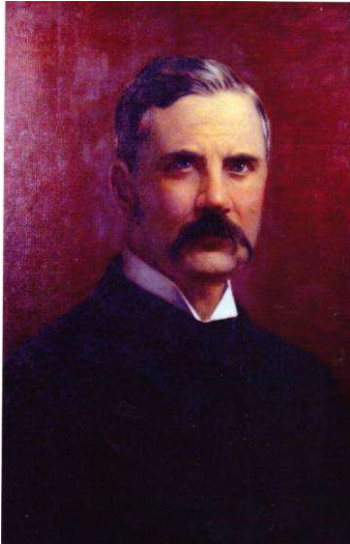




John McLeod, Architect

Portrait by his brother in law John Inglis McClymont FRSA

Because John died at the early age of 50 we do not have any accounts from his sons who were infants at the time and his widow Lilius Symington McClymont has to my knowledge not left any reminiscences of their courtship and short married life.

He was born 1st March 1838 in Renton but very soon moved to Moss Cottage at West Bridgend, Dumbarton and will have received his education there. He lived in

this parental home until marrying on the 28th February 1884 at the age of 45. Lilius was at the time a 24 year old teacher living at 23 Barnton Terrace, Edinburgh and they were married "After the Forms of the Free Church" by her uncle John Inglis D.D. They set up home in a grand house at Overcliffe overlooking Levensgrove Park (which he designed) but he died following a short period in a diabetic coma on 6th August 1888 and is buried in Dumbarton Cemetery where Lilius had an imposing memorial erected.



The following photograph in somewhat damp and degraded condition was discovered in 2013 on top of a wardrobe at Dye Cottage. It is of The Officers and NCO's of The 3rd Dumbartonshire Artillery Volunteers and Sub-Lieutenant John McLeod is front left. In Billy's writings she states he was a tall man, but here he appears to be dwarfed by most of his fellow men at arms and doesn't appear to my eye to be entirely comfortable in the role (having been there myself). The NCO's in particular look to be a magnificent hirsute collection, no doubt some

Crimean veterans among them. The other officers are Captain-Commandant W. L. Halley and Lieutenant E.A. Johnson. The unit was formed January 4th 1860 with a muster of 70-80 and by 1877 had 86 other ranks, 6 Corporals and 7 Sergeants. I have no information as to how long he served but since no one invaded Dumbarton at that time we



can assume he saw no action. (Castle and Town of Dumbarton. D MacLeod 1883 pg 102).

John trained as an Architect in London and practiced in partnership with Alexander Adamson, of whom he had probably been a pupil, from 1867. Their office was at 112 West George Street, Glasgow but it moved the following year to 160 Hope Street. The partnership was dissolved c.1872 with John continuing to practice on his own account from the existing office. In 1879 he was a member of the Council of Management of the Glasgow Institute of Architects.

He employed or trained, William Flockhart c 1871-75 Apprentice, Edward Alexander Buckingham Hay 1872-77 Apprentice and as Assistant from 1877-80, William Fraser 1883-88 Apprentice, David Andrew (junior) 1886-88 Apprentice.

Buildings and Designs

Bridgend Academy, Dumbarton Cemetery, Janet Rankin Monument and other monuments, School, Bruce Street, Women's Christian Association, Glasgow.

1870 Smollett Fountain, Alexandria, won competition and secured job. Villas, Dixon Drive.

1873 Dalreoch Church, Town Mission Hall, Warehouse for Simons Jacobs & Co and extension.

1874 Bridgend UP Church Sabbath School.

1877 Stables and offices, East Clyde Street, Helensburgh and warehouses in Glasgow.

1878 Garnethill Synagogue, Glasgow,

New Established Church, Helensburgh, North Church, Dumbarton.

1880 Christian Institute, Glasgow, Methlan Park House, Dumbarton.

1881 Burns-Aitken Building, Glasgow

1883 Jamestown Parish Church, alterations.

1884 Knoxland Church, Dumbarton

1885 Knoxland School, Levingrove Park, Dumbarton.

1886 West Bridgend UP Church (major family involvement)

1888 Knoxland School, Second phase of work, doubling building in size. (Scottish Directory of Architects)

Also mentioned in another obituary are the fine houses in Klrktonhill (from which I deduce he designed Overcliffe), renovation of the Parish Church, rebuilding of the Lesser



Town Hall, Messrs McMillan & Son's offices and the new slaughter house. From this account he received his professional training from Mr Spence of Glasgow, after which he went to London "where he wrought with Mr Street, the eminent architect, and others".

