

# WEST STORMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Newsletter 29 Autumn 2020

### Programme 2020/2021

The Society committee has decided that the safest approach for all members is to cancel all the talks and meetings planned for September, October, November and December 2020. It is hoped that we can reconvene the Historical Society programme from January 2021 but this will depend entirely on the coronavirus situation in the local community in the new year and the prevailing advice and guidance on inside gatherings.

Meanwhile, stay safe and healthy. And remember **FACTS:**

Face coverings

Avoid crowded places

Clean your hands regularly

Two metre distance

Self-isolate (and book a test if you have symptoms).

#### West Stormont Historical Society

The current postal address of the Society is:

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### MURTHLY WALKS

Two FREE guides to walks around Murthly are available to download in PDF format from:

[www.murthly.scot/library.asp](http://www.murthly.scot/library.asp)



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# THE BATTLE AGAINST INTEMPERANCE

MIKE LAWRENCE



**The sin of intemperance and its accompanying vices are found to prevail.**

**A**t the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, beer was seen as part of the normal diet of the Scottish people. Light ales were brewed in almost every hamlet and regularly used as a substitute for drinking water. And not without good reason since the village and town wells were often polluted.

Drinking alcohol was an integral part of the social round of all classes to celebrate births, deaths, marriages, christenings, harvests, the completion of buildings, key stages of apprenticeships, and to seal a deal. Often over-indulgence took place at times of general jollity – fair days and holidays – when there was no work the next day.

Going on the occasional “spree” was quite acceptable but the Church courts had the power to impose fines or issue pulpit rebukes for over indulgence in alcohol. More serious sanctions for regular public drunkenness included the use of the “jougs” at the Kirk door or even imprisonment. There is little evidence that such punishments were common.

The First Statistical Accounts are arguably the best contemporary reports of Scottish life in the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These were gathered by the four parish ministers of West Stormont between 1792 and 1796. What is remarkable in these detailed accounts, however, is that only the Rev George Fraser of Monedie (as it was then named) saw fit to mention alcohol when he noted “there is but one public house at present, which rather deserves the name of a two-penny house, as there is no entertainment to be had in it, but ale and Scots spirits”. Drinking and drunkenness was just not an issue for public concern.

Over 40 years later, the Second Statistical Accounts were completed. The local minister was again the compiler for the parish but now we find a dramatic change in their tone about the availability of alcohol and the drinking habits of the population.

In his 1837 account, the Rev JW Thomson reported that there was still only one whisky shop in Moneydie but in the Logiealmond district of the parish there were five public houses and “the sin of intemperance and its accompanying vices are found to prevail”. Meanwhile in Redgorton, the Rev William Liston lamented that there were “no less” than eleven houses licensed to sell alcohol in his parish, five of them along the turnpike.

The Auchtergaven account was completed in 1838 by the Rev Thomas Nelson and he detailed twenty-six houses in his parish licensed to sell “porter, ale and British spirits”. At least nineteen of these houses were regarded as public nuisances and “most hurtful to the morals of the inhabitants”. Twelve of the drinking establishments were in the village of Stanley and the other fourteen houses were in or around Bankfoot.



Kinclaven was relatively abstemious and the Rev Henry Henderson noted that the parish had only two inns. One was near the secessionist house and established for the accommodation and refreshment of the remote residents of the congregation. The other was by the Tay ferry for the use of travellers and anglers.

What changed at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was an explosion in both the number of licensed houses and the availability of cheap alcohol, particularly whisky. Drinking and drunkenness started to be regarded as a social problem and both the general public and the authorities were bound to react.

## **The Growth of the Licensed Trade**

The licensed public house was first introduced to Scotland in 1756 when the Scottish Licensing Act gave magistrates the authority to issue licences for the sale of beer and spirits in burghs such as Perth while justices of the peace oversaw licensing arrangements in the country communities.

In 1794, a change was made to the licensing law and from this may be dated the rapid growth in the consumption of alcohol in Scotland, particularly whisky. The Scottish Licensing Act 1794 permitted licences to be granted to “retailers of plain aqua vitae only” at the reduced rate of £1 per “dram shop” in the Highlands and £2 per “dram shop” in the Lowlands.

There were 4,397 of these cheap whisky licences taken out in 1794 in addition to the 1,304 general “public house” licences which authorised the sale of foreign as well as British spirits. In this way the total number of licensed houses in Scotland was increased to 5,701, an almost a five-fold increase in a single year.

By 1815 the number of whisky-only licences in Scotland had increased to 5,695 and the general licences to 2,774 and by 1824 the number of dram shops had increased to 7,539 and public houses to 3,595, a total of 11,134.

The two classes of public house and dram shop were then united under a uniform rate of duty. In 1825 the licence duty on houses of under £10 rental was reduced to £2/2/- and a house of £20 of rental to £4/4/-. The issuing of these two-guinea and four-guinea licences gave such an impetus to the spirit trade that by 1830 the total number of licensed houses in Scotland exceeded 17,200.

