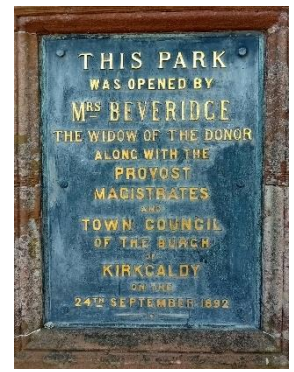




## Mr Beveridge's Park



For over 130 years the Beveridge Park has been a fixture in Kirkcaldy - bringing pleasure, entertainment, enjoyment and tranquillity to generations of Langtonians. Its longevity and permanence create the aura of its having always been there.

As the years pass, perhaps fewer and fewer people know the circumstances which led to the formation of the park other than possibly a few basic facts. The plaques on the gates reveal that the park was the gift of Michael Beveridge, a former Provost and industrialist of the town, and was opened on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 1892 by his widow. In 1931 she also donated the ornamental fountain which sits in the formal gardens.

However, there are other questions which are of great interest in the story of the park and these are at the centre of this Object. What induced Michael Beveridge to leave a truly significant sum in his Will for that particular purpose? Was it a benefit that the townspeople cried out for, or was it a whim on the donor's part? Why is it located where it is, whose land was it originally and was that land gifted or was it bought? The initial focus of this Object is to try and answer these questions. There must be very few individuals in Kirkcaldy who have not enjoyed the park's facilities while, at the same time, taking it for granted. This Object attempts to explore and establish the circumstances and thinking which led to its being established – not simply taking Provost Beveridge's Will as the starting point and ignoring all that went before.

Thereafter, the story will provide an outline of the facilities and entertainments which were available during the park's formative years before casting an eye over some of the facilities and

equipment which, over time, have given the park its iconic status. There is one certainty in this narrative and that is that most readers would naturally assume that it would all be a reasonably simple and straightforward transaction. A site would be selected, paid for, and the park established without any criticism or acrimonious feeling.

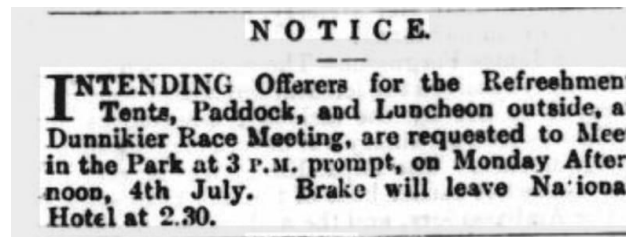
However, this is Kirkcaldy and the fallout was both substantial and significant leading to what was tantamount to civil unrest in Pathhead. At the outset of this story, the team never anticipated the details the research would uncover and bring to light. Here then is the story of Mr Beveridge and his park.



Michael Beveridge was born in Kirkcaldy and attended the Burgh School. On leaving school he went to London to prepare for a life in commerce. Returning to Kirkcaldy he founded the firm of Shepherd and Beveridge. His partner was a former Nairn's employee – James Shepherd. The factory was sited in Pathhead and in 1876 he was first elected to the Town Council. In 1878 he was appointed as a Bailie. In 1886 following the retirement of Provost Swan he was unanimously elected Provost. He died in office in 1890.

It would be wrong to suggest that the town had no parks at all prior to Mr Beveridge – there were indeed a number of what really amounted to enclosed fields where sports were played. There were certainly no public facilities of the size and elegance which the Beveridge Park has subsequently bestowed on the population. As an illustration, included in the area the park now covers was the much smaller Robbie's Park which was an early home to Raith Rovers. It was from Robbie's Park that the displaced lads from the Links who founded the team transported their pavilion to Stark's Park causing a little damage to its roof, courtesy of striking the railway bridge at Milton Road.

In fairness, the Ferguson's of Raith and the Oswald's of Dunnikier allowed access to some of their Policies for leisure walks and often large outdoor events. Included in this was the popular Dunnikier Races as this advertisement from the *Fifeshire Advertiser* of the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1887 shows. Hands up those who knew that the Fife Hunt Cup was at one time run in Kirkcaldy! The National Hotel mentioned in the advert once stood opposite the mouth of Tolbooth Street adjacent to the National Bank building which itself is still standing (Admiral).



The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the celebration of two Royal Jubilees – in 1809 (25<sup>th</sup> October) George III celebrated 50 years on the throne and in June 1887 it was Queen Victoria who celebrated her Jubilee year. Celebrations were planned throughout the country with many towns and cities looking to mark the occasion by the erection of some form of tangible memorial.

The idea of a public park was one of the ideas seen as a strong contender for Kirkcaldy's celebration of Victoria's landmark event.

Therefore, the seeds of our story are to a large extent sown in these 1887 celebrations, although the idea of a park for Kirkcaldy had been gaining traction over the decade. The foundations can be placed into two distinct phases and both will be examined.

The first was nationwide and came with the greater emphasis on public health. The industrial revolution changed Britain for ever but there soon became a need to look at the causes of the diseases like tuberculosis, cholera and smallpox, which quickly became rampant, in the growing towns and cities.

Research identified these, in the main, as being caused by poor

housing, overcrowding, a lack of sanitation, along with a number of other factors. From the middle of the Victorian period vaccinations and a raft of public health acts started to improve conditions. Alongside these measures it was recognised that fresh air and exercise would be of immense benefit to factory workers. The idea of public parks then came into vogue. If Britain had become an industrial powerhouse – make no mistake Kirkcaldy was the country in microcosm. It is nigh on impossible today to recognise the level of heavy industry and mining which were contained within the town's boundaries. The same diseases and conditions prevalent in the wider country were equally to be found in the Lang Toun – hence the gradual but continual rising of support for the provision of a public park.

