

West Stormont's Auld Times

#13 Spring 2026



Lunch on the Moors by Charles Lees (See p9)

WEST STORMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Name	Age	Sex	Occupation
John	25	M	Farmer
Mary	22	F	Wife
William	10	M	Son
Elizabeth	8	F	Daughter
James	5	M	Son
Ann	3	F	Daughter



Next season's mid-month meetings ... something different

Would you be interested in researching your family tree, the history of your house or past events – and like some help in learning how to navigate the various websites? We will have experts on hand to help in hands-on sessions showing you how to use these resources and get the best out of websites and libraries.

ANCESTRY - the world's largest genealogy website. How to create a family tree.

SCOTLAND'S PEOPLE - Scottish birth, marriage and census records and more.

THE BRITISH NEWSPAPER ARCHIVE - Search millions of stories by keyword, name, location, date or title.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND - Search historic maps published by Ordnance Survey, covering England, Scotland and Wales 1820s - 1970s

NATIONAL RECORDS OF SCOTLAND – sasine's, church and court records

At a new venue - the Tayside Hotel in Stanley

Meetings will be held on afternoons and evenings – check the website for full details and a complete programme of sessions. Come along and share your experience too. These are informal sessions not classes, everyone of all abilities can join in and we can all share our expertise!



KEEPING CLEAN IN 19THC BANKFOOT

MICHAEL LAWRENCE

Bankfoot was developed as a planned village by James Wylie after he was gifted the Airleywight Estate by his mother in 1805. For the next one hundred years, the residents had to collect their water from either the Glenshauch Burn or Garry Burn or from some twenty-five surface wells which were sunk into gravel banks around the village.



Courtesy of Culture Perth and Kinross Museums & Galleries

The water had to be carried to the home and then stored in wooden casks or barrels, pails and stoneware jugs. This was an arduous, labour-intensive routine that could not be avoided. So, with limited water, how clean and hygienic were the villagers?

Like their contemporaries elsewhere, the personal toilette habits in Victorian Bankfoot were to avoid expressions of disgust from other people. Nobody wanted to smell bad and so almost everyone would aim to wash all parts or at least a selection of their hands, face, arm pits, feet and other dirty bits on a daily basis. Sponge bathing in stages

using a basin and jug of water was the standard approach. Full immersion was unusual due to the difficulty of heating large quantities of water but a bath, if taken, was often a Saturday night ritual to be fresh and clean for church on Sunday. A wooden or tin tub was placed near the fireplace and filled with water from a large kettle or pot heated on the open-hearth fire and mixed with cold water to reach a usable lukewarm temperature. Father, mother and children would all use the same bath water, starting with the cleanest.

A homemade lye was the usual cleanser. This was created in each household by mixing wood ash from the hearth with water to create a paste and boiling this up with rendered animal fat. The cooled slab could then be cut into hard bars of soap. The basic lye soap carried a smoky undertone at best or a rancid savoury scent at worst. Some would add lavender or rosemary to give a faint herbal note or oatmeal for a milder smell. But people did feel cleaner after a good rub down with their own soap.

The repeal of the soap tax in 1853 made soap much cheaper to buy and, gradually, manufactured soap, such as Pears and Sunlight, replaced the homemade. Early manufactured soaps were made from tallow or vegetable oils, usually unscented, and sold in blocks. Carbolic soap containing coal tar became popular for both body washing and household tasks such as the laundry and floor scrubbing but branded, strongly perfumed soap was not available until the end of the 19th century.

No matter how often a person washed their body, they did carry the pong of everyday life in Bankfoot. And there were no deodorants to mask the aroma. Almost everyone carried a waft of smoke from the peat or coal fires that were used for cooking and heating. Their clothes, hair and skin all absorbed the reek. Many in Bankfoot worked on the local farms and would pick up the rustic stink from horses, cattle and sheep and from the dung and hay in stables and barns.

Hard-working people naturally whiffed of sweat and skin

oils and their body odour was always a bit stale, musky and slightly sour to any nearby nose. The upside was that everyone smelled the same and so it wasn't noticeable or socially offensive. Clean then meant free of obvious dirt and excessive body funk, not scentless or excessively perfumed.

Good hair grooming was closely linked with respectability. Hair was brushed regularly and fine combs were essential, particularly to manage head lice. Hair was washed infrequently, perhaps monthly, using the same soap as the body wash. Bunnets and bonnets covered the hair when out and about.

