

The Story of the Society

SELKIRK Colonial Society owes its existence very largely to the happy inspiration of Mr T. B. Williamson, a Toronto exile, who in 1910 made contact with a number of fellow Souters in Canada, Hawaii and the U.S.A. and an inaugural meeting was soon convened in Guelph, Ontario. A committee was formed in Selkirk to act in liaison with the Canadian Colonials. The chairman was Mr Wm. Crichton (later Provost) and Mr John Anderson, a Glasgow Souther, became the first deacon. Secretarial duties were shared by Messrs R. W. Dickson and John Brydon. The Canadian Society purchased a flag and it was hoped that Mr T. B. Williamson would have the distinction of casting it for the first time. Unfortunately, business commitments intervened, and Mr John Johnstone, who had been a member of the original Society in Guelph, stepped into his place. Mr Williamson's services were recognised by the choice of his niece, eight year-old Chrissie Williamson, Innerleithen, as lady busser. Has there ever been a younger lady busser than the little girl in golden ringlets who performed her duty right well at that first Nicht Afore of the Exiles?

All the Crafts and various mills formed themselves into a committee to organise the bussin' and, with admission no more than twopence, it still showed a small profit. Deacon Anderson presided and Mr T. Craig Brown, historian of the county, gave the oration. The first song, appropriately, was "Home Sweet Home," sung by Miss M. D. Smith. Prior to the first casting of the Colonial colours a children's choir of 150 voices sang "The Maple Leaf." It was soon recognised that the Society had the makings of a world-wide rather than merely a Canadian organisation and by 1912 there were members in Australia and New Zealand. In the "Flodden Year" of 1913 the Standard-Bearer was Mr Bob Anderson of Honolulu, and the roll of those who have carried the flag includes exiles from all parts of the world. In its early years the Society formed a link with the Edinburgh & Lothians Souters and the presentation of a medallion to the Burgh Standard-Bearer has taken place at the Colonial bussin' since 1912. In addition to Mr Craig Brown, the eminent people who have spoken at the bussin' include the Rev. William Steven, last minister of the Forest Free Kirk; Mr A. L. Brown, M.P. for the Border Burghs; and Sir Andrew Grierson, a Souther who rose to become Town Clerk of Edinburgh.

The Colonials have shown their fealty to Selkirk in many ways. A generous contribution to the fund to preserve the Toll embankment for the Common Riding is one example. In recent years a reception has been arranged for overseas visitors and bussin' programmes are circulated throughout the world. It has striven, as always, to give meaning to its motto—"Yince a Souther, Aye a Souther!"