministry and on returning to Scotland, was minister at churches in Leith and Ayrshire — he was the Chaplain to the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1931.

1910 One Saturday afternoon on a ramble in the Beverly Hills — Morgan Park District, Paul Harris was out with the Chicago Prairie Club and on climbing through a fence tore the sleeve of his fine tweed jacket. Jean Thomson, who was also on the ramble with her sister Mary noticed Paul's dismay and offered to repair the rip for him. Just 3 months after that meeting, on **2nd July 1910 Jean and Paul Harris were married** — this lasted 37 years until Paul's death.

1912 Paul and Jean Harris named their house in Chicago - **Comely Bank**.

1934 Although Paul Harris visited The Rotary Club of Edinburgh in 1928 - he and Jean Harris also lunched with the Club on 5th April 1934. A silver salver was presented to Mrs Harris. They were given a Civic Reception by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh and were guests of honour at a Banquet of the Assembly of Lord Provosts of Scotland in the City Chambers. For the 52 year old Jean Harris, who had left the City 25 years earlier, it was a most memorable homecoming.

1937 On the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of The Rotary Club of Edinburgh, Paul Harris wrote -
Edinburgh is the birthplace and for twenty-five years was the residence of my wife. Some of you know that in memory of the associations of her childhood we have named our home **Comely Bank**, after the street where her family lived.



1946 Jean Harris became the first Honorary Member of the Inner Wheel Club of Edinburgh.

1947 Following Paul's death in 1947, Jean Harris experienced a breakdown. On her recovery, she continued to give much voluntary service in the City of Chicago but always felt a strong desire to return to her native Edinburgh. This she did in 1955.

1955 On her return to Edinburgh, Jean Harris made it very clear that she wished to be left alone and did not care to be invited to any function. Although she never actually attended any meetings of the Inner Wheel, she generously contributed annually to their Edinburgh's Charity Fund.

1962 However - during the Club's Jubilee Year, Jean Harris did agree to be guest at a Special Dinner of the Rotary Club of Edinburgh attended by the Rotary International President. She remarked to one of the older members of the Club that she had had enough of Rotary to last two lifetimes. On 23rd February each year (the founding day of Rotary) she was visited by Past President Bob Murray and Secretary Kenneth Dow from the Rotary Club of Edinburgh who took her flowers.

1963 **9th November** — the day after her 82nd birthday, Jean Thomson Harris died in a nursing home in Newington, Edinburgh. The Scotsman Newspaper - Death notice for 11th November 1963.

Harris—at a nursing home in Edinburgh on 9 November 1963 — Jean Thomson — Mayfield Gardens beloved wife of the late Paul P Harris — funeral private — no flowers.



Jean Thomson Harris is now buried in Newington Cemetery in a grave with her younger brother James. Other members of the Thomson family are buried nearby.