The Council's plans for the celebration of Victoria's Jubilee were grandiose and drawn up by a well meaning Council Committee, which generated much talk, but perhaps inevitably came to nothing! As shall be shown later, it was left to former Provost, Patrick Don Swan, to partially save the day. There were another two possibilities for the town's cornerstone of these celebrations but, before looking at them, attention will be focused on why the public park idea became the strongest contender.

Before the Queen's Jubilee celebrations came into focus, the two principal local newspapers had started to carry the notion of a public park for Kirkcaldy. Some snippets from the *Fifeshire Advertiser* and the *Fife Free Press*, which are outlined below, will give a flavour of the time.

## THE PEOPLE'S CLUB AND INSTITUTE.

### INAUGURATION OF THE NEW PREMISES.

The formal opening of the extensive premises lately acquired for the purposes of this institution took place on Thursday afternoon. The old premises in High Street have for a considerable time been found totally inadequate, and in consequence of projected improvements in the vicinity of the Institute by the opening up of a new street, it was at one time anticipated that the members would be compelled to change their quarters. The Committee therefore took the necessary steps for acquiring other and more suitable premises, and eventually they were successful in purchasing the property at the head of Glasswork Street for the sum of £1900. £700 have been expended on improvements and alterations, and altogether the premises are well suited for the comfort and convenience of the many members which the Committee have at present on the list and expect soon to enrol. On the second flat are the library, reading, billiard, and bagatelle rooms, and on the third flat the draught room, committee rooms, &c., with superintendent's house.

We will take our starting point as a report in the *Fife Free Press* of the 31<sup>st</sup> October 1885. Given significant prominence was an article on the opening, by Provost Swan, of the new home of the Peoples' Institute at the head of Glasswork Street. The event was attended by many of the town's 'royalty' and it was the Reverend James Stalker who raised the issue of what the town did not have but, to his view,

were needed. “Kirkcaldy has no public park – no museum – no art gallery and no library. He did not know how to get them but perhaps Kirkcaldy might be as lucky as to find a person so fond of his mother-town as Mr Andrew Carnegie. Even if they could not get it this way, he for one would be very glad to pay a penny more in the pound, even in these hard times -- for a public park in which the working lads might spend their Saturdays, and working people might walk about when they wanted fresh air, and even more would he be willing to pay to get a library”.

Stalker was the first minister of St. Brycedale Church and an influential figure in the town but that idea certainly did not see the light of day. These appeared to be difficult times and increasing the rates was not a subject people warmed to – even for the best of ideas!

If that was a tacit appeal to Mr Carnegie there was a far more blunt approach on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 1886 again via the columns of the *Fife Free Press*. *A Working Man* felt that after all Mr Carnegie had done for Dunfermline and what he was doing for Edinburgh – “was it too much to expect that he will yet turn his attention to the wants of this obscure corner of his native kingdom” .

The writer's argument was that workers in Kirkcaldy were badly off for a breath of fresh air. “I know of no class more requiring of fresh

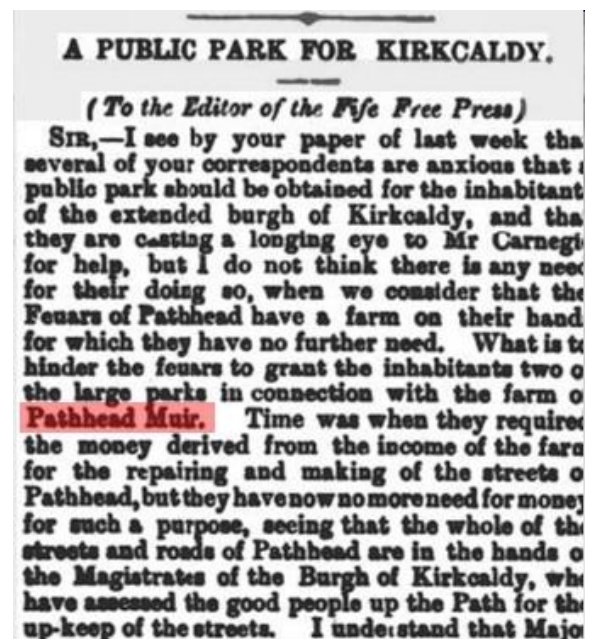
air than the toilers in our factories, especially those employed in our floorcloth and linoleum workshops. I am sure it would secure the hearty sympathy of Mr Carnegie and many other generous sons of Fife, and I am sure it only requires to be started to meet with a hearty response from many wealthy individuals in our midst”.

This letter drew responses with one signed by *A Scot* taking a different viewpoint. This writer appreciated that “if Carnegie was slinging his thousands in this direction people would be happy to accept”. That said, he did not think Kirkcaldy should simply sit back and cast envious eyes over the Atlantic - he believed that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush and the town needed to protect the locations currently open to it. He strongly urged fighting for and constructing defences in order that existing footpaths and rights of way be kept open. His contention was that enough land had been allowed to slip through the town's fingers which would have been sufficient for two parks never mind one! The Longbraes and the Mill Dam were two that were mentioned as requiring protection against being closed to the public. It would also seem that in the woods above the Mill Dam gun targets had been placed with live ammunition being fired. This was a walk currently open to the public and therefore there was some danger to life and limb. The reason for the targets was subsequently discovered and is covered later.