Beards, sideburns and moustaches were in and out of fashion in 19th century Bankfoot but any shaving was by a straight "cut-throat" blade. Men would have an open razor that folded into the handle, and other essential items included their shaving brush, a leather strop for regular sharpening, mirror, basin and towel. For a working man in or around Bankfoot, such as a farmer, weaver, tradesman or labourer, shaving every day in the 19th century was usually impractical.

Men would shave only once or twice each week but certainly for church, market days, weddings or funerals. The modern safety razor, with a disposable double-edged blade, was invented by King Camp Gillette in 1895 and revolutionised male grooming worldwide.

For most of the people in Bankfoot in the 19th century, teeth were cleaned by rubbing them with a cloth or sponge dipped into a mildly abrasive paste such as water or vinegar mixed with salt, chalk, charcoal or fish bones to scrape off any dirt or stains. The big problem was that these pastes also damaged the tooth enamel.

Another method was to chew on small sticks which frayed and acted like a primitive brush. Wooden splinters were used as tooth picks to extract food particles while herbs such as mint, cloves or cinnamon were chewed to freshen the breath. Daily cleaning, however, was not a habit and a brown hue to the teeth was regarded as normal.

Better off households were using tooth brushes in the final decades of the 19th century but the big turning point came during the First World War when soldiers were required to brush their teeth regularly and many kept the habit when they returned home. Mass production of cheap brushes along with public health campaigns in the post war period to encourage regular teeth cleaning meant that it was the 1920s before daily brushing was normal rather than exceptional.

After the quick sponge bath, people relied on changing their linen or cotton underwear daily or at least several times each week to keep smelling fresh. These garments were believed to "absorb sweat and toxins" and draw dirt from the body.

Underwear, shirts, blouses and aprons were scrubbed in the weekly wash using the household soap and a washboard to remove sweat and grease. The Glenshauch Burn in front of the Bankfoot Inn and the Garry Burn by the bridge just beyond the school were the favourite spots for rinsing the clothes and the load was then hung out to dry on washing lines adjacent to each house.

Visible items such as shirts, blouses and aprons were pressed while still damp using a flat iron heated directly on the hearth. Under garments were rarely ironed. It was all about making clothes presentable with the scant resources available.

Outer garments such as trousers, skirts, dresses, jackets and coats were brushed, aired and spot cleaned. People owned few clothes, often just two sets, and so regular repair work was necessary. The best was kept for church, weddings, markets and holidays.

Typically, men would wear a coarse linen or cotton shirt, wool or fustian trousers, a waistcoat, braces and, in winter, a scarf or muffler around the neck and a thick wool jacket or coat. A wool or tweed bunnet or other simple cotton cap was considered socially proper and protected against the wind, rain or sun. Footwear was usually home knitted socks and heavy leather boots.

Women would wear a long dress or skirt made of wool or cotton and an apron to protect their clothing. A heavy woollen shawl was common instead of a coat. The most common headwear was a linen or cotton mutch. Married and older women were expected to keep their hair covered and so the mutch was close fitting, covering the head completely. For outdoor work, women often wore a head kerchief which was folded and tied under the chin. Shoes were basic and sturdy. And like the men, clothes were home spun and repaired, adapted and reused over the years with a good outfit reserved for church or special days.

Mattresses were stuffed with straw and feathers and regularly aired. Most families had few spare sheets and bed linen was changed every four or five weeks at most. Outer wool blankets were rarely washed, perhaps annually, but more often just aired and beaten to remove dust and dirt. Wool, of course, would shrink in the wash and took a long time to dry. The outcome was that lice and bed bugs were common.

Almost all the homes in 19th century Bankfoot were stone built with thick walls, small windows, flat stone floors and an open hearth in the main living room. Floors were swept daily and any rugs beaten outside every few days. The interior walls were regularly whitewashed – a combination of lime, salt and water – to kill bacteria, reduce smells and discourage mould and parasites. The whitewashing also made the inside less gloomy and signalled that this was a respectable family who valued a clean house.

None of the houses had an inside toilet and excretory matters involved a chamber pot which was dumped on the midden in the back garden. The traditional way to reduce smells was to cover the solid waste with fire ash and this combination created a valuable fertilizer which the local farmers would collect.

Urine was also a prized substance and householders would store it in a tub or bucket for use as a lye in

bleaching, for stain removal, as a mordant in dyeing, as a detergent for blanket washing, or to limber or soften boots. In most of Scotland, the fermented urine was known as strang. Any surplus was added to the midden.

The midden was also the dump for rotten vegetables, putrid meat, human waste, animal manure, and ash, and when combined with primitive drainage this meant that the springs and wells of the village were often contaminated, particularly in wet weather, making Bankfoot a very unhealthy place.

The people of Bankfoot did everything they could to keep themselves neat and tidy. By the 1890s, however, the developing public health science showed that most of the village wells had water that was unfit for domestic use but, rather than incur the additional Council rates, the residents simply ignored the experts and continued to use the old sources for their washing, cooking and cleaning.



Courtesy of Culture Perth and Kinross Museums & Galleries

At the dawn of the 20th century, Bankfoot had the deserved and well-established reputation as the worst of a number of “dirty villages” in Perthshire with a polluted water supply and sub-standard sanitation. Deaths from typhoid in Bankfoot were the highest in the county and this serious health problem was only eliminated with the forced imposition of a new water works at the Coral Grove, which opened on Saturday 9 October 1909, and the installation of a network of pipes and pumps to provide both a regulated water source and an efficient

sewerage system to remove the waste water.

The villagers of Bankfoot had always washed – only now, for the first time, were they fully clean.

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OLD WELL BRAE STANLEY

COLIN MCLEOD

I took a punt when I found this postcard at a postcard fair. Showing people collecting water from a spring, the caption is 'The Old Well Brae, Stanley'.



I didn't know if it was *our* Stanley – there are three other

Stanleys in Britain: in Co. Durham; West Yorkshire; and Derbyshire. 'Brae' is a Scots word, but from Norse, so does occur in the north of England. The publisher is named as 'McCulloch's Restaurant, Stanley'. Again, 'McCulloch' is a Scots name, but there are plenty of Mc's & Mac's south of the Border. The card is unposted and undated, but it's a 'divided back' postcard, so can't have been printed earlier than January 1902.

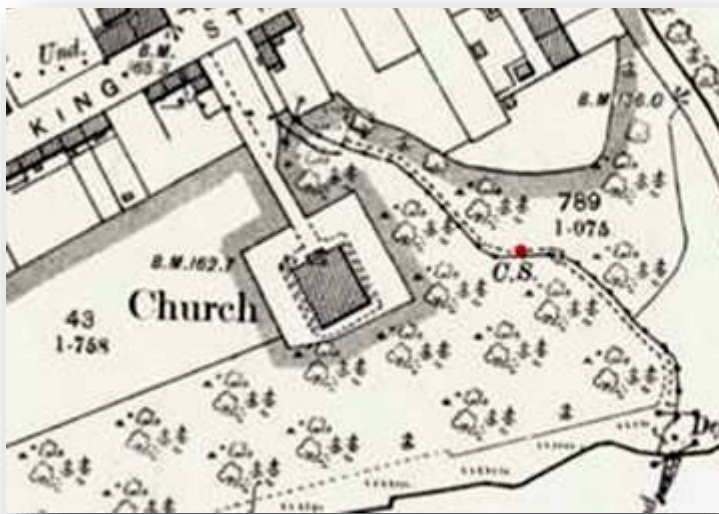
Searching 1900s street, Post Office and trade directories found no mention of such an establishment in any of the four Stanleys, the only McCulloch's Restaurant being in Glasgow. However, the 1905 Valuation Rolls for Perthshire list one McCulloch in Stanley – an Andrew McCulloch, fish dealer, occupying a house and garden in King Street, owned by Thomas Marshall, grocer. Thanks to the British Newspaper Archive, the clincher turned up in a small ad in the *Dundee Courier*, 20 April 1906:



So, there *was* a McCulloch's Restaurant in Stanley in the mid-1900s. If Andrew McCulloch was a fish dealer, perhaps it was a 'fish restaurant'? Stanley was well-provided with eateries – the 1903 Leslie's Directory lists tea-rooms in the store at the centre of the village (proprietor John Corstorphine), Stanley Coffee House (run by Alexander Currie), as well as Stanley Hotel (run by JS Mowat) and another hotel (run by William White). There was also Stanley Mills works canteen (originally in a repurposed existing building, and later in standalone purpose-built premises that stood on the riverbank just to the right of the present entrance to the Mills). However, even if McCulloch was employed as caterer for the millworkers, it's unlikely he would have been promoting the canteen under his own name, and the address would probably be given as 'Stanley Mills', rather than just Stanley. McCulloch's Restaurant seems to have been a short-lived venture which failed, given the number of outlets competing for a limited market in the village – but

its address remains to be discovered. It is surprising that there is so little record of the existence of a business that went to the lengths of producing cards under its name. The only other locally published postcards I'm aware of are the 'Stanley Series', published by James Dowie, Postmaster, and another published by Catherine Stewart, tobacconist & stationer.

What of Old Well Brae and the well? There is still a Wellbrae Cottage on King Street today, just east of the old church. The 1901 25-inch OS map <https://maps.nls.uk/view/82898715> marks the path down the den, just as shown in the postcard.



In the extract, I've put a red dot where I reckon the well was. The photographer must have been standing where Stanley's sewage treatment works now is! The burn runs in a culvert through the village (see WSHS Newsletter No. 14, Spring 2013) but emerges at the top of the den and can still be followed with difficulty. However, the well itself and most of the path were destroyed when a sewer pipe was laid down the den, and half a huge beech tree fell across the site during winter 2021/22. The well was on an obvious natural spring-line, and there are still seepages around where it was. Despite the well's apparent popularity, it seems an unhealthy location to be collecting drinking water, from *below* the village! The name 'Old Well' suggests that it had ceased to be a water supply by the time the card was published.

THE CONDIES & MURTHLY ESTATE

PAUL MCLENNAN

The Condies were Perth's leading solicitors for much of the 19th century, particularly known for their work as law agents and factors for many of the county's landed gentry. Among their clients were the Duke of Atholl, the Earls of Mansfield and Kinnoul and the Drummonds of Logiealmond. They also served and became most closely associated with three generations of the Stewarts of Grandtully and Murthly. Drawn to them by circumstance – and the love of a shooting lodge.

The relationship began with George Condie (c1769 – 1830) acting for Sir George Stewart, 4th baronet of Blair & Balcaskie, the 17th of Grandtully. We can't be sure when George was born or where, exactly. The Condie family connections cluster in the parish of Forgandenny, in the vicinity of Whitehill. Old estates of Struie (Strowie) and Pitquhanartie feature strongly as well. We do know George worked for Perth solicitor William Small before setting up on his own account. By 1798, he was representing Thomas Anderson then one of Perth's leading merchants who, with his son-in-law Thomas Hay Marshall, was driving the development of Georgian Perth. However, Anderson went too far too fast and was declared bankrupt. It fell to George to organise the sale of his house and landholdings by public roup. Said house, the mansion of Blackfriars, beautifully situated facing the North Inch, was listed as worth £1,500 (about £229,000 today). Somehow, when the bidding was done and the dust settled, the deeds ended up in George's pocket.



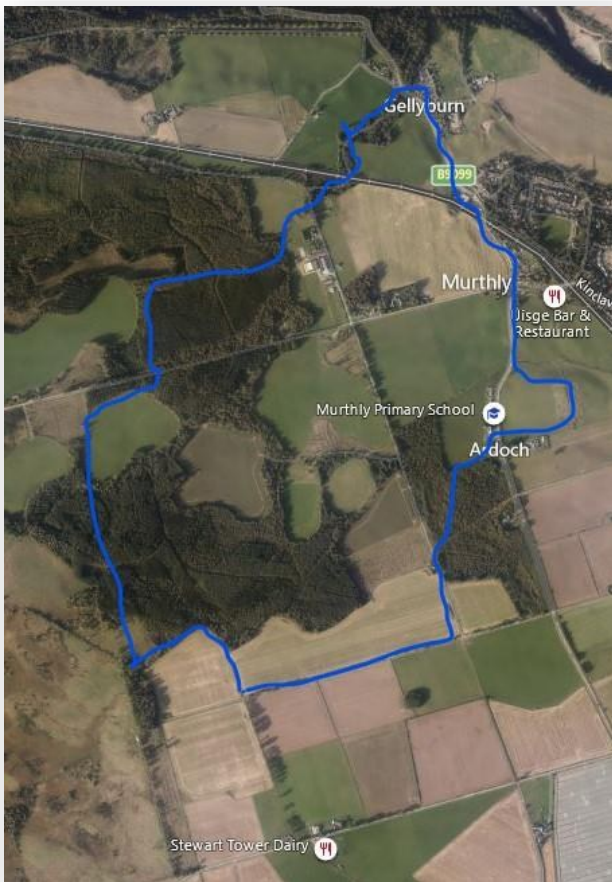
Blackfriars would become home to three generations of Condies. The mansion that proclaimed their success to

Perth.

We do not know when George began acting for the Stewarts (those old tears in the record again) but it's clear that he was familiar enough with Sir George's finances and foibles to chide him about the folly of owning Newington House in a yet to be fashionable suburb of Edinburgh. Sell it, 'as you are sustaining a considerable loss every year.' That was in a letter dated 18th May 1819. The letter in which he dropped a bombshell: Sir Alexander Muir Mackenzie was open to the idea of selling the estate of New Delvine. Maybe Sir George should go for it; cautioning . . . 'if fair and equal terms can be had.'

Might as well advise him not to take too big a swig of something too fast to get rid of a bone in his craw.

Mackenzie had inherited New Delvine from his uncle. But it was on the other side of the Tay from his major landholdings in Caputh, Spittalfield and Delvine and access then was by ferry. Moreover, he, and his aunt before him, had run ins with the Stewarts, boundary disputes along the Gellyburn that were not neighbourly.



Sir George had a different perspective. New Delvine – present day Douglasfield & Bradystone farms extending to and including the crossroads and Uisge – was a little gem. One of the earliest wholly improved estates. And wholly surrounded by Murthly estate. Secure it and Stewarts would own land contiguously from the edge of Stanley

through Airntully and Murthly by Strathbraan and Grandtully right to Aberfeldy. It hardly needed Condie egging him by dropping in that Muir Mackenzie might include it in an entail, 'after which it could not be got at all.'

First cautioning Sir George to question the terms of any sale; then stoking his fear of missing out by suggesting Muir Mackenzie might put New Delvine beyond his reach for ever? Solicitors, eh.

Condie was joined by his son, James, in 1820 when the latter passed before Perth Sheriff Court and was deemed a 'writer'. The firm of Condie & Son was born. In a few years it had built an impressive client list, 'almost without any parallel in any county in Scotland.' James married Laurentia Pattison in 1824. She was a Moncreiff on her mother's side with solid Perthshire antecedents. They would have eight children and the eldest son, George of course, followed his father's footsteps into the great halls, across grouse moors and golf courses. Popular figures for their prowess with gun, rod and mashie. In due course, he joined the firm.

George Condie Snr died in 1830. His obituary proclaimed 'he maintained during life a high reputation, not only for his ability in his profession, but for the strictest probity and honourable dealing.' When his affairs were settled it became clear he was always the canny operator, cleaving to the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) making any extra money always work for him by offering loans. Often to his clients. Of the net sum of about £15,000 (equivalent to more than £2m today) most was in the form of money owed by the great and good, loaned out at 5%, including to the Duke of Atholl and two Murthly Stewarts – Sir John, 5th baronet and Captain William Drummond Stewart – as well as estate factor James Chalmers.

George Condie seems only to have made one bad investment: two shares at £12 14/- each in Perth Coffee Rooms, which went belly up.

In 1837, James Condie was asked by Sir John Stewart to help draft his will. What, another one? Sir John was very ill and had come to suspect that his wife, Lady Jane, might have something to do with that. Were he to die, he believed she would hot foot it back from Paris with a bogus will. Well, Sir John died soon after. Although nothing could be proven as to a criminal cause, when Lady Jane asked for a reading of the will James Condie flourished the updated version. Oh, you mean this one?

However, Lady Jane left Murthly with £3000 per annum, the sum accorded her as the relict under the terms of the marriage contract.

There was an interregnum between Sir John's passing in 1838 and his younger brother, Sir William returning from America. When the new laird had found his feet, and found enough money (principally through selling the Drummond estate of Logiealmond) to settle his brother's debts and fund a wide range of improvements, he began building. Beginning, in 1841, with what is for many the loveliest of all shooting lodges – Rohallion Tower at the foot of Birnam Hill.



Seeing it was a *coup de foudre* for James Condie who, no doubt leaning on his value to Sir William as his man of business, asked to be the first tenant. At £120 p.a. By the end of 1842, James was £240 in arrears. But Sir was thousands of miles away, having one last hoorah with the Mountain Men in the Rockies. Who was checking . . .

Before taking ship from Liverpool for that trip, Sir William had James meet him at the docks, where he asked him to be his factor as well as law agent. Condie said yes, of course. Then I'll leave it to you to inform Chalmers, said Sir William. James Chalmers had also served three generations of Stewarts as factor, beginning with Sir George in 1823. Condie chose not to break the news to him for another 10 months. During which time they continued working together on estate business.

Chalmers' reaction to the sack was emotionally expressed in a letter to Sir William on 17th June 1843 c/o Sublette & Campbell, St Louis. It was full of anguish, at being dumped without warning or cause, at 'such harsh and cruel treatment.' So little of Sir William's correspondence has survived, why didn't this land in a fireplace?

'You are aware', wrote Chalmers, 'that from the time I

came to Murthly until you went abroad that you were the person that on all occasions of doubt or difficulty I looked to for advice and assistance. I then little thought the day would come when you would not only turn your back upon me, but as it now appears, do all you can to blast my prospects through life.' James, who never married and cared for his spinster sisters, was now 'turned out of House Home and employment'. He went on to relate the shame he felt when Condie told the tenants he had been sacked. Shamed again when they worked out Condie had sat on the instruction for 10 months.

The Condie family all came to love Rohallion, their second home. Possibly no one more than young George. Only a dozen miles from Perth it was, in those pre-railway days, another world.



Courtesy of a private collection.

Something of their happiness was captured by Charles Lees in 1846. 'Lunch on the Moors' features James and his wife, three of their children, and three of his golfing friends – James Hay of Leith, Dr Henry Macfarlane (also son-in-law) and William Peddie. All three would feature, along with James, in another painting by Lees, 'The Golfers' (1847).

A key aspect of the painting is that the central figure toasting the others is not Condie, who commissioned the work, but James Hay. A friend, yes, but also a great rival of at least equal golfing skill. James Condie sits, almost in shadow, on the far right of the group with one of his favourite dogs. Similarly, he is positioned in the back rank of 'The Golfers', a place at odds with his standing with the Royal and Ancient and Royal Perth Golfing Society.

In 1848, when Queen Victoria, Alfred and the children left Balmoral to return to London they first went to Aberdeen

to take the royal yacht. But the weather took a nasty and the water was deemed too choppy to risk embarking. A hastily concocted Plan B was to go back by train, stopping at Scone Palace for the night. Which had to be amended as the Earl of Mansfield was abroad, the palace shuttered. There still had to be a Perth stopover, but now at the George Inn (which Herself found thrilling as she had never stayed in a public establishment before). Ironically, the proprietor, Mr Donaldson, had gone to Aberdeen to see the royal progress. Leaving his housekeeper in charge. Who knew the inn's place settings were good enough for travellers and farmers in from the country. But the queen? So, she scurried the few hundred yards to Blackfriars House and begged a loan of the best table and silverware from Mrs Condie. That night Victoria enjoyed slumming with her subjects (at her insistence the other guests were allowed to stay). Mr Donaldson was allowed thereafter to rename his establishment the Royal George Hotel. And James Condie's reputation as Perth's leading solicitor (perhaps now leading citizen?) was further enhanced.

George Jnr joining the firm proved to be a great success. Youthful drive coupled to experience. A rock steady partnership. And George's game was thought to be near as good as his dad's. Going two rounds of twelve holes on Perth Green against Tom Morris, Champion of Scotland, finishing all square attested to that. Following the opening of the Perth to Dunkeld railway in 1856, the Condies were required to become even more involved with Murthly estate. The railway terminus was in Birnam hard up against the Inchewan burn, the western most part of the estate. (Cross it and you enter Atholl.) Sir William's famous antipathy to the railway was performative; something he used when he had a court case in the offing, when he felt he might need to take legal action against Perth & Dunkeld Railway Company for compensation. From the moment the first turf was cut in 1854 he had welcomed the economic potential. Not privileged to the conversations between Sir William and his man (or rather men) of business we can only surmised what they planned. The Montgomery Act of 1848 was the spur. This vital amendment to the Law of Entail allowed proprietors to feu (but not sell outright) parcels of their land for business and residential development. Condie & Son would be his agents, responding to an immediate demand.

Before the railway station opened Birnam, was little more than the old farm of Wester Inchewan, a struggling coaching inn – and an oak tree. Sir William and the

Condies began the transformation.

In November 1857, newspapers the length of Britain, from the *John O' Groats Journal* down to the *Western Daily Press*, all across Ireland and even en-route to India (*Tracker's Overland News for India and the Colonies*) carried shocking news from Perth:

The bankruptcy of Mr James Condie, writer in Perth, announced on Friday, took everybody by surprise. The liabilities, it is said, amount to £180,000. The over-draft in the Perth Bank is stated by some accounts to be £70,000, by others to be £110,000, and rumour makes the assets to yield somewhere about half-a-crown a head.

Many newspapers simply carried the headline news, went with the exaggeration. Some, however, such as the *Cork Examiner*, ran the full report, which ended:

We learn that some of his principal clients – including the Duke of Atholl, the Earls of Mansfield and Kinnoul – held a meeting and resolved to support Mr Condie's son in retaining, as far as possible, the business of his father.

Curiously, Perth newspapers missed the story entirely.



James, so good with his clients' money affairs, got completely stuffed speculating on railway stocks and shares. Compared to George Snr's record with

investments this apple had not just fallen far from the tree but right down a rabbit hole. It did not harm his reputation, however. His creditors, knowing only too well such speculation was rife and had ruined many, quietly made it clear they trusted him to work off the debt. However, easily imagined, harder to pull off. James Condie remained an undischarged bankrupt until his death. He put the business entirely in George's name. (Murthly estate leases, new and renewed, are all handled by George from this point.) Everything else carried on as before: he continued as Clerk to Perth's Parochial Board, for example, chaired the annual meeting of Perth Golfing Society when it was his turn, and retained the lease of Rohallion (although George paid the rent).

A love-darg is an old custom, when folk gather to give a day's ploughing to help a neighbour. James Condie was the recipient of one in February 1863. As was often the case it took the form of a ploughing match. Joseph Gold of Douglasfield, land steward to Sir William, organised the event which saw 29 ploughs turn over a 12-acre field beside Rohallion, working from eight thirty until five o'clock. All the notable tenant farmers of Airtully, Auchtergaven and Murthly and many ordinary folk attended. George Condie provided refreshments. And there were prizes for the best work; half a crown for every participant; and a special commendation for John Dow of Airtully, the youngest participant at just 14.

Also in February, the shopkeepers, merchants, smiths – the growing business community of Birnam – gave a dinner in Birnam Hotel to celebrate the birth of George's daughter, Laura. Alexander Robertson Esq, 'Dundonnachie', gave the keynote speech praising the connection which had existed between three generations of Condies and the area. The Condie name was a household word in Perthshire, but their residence for a considerable part of the year at Rohallion led them more in contact with the people of Birnam and Dunkeld. Addressing George, he said everyone admired the strict business habits and straightforwardness that at all times characterised him.

On 10th September 1868 George had a day to remember, a 'Take me now, Lord' day on the Rohallion shoot. To his gun alone: 1 bison, 1 roe deer, 1 fallow deer, 2 capercaillies, 2 blackcock, 14 grouse, 33 partridges, 23 hares and 2 rabbits.

Aye, you read that right: 1 bison. Sir William had imported them 20 years or so ago. Souvenirs of exciting times. But this is the only record of one being shot for sport.

That was George's last day on the hill. To the shock of the county, he died from a gastric fever on 20th December. He was 41.

James Condie died on 12 May 1870, last of a line of solicitors that had built possibly the largest provincial legal business in the country. A fulsome obituary spoke of 'his abilities and integrity – qualities inherent in the family – joined to his frank and thoroughly gentlemanlike character, and his engaging attention to the poor quite as much as to the rich and noble, rendered him a general favourite with all classes'. And quietly ignored his sequestration, which would not be closed until 1873. Perhaps there was life yet in the auld Scots saw: 'They that get the wurd o' sune risin can bide in their beds a'day'.

The Rohallion connection took a while to fade. George's daughter, Laura, was married at Lewes, Eastbourne, to Captain O. Scarlette Vale in August 1886. She was given away as the daughter of the late George Condie Esq. of Blackfriars House and of Rohallion, Perthshire.

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The British Newspaper Archive

Perth: past and present (second series) Glimpses of bygone days By Peter Baxter (John M'kinlay, Perth 1929)

Heritage of Perth by WH Findlay (Perth & Kinross Libraries 1996)



Donald the Keeper (holding the dog).

The earliest known portrait of a named Murthly estate worker.

Extract from 'Lunch on the Moors' by Charles Lees (1846)