### **Perthshire Courier Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> October 1827**

***Reported that the General Road Act for Scotland states that the lessee of any Toll House on a turnpike shall not be allowed to retail spiritous liquors. In the face of the law we find that not only do toll-bar keepers retail spirits, but they do so with the full knowledge of the turnpike trustees. In many cases, it is the same trustees who grant the man the licence. In certain districts, one third of the rent produced is obtained from the profits arising from the whisky drunk in the back room of the toll house. In Stanley, where the toll house is situated almost in the village, if the licence for selling spirits was taken away from the toll-keeper, the effect would only be to diminish the rent for the bar and transfer the retail of spirits to a nearby licensed house.***

During the 1830s there was a rigorous campaign to reduce

the number of public houses, especially those with a low rental value. By 1845, however, the year of the publication of the Second Statistical Account of Scotland, there were still over 15,000 licensed houses.

### **Perthshire Courier Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June 1833**

***Reported on a sitting of the full bench of the Justices and Commissioners in Perth on the previous Friday. The issue was the restriction of licences to sell excisable liquors. Three applications were from Bankfoot and the rest from the immediate neighbourhood. In Bankfoot there were already nine licensed houses and this was considered too great a number for any good and end purpose.***

In Perthshire, with a population of around 65,000, there were 883 public houses scattered around the county in 1840, or one for every 72 adults. In 1845, the Rev Dr William Thomson reported in the Statistical Account for the parish of Perth that there were 249 ale houses and another 74 establishments where beer and spirits could be bought. He described many of these 323 licensed houses as “foul pest houses” in which “the most worthless characters are found to congregate”. At this time Perth had a population of around 20,000 people.

### **Perthshire Advertiser Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> June 1848**

***Reported on the Quarter Session held in Perth on the previous Friday. The Session heard the case of Duncan McLagan of the Bankfoot Inn. Mr Duncan, Procurator Fiscal, stated that for 180 adult males in the village there were no fewer than 10 public houses in the village of Bankfoot. Mr Marsh argued for granting – the Inn had eight rooms, stabling for 12 horses and was much frequented by travellers, carriers and carters on the turnpike. The licence was granted.***

### **Perthshire Advertiser 21<sup>st</sup> November 1850**

***Reported on street dram selling in Perth. A significant quantity of liquor was sold on the street by peripatetic whisky merchants. They store their wares in capricious pockets and perambulate the streets looking for customers. A nod of the head and they enter a nearby close or common stair and supply drink at an exorbitant rate per glass.***

## **The Increasing Popularity of Whisky**

Whisky drinking, a day and daily refreshment in the Highlands for centuries, was only popularised in Lowland Scotland towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and consumption soared as the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed.

Whisky was first taxed in 1644 and this simply led to a

huge increase in the number of illicit distillers across Scotland. Smuggling became standard practice for the next 150 years, partly because Highland magistrates, on whose lands the stills were hidden, understood that revenue from the illegal trade was very lucrative and paid the rent of their tenants. In 1777 it was reckoned there were only eight legal distilleries competing with over 400 illegal distilleries in Scotland.



The more the Excise tried to control the trade through taxation, the more the production of whisky was driven underground. By the 1820s, as many as 14,000 illicit stills were being confiscated every year. Over half of the whisky consumed in Scotland was being enjoyed illicitly without any duty being collected by the Exciseman.

The Excise Act 1823 encouraged the legal distillation of whisky by awarding licences costing just £10 to producers in return for a much-reduced duty per gallon. The Excise Act effectively killed smuggling and saw the official recognition of distilleries that soon became household names – Aberlour, Glenfiddich, Glenlivet, Glenmorangie, Highland Park, Laphroaig, and so on. The immediate impact was that the production of duty paid whisky rose from 9 million litres (2 million gallons) to 27 million litres (6 million gallons) per year.

Between 1823 and 1830 spirits consumption in Scotland, as officially measured, increased nearly threefold. By 1825 Scots were imbibing an average of 2.71 gallons of whisky per person per year.

Another important event was the invention of the column still in 1831 by Aeneas Coffey, an Irishman, which enabled a continuous process of distillation and led to the production of grain whisky, a smoother, less intense spirit

than the malt whisky produced in copper pot stills. With a short space of time, the market was flooded with whisky.

The improved quality of cheap whisky and an abundant supply through the growing network of inns, pubs, and dram shops was bound to be a dangerous social cocktail. People were drinking more and more alcohol and a wave of intoxication swept through Scotland in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **Perthshire Advertiser Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> January 1834**

***Reported on the case of William Fleming, a grocer in Stanley, who was charged with selling alcohol to Andrew Wishart aged 12, John McGregor aged 12, David Gall aged 14, and James McLeod, also 14. He supplied them with whisky and then toddy, brought in four girls for them to have a dance, and even played the fiddle for their reels.***

There was a steady rise in the number of people arrested for drunkenness and every form of loutish behaviour from domestic violence, to petty crime, poverty, ill health and early death was blamed on alcohol.

#### **Perthshire Courier Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> December 1843**

***Reported that David Littlejohn was charged with breach of the peace. On Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December he was wandering about Bankfoot in a state on intoxication, uttering oaths and imprecations, using violent and threatening language, and attempting to assault the lieges. Littlejohn pled guilty and was fined 20 shillings or 10 days imprisonment.***

Workers in the mills and factories had more frequent pay days than their agricultural worker neighbours – weekly or fortnightly in the works compared to each term or even annually on the farms. Industry was completely cash whereas agricultural workers were significantly paid in kind. Saturday nights and Sundays were when industrial workers had money in their pockets and spending habits changed to reflect this. Drunkenness became a weekend problem. Intoxication on a Sunday was a particular concern and the Kirk was powerless to impose the traditional public humiliation or fines on non-attenders.

Since spirits were generally believed to be more dangerous and less wholesome than beer, the growing preference for whisky influenced public attitudes against alcohol in Scotland. Public drunkenness was presented as a threat to the industry, discipline, punctuality, sobriety and piety of the respectable class and they wanted swift action from the government.



## **The Rise of Temperance**

The public were divided between those who thought drinking beer, wine and spirits was good, those who thought a moderate amount was acceptable, and those who campaigned for prohibition and a total ban of the production, sale and consumption of alcohol. Those who campaigned for abstinence and prohibition started to band together from the late 1820s onwards under the banner of temperance.

In October 1829, John Dunlop, a Greenock businessman, launched a local temperance society which quickly grew into the Scottish Temperance Society. Soon he was joined by William Collins of the well-known Glasgow firm of booksellers and bible publishers. By the summer of 1830 the Society had over 3000 members.

Initially temperance was anti-spirits but not anti-alcohol and did not oppose "the moderate use of ale, porter or wine". As the Society grew, members who avoided alcohol ridiculed the hypocrisy of others who drank in their homes, hotels and private clubs while attacking the lumpen for drinking in public houses and dram shops. This division in the ranks limited the organisation and the Scottish Temperance Society failed to thrive. By 1836 it had ceased to exist.

It was not until the late 1840s and early 1850s that the drink question re-emerged as an issue of public and political debate. And the struggle continued between those who favoured temperance, defined as sipping in moderation and avoiding hard spirits, and those who advocated total abstinence, the teetotallers.

The Scottish Temperance League was founded in 1845 as the first truly national temperance organisation in Scotland. It published regular temperance newspapers and pamphlets, and employed a large body of full-time agents to promote the cause. The movement was strong in the villages of Bankfoot, Luncarty and Stanley.

### **Perthshire Advertiser Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> June 1854**

***Reported on a lecture in Bankfoot on the temperance movement delivered by one of the Scottish Temperance League agents, Mr Scrimgeour. His aim was to make everyone teetotallers. Upwards of 40 people in the village had signed the pledge since his visit. It was reckoned that there were now more than 100 total abstainers in the village.***

Temperance activists lobbied local councillors and MPs for a reduction in the number of public houses and restrictions on the sale of alcohol. Local licensing courts,

which governed the availability of alcohol in each district, were targeted. The teetotallers also pressed for reductions in the number of licences granted and for further limitations on licensed house opening hours.

## **The Use of Legislation**

The Home Drummond Act of 1828 laid down that, in addition to an Excise licence, the proprietor of any place selling liquor in Scotland required a certificate from the local licensing authority. This certificate had to be regularly renewed thus enabling the magistrates or JPs to keep a tight rein on pubs, inns and dram shops and how they were run.

Certificates included provisions against adulteration and breaches of the peace by customers while also banning licensees from allowing "men and women of notoriously bad fame, and dissolute boys and girls" on the premises.

A James VI act of 1594 had banned Sunday trading in Scotland and this tradition was unchallenged for over 230 years until the passing of the Home Drummond Act. The key sentence in the certificate was "And do not keep open house, or permit or suffer any drinking or tipping on any part of the premises, thereto belonging, during the hours of divine service on Sundays, or other days set aside for public worship by lawful authority."

This sentence was challenged by an Edinburgh spirit dealer called MacNeil on the grounds that the words quoted gave him liberty to keep his public house open on a Sunday except during the hours of the church services. This view was confirmed by the Court of Session and introduced a distinction between publicans who only had to close during church hours and the butcher, baker, grocer, confectioner, hatter, clothier, shoemaker, candlestick maker, and all other businesses who were not allowed to open at all on a Sunday.

The government, spurred on by lobbying from the temperance movement and the Kirk, pushed for new legislation. The Public Houses (Scotland) Act 1853, better known as the Forbes Mackenzie Act, decreed that ordinary licensed premises had to close all day on Sundays and from 11pm to 8am on Mondays to Saturdays. Hotels could open on Sundays and serve alcohol to "bona fide travellers" only. Many locals took advantage of this loophole by travelling to neighbouring villages to buy drink.

The Forbes Mackenzie Act marked the foundation of the modern Scottish licensing system and introduced three separate certificates: hotel, public house, and an "off

sales" certificate for grocers. The Act also banned sales to under 14-year olds and to patrons who were already intoxicated. Scotland had moved from a predominantly rural society with social control through the Kirk to an urban society requiring statutory control of the sale of alcohol.

The Forbes Mackenzie Act had an immediate effect, particularly at night with drinkers required to break up their sprees by 11pm and no longer disturbing the sober citizens at two or three in the morning with their singing and wild shenanigans.

The Act also resulted in a big fall in cases of drunkenness on a Sunday. For the last three years of the old law there were 11,471 cases of drunkenness in Scotland on a Sunday. For the first three years after the passing of the Forbes Mackenzie Act there were 4,299 cases. In Perth there were 263 cases in the three years up to 1854 and only 58 cases in the three years afterwards.

The Forbes Mackenzie Act was an important victory for the temperance movement. It provided official recognition of the social problem of drunkenness. The Act also indicated a change of approach by the authorities. For the first time there was control of the drink seller rather than just the drunkard.

One controversial aspect of the law was the police use of the "spy system" to obtain convictions of those operating illicit drinking dens. The police had no powers under Forbes Mackenzie to enter private property and were forced to use devious means.

#### **Perthshire Advertiser Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> July 1861**

***Reported on the case of Janet Allan in Bankfoot. She was fined £7 for shebeening. Her activities had presented a long-standing problem for the local police. Her house was described as a nuisance. To entrap her, the local constable asked Andrew Garvie, a local ploughman, to go to the Janet Allan's house to buy a half bottle of whisky for which he paid 1/8d. Garvie was described as the simplest man in the village. He said it was for two men coming to the village when it was, in fact, for the police constable. The only way that a conviction could be obtained was through deception, fraud and imposition. The police had to breach the law in order to vindicate the charge. Allan was convicted of running an unlicensed house.***

#### **Perthshire Advertiser Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> July 1861**

***Reported on the considerable traffic of alcohol from unlicensed houses in Stanley. It was said there were four***

***shebeens in the village at which drink could be obtained at all hours and on all days of the week. These houses apparently sold more alcohol than some of the licensed houses. On Saturday and Sunday nights the customers were numerous and the result was frequent brawls, fighting and licentiousness. The current law did not allow police officers to enter these unlicensed premises and the JPs turned a blind eye.***

The Public Houses (Scotland) Act 1853 was reviewed by a Royal Commission from 1859. A wide range of interested parties were consulted in the major towns and cities across Scotland on the workings of the Act. This review led to the Public Houses (Scotland) Amendment Act 1862.

After 1862 the licensing system became the responsibility of local magistrates, with everyday supervision in the hands of local police forces. The amendments also imposed further restrictions on drunkenness and disorderly conduct and introduced the principle that nearby residents, police and magistrates could object to new licensed house applications. This was the means of controlling alcohol sale for the next one hundred years.

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**Scots Saws**

**Naething should be done in  
haste but grippin' fleas.**

## BACK IN THE DAY

The farmer was James Paton, and his rent was £300 sterling, paid in two lots at Martinmas and Whitsunday. Meikle Obney's fermtoun, just off centre, would have housed all of Paton's sub tenants, cottars, a smith, and several handloom weavers.

The Witch's Stone is not marked.



This image is taken from “Plans of the Baronies of Murthly & Airtully”, a folio of 29 estate maps prepared for Sir George Stewart of Grandtully, Bart in 1825. They were drawn and coloured from surveys carried out by James Chalmers, recently appointed estates factor. Who worked out of The Hospital at Dalpowie, although known at that time as Glen Birnam.

These plans, and the estate's rent rolls, indicate the importance of Upper, Nether, and Meikle Obney to Murthly estate in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Meikle Obney in particular, which had the distinction then of being the most valuable farm, by rental value, on lands stretching from the edge of Stanley through Airtully and Murthly to the Obney Hills, and onto Birnam (or Wester Inchewan as it was known then) and including the recently acquired estate of New Delvine.





# MONEYDIE FIELD FIND

MIKE LAWRENCE

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There was a general  
fear of arming the  
working class.



Committee member, Trish Strang brought this find from a field near Moneydie to our attention. First thoughts were that it was a Black Watch badge. Then Mike Lawrence did some archival digging . . . And reported back.

A large number of volunteer corps were formed during the French Revolutionary War in the 1790s across the UK to deal with both the threat of invasion and the sympathetic activities of those calling for parliamentary and burgh reform. Around Perth, the Friends of the People were 1600 strong, led by James Wylie (eventually of Airleywright), and a hundred or so local “loyalists” volunteered to confront the radicals. This voluntary force was small, short lived, and stood down after a few months. It is unlikely that this organisation is the source of the badge found at Moneydie.

It is much more likely that the badge is from the 1st or 2nd Perth Volunteer Corps that were raised in 1859. My source is not Wikipedia but the Records of the Scottish Volunteer Force 1859 to 1908 by Major

General JM Grierson. The Perth Volunteers were created as part of the voluntary movement that swept across mid Victorian Britain.

In 1859 and 1860, some eighteen separate companies of volunteers were raised in Perthshire and shortly afterwards were formed into two Administrative Battalions. The official titles for those battalions around Perth were the 4th Perthshire Volunteer Battalion, The Black Watch (Royal Highlanders) and 5th Perthshire Volunteer Battalion, The Black Watch (Royal Highlanders).

Following the Crimean War, it was painfully clear to the War Office that, with half of the British Army scattered around the Empire on garrison duty, it had insufficient forces available for home defence. Faced with the growth of the third French Empire and the reputation of the French military forces, there was a growing feeling that the British Army was under resourced. Tension between the UK and France increased with the Orsini Affair - an assassination attempt on Emperor Napoleon III - and the perceived threat of a French invasion during the French/Austria War. Patriotic men felt it was time to volunteer their services.

Many of the government military advisers were opposed to “amateur” soldiers and there was a general fear of training and arming the working class. Faced with a manpower crisis it was decided to create a defensive force of the “middle class”. On 12 May 1859 the establishment of a voluntary force in Great Britain was sanctioned. Circulars were addressed to the Lord Lieutenant of counties which authorised them to submit proposals for the formation of voluntary rifle corps inland and of artillery corps in the maritime towns.

The circular contained provisions for the commissioning of officers and non-commissioned officers, the swearing of oaths of allegiance, calling up of the volunteers to deal with an actual invasion, pay, severance, drilling regimes and so on. Volunteers had to provide their own uniform, arms and other equipment and to defray all related expenses except when assembled for actual service. Arms had to conform to War Office stipulations to secure uniformity of gauge. Only “proper persons” could be appointed as officers.

Drill and instruction was not to be unnecessarily irksome or make excess demand on the time of volunteers. Men were to be fully instructed on the use of rifles and ranges were established across the country so that volunteers could practise. Ammunition and targets were provided at cost by government stores. This gave rise to a craze for inter-company shooting matches.

At first the volunteer movement was confined to those who could afford the kit and rifle but as more men from the artisan class volunteered their service it quickly became obvious that arms and uniforms had to be provided. Measures were taken locally to raise the necessary funds by public subscription and by contributions from honorary members. The general spirit of the volunteers was enthusiastically patriotic



and discipline was improved as retired regular soldiers joined the movement.

The 1st Perth Volunteers were raised on 13th December 1859 and was composed of "citizens" of Perth i.e. the middle class.

The 2nd Perth Volunteers was also raised on 13th December 1859 and was composed of "artisans" i.e. the working class.

The 1st and 2nd were amalgamated as one company in June 1860. The uniform (shown below) was a medium grey tunic and trousers, with scarlet collars and cuffs and black braid, grey peaked cap with scarlet bands, and a badge chaining the crest and motto of Perth - Pro Rege, Lege et Grege (for the Queen, the Law and the People). There was also a black pouch and a waist belt. I suspect what has been found in the field at Moneydie is a belt buckle with the Perth crest and motto.



From 1860, cadet corps were also formed consisting of school boys. Like the adult volunteers, the boys were supplied with arms by the War Office for which they paid a fee. Cadet Corps were almost exclusively associated with private schools.

In 1869, the 5th, 7th, 9th, 13th and 14th companies were transferred to the 5th Volunteer Battalion, the others remaining as the 4th Volunteer Battalion.

On 24th April 1883 authority was given for the adoption of the uniform of the Black Watch. On 21st March 1885, the battalion was renamed as the 4th Volunteer Battalion, The Black Watch.

My belief is that you have found a belt buckle from the mid to late 19th century. If any reader has an alternative view or any other information then please get In touch.

# THE DANDY FECHTERS

PAUL MCLENNAN



William's training was fierce fast and furious.

Young William Drummond Stewart, second of Sir George and Lady Catherine's five sons, born Boxing Day 1795, was tutored at home before being sent away to Westminster School. Not to Eton, like his father and older brother, John; apparently his parents saw enough of his adventurous character by age 10 to agree he should go into the army and opted to defer any real expense until then.<sup>1</sup> In 1813, Sir George purchased a cornetcy for him in the 6<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards for £750. William was just 17 and had set his foot on the lowest acceptable rung of a military career, for a gentleman.

However, William soon chafed at life in the 6<sup>th</sup>, on garrison duty. Could Papa not buy a position in the Hussars instead? Preferably the 15<sup>th</sup>: such splendid uniforms, its officers really cut a dash. Moreover, they were with Wellington and the Peninsula Army, winning battle after battle, pushing Napoleon's army out of Spain. William would have known of the 15<sup>th</sup>'s famous charge at the Battle of Sahagun on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1808, just before his 13<sup>th</sup> birthday. While some muttered about "fops and dandies" (apart from being so colourfully attired the hussars were the only regiments in the British Army permitted to grow moustaches at that time) these officers undoubtedly led a fighting regiment. That charge had "set the standard" for British cavalry for the whole of the Peninsula Campaign.<sup>2</sup>

Sir George's purse took another, bigger hit. Although that cornetcy in the 6<sup>th</sup> could easily be sold on (minus the requisite fee to the regimental brokers, of course) a lieutenancy in the Hussars would cost about £1,000. And it would not be cheap equipping William in the extravagantly theatrical uniform of the 15<sup>th</sup> (The King's) Regiment of (Light) Dragoons, to give its Sunday-going-on-church-parade title. Lt. George Woodberry of the 18<sup>th</sup> Hussars, William's contemporary, but already a year ahead of him in campaigning, gives a clear accounting of what it cost to be a gentleman in the cavalry, in his journal, *With Wellington's Hussars in the Peninsula and at*

Scots Saws

Owre many grieves only hinder the work.

*Waterloo*.<sup>3</sup> After buying a commission, dress and undress uniforms, a gentleman must provide his own curved 1796 pattern sabre and brace of pistols; his charger, spare horse, pack horse, and their saddlery; camp equipment, and possibly a cart. George or rather, his father spent £488 here. He also needed a servant, at £100 a year, who might have had to find his own clothes and food out of that, “but when in England I am to find him a bed.”<sup>4</sup> His bills in the officers’ mess would run at £500 a year.

Given Woodberry’s experience, at a conservative estimate it cost Sir George and Lady Catherine £55,000 in today’s money to establish William as a lieutenant, and sustain him for his year in France. His pay was £164 5/- (around £7,000).



Lieutenant Stewart was duly commissioned on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1814 and left for France to join his regiment. The 15<sup>th</sup> Hussars, as they were known to everyone (although not officially designated as such until 1861) were then somewhere in the foothills of the Pyrenees. In field campaign mode, skirmishing with Marshall Soult’s *chasseurs*. On arrival, William was no more than an unchancy cannon ball or musket shot away from being in sole command of a troop of around 60 “sabres”. He was barely 18, and as green as Maureen O’Hara’s eyes.<sup>5</sup> Little wonder that Wellington railed against a system where fops and dandies bought their rank, and engineered advancement through family connections and patronage (while doing nothing to change it).

With Wellington anxious to begin his spring offensive and bring Soult to battle William had only a few weeks to get to know his men, learn the drills, evolutions, and signals,

cope with his turn leading a night *piquet*, and get used to reveille at 3am. As Woodberry noted, “The duties of hussars in the field are so various, and require so much practice and experience that (enough) opportunities cannot be taken . . . for training.”<sup>6</sup> William would have no parade ground, no drill yard; all of his training would, often, be under live fire. Luckily, his squadron commander, Captain Thackwell, assigned him Richard Ryder,<sup>7</sup> an experienced trooper, as his ‘groom’.

Born in England in 1781, whereabouts unknown, Richard had joined the Royal Marines at 15. He was at the Battle of Copenhagen in 1801, when Nelson destroyed the Danish fleet. Richard and the admiral both suffered from seasickness but, unlike Nelson, who quickly found his sea legs after a run ashore, his bouts were progressively debilitating. Enough so that he was discharged from the service soon after. The sea having rejected him, Richard surrendered to nominative determinism:<sup>8</sup> he joined the cavalry, the 15<sup>th</sup> Hussars.

On 21<sup>st</sup> December 1808, during the first phase of the Peninsula Campaign, the 15<sup>th</sup> carried out a tough night march in heavy snow to surprise the French at Sahagun in northern Spain. Although under strength, with only 350 men and horses fit for the attack, the Hussars charged a cavalry brigade (double their number) just before dawn, routing them. The official account does not bother with the number of French killed; but two colonels, eleven other officers, and one hundred and fifty-four other ranks were taken prisoner; one hundred and twenty-five horses were captured along with some mules, and the baggage train. The regiment lost two privates and four horses.<sup>9</sup>

The 15<sup>th</sup>’s other honours during the second phase of the campaign include the battles of Vittoria and Salamanca.



Richard Ryder was, therefore, an ‘old sweat’ (although only 32) a battle-hardened, seasoned campaigner. Exactly the type a good commander would assign to steady a fresh and impressionable young officer. Within a few weeks, the 15<sup>th</sup> was in the thick of it again. Lieutenant Stewart’s first experience of the fog of war was at Orthèz when, in early February, Wellington began a series of manoeuvres over several weeks designed to force a



reluctant, but wily, Marshall Soult into a decisive engagement. This finally took place on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The terrain was not conducive to cavalry, being strewn with ditches and walls, and the regiment was not heavily engaged. In subsequent weeks, however, various squadrons had a series of encounters, sharp skirmishes, at Grenade, St Gernier, Tarbes, Tournefeuille, St. Simon, and Gagnac. Captain Thackwell was given a field promotion to brevet-Major, and the regiment was singled out by Lord Edward Somerset, general commanding the brigade, for its conduct. The pace of William's on the job training was fierce, fast and furious. And Marshall Soult was being forced back to Toulouse.

Toulouse, famously, is a battle that need not have happened, Napoleon having abdicated four days earlier. On 10<sup>th</sup> April, 1814, the 15<sup>th</sup> was ordered to support an advance by the infantry. William and Richard had to grin and bear it as the regiment suffered casualties to men and horses when raked by cannon fire, unable to engage directly with the enemy.

With Napoleon soon corked and bottled on Elba, the British parliament sought a peace dividend through an immediate culling of its huge expenditure on both army and navy. The 15<sup>th</sup> got off lightly, losing only the four troops of reinforcements it had received before Toulouse; the remaining eight troops were needed to support the civilian authorities in Ireland. Doubtless the Officers' Mess, when they returned to barracks in Hounslow, rang to the ironic toast of, "The Irish! God bless 'em."<sup>10</sup>

The regimental history has nothing at all to say about Ireland: it is often non-committal or, when forced, terse (as we shall see in Part 2) about its policing role. The 15<sup>th</sup>'s history only picks up with Napoleon's return to France in March 1815. All roads soon led to Waterloo . . .

During the night of 17<sup>th</sup> June, the regiment was exposed to a torrential downpour in a field of rye. William, too, kept a journal (although not assiduously, not at all like George Woodberry). He wrote of those miserable hours as "the most dreadful bivouac ever experienced"<sup>11</sup> Having first tried to shelter under a pile of wet straw with Captain Thackwell he added, "We were obliged to wander up and down in the mud to produce some species of circulation in the blood which we knew not how soon should flow." The call, "To horse!" at 3am must have been a blessing. Breakfast was "a small piece of brown unleavened bread, sent by the Colonel . . . divided among the officers like a Last Supper. Each eager to snatch at what a well brought up pig in England would have voted a nuisance."<sup>12</sup>

As the day wore on William could only have had the haziest notion of how such a vast battle was progressing. The 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade comprising the 7<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Hussars, along with the 13<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons, was stationed to the rear of the Hougoumont chateau. There he was perceptive enough to notice that Wellington kept visiting: "The anxiety of the Duke seemed often to lead him there to what he called the key of the position."<sup>13</sup> Later, the

brigade was manoeuvring to charge ten squadrons of lancers beyond the Nivelles Road when ". . . a large body of Cuirassiers and other cavalry were seen carrying all before them on the open ground between Hougoumont and La Haye Saint, and their lancers were shouting in triumph. The brigade instantly moved towards its former post, and the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> charged and drove back the Cuirassiers, with the most distinguished gallantry, for some distance." The blessing of open ground! The regiment then made charge after charge upon infantry and cavalry, throughout the afternoon.<sup>14</sup> Forming for yet another charge it came under heavier fire, including artillery. "Here we lost (Major) Thackwell, only wounded, (Lieutenant) Buckley dead, (Captain) Whitford wounded and (Lieutenant) Sherwood killed." William's horse was shot from under him and he then was pinned down by infantry fire. During this time, he watched as Sir Colquhoun Grant, commanding the 15<sup>th</sup>, "lost five or six horses in quick succession", and two men at his stirrup. Re-horsed, William was sent to round up stragglers, but could find no more than nine comrades. By this time "the enemy cavalry . . . began to show symptoms of the most disorderly flight"<sup>15</sup>: the battle was won. William found the brigade position. He lay down, "and slept on the ground from twelve until three the next morning."

The 15<sup>th</sup> Hussars lost 28 men and forty-two horses killed; a further fifty were wounded along with fifty-two horses. The following day, the regiment joined in the pursuit of the wreck of the Grande Armée. It would remain as part of the army of occupation until May 1816, when ordered back to England. Once again, policing duties saved it from being disbanded or severely reduced. The toast in the Officers' Mess this time was, "The machine breakers! God bless 'em."<sup>17</sup> Sent to Nottingham, Birmingham and Wolverhampton as heroes of Waterloo, the 15<sup>th</sup> helped suppress several riots and disturbances among factory workers. Towards the end of the year, however, parliament did take its dividend. The regiment suffered a reduction in force, to eight troops of just 62 men, and eight horses apiece. Richard Ryder was one of those discharged. Without a pension.

At this point William stepped in and engaged Richard as his servant. Who we next hear of almost three years later, in an extract from the parish register of Little Dunkeld in 1819, regarding a marriage: "February 12<sup>th</sup>, Richard Rider servt. Murthly and Anne Logie servt. there. No objections."<sup>18</sup>

It didn't take the old soldier long to get his feet under the table.

End of Part 1.

(The full article can be read on the Thornie Tales blog:

[www.murthly.scot](http://www.murthly.scot) )


*"O, man," he cried in a kind of ecstasy, "am I no a bonny fechter?" RLS "Kidnapped" 1886.*



## Sources & Bibliography:

1. *Stewart Heritage* by Charles Kinder Bradbury & Henry Steuart Fotheringham (Brayck publishing 2016) p278  
Quoted by John Mackenzie in Britishbattles.com.
2. *With Wellington's Hussars in the Peninsula and at Waterloo: the Journals of Lieutenant George Woodberry, 18<sup>th</sup> Hussars, 1813 -15* ( Ed. Gareth Glover, Pen & Sword, 2017)
3. *Ibid*
4. Anyone of my vintage would probably know more about the life of a cavalryman from watching John Ford's trilogy: Fort Apache, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, and Rio Grande. Ford is particularly good on the callowness of young officers, and of the need to give them their chance. Besides, has there ever been anything greener . . .
5. *Woodberry*
6. Ryder eventually became Rider on his move to Murthly, beginning with the record of his marriage to Anne Logie in 1819. Subsequently, his daughters gave Rider as their maiden name to the parish record, and that is the spelling on his death certificate, and in the news item carried in so many newspapers. However, it is given as Ryder in the Census of 1841, presumably Richard spelling it out for the census taker. The clincher is to be found on his Waterloo medal, where Richard Ryder is stamped around the edge: Waterloo Medal Book [Mint 16/112/27].
7. Nominative determinism: a phrase popularised by the *New Scientist* pointing out how often someone's surname seems to determine their role in life. For another example see citation below for Richard Cannon, author of a series of regimental histories.
8. *Historical Record of the Fifteenth, or King's Regiment of Light Dragoons, Hussars 1759 – 1841* by Richard Cannon (John W Parker, London, 1841).
9. *Ibid*
10. *The Waterloo Journal of Sir William Drummond Stewart* transcribed by Henry Steuart Fotheringham (Journal of the Stewart Society, 1971) p.168. (If this seems a bit much from someone who had seen all of five months campaigning, and through spring and early summer in the south of France at that, remember William was just 19 years old. He, and everyone else in the regiment, would have been apprehensive. They were facing Napoleon himself, for the very first time. Wellington was on the back foot, having been forced to make a tactical withdrawal the previous day. The 15<sup>th</sup> had had to cover that retreat.
11. *Ibid*, p 169.
12. *Ibid*, p 170
13. Cannon
14. WDS Journal, p170
15. *Ibid*, p170
16. Cannon
17. Parish Register, Little Dunkeld



 ***Billeted here in Death,  
Quartered to Remain,  
Till the Last Trumpet sounds,  
When we shall rise and march again.***

Over the years, members of the Historical Society have faithfully and painstakingly recorded the inscriptions on gravestones across West Stormont. For this effort we are eternally grateful. These memorial inscriptions were published in a series of booklets and are now available in a portable document format (PDF) on request. The Auchtergaven Parish Church and Logiebride Church graveyard inscriptions are also available on the Bankfoot Church Centre website.

Most gravestones typically feature names, family relationships, dates and place of birth and death, and sometimes a favourite quote or a symbol reflecting an affinity the deceased had in their life. Occasionally, however, the inscription is more memorable and makes the observer stop and think.

In Redgorton Parish Church graveyard there is a beautiful epitaph which reads:

***Billeted here in Death,  
Quartered to Remain,  
Till the Last Trumpet sounds,  
When we shall rise and march again.***

This inscription appears on the gravestone of David McLaren, the village blacksmith in Luncarty, who died in 1916, and his wife, Margaret Jack, who died in 1869. But the epitaph refers to David and Margaret's two sons, David and William, who are not buried at Redgorton.

Both McLaren sons became regular soldiers. David McLaren Jnr was a Sergeant Major in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Life Guards and died of wounds received in action, aged 40, on 21<sup>st</sup>

March 1901 at Bethlehem, Orange Free State, South Africa. William McLaren was Company Sergeant Major in the 9<sup>th</sup> Black Watch and was killed in action at the Battle of Loos in France on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1915, aged 51.

The gravestone was erected by another McLaren brother who had emigrated from Luncarty to South Africa, He saw the inscription on a gravestone in Pretoria and thought the words were a perfect tribute to his two brothers.

The quote is taken from a verse that first appeared on the gravestone of William Billinge in the village of Longnor in Staffordshire. Billinge was born in a cornfield at Fawfieldhead in Longnor in 1679. At the age of 23 years he enlisted in the army under Sir George Rooke and was involved in the taking of the fortress of Gibraltar in 1704. He served under the Duke of Marlborough at the Battle of Ramillies and was wounded in the thigh. He then fought against the Jacobites in the Risings of 1715 and 1745. William died within 150 yards of where he was born and was interred in the graveyard of Saint Bartholomew's Church graveyard in Longnor on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 1791, aged 112 years.

The original verse at the end of the William Billinge epitaph read:

***Conquest I shared in many a dreadful scene,  
With matchless Malboro' and with brave Eugene.  
To peaceful quarters billeted am I,  
And here forgetful of my labours lie.  
Let me alone awhile, asleep, not slain,  
And when the trumpet sounds, I'll march again.***

The short epitaph to the McLaren boys is a marked improvement on the doggerel of the Billinge original but the sentiment is the same. The next time you are in the Redgorton Parish Church graveyard, make a point of seeking out the gravestone and remember David McLaren



## SCOTS SAWS

A man o' words and no deeds is like a gairden fu' o' weeds

A thread 'ill tie an honest man better than a rope 'ill tie a knave

Bees that ha'e honey in their mooths ha'e stings in their tale

Better my bairns seek frae me than I beg frae them

Ding doon the nests and the craws wull flee awa

Dirna scald yer mou' wi' ither folks kail

Fain fish wad ye eat but ye're laith tae weet yer feet

Fiddlers, dogs and flesh fleas come tae the feast unca'd

Forbid a fool to dae a thing and he'll awa an' dae it

Gie yer tongue mair holidays than yer heid

He that deals in dirt aye has foul fingers

He that has a muckle wad aye has mair

He that lies wi' dugs maun rise wi' fleas

He that shows his siller tempts the thief

He's aye jaggin' his grape intae some bodie else's midden

It's as well that our fau'ts are writte' on oor face

Keep yer mooth closed and yer een open

Langest at the fire soonest finds the cauld

Lie for him and he'll swear for you

Loud cheeps the moose when the cat's no rustlin'

Love's as warm among cotters as courtiers

Mair than enough is ower muckle

Meat feeds, claith cleads, but manners mak the man