The same edition produced yet another angle – this time signed simply *X*. Here we had praise for Mr Carnegie but no pleas for him to intervene. What was present once more was the claim that Kirkcaldy was in need of a benefactor to meet a need which was common to all industrial towns - the need to breathe! The letter went on to say that in several instances “princely givers” had met that need. The writer mentioned Baxter (Baxter Park, Dundee) and Carnegie as examples before attacking the fact that young people often had no alternative but to wait for the tide going out before they could play. “Can nothing be done in order to procure a piece of

ground where our youth may sport and play at will, and our old folks breathe the fresh air. Perhaps the time is not far distant when some of our merchant princes will immortalise his name by gifting the Lang Toun a public park". This would suggest that one or more of the local wealthy individuals should follow the lead of Baxter and Carnegie.

Another different tack was taken in the *Fife Free Press* of the 25<sup>th</sup> September 1886. Here on the letters page *Pro Bono Publico* added his opinion to previous correspondence. He felt that there had been a degree of jealousy over what Mr Carnegie was doing for Dunfermline and some thought that an approach should be made in that direction for funds for a park. However, our writer had a homespun answer which had no need for Carnegie's riches or participation. His target was Pathhead Muir Farm. His argument being that "the Feuars of Pathhead had no further need of the rental income derived from the farm which, until 1876, had been used for making and repairing streets in Pathhead. Now that Kirkcaldy Town Council had responsibility for maintaining the streets of the extended burgh – surely some part of the farm could be used for the provision of a park for the recreation and amusement of the inhabitants". The writer achieved some results from his efforts. In an election meeting, which *The Fife Free Press* reported on in its 30<sup>th</sup> October edition, it was revealed that Councillor Yule had taken up the idea and indicated that there were 41 acres let at an annual rental including the farmhouse of £100. Could some of this ground be used?



The fact that the *Fife Free Press* of the 24<sup>th</sup> September 1904 reveals that the farm was being advertised to be let at Martinmas (Scottish

Quarter Day 28<sup>th</sup> November) tells us that the idea came to nothing. The farm was 33 acres at that time and during research an 1888 article was unearthed revealing that an old ploughman (unnamed) had just completed his sixty-second consecutive harvest at Pathhead Muir. He was born in 1812 which tells us what life was like before the state pension came to pass – hard labour at 76! Apparently he had brought up a family of 7 on £13 per annum. The farm which is long gone is shown on the attached map and was still available to let in 1923.

### THE PROPOSED PUBLIC PARK.

(To the Editor of the *Fife Free Press*.)

SIR,—I was somewhat amused at the cool audacity exemplified in “*Pro Bono Publico's*” letter last week, in which he suggests the extremely modest proposal of asking the Pathhead feuers to hand over their farm (their own private property) in order to form a public park for the amusement and recreation of the folk of the extended burgh.

However, the death of that idea was not before a stinging response to *Pro Bono Publico's* letter was published in the *Fife Free Press* on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1886. This emanated from the pen of *A Pathhead*

*Feuer* who was “amused by the cool audacity in which he suggests the extremely modest proposal of asking the Pathhead Feuers to hand over their farm (their own private property) in order to form a public park for the amusement and recreation of the folk of the extended burgh”. His view was that 100 years previously *Pro Bono Publico* would have made an excellent gentleman of the road of the stand and deliver variety!

He likened the request to a rich man's herd and flocks being passed over and the poor man's lamb being fixed upon to minister to 'Dame Kirkcaldy's luxury'. He suggested that instead of pursuing Pathhead Muir – *Pro Bono Publico* should approach the wealthy and liberal minded lairds who derive their income and wealth from Kirkcaldy and ask them to give sufficient land free and gratis. He did not anticipate that bringing a great deal by way of results.

The letter assured readers that the income from the farm was both



required and spent to assist those in need in Pathhead, unlike the Lairds' income which was generated in Kirkcaldy but spent in London or Edinburgh!

But the best has to be saved until the last with the best being a lengthy tirade which appeared in the *Fife Free Press* on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 1886. The remarkable letter was well written in style if in questionable content but the target was the population of Kirkcaldy and in particular the young able bodied male segment (these he numbered at 3,000). The author was styled *The Man in the Rock*. The letter began by asking if there was not something servile in 25,000 inhabitants praying for assistance from Mr Carnegie in America. He asked what 3,000 able bodied men were snivelling at and why they thought that they had to approach America for a park? "If parks were an imported foreign product brought here at great expense or by special favour of the producer, one could understand it: but are there no parks in Scotland! Are there none in Fife? Are there none in the district of Kirkcaldy at your very door? Aye, plenty of them! Well and why can you not enjoy them?" His reasoning was that they and their fathers had allowed the land to be taken from them depriving their own children of a birthright. "Is it not about time that you stirred yourselves out of your lethargy, and commenced to remedy this state of matters?"

