

West Stormont's Auld Times

Issue No. 6 Autumn 2023



The Kirk O' the Muir. Summer 2023.

Welcome to the Autumn issue. The full programme of illustrated Talks, and Topic Nights from September to next April lies inside. Get those dates into your diaries now.

This year's AGM will be held on a Topic Night in Luncarty Church Centre, on Monday 13th November.

As ever we are indebted to Jennifer, Ros, Mike, Jock, and Paul for another collection of interesting, well-researched articles.

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Forthcoming Monday Talks . . .

25 September Stanley Village Hall 7.30pm

The History of Five Mile Wood and Taymount Wood

by Christopher Dingwall



Presented in collaboration with West Stormont Woodland Group and to be followed by a guided walk through Taymount Wood on Wednesday 27 Sept. Meet at the main entrance at 10.30am

30 October Luncarty Church Centre 7.30pm

Deciphering the Language of Our Local Landscape

by Colin Liddell

27 November Pitcairngreen Village Hall 7.30pm

Pictish Sculpture in the Kingdom of Atholl

by Mark Hall

29 January Bankfoot Church Centre 7.30pm

Robert Burns — Why All the Fuss?

by Len Murray

26 February Bankfoot Church Centre 7.30pm

The Scots Matadors — Helping to Tame the Wild West

by Ewan Pate

25 March Murthly Village Hall 7.30pm

Cleansing Fires: The Story of Murthly Pt 2

by Paul McLennan

29 April Chapelhill Hall 7.30pm

The Navvies at Loch Chon — Building Glasgow's Water Supply

by James Kennedy

Forthcoming Topic Nights . . .

Topic Nights will again be held on Mondays. Always in Luncarty Church Centre at 7.30pm. They are proving to be informal, friendly, fun-filled evenings. Even surprisingly informative.

Come along to pitch in on any given Topic, ride a hobby horse, or just listen . . .