The Christian Institute and YMCA in Bothwell Street, Glasgow are no longer with us, having been demolished in 1980, following a lengthy period of financial difficulties, and the impracticality, cost and difficulty of any renovation. The original building was designed in the German Renaissance style by John McLeod and the cost including site, building and furnishings was the then enormous sum of £30,000. It was opened in 1879 by Lord Shaftesbury. Mounted over the doorway were statues of John Knox and William Tyndale and above the windows of the second floor were medallion busts of Martin Luther and other reformers. It was intended to be both the headquarters of the YMCA and a central meeting place for all bodies of a religious character.



In 1896 two wings were added by architect R.A. Bryden and followed the exuberant style of the original. "The finished building was pure fantasy, like a whimsical illustration from a Bavarian fairytale book", (Carol Foreman, *Lost Glasgow*, pg 174). It contained a restaurant a hostel with 195 beds for the YMCA, drawing music writing and smoking rooms. No doubt no drink but smoking clearly not a vice. The Bible training Institute also had 100 male and 50 female beds with separate, dining, writing, sitting rooms and libraries for each sex. "Although many thought the building had no architectural merit, it was Glasgow's most fantastic building and its architecture was so over the top that it had a charm that was much missed". (Pg 175).

He left a very substantial moveable estate of £8,481 14s 4d.

Overcliffe is to the south west of the old quarry and the map also shows the layout of Levensgrove Park. There is a war memorial in the park which includes a Captain McLeod MacMillan killed in 1916 who was John's nephew.

THE LATE MR JOHN M'LEOD, ARCHITECT.

On Sunday last, the Rev. William Watson, West Bridgend U.P. Church, of which the late Mr John M'Leod was a member, made the following allusion to the death of that gentleman.

Since we met here last Sabbath another break in our membership has occurred. A well-known figure has gone for ever from our streets; a place that was occupied among us here has suddenly become vacant. In referring then to Mr John M'Leod, I am speaking of one who was certainly no stranger to this congregation, or to many in our town, and in the neighbouring city. Baptized and brought up in this Church, he was identified with its history through many changes. He was for many years an active useful office-bearer among us. He went out and in to Sabbath worship with an interest and regularity which even failing strength did not diminish. He never cared to seek any prominent place among us. His nature found its congenial satisfaction best in quiet retirement; and yet, I do not know that any one could have manifested more happiness than he in the holy services of the Sanctuary of God. His enjoyment of these was deeply reverential and sincere, and it was no insignificant reason that ever prevented him being in his place beside us. It was indeed his unexpected absence from us last Sabbath—for he was out on Saturday evening—that made us sure something serious must have occurred. Yet, though not with us then he was thinking much about us. He cannot be with us any more. God has taken him, and the suddenness of his death has fallen with a solemn shock on the whole community. It is not my intention, nor would it be desirable to say at this time and place, all that could be said about the character of our deceased friend. Those who knew him best know how kindly and amiable and good he was. There are some natures whose spiritual emotions and convictions are too deep for adequate utterance, and rather than express them in any public conventional way, they prefer to keep them in a sacred quietness within the chambers of their own heart. Such was our friend. He did not say much in general conversation about religion—yet none could fail to see how profoundly the mysteries of life and providence and human destiny touched him—but at his own fireside, to those who were dearest to him and most with him, he spoke frequently. Anticipating as he had been all through these past months of weary illness, that his tenure of life must be brief and insecure, he faced death when it came to him, without misgiving. He had

seen it afar off and he met it courageously. Even amid the severe exhaustion in which his illness ended he listened with a restful joy to the consolation of the gospel, and was able to declare, as he had done in stronger days, his faith in the Saviour who died for him, and because of that Saviour's love to him, his certainty of victory in the lonely hour of dying. His end was like his life, gentle, quiet, undisturbed, and full of peace. He was in a very intimate way identified with us all. A native of this town he never cared to leave it. Though a busy professional man with most of his interests and duties in Glasgow, his home was here, and he loved it that should be so. And all around this neighbourhood are the marks of his genius and skill. Much of our recent local architecture is his handiwork. Our Sabbath-School premises were designed by him, and not the least impressive and significant of his achievements is this church in which we now meet. We cannot sit here without thinking of him. This is one of his many monuments. I was with something more than a mere professional regard he watched its erection. All the questions connected with it had a more than technical interest for him. His affection for the congregation of his youth and manhood was the ground of his enthusiasm, and I do not know that one among us was so humble in his natural joy, or so grateful at its happy completion as he was on the opening day. He is at rest now where "they need no temple." For those from whom he has been taken so suddenly let us pray that God's pity and consolation and help may be abundantly given to them, and for ourselves let us not be forgetful to ask God that "when our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved" we may have the sure strong knowledge within our hearts that "we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