There followed a tirade on places now fenced off and lost to the public. They ranged from Ravenscraig Castle to an old right of way between Dunnikier Road and Bennoch. This was an interesting remark in which he mentioned the *Halkett's Close principle*. Halkett's Close or, as it is now known, Adam Smith Close had high walls on either side where nothing could be seen bar the sky. The contention was that the part of the right of way at the rear of Bennoch Cemetery now had high walls built on either side. The ground west of the Tyrie Burn was also seeing the application of the same *Halkett's Close principle* (Probably Tyrie Bleach works) before homing in on the Mill Dam walk. We learn that the targets

were for use of the town's Rifle Corps who had been given permission by the Laird of Raith to discharge live ammunition. It seems that the Laird, for public safety, had erected high walls close to the target area. His ire against the walls was that again they were obscuring views. The question of a right of way surely has to be the ability to cross it rather than a view to be maintained. That said, *The Man in the Rock* was having none of it:-

The answer, in his eyes, was for Provost Beveridge to “unfurl his flag like the Prophet of Pathhead Sands and lead you to recover your lost property. You have several fine parks about you, and some have been well kept for you, so you will not grumble for being left out of them for so long, if you only get back to them now. There is Raith Park, Dunnikier Park and Dysart Park, all finely situated, and I don't know what better you would like. (when called upon to lead the revolution, Beveridge had been Provost for 15 days!)

Or, perhaps, you consider in your listless way that, as he has got all these dollars at the expense of you and others like you, you may as well recover a little of them as not, and you don't care much for appearances. Very well, get his dollars if you can, but, at any rate, get the park. Here is good work for your new Provost. Let him unfurl his flag like the Prophet of the Pathhead Sands, and lead you to recover your lost property.

“When you get them, take down those monuments to you and your fathers' slavery, which surrounds them in the shape of seven or ten feet walls. They are useless, and an eyesore to a free man. Poor fellows! You had to build these walls yourselves – that you had to shut yourselves and your wives and your children out from the use of all that nature provided for you and them. Aye you had to do that in the cruel slavery days but you are now free men!”.

The letter ended with the author doubting whether *clerks and shopkeepers* would rise to seize these parks for the benefit of miners, engineers and factory workers. This reads more like a dig at the Civic Fathers than an attack on the commercial classes in general. It is quite clear to see that *The Man in the Rock's* answer was to simply take ground from Messrs Ferguson, Oswald and Rosslyn – certainly a different/novel way of securing a park for the town!

The above snippets attempt to show that there were the beginnings of stirrings for a park by the mid 1880s - a genuine feeling that space and fresh air were needed. It is easy now to forget that Kirkcaldy was a massive industrial and manufacturing complex. If any confirmation is needed, then glance at old photographs showing the number of chimneys belching smoke – creating what had to have been an unhealthy atmosphere. It was a place of heavy industry which demanded hard and relentless work. Perhaps not quite the dark satanic mills of William Blake but was leisure space too much to ask?

However, this agitation failed to galvanise the local lairds, the civic fathers, or the inhabitants into action. As far as we can tell Provost Beveridge did not unfurl his flag on Pathhead Sands!

It was, as we will now see, the Jubilee of Queen Victoria which reignited the clamour for a park. Did that succeed?



A significant change had occurred in the town on the 5<sup>th</sup> November 1886 when, for the first time in 33 years, Patrick Don Swan was no longer Kirkcaldy's Provost and Admiral of the Port. His successor was Michael Beveridge who had been first elected as a councillor in 1876. He therefore had experience of civic affairs and had also served as a Bailie in the previous administration.

That said, it would have been a daunting task for anyone to fill the shoes of Provost Swan but Michael Beveridge was the unanimous choice of the members and his priorities were announced at a dinner in the George Hotel and reported on in the *Fifeshire Journal* of the 25<sup>th</sup> November. The dinner held on Friday the 19<sup>th</sup> was hosted by Provost Beveridge and with the exception of two councillors all the

members were present as was ex - Provost Swan. The town's officials were also present. The dinner was by way of an informal meeting of the members and officials following the recent elections. At the end of the dinner and following the toasts there was a lengthy discussion of three prospective projects:-“ *the improvement to the Sands Road, the harbour and the securing of a public park*”. It would seem that the Provost was setting out his agenda and manifesto. A memorial to Adam Smith which became almost a *raison d'etre* was apparently not on his radar at that time.

The Town Clerk, Mr W. R. Spears, then gave “The Town and Trade of Kirkcaldy,” replied to by Mr Nairn. The Chairman, in giving the health of ex-Provost Swan, referred to his long term of office, and the many improvements which had been carried out during his reign, and hoped his genial face would be long seen going in and out amongst them. This having been replied to the Company proceeded to discuss the prospective improvements on the Sands Road, the harbour, and the securing of a public park. The Company thereafter broke up.

On Monday the 14<sup>th</sup> February 1887 the full council met with the celebration of the Queen's Jubilee high on the agenda. The *Fife Free Press* of the 19<sup>th</sup> carried a full report. It appeared that there were three main proposals each with its supporters. The Provost mentioned at the outset that he had been in touch with several towns in Fife to see what they had planned and he had also communicated with Stirling and Dundee. Surprisingly, there appears to have been little in the way of concrete decisions made:-

*Dunfermline* was waiting to see what Edinburgh would do in relation to the Imperial Institute. (This was an idea to build an Empire Museum in London with towns and cities contributing to the cost). Building certainly began in 1887 with its opening in 1893. It was also expected that a subscription list would be opened for Lord Elgin's Committee for the County – whatever that might entail!

*St. Andrew's* had set up a committee but had not come to any conclusions as yet.

*Cupar* – A meeting of the magistrates had taken place and the initial thoughts were that any memorial should be in the town rather than make a contribution to the Imperial Institute. No definite decision

as yet.