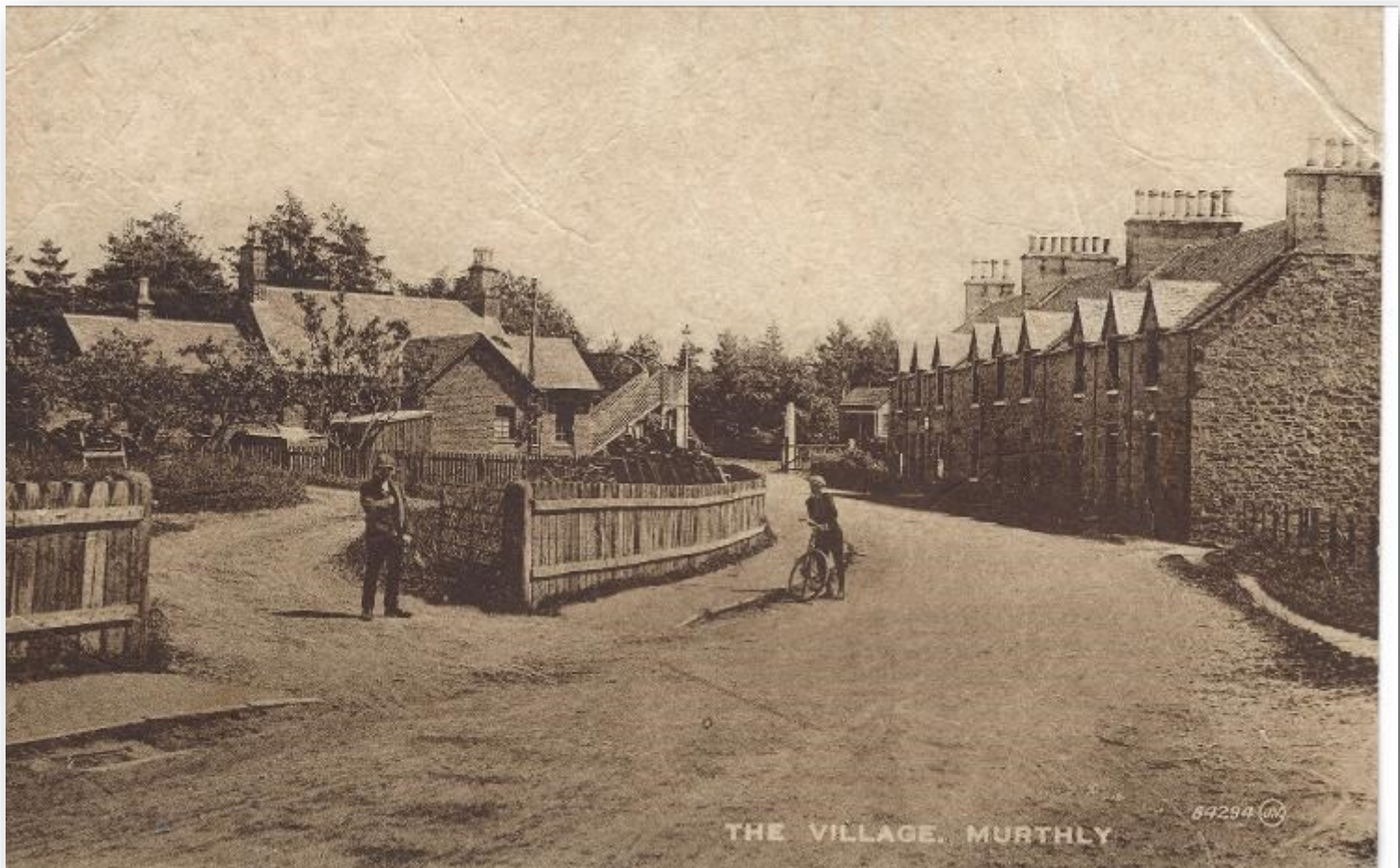
9 October: **Street Names**

13 November: **Prisoners of War**

Topics for 11 December, 8 January, 12 February, 11 March and 8 April will be decided following input and suggestions from Members at the AGM.

This year's AGM will be held on Monday 13 November in Luncarty Church Centre at 7.30pm.

One item on the Agenda will be a discussion on ways forward for the Society. Project proposals are being prepared. These will be circulated in advance so that you can determine their merits, pick your favourite. The projects will then be put to the vote. Members will have the opportunity to put forward their own proposals in advance of the AGM.



KAILYARD SHORTBREAD

JENNIFER MCKAY

The story of Mary Fenwick of Bankfoot House, Queensland in the last issue of "Auld Times" put me in mind of another enterprising Fenwick from Perthshire: James Edwin Fenwick, of A Fenwick & Son, Bakers and Confectioners, Kinnoull Bakery, Commercial Street, Bridgend. The business was established in 1848 by Andrew Fenwick and it traded until 1954.

James Fenwick was born in 1863, in Commercial Street. His father James seems to have been a baker who turned to umbrella manufacturing, with premises in Kinnoull Street. After his death, James senior's widow, Sarah, took charge of the bakery. It was very much a family concern in which Mrs Fenwick employed three of James junior's older sisters: Margaret, Sarah and Caroline, as well as James and his younger brother, Frederick. The family also had tearooms in St John's Street and County Place.

James was an energetic entrepreneur who worked hard to expand the business after his mother's death in 1895. He saw potential for increasing the sales of Fenwick's shortbread which was winning gold medals at exhibitions in Glasgow and London. He had an idea for marketing the shortbread.

The story starts in 1874, when the Rev John Watson was ordained in the Free Church at Logiealmond. Watson had never considered a church career; he was bounced into it by his parents. As a child he had spent long summers with uncles who farmed in the Blairgowrie area and he had anticipated a career in farming.

After graduating, Watson served a miserable six months as an assistant minister at the Barclay Free Church in Edinburgh where he was told he was a poor preacher, was consigned to visiting old ladies and was rarely allowed into the pulpit. Consequently, he was mightily relieved to be called to Logiealmond where his uncle, the Rev Dr Hiram Watson, had been a minister from 1841 to 1854. Dr Watson 'came out' in the Great Disruption* of 1843 and was held in high regard by his Free Church congregation. Surely the nephew would live up to the uncle's reputation?

Watson worked conscientiously on his pastoral duties: regular home-visiting; comforting the sick and dying and conducting funerals. He found the work almost overwhelming – his health was never robust; he was only

24 years old and his mother who had so wanted him to be a minister had died the previous year. But in later life he always said that his three years in Logiealmond were the happiest of his ministry.

Despite his shortcomings in the pulpit, the Logiealmond folk liked their minister and he liked them. He felt at home in Logiealmond; he was at ease in farm kitchens, bothies and byres and, to their surprise, he could converse knowledgeably with the country folk on all matters agricultural and rural. Watson was sincere, cordial and caring. He was also a wicked mimic, had a great sense of humour and could tell a good story.

About fifteen years after he left Logiealmond, Watson was asked by a university contemporary, Rev W Robertson Nicoll, who edited the non-conformist church magazine, *The British Weekly*, to submit a story for publication. Watson declined, saying he was too busy. Eventually Nicoll persuaded him to write a piece and in 1893, he sent a story, "How We Carried the News to Whinnieknowe", which tells of how a letter was delivered to the parents of a "lad o'pairts" informing them that he had won the medals in Greek and Humanities in his first-year exams at Edinburgh University. Nicoll instantly recognised that this story would appeal to his magazine's readers and encouraged Watson to keep writing.

Watson produced a collection of stories loosely based on events recalled from his time in Logiealmond and peopled by composite characters resembling his farmer uncles and various of his parishioners. These episodes were gathered together in a book which he called *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* a name inspired by the line in an old Scots song, "There grows a bonnie brier bush in oor kailyard". Watson gave himself the pen name Ian Maclaren and he renamed Logiealmond, Drumtochty.



Rev. John Watson aka 'Ian Maclaren'.

As Nicoll had predicted, the book was hugely successful. Watson's stories were beautifully crafted and they caught the nostalgic zeitgeist of late Victorian times. While extremely popular in the UK, the book made an even greater impact in the USA where it sold around half a million copies and was a No 1 best seller in 1895. Admirers of the book included Queen Victoria and Andrew Carnegie.

Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush is unashamedly sentimental. Its stories tell of independent, hard-working, couthy, pious Scotch country-folk as they negotiate the trials, tribulations and joys of life in a romanticised rural past which had never existed. The book was so popular that it seemed everyone was talking about Drumtochty. By 1900, local newspapers were using the name Drumtochty in headlines as a substitute for Logiealmond, as in, "Burglary at Drumtochty Schoolhouse" or "Drumtochty Man Sued".

Meanwhile, the ambitious James Fenwick had his clever idea. It occurred to him that the bakery business might benefit from an association with the Drumtochty craze; Fenwicks would market their Bridgend-baked shortbread as "Drumtochty Shortbread". Watson, after all, had lived in Perth as a boy and had attended Perth Academy; Logiealmond, or "Drumtochty", was only a few miles away.

James decided to register the trademark "Drumtochty Shortbread". Time was of the essence; it wouldn't do if another business came up with the same bright idea. Any agricultural product or wholesome country food could potentially be marketed with a "Drumtochty" label. James submitted an application to the trademark office in London but it was rejected. The name Drumtochty was already in use! Unbeknownst to James, and to John Watson, there was a real Drumtochty with a Drumtochty Castle and estate.



Drumtochty Castle (Kim Lawson Photography).

James Fenwick was not alone in exploiting the fame of "Drumtochty". In the true Drumtochty's Kincardineshire, local businesses such as the Kintore Arms in Auchenblae, the carriage hirer at Fordoun Station and the Star Hiring Company of Montrose ran coaches and charabanc outings to Drumtochty Glen. Demand for these trips soared after the publication of *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*.

In 1897, a Dundee Advertiser correspondent reporting on the wedding of Mr Charles Cheape Mott and Miss Elizabeth Marion Gammell at Drumtochty wrote, "The very name conjures up memories of charming idylls sacred to the pen of Ian Maclaren, and yet today, in a small fashion, I, too, become the chronicler of another

Drumtochty which is not celebrated or so well known in the annals of literature."

In 1913, Drumtochty Glen was described in the Glasgow Evening Times as the "Valley of Romance and Heavenly Bliss"! Now, over a century later, Drumtochty Castle is an exclusive wedding venue.

Having learned that Drumtochty actually existed and undeterred by the rebuff from the trade mark bureaucrats, James Fenwick wrote to Colonel Gammell, owner of Drumtochty Castle, to explain the situation, and formally asked his permission to use the name Drumtochty for his biscuits. The colonel replied agreeing to his request. James caught the sleeper to London and the following morning, armed with his correspondence with Colonel Gammell, he was standing on the doorstep of the trademark office waiting for it to open.

The colonel's letter plus James's tenacity and powers of persuasion won the day; permission to use the Drumtochty registered trade mark was granted, as can be seen on Fenwick's adverts.

In 1916 they were also selling "Drumtochty Oatcakes, fresh, crisp, delicious, 3d per packet. First Prize Medallion at the London Exhibition." Fenwick's bakery and tearooms were prospering.

James Fenwick must also, at some point, have written to John Watson to ask for an endorsement. Over the years, Fenwick's regular pre-Christmas adverts in the Perthshire Advertiser included a puff from 'Ian Maclaren':

"IAN MACLAREN speaks of Our Manufactures as:- Fenwick's Own Very Best; Pure and Rich and Well Flavoured".

Fenwicks was still running these adverts in the 1930s, long after John Watson's death, in 1907 while on a preaching and lecture tour in the USA and Canada. James Fenwick died at his home, Mount Tabor, Bridgend in 1942.

Sources:

'Ian Maclaren' *Life of the Rev John Watson*. Nicoll, W R

Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush. Maclaren, I

Perthshire Advertiser, Montrose Review, Dundee Advertiser, Stonehaven Journal, Dundee Evening Post

Drumtochty Castle's wedding venue website.

Scotland's People

Weavers and Weaving in Perth. Baxter, P

*The Disruption of 1843 was the biggest event in Scottish church affairs in the 19th century. Ministers and congregations broke away from the Church of Scotland to create the Free Church of Scotland in order to be able to choose their ministers themselves rather than have them selected and appointed by the local gentry.



CHAPELHILL HALL

ROS PEARSON

Chapelhill Hall has an unusual origin and an intriguing story which involved the whole community in the area, not only at Chapelhill but both sides of the River Almond, the church congregations, the farmers, the estate and Glenalmond College. The churches and schools in this area have been at the heart of the provision of halls for the community.

The Phoenix 1890 – 1930

In October 1894 there was a serious fire at Trinity College Glenalmond. No one was injured but the northern section of the West Wing was badly damaged as well as some rooms in the Tower, which included the Museum. Two masters' bedrooms and ten boys' bedrooms were lost.



The morning after. Photo by AS Reid.

The fire started in the Prefects' Common Room and was fought by staff and boys. Seeing the smoke, help came from both sides of the valley, the Perth Fire engine arrived at 7 am, and gradually it was brought under control.

Staff and boys were found temporary accommodation, and an emergency building was bought and completed within a few weeks. It was known initially as the Phoenix and later the Tin-Tab. (Tab for tabernacle or moveable structure often for religious purposes, and so a tin-tab came to be temporary building clad in corrugated iron.)

Glenalmond's Tin-Tab initially contained two classrooms, a

Masters' sitting room and a Prefect's room. Its function changed over the years to provide, at various times, an extension to the Chemical Laboratory, the carpenter's workshop and the school shop.

Thirty years later this became Chapelhill Hall, deconstructed, moved to the other bank of the Almond, reconstructed and refitted.

Chapelhill Hall –1930s

A new church was built on the very old site at Chapelhill in 1834. This saved members of the Church of Scotland from making the six mile journey to Moneydie church for services. But it did not have a church hall and there was not one in Harrietfield either.

In the 1850s a new school for the area was built at Ballandie, still active as Logiealmond Primary School. The vigorous dissenting congregation converted their former school building in Harrietfield into a church hall that was also available for other community uses.

By the 1930s Trinity College Glenalmond no longer had a use for their tin-tab, and the Chapelhill Kirk Session were able to acquire it for use as a church hall. They sought a convenient site from Scone Estate Trustees who agreed to let them erect the building on its present site near the church. They had an annual tenancy agreement and paid a rent of ten shillings a year, the same sum as the previous occupant.

Such buildings consisted of a concrete and brick base, a wooden frame, corrugated iron cladding on the walls and roof, and wooden panelling to line the inside. The work of transporting the building from the College to Chapelhill was funded and carried out by the congregation, the farmers and two contractors (Donald Clark of Harrietfield and R. Keay mason and farmer in Marybank). The local farmers also cleared and prepared the site, including a carpark.

The costs overall must have been substantial and required significant fundraising. The official opening on Saturday 1st October 1932 was followed by a big sale of work, with tables of home baking and farm produce.

The Perthshire Advertiser recorded the opening on the 5th of October 1932. "Through the generosity of the authorities at Glenalmond the frame of the spacious hut formerly in use at Trinity College was secured and reconstructed on a convenient site in close proximity to the Kirk. The interior has been entirely renovated, a new platform and modern conveniences installed, and the result is a credit to the congregation and a tribute to the enterprise of the minister.

"The hall supplies a long felt want in the community. The congregation had not previously enjoyed the privilege of possessing a suitable rendezvous for church and other functions.

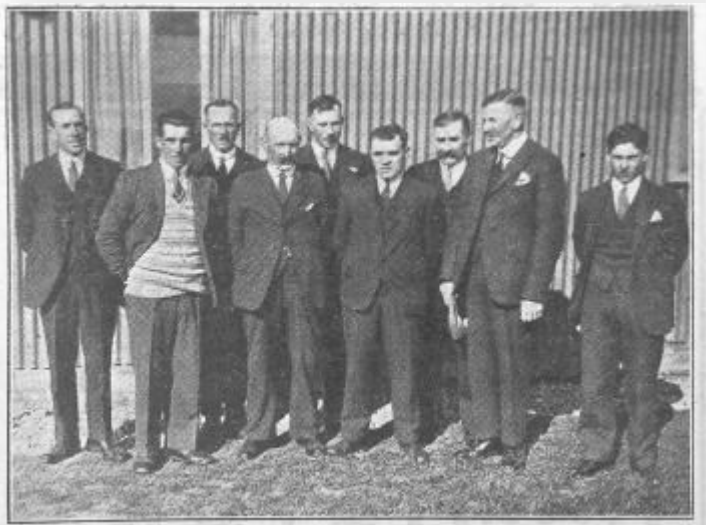
"Lord Scone, M.P. for the Perth Division, performed the opening ceremony on Saturday afternoon in presence of a

large attendance and said 'this is a very scattered community, and it was only right that there should be some place in which the people could meet in the winter evenings, and at other times for the purpose of social recreation, and in which sales could be held for church or other worthy objects. The hall would be undoubtedly of great use to the community.'



Left to Right: Mr R F Goodacre, Rev Dr Cameron, Lord Scone, Lady Scone with the Master of Scone, and Mrs Cameron

Perthshire Advertiser 5th October 1932.



Members of the new Chapelhill Hall Building Committee: — left to right— Messrs D. Simpson. H. Robertson, W. Scrimgeour, A. Pattullo, J. Cameron, R. Miller, H. Scott. D. Simpson, sen. (chairman), and H. Scott jun.

Perthshire Advertiser 5th October 1932.

Chapelhill Hall - 1950s to present

The church at Chapelhill was closed in 1958 as it was in serious disrepair and after that the regular Sunday services were conducted in the church in Harrietfield. In addition, a monthly service was held in the hall as well as Sunday School classes.

Ten years later the Minute Book of Chapelhill Hall started a new volume with a meeting to propose that, although the Hall was vested in the Kirk Session, it 'should be

looked upon as the Community Hall for the District'. A Committee was set up consisting of four members of the Kirk Session and four members of the SWRI as well as the Minister and the District Councillor. In time this was broadened to include other users, such as the Badminton Club.

A great deal of work was done to improve and modernise the hall and considerable fund raising was needed initially and throughout the years. Events included dances, ceilidhs, sales of work, Burns Suppers, plays and parties. There were also events to support local organisations like the Curling and Badminton Clubs, as well as good causes.

In 1984 the unoccupied church at Chapelhill was demolished, the walls knocked inwards and the whole levelled off at windowsill height. From this date the Valuation Rolls no longer record the proprietor and owner of the hall as Logiealmond Kirk Session but Chapelhill Hall Committee.

Today Chapelhill Hall has the status of a SCIO, Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, and a new committee is tackling the challenges of rising costs (particularly electricity and insurance) and maintaining a building with a history of 129 years for the benefit of the local community.



Sources

The Book of Glenalmond, 1956

The History of Glenalmond, G St Quentin, 1956

Perthshire Advertiser

Valuation Rolls for Perthshire

Chapelhill Hall Minute Book

Post script

Dr Graham Clark is making a survey of the surviving corrugated-iron buildings in Scotland. He has published his results for those used for churches and halls in the journal Scottish Local History, and both Chapelhill Hall and Logiealmond Primary School's dinner hall are expected to feature in the next issue on school buildings.

STANLEY DISTRICT

PAUL MCLENNAN

Over the summer, the Society was asked to contribute a potted history of Stanley District for Stanley Development Trust's forthcoming Development Plan. 'Potted' as the Plan's co-ordinator was only looking for "around two thirds of an A4 page". And we had to leave out the Mills and village as someone from Historic Environment Scotland (HES) would see to those.

Where to start? Well, obviously with Leslie Fraser of that parish. Reminding me that he had produced something similar when the Development Trust was first on the go, Leslie gave me a free hand to incorporate i.e. poach from that. The resulting short text was well received by the Development Committee and is appended here as an aide memoire.

"Stanley district has a diverse selection of buildings and structures some 60 of which are listed by Historic Scotland for their historical or architectural significance: 4 A-listed as being of national importance, 20 B-listed of regional significance, and a further 36 C-listed, of local importance. Stanley village has 32 of the 60 listed, Stanley Mills a further 8, whereas a surprising 20 are to be found scattered around the rural hinterland, often in somewhat unlikely places. They are all mapped on the Historic Environment Scotland [website](#).

Stanley village, although somewhat overshadowed in heritage terms by the Mills, nonetheless has more buildings of historical or architectural merit than many places of similar size and period.

This along with its historical importance as one of the most significant 18th century planned villages in Perthshire calls to question its lack of conservation status. It seems odd to find it missing from the list of more than 30 P&KC designated conservation areas, when these include villages and parts of towns which to the buildings historian are less worthy of such status than parts of Stanley.

There is also a rich heritage of stone cairns, earthen barrows (burial mounds), ancient settlements, round houses and souterrains. A record of these can be found on the Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust [website](#).

There are two castles, both substantially ruined. Inchbervie or Inshtrui lies just east of Stanley on a bend of the Tay. Kinclaven Castle is at the confluence of the rivers Isla and

Tay. The Canmore [website](#) repeats the claim by Thomas Hunter in *Woods, Forests and Estates of Perthshire* that it was built by Malcom Canmore (1057 - 1093) and was for centuries a favourite residence of the kings of Scotland. However, it may only have been a hunting lodge as more detailed and compelling archaeological evidence would suggest the stone castle dates from the reign of Alexander II (1198 – 1249). One undisputed date is 1297, the year William Wallace with only a handful of men (just seven according to the chronicler Blind Harry) sacked the castle and put the English garrison, including its constable, Sir James Butler, to the sword. (Again according to Blind Harry although it was probably more rout than slaughter). After that it largely disappears from the main historical record. However, the view of the confluence from the riverbank below the castle remains one of the loveliest in Perthshire.



The district contains the complete parish of Kinclaven, including the ancient hamlet of Airntully, part of Stanley & Redgorton parish, and part of Auchtergaven. There are five churches. The parish church of Kinclaven dates from 1848 and was remodelled in 1893. However, there has been a church on this site since at least 1195. Its stone belfry houses the half metre in diameter bell from the earlier building. This was cast by John Burgerhuys, master founder of the Middelburg Foundry in the Netherlands. There are only a handful of these 17th century bells in Scotland. In 1733, the minister was the Rev James Fisher. When he followed a growing trend to secede from the teachings and apparatus of the Established Church the whole congregation joined him. In 1734, they built their own Secessionist church nearby, the Kirk o' the Muir. Although an 'A' list building it is now in ruins, and on private property. (A recent photo of its current condition is on the front cover.) The former parish church in Stanley dates from 1828. It was built as a chapel of ease by the mill owners, the Buchanans, with seating for 1000. Its tower houses a pendulum clock made by Richard Roberts of Manchester. Only one other similar clock exists and is in

Russia. The church is now in private hands. The small Episcopalian church in Stanley, St Columba's, dates from 1897. The ruins of an even smaller Episcopalian church can be found in the grounds of Ballathie House Hotel. This was a private chapel from when Ballathie estate was owned by Colonel Stewart Richardson and erected following the death of his wife, Jessica, in 1894.

Stanley railway station was built in 1848 on a line that ran from Perth to Forfar. In 1856 it was moved half a mile north of the village, despite vociferous protests, to become a junction station with the opening of the Perth & Dunkeld Railway. Seven years later that line was extended to Inverness as the Highland Line. The station closed in 1956."



THE PERTH RACES

JOCK MEIKLE & MIKE LAWRENCE

Here is the true an' faithfu' list

O' noblemen an' horses;

Their eild, their weight, their height, their grist,

That rin for plates or purses

Robert Ferguson

Elite horse racing first appears as the sport of Kings and Queens in Scotland at the turn of the 16th century during the reign of James IV but it was after his grandson moved to London as James VI of Scotland/I of England in 1603 that many more horse races were established north of the border.

Racing in Perth officially dates from 1613 when it was first recorded in the Town Council minutes that gentlemen raced their horses round the South Inch and a silver bell, given by Ninian Graham of Garvock, was awarded to the

winner. And the racing habit was well enough established in Perth by the 19th April 1624 when a meeting of the trustees of the King James VI Hospital was cancelled because several of the board members preferred to spend the day watching a horse race on the South Inch.

In the early years, the principal event at the Perth Races was known as the Bell Race but on the 12th April 1631 the bell was replaced by a trophy as the prize for the major race. The first winner of the Silver Cup was Kildair, a horse owned by Thomas Tyrie of Drumkilbo near Meikle.

The sport went into abeyance during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms from 1639 to 1653 and the Interregnum that followed the execution of Charles I on 30th January 1649. Puritan views were imposed on most of the country and horse racing, particularly through its association with gambling, was suppressed. The sport bounced back with a vengeance after the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in the kingdoms of Scotland, England and Ireland and the crowning of Charles II on 23rd April 1661. From the mid-17th century, Aberdeen, Ayr, Inverness, Hamilton, Kelso, Lanark, Musselburgh, Peebles and Perth were all holding annual race meetings.

The South Inch was the venue for horse racing during the 17th century and well into the 18th century. In 1734, it is recorded that the Perth Town Council decided to give ten guineas or three purses "for the horse races to be run here next week". The Perth Races always attracted the county upper crust and it is alleged that the race meeting was used as a front for the planning of both the 1715 and 1745 Jacobite Risings. The defeat at Culloden in 1746 sent much of the Scottish nobility into exile in Europe and put a stop to any racing in Perth for the next decade or so.

When the Races restarted in Perth, the venue had switched to a new track on the North Inch using land gifted by George Hay, 8th Earl of Kinnoull. Permission to use the North Inch was included in a tack dated 1761 which granted "liberty for the running of horse races, and for the airing and sweating of the said horses for three weeks before the week of the race, and that the races be no sooner in the year than September". The Town Council also sponsored the meeting by regularly voting through £50 from the public funds for a plate or purse as prizes for a major race.

Horse racing in Scotland was haphazard until the founding of the Hunters Club in 1777 under the patronage of the Dukes of Hamilton, Buccleuch, Roxburgh, Gordon and other aristocrats. The following year the club changed its

name to the Caledonian Hunt Club. In 1784 the Perthshire Hunt was established by the county gentry and took over the organisation of the races in Perth for a week in the October of each year.

The Perth Races in 1791 were organised by the Perthshire Hunt from Monday 17th October to Wednesday 19th October with one race each day and by the Caledonian Hunt Club from Thursday 20th October to Saturday 22nd October. Most purses were for 50 guineas but for His Majesty's Plate a prize of 100 guineas was offered.

The Hunt Stewards Stand was built each year on the banks of the Tay. The area inside the track during race week resembled a town of canvas with the tents arranged in rows, each named after a principal thoroughfare of Perth – High Street, South Street, George Street, St John Street etc. Most of the tents were devoted to either bookmakers taking bets or publicans selling alcohol well into the night.

A most unfortunate accident happened on Friday 2nd October 1807. The scaffold erected on the North Inch race course for the accommodation of the stewards and their guests collapsed soon after the horses had started and all the seated spectators were thrown to the ground. This included the Duke of Atholl, Lord Kinnaird, the Earl of Mansfield, and Lord James Murray. There was a scene of utter confusion but luckily only a few people were seriously injured. Members of the Perthshire Hunt collected £30 that same evening for the relief of the sufferers.

The Napoleonic wars caused another break in the continuation of the races and they were not run until 1815 when the Perth Town Council again came to the rescue with a prize fund.

The Caledonian Gold Cup, worth 100 guineas, was first raced over the North Inch Course at the Michaelmas meeting in 1818. The first winner was Lord Eglinton's "Sans Culottes", second was Sir W Maxwell's "Eglinton" and third was S W Maxwell's "Thunder".

The Caledonian Hunt Club was renamed as the Royal Caledonian Hunt Club in 1822 when King George IV became Patron. The Royal Caledonian Hunt is Scotland's most ancient and elite racing club. Historically it has been confined to "the great gentlemen of Scotland" and is restricted to seventy elected members who must be either born in Scotland or be Scottish landowners. The club hold their annual meetings at one of the established race tracks such as Hamilton, Kelso, Musselburgh, Ayr, or Perth.

In 1825 the Perth meeting was extended to three days but

only one race was held each day – the Subscription Plate, the Perth Hunt Cup and the Royal Caledonian Hunt Cup.

In 1833, the Council decided to make their last contribution from the public funds for the encouragement of horse racing. (In fact, the Council did contribute to racing again in 1999 when the Council agreed to sponsor the Perth Gold Cup.)



Alex C Cowper 1961. Courtesy of Culture Perth & Kinross.

In the 1840s, a large addition was made to the North Inch following an excambion with Thomas Hay Drummond, 11th Earl of Kinnoull, bringing the park up to over 100 acres. Scotland Illustrated (1845) described the racecourse as "curved at the ends, straight along the sides, and measuring 950 yards from end to end, and 370 yards from side to side....parallel to the river".

The condition of the North Inch track deteriorated in the 1890s when various floods rendered the race course wet and muddy. This coincided with a Jockey Club rule that no race under their auspices could be held for a stake of less than 100 sovereigns. The last flat race meeting on the North Inch under Jockey Club rules was on 22nd and 23rd September 1892 when the leading horses competing were Mr Brechin's "Wrinkles", Mr Craig's "Arizona", Mr

McLauchlan's "Old Hoppy", and Mr MacKenzie's "Mayflower".

After a gap of a four years, horse racing restarted on the North Inch. In 1896, a committee, including William Murray, the 5th Earl of Mansfield, proposed races under the British Pony and Galloway Racing Association rules and this was enthusiastically agreed. The racing restarted but attendance was much lower than before.

There were also a number of festering controversies about horse racing on the North Inch in the early years of the 20th century. Byelaw number 13 was quite clear that "No person shall take part or engage in card playing, lotteries or betting on either of the Inches". And yet betting was condoned during the Perth Races despite the protests of several town councillors, most prominently by the Dean of Guild, James Barlas. Ignoring the byelaw, the Town Treasurer even charged dues to bookmakers to pay for renting their stances on the North Inch!

Carriages, carts, motor cars and other wheeled vehicles



Photo: Alex C Cowper 1961. Courtesy of Culture Perth & Kinross

were also banned from the Inches but this byelaw was also set aside during race week. Matters came to a head in September 1904 when a five-year-old boy was run over by a vehicle on the North Inch during the Perth Races.

The Courier, Saturday 22nd September 1906

Reported there were wild scenes on the North Inch on the previous day after many bookmakers had been badly hit and a few welshed (i.e., unable to pay) on the agreed bets. Several of the bookies tried to make a run for it but were seized and jostled by the punters. Their stands were wrecked, clothes were torn from their backs, and their distinctive fedoras kicked around like footballs. Another had the contents of a coal bag thrown over his head. And

it was with great difficulty that a force of policemen prevented a mob from throwing one bookmaker into the Tay. Meanwhile "Coincidence" owned by George Wright from Stanley romped home at 3/1 in the Royal Plate.

The Courier, Monday 6th April 1907

Reported that the promoters of the Perth Races on the North Inch have been hampered by the encroachment of drunken spectators on the track while races were in progress.

In 1908, Alan Murray, the 6th Earl of Mansfield, invited the Perth Hunt to hold races in the grounds of Scone Palace. Pony and Galloway racing had been interesting but the move to Scone marked the return of thoroughbred race horses and Jockey Club and National Hunt rules. The track was laid on the Scone Palace Park alongside the Tay. A handsome grandstand and paddock were erected for the grand opening on Wednesday 23rd September 1908. The Perthshire Advertiser reported that extra tram cars were run from the Perth General Station to the junction of the Old and New Scone Roads. From there a motor brake provided transport to the race ground. The Cramock Handicap Steeplechase over two miles was won by "Loch Sloy", owned by Mr A Coats, and ridden by R Cowe. After the race, the Earl of Mansfield presented the winning jockey with a gold riding whip as a memento.

There have been many improvements to the course and facilities at Scone over the years. Two new bars were added in 1967, photo finish equipment was installed, an irrigation system laid around the track, improved living accommodation for stable lads built, and better access roads created. Saturday racing was introduced at Scone in 1973.

Strathearn Herald, Saturday 20th September 1975

Reported that the Perth Hunt Races were held in conjunction with the Royal Caledonian Hunt. This was the Hunt's first ever visit to the Scone Palace course and their first visit to Perth since 1890.

Perthshire Advertiser, Friday 9th June 1995

Reported that racing history was made at the Scone track the previous night when the venue became the first in Britain to host a summer jump meeting.

The governance of the Perth Race course was restructured in March 2023. The Perth Hunt Club lease on the course was due to expire in 2036 but with a break clause in 2026. In December 2022, Perth Hunt members voted overwhelmingly (97%) to transfer control of the race course to a new company, Perth Racecourse Limited, which is wholly owned by the family of Alexander Murray, the 9th Earl of Mansfield. Scone Estates will invest a minimum of £5m to improve the course, facilities and prize money by 2030 and so future proof racing at Scone

for the next century.

The next horse racing fixtures at Scone Palace Park are on Wednesday 27th and Thursday 28th September 2023.

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ORDINARIES & HUNT BALLS

JOCK MEIKLE & MIKE LAWRENCE

Feasting, drinking and dancing were an essential part of the Perth Races week. The inns, taverns and pubs were well stocked with claret, brandy, gin, malt liquor and beer, and bursting with thirsty customers. Shopkeepers across the city enjoyed much more trade than their usual routine and the street hawkers kept replenishing their stock to satisfy the huge demand. The theatres put on special shows and each sold out quickly. And there were several ordinaries and balls that lasted well into the small hours.

An ordinary was a ticketed all-inclusive meal typically held in a local tavern during race week. Ticket holders received

the entirety of their food, drink and entertainment for a fixed price. Heavy drinking was expected and the nobility and gentry mingled and caroused with the locals. Ordinaries were exclusively all male affairs.

Caledonian Mercury 14th October 1815

Reported that the Caledonian Hunt was held the previous week and that enjoyments consisted as usual in the amusement of the racing during the day and the theatre, ordinaries and balls in the evening. An ordinary was provided by Mr Stewart at the Salutation Hotel who erected a table for 100 covers and in the centre were representations of the British cavalry crossing the river Seine on their way to Paris after the Battle of Waterloo four months previously and of the island of St. Helena with the lone and dejected figure of Napoleon Bonaparte staring out to sea at the start of his exile. There were many toasts to the great victory at Waterloo, the end of the Napoleonic War, the Duke of Wellington, and all the Scottish regiments who fought in the battle - the Black Watch, Cameron Highlanders, Coldstream Guards, Gordon Highlanders, Highland Light Infantry, KOSBs, Royal Scots Greys, and the Scots Guards.

The Perthshire Hunt ball was first held in 1784 and proved to be an enduring success amongst the county elites. Many venues were used – the old City Hall, the Glovers Hall in George Street, the Perth Academy Hall in Rose Terrace – before it settled on the imposing neo classical County Buildings in Tay Street as the permanent venue. The Hunt even paid for the sprung wooden floor in the main hall to absorb the shocks from the vigorous dance programme of reels and jigs.



White dresses and tartan sashes were the order of the day at Perth Hunt Ball in 1946. Photo by Alex C Cowper. Courtesy of Culture Perth & Kinross

Up to 400 guests, hosted by the great town and country houses of Perthshire, could be accommodated in the County Buildings. The Perthshire Advertiser and other local newspapers would always list the family seats that were represented – Blair, Balgowan, Ballathie, Delvine, Dunsinnan, Dupplin, Kinnoull, Megginch, Moncrieffe, Rossie, Taymount, Tullybelton, and so on.



Perth Hunt Ball 1946. Photo Alex C Cowper. Courtesy of Culture Perth & Kinross.

Crowds gathered at the entrance to catch a glimpse of the glamorous aristocratic and landed scions as they arrived.

Most of the gentlemen sported Highland evening dress while the ladies wore fashionable ball gowns with tartan sashes. Traditionally, there were two balls during the Perth Race Week and it was the place where all the eligible young ladies and gentlemen from across the Perthshire landed class would make their social debut.

A special canopy was erected at the entrance to the County Building. Supper rooms were upstairs and the Sheriff Court was used as the gentlemen's cloakroom. The ballroom was decorated with autumn plants and leaves, posies of purple heather adorned each table, and floral decorations were placed in all the windows. Furniture and fittings – sofas, easy chairs, screens, plant pots, carpets and rugs etc – were supplied by a local firm; Love & Sons or Camerons of George Street being the most regular. Catering was provided by a large restaurateur such as Mackie's of Edinburgh, and a country dance orchestra would play the music.

The Hunt Ball during race week was a tradition that lasted over 200 years. In 1993 a social committee took over the organisation of the Ball and, instead of being restricted to Hunt members, it is now open to all although it remains a high society event with a strict code of dress and conduct. In recent years it has been held in Scone Palace, Blair Castle and Murthly Castle.



Photo: Alex C Cowper 1946. Courtesy of Culture Perth & Kinross.

Auld Times is the journal of The West Stormont Historical Society.

c/o Church House, Murthly, PH1 4HB

Email: weststormontsec@gmail.com Website: www.wshs.org.uk

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