

KIRK OF THE GREYFRIARS, EDINBURGH - OPENING OF SOUTH WEST LOFT

Narrative: 26 August, 1973

Peace be to this house of prayer, and to all who worship here.

Peace be to those who enter, and to those who go out therefrom.

Peace be to those who love this sanctuary, and who love the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.

Remember them that had the rule over you, who spoke unto you the Word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith.

My brethren, we are gathered here today for the inauguration of the South West Loft, which has been rearranged, carpeted and furnished by the Society of Friends of Greyfriars as a further museum precinct within the Kirk of the Greyfriars, and for the display of some pictures, including those held of former ministers.

When the city parish of the Royal Burgh of Edinburgh was first divided in 1598, our Greyfriars fellowship was inaugurated as the *South West Quarter*, the Burgh Church congregation which later moved from the High Kirk into a new church built in the Greyfriars' Yerd, which was dedicated on Christmas Day 1620. Thus in the very designation of the *South West Loft* is to be heard an echo of our original parochial title.

This loft was part of the gallery structure of New Greyfriars Parish Church and was associated with two of Edinburgh's oldest educational foundations, George Heriot's Hospital and the Merchant Maiden Hospital, whose foundationers sat in these lofts at Sunday worship when the hospitals were residential schools. To commemorate this, the Former Pupils' Guild of the Mary Erskine School, who are represented among us today, has presented a handsome wrought-iron flower-stand to be part of the permanent furnishing of the loft.

The notable ministry in Old Greyfriars between 1843 and 1868 of the Rev. Dr. Robert Lee made a significant contribution to better standards of order, reverence and beauty in the worship of the Church of Scotland, his efforts being developed by the Church Service Society founded in 1865. Now within the South West Loft, the Church Service Society is to have a small library, and we are glad to have a representative of the Society participating in today's

occasion. A bookcase has been bequeathed from the home of the late John G. Ramsay, an elder in Greyfriars whose family was earlier closely associated with Dr. Lee's ministry. This Society library will include some liturgical works associated with the pioneers and early days of the Society, which eight years ago celebrated its centenary under my Presidency.

The main purpose in the Friends' project has been to contrive a corner in historic Greyfriars where all the former ministers who have served in the South West Quarter of Edinburgh are affectionately remembered – the ministers of Old Greyfriars, New Greyfriars, Lady Yester's and New North Churches, from 1587 to the present day, signifying four centuries of faithful service in the Holy Ministry of Word and Sacrament. This ministerial service is recorded on the handsome sign-written boards, designed by George Hay, and now in place on the east wall of the South West Loft, while the pictures of some of the Ministers are arranged on the south wall.

As a grand-daughter of the late Rev. Dr. Robert Balfour, whose ministry in New North Church began in 1866, Miss Ruby Steele is the most senior member of our congregation who has family ties with past ministries, having spent many childhood years in her grandfather's Manse.

Accordingly, I now invite Miss Steele to inaugurate this re-furnished South West Loft, and to lay a wreath of evergreens beneath the new record-boards, in grateful, pious and affectionate memory of so many good ministers.

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[Dr. Loudon has contributed this MS. which I am sure will bring news of interest to all members of the Society. – Ed.]