*Dundee* - £2,500 had been set aside to provide an Art Gallery and £500 to the Medical School. A decision on a contribution to the Imperial Institute had been delayed.

*Stirling* – contemplating donating £50 from the Common Good Fund to the cost of the Imperial Institute. Members of the public could, if they so desired, also make contributions. There was a proposal before the Council to erect a fountain in one of the principal streets.

*Kirkcaldy* - after a lengthy debate came down to three ideas and these were:-

The **provision of a public park** on the basis that it provided recreational facilities for all. The issue for Kirkcaldy was the length of the town and where a park could be best situated to suit the bulk of the population. The idea of two parks was also aired. The idea of approaching both Ferguson of Raith and Oswald of Dunnikier was then floated with the hope of securing a long term lease – say 99 years.

**A hospital** was proposed on the basis that a town of Kirkcaldy's size should really have its own hospital. Ferrying the ill and injured over the Forth was certainly not ideal.

The provision of a **working lads institute**. This was aimed at the tier boys (apprentice printers) of the floorcloth and linoleum industry. It would seem that these lads were known for boisterous behaviour and causing mischief. It was felt that their own institute would perhaps tone down their excesses. Baillie Barnet observed that, on each quarterly and annual return of crime figures, boys from this group appeared in significant numbers. "Something ought to be done for them in both their interests and those of the community and perhaps the employers might care to contribute towards the

cost”.

Ultimately, it was obvious that no agreement would be reached and, on the proposal of the Provost, it was agreed that a Special Committee be formed to consider and report.

Three members were selected from each ward with the **Third Ward** producing:- Provost Beveridge, Baillie Mitchell and Councillor McKenzie. The **Second Ward** saw Baillie Douglas and Councillors Honeyman and Nairn nominated. From **Ward One** came Councillors Pratt, J. Lockhart and J. Thomson. There was a clear agreement that, in all probability, no more than one of the ideas could be adopted and undertaken but at least plans were now under way.

The same edition saw the first leader on the subject appearing in the *Fife Free Press*. There is no doubt that before analysing the proposals, the writer was doubtful if they would ever see the light of day:-

#### THE JUBILEE PROPOSALS.

THREE JUBILEE PROPOSALS, each of which had its supporters, were brought under the notice of the Town Council on Monday evening, so that in the work of conceiving schemes — whatever is to come from them in the end—Kirkealdy is losing none of its ancient prestige. That as a community we have earned distinction for scheming is unquestionable.

“That as a community we have earned distinction for scheming is unquestionable”. However what followed was a litany of schemes which had failed to materialise. “Within quite recent years we have had above-board a new harbour for the district, even two at one time; a direct

line of railway to Glasgow via Alloa; a tramway to give pedestrians a lift through the main streets of our proverbial “lang toun“ and on, if they had the mind, to Dysart; a bridge across the den, with the opening up of a new roadway between the Second and Third Wards; a Brighton-like transformation of the beach with reclamation scheme; a column to commemorate the introduction of the Lothrie

water and the heroes of the cause; and a monument to Adam Smith, the greatest of Kirkcaldy's sons, etcetera.

The article lamented that beyond talk none of these ideas and plans had come to pass – although if they had Kirkcaldy would now be a far different and better place. However, it was accepted that “something must be done to give expression to the exuberant loyalty of the lieges in connection with the approaching jubilee of the Queen, and it is the general opinion that such expression would find most profitable ventilation in some good practical public undertaking”.

The view of the **Working Lad's Institute** was - “the proposal is certainly not calculated to dazzle the eye, but it has about it the true ring of humanity. It is intended to supply the factory boys of our town with intellectual nourishment, but to amuse them as well, and by drawing them off the streets, where they idle away their time to no good, something will, it is hoped, be done to make them better boys, and fit them to fill with credit their place as “the coming men”.

**The public park** was seen as “among the pressing needs of our large and steadily increasing population there are indeed few more urgent. Whether the scheme is one capable of solution now or not, we, at any rate, hope that the day is not distant when a piece of ground, of sweeping area, will be acquired, laid out, and enclosed for the pleasure of the inhabitants, young and old, rich and poor. The boon would be the sort whose value is inestimable, and could only be rightly appreciated by possession”.

The leader writer then fully accepted the desire for a **hospital** and appreciated that it was perhaps the one with strongest grounds. However, in the days before the National Health Service, with only a few exceptions, hospitals depended upon public subscriptions for their upkeep:- “but the undertaking is, if anything, rather ambitious for these perplexing times, which are contracting the pockets of the

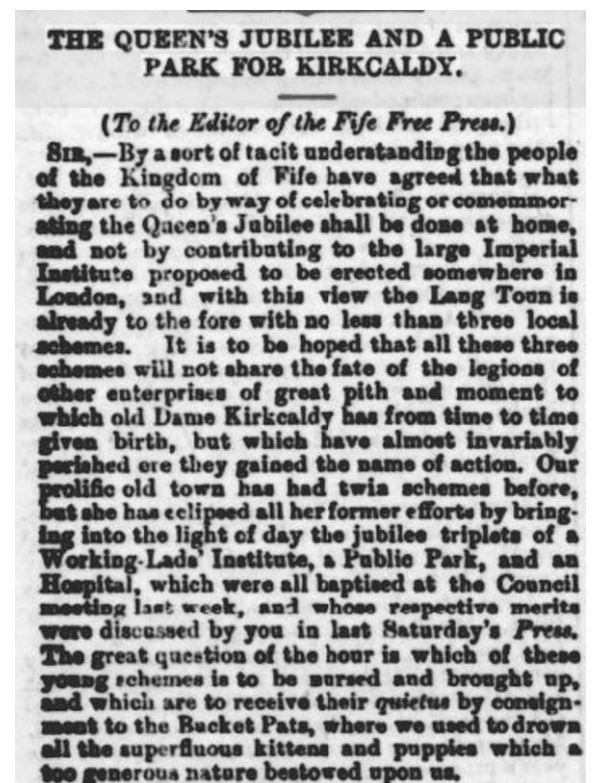
people, especially of employers, and generally narrowing public liberality. However well meaning and admirable the suggestion, the present does not seem the most fitting period for the enterprises”.

The conclusion reached was “Of these proposals, all sensible and good, the public park seems the best, most popular, most practical and most beneficial”.

*The Fife Free Press* of the 26<sup>th</sup> February 1887 shone light on Lord Elgin and his County Committee. At a meeting held in Cupar, which was attended by representatives of the Burghs and County officials, it became clear that there was little appetite to raise money locally for the Imperial Institute. If anything were to be done by the burghs it would be on a local basis. “Kirkcaldy did not feel justified in joining the County”. Some examples of local memorials were – Crail was to re-erect its old market Cross, Newburgh intended to build a town hall and Kinghorn was aiming to open a park. Provost Donald of Dunfermline indicated that feeling had not been strong enough to induce him to open subscription sheets for the Institute.

Lord Elgin still felt that there was room for both local and national contributions but, such was the feeling of the committee, that it was agreed advertisements would be placed in newspapers asking that any subscriptions be made directly to committee members and thereafter the monies combined and credited to the Imperial Institute appeal. A ceiling was placed on the suggested level of individual subscription.

The *Fife Free Press* of the 5<sup>th</sup> March 1887 published another letter from “*The Man in The Rock*” which initially turned away from the idea of seizing local parks to





attacking the Empire and by extension the Jubilee. The opening gambit was that he was pleased that anything done by Kirkcaldy would be local with no contribution to London. He praised the notion of a public park and the paper's support for it. However, he soon started to warm to his theme by demanding to know why it took the incentive of the Jubilee to get things moving in this direction when a park was such an obvious necessity? He then turned his ire on the Queen herself by asking “is there anything we feel grateful for today which we can attribute to Queen Victoria's reign? What are the outstanding features of this so-called beneficial and peaceful reign? Are they not war, bloodshed abroad and misery and oppression at home?”

The letter then launched into a list of wars which had been waged in the name of our country, at the struggle of the workers against their oppressors, the ever increasing, the ever deepening wail of the poor in our large towns and cities, the barbarous treatment of the crofters, the fearful things which have happened and been perpetrated in Ireland – the heartless evictions, the death by famine and the thousand other unnatural shocks that that distressful country seems heir to. “What is there to be jubilant over in all this record of bloodshed, rapine and oppression?”

He accepted that science and invention had made great progress and not just in the field of armaments but what the writer referred to as *the art of peace* which included railways, telephones, telegraphs and machines of all types. His question was “what have the common people benefited from all these things?” Very little was his response. He accepted that Victoria was not to blame for all the ills and that she had sat on the throne with more propriety than many of her predecessors. That said, in his view, she was well paid for her services quoting £23 million as the sum spent during the 50 years. He further claimed that the Queen now received £800,000 per annum and he could not see why the begging bowl was out to commemorate the reign of this expensive family.

Any idea to call the park the *Jubilee Park* was anathema to the writer and he then returned to the idea of the three potential parks which he sought to acquire – having already decided on exactly what should be taken from each landowner – for example, the skating pond on Raith Estate was to be procured as part of that park although he was agreeable to not confiscating the various Factor's houses. The land being taken from each landowner was mentioned in great detail before the epic ending:-

“The manner of acquiring them and relieving the present owners of all responsibility or liability for them is a mere matter of detail with which it is not necessary to trouble at present. The one thing required is that we feel need of these parks and determine to have them”.

Of the jubilee proposals we have named, one only remains to be settled, that is the long and much-talked of public park for the burgh. There may be differences of opinion as to whether or not our present assessments should be increased in a period of commercial depression like the present even for such a purpose, but there can be no difference of opinion as to the desirability of having this great want of the community supplied. The committee of Council appointed with regard to the celebration of Her Majesty's jubilee in the burgh have, we observe, expressed themselves as favourable to the providing of “two parks for the community as the best mode of celebrating the jubilee in the burgh,

The *Fife Free Press* then produced another leader on its edition of the 9<sup>th</sup> April 1887. It was written in advance of a full Council meeting to be held on the following Monday. It seems clear that the other options had fallen by the wayside and that the park was the only proposal left on the table. It was still believed that two parks were required given the shape of the town. The paper appeared to have knowledge that the sub-committee had

been in touch with the Laird of Raith to discuss leasing ground between Raith Gates and Milton Road as a park for the First and Second Wards on a 50 year lease at £3 per acre. It appears that the price per acre being sought was £4. While fully supporting the desirability of having a park – the writer was still fearful of this added expense in such straightened times. There was nothing specific about a park for the Third Ward other than it would be discussed on the Monday.

The Council meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> was fully covered by the *Fife Free Press* of the 16<sup>th</sup> April and it opened brightly for those advocating the cause of a public park. There had been three meetings of the sub-committee held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> March with another on the 5<sup>th</sup> April. Much of the content of the latter had provided the body of the paper's leader the previous week. Mr W.R. Spears, the clerk, had been instructed “to write to Ferguson of Raith and Mr Oswald of Dunnikier advising them of the proposal to mark the Jubilee with a park and seeking the terms they would wish for the respective fields the committee thought would be suitable for a park”. The Laird of Raith had indeed offered the ground mentioned above on the terms the newspaper had earlier suggested - £4 per acre.

Mr Oswald did not offer any terms for four reasons – firstly, he believed the land which was part of Smeaton Farm was too far from the town and very few would use it. A map showing the site of the farm is attached.



Secondly, the farm was already let to a Mr Harley until Martinmas 1899 – which lease he did not wish to break as well as the considerable compensation that would be entailed. Thirdly, there would be a need for lime and mortar walls to enclose the park area and finally the loss of 20 acres from what was a small farm would make its future leasing very difficult.

The Provost discussed the situation in that the committee had decided against both the Working Lads' Institute and the hospital leaving the park as the only option. Provost Beveridge then indicated that he was against the park if it meant an increase on the rates in these difficult times. He did however concede that members

might look to economise in other areas of expenditure in order to procure the park. So, Beveridge wanted a park but to meet the cost other proposed expenditure had to be trimmed or dropped.

Councillor John Lockhart moved that they go ahead and approach Mr Ferguson to try and get the terms for the lease reduced to £3. If agreement was forthcoming he suggested that the Provost call a public meeting to test the opinion of the ratepayers. Again, he made it clear that “none of their local magnates or millionaires were going to assist them” - it was via the rates or nothing”! He found a seconder in Treasurer Yule although even Yule admitted that he was ill at ease with any further burden on the ratepayers.

From that point onwards, it simply fell apart. Bailie Mitchell proposed a counter motion that much as he supported the provision of a park - *“That the Council do not see their way to entertain, for the celebration of the Queen's Jubilee, any proposal which will result in an increase to the present rates”*. He found a seconder in Councillor Kinlay.

Although one or two councillors spoke in support of the acquisition of the park it was very clear that the body of the meeting was going to throw its weight behind Bailie Mitchell's proposal and indeed this is how it turned out. The idea of a park, and for that matter any other memorial which would add to the rates, simply died a death. “The committee which had been formed in connection with the proposed public park was discharged”.

THE TOWN Council of Kirkcaldy, having had before it three proposals for the celebration of Her Majesty's Jubilee, has ended by rejecting them all. Its Jubilee Committee, in a fit of generosity, proposed to lease a Public Park for the lieges, in which the young men might exercise their athletic tastes, while the young women looked on and smiled approval. The second proposal was to erect an Hospital where the accidents, which occur so frequently in so large a manufacturing town as this, would have prompt surgical attendance and careful nursing. The third was to provide an Institute where the lads who are busy all day in our factories would in the evenings be drilled, instructed, amused and incited to better things. Having three such unobjectionable proposals to choose from, it was to have been expected that the Council of a town, whose loyalty is beyond question, would have selected one of them as a fitting memorial of the Jubilee year. No such thing. Having the proverbial three courses open to them, the Kirkcaldy Town Council took none of them.

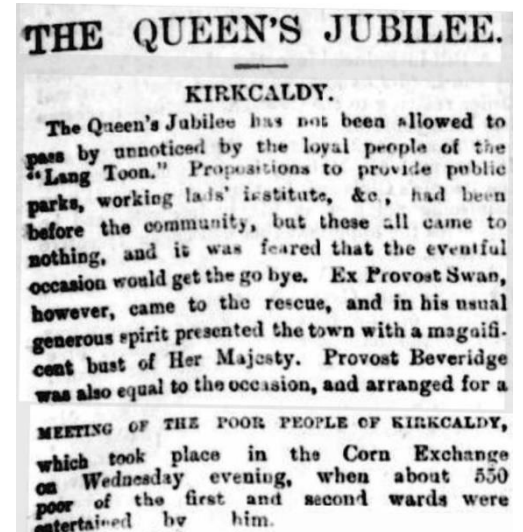
For a different viewpoint on what had transpired we look to the *Fifeshire Advertiser's* Leader in its edition of 6<sup>th</sup> May 1887. "The Town Council of Kirkcaldy, having had before it three proposals for the celebration of Her Majesty's Jubilee, has ended by rejecting them all. Its Jubilee Committee, in a fit of generosity, proposed to lease a Public Park for the lieges, in which the young men might exercise their athletic tastes, while the young women looked on and smiled approval. The second option was to erect a hospital where the accidents,

which occur so frequently in so large a manufacturing town as this, would have prompt surgical attendance and careful nursing. The third was to provide an Institute where the lads who are busy all day in our factories would in the evenings be drilled, instructed, amused and incited to better things.

"Having three such unobjectionable proposals to choose from, it was to be expected that the Council of a town, whose loyalty is beyond question, would have selected one of them as a fitting memorial of the Jubilee year. No such thing! Having the proverbial three courses open to them, the Kirkcaldy Town Council took none of them. They refused the Park on the grounds that no one would make a present of it. They declined the Hospital, although the promoter\* offered a subscription; and they utterly refused to approve of the Working Lads' Institute, although it might not be a burden on the rates. "Why the Council should act thusly no one can pretend to guess unless the explanation is simply that the Corporation is not in a Jubilee mood this year".

\*We can not think this would be anyone other than Michael B. Nairn who a few short years later took the matter into his own hands.

It was to the *Fife Free Press* of the 18<sup>th</sup> June we referred when seeking an indication of how the town's celebrations would look. The leader writer was in fine fettle when he embarked on his report under a banner headline of **The Queen's Jubilee**:- “ The Queen's Jubilee has not been allowed to go unnoticed by the loyal people of the “lang toon.” Propositions to provide public parks, a working lads' institute, etc, had been before the community, but these all came to nothing, and it was feared that the eventful occasion would get the go bye. Ex- Provost Swan, however, came to the rescue, and in his usual generous spirit presented the town with a magnificent bust of Her Majesty. Provost Beveridge was also equal to the occasion and arranged a meeting for the poor people of Kirkcaldy which took place in the Corn Exchange on Wednesday evening, when about 550 poor of the First and Second Wards were entertained by him”.



There were a significant number of civic dignitaries and church ministers in attendance and the Provost, adorned with his Chain of Office, presided over the function. We learn that while the majority attending were old women there was also a significant sprinkling of males enjoying the evening. We also are made aware “that the company partook of an excellent tea, with substantial accompaniments”.

The Provost was quite honest when remarking that “the Jubilee proposals had fallen through; chiefly because the town was unable to face the expense which would have been involved in adopting any of the suggestions”. The Provost however felt that it would be wrong to allow the auspicious occasion to pass without some form of celebration and hence “It occurred to me that a very sensible and at the same time a very modest way of celebrating the Jubilee

would be to give an entertainment to the poor people here, and have another in Pathhead. The entertainment will take the form of a concert of Scotch music. My reason for arranging Scotch music was that I thought you would enjoy it better than any other kind”.

The Provost then made mention of the Queen and her long reign but he did not want to hear speeches - tonight was about entertainment. The article certainly made mention of a packed programme of songs and music with some in a humorous vein. During the interval pies were distributed and the event came to an end with the singing of *Auld Lang Syne*. The Provost had previously thanked all those who had provided the entertainment and also the ladies who had distributed the food and tea. We learn that the Reverend John Campbell had taken it upon himself to publicly thank Provost Beveridge, as the cost of the event had been borne by the Provost himself. Campbell asked for three cheers which were heartily given and Michael Beveridge responded with “I am very grateful for your vote of thanks, but my best reward is to know that you have all enjoyed a happy evening”.

The same edition carried a report on the official thanksgiving service which was held in the Parish Church on Thursday the 16<sup>th</sup> at 3.00pm. A glance at the public bodies, who formed the procession from the Town Hall to the church, illustrates how the governance of the town has subsequently altered. Besides the members of the Town Council there were representatives from the Water

**JUBILEE  
THANKSGIVING SERVICE  
IN  
KIRKCALDY PARISH CHURCH.**

**THURSDAY, 16th JUNE, at 3 p.m.**

The following Ministers will conduct the Service:—

The Very Rev. Dean JOHNSTON, St Peter's Episcopal Church.  
 Rev. WILLIAM MILNE, Free Church, Inveriel.  
 Rev. B. B. BEGG, Abbotshall Church.  
 Rev. GEORGE M'HARDY, Congregational Church.  
 Rev. JOHN CLARK, Union Church.  
 Rev. JOHN CAMPBELL, Kirkcaldy Parish Church.

The Collection will be on behalf of the *Fund for the Poor* under the Administration of the Town Council.

The Galleries of the Church will be reserved for the Representatives of Public Bodies, Benevolent Societies, and like Associations; and the Body of the Church for the General Public.

A CHOIR will meet in KIRKCALDY PARISH CHURCH on *Tuesday, 14th inst.*, at 8.30 P.M., to prepare the Service of Praise. The assistance of Members of Choirs is respectfully invited.

Commission, the School Board, the Parochial Board, Philp's Governors, the Prime Gilt Box, and other public bodies. The article informs its readers that “the Town Hall and adjacent buildings, especially the George Hotel, were beautifully bedecked with flags, and the route to the church was lined with people”. Rather than quote from the newspaper report an advertisement from the *Fife Free Press* of the 11<sup>th</sup> gives the intended order of service. In terms of the collection for the *Fund for the Poor* that generated a figure between £18 and £19 on the day. (that is £3,000 today)

After the service the clergy in attendance plus the full Town Council were photographed at the rear of the church by a Mr Taylor. “The likeness is an excellent one, and will be appreciated by many as a souvenir of the event”. We have not as yet been able to locate a copy but remain optimistic.

Following the service the company returned to the Town Hall for a cake and wine Banquet. The guest list was extensive and everyone of any standing in the town was there at the invitation of Provost Beveridge. After the Reverend Campbell delivered a prayer – ex-Provost Swan was invited to unveil the bust which he had presented to the town.



The bust had been commissioned by Provost Swan himself some 30 years previously and had been executed by Matthew Noble, a mason turned sculptor. It seems that a bust of Sir Robert Peel, also the work of Noble, had been commissioned by the Council and was housed in the civic chamber. Immediately on seeing Noble's work, Swan had commissioned Victoria's sculpture. (The bust of Peel is currently housed in the Police College at Tulliallan) It had always been Swan's intention to present the Queen's likeness to the town and he felt this was the ideal time.

The bust had been draped in a Union flag prior to its unveiling. The health of Provost Beveridge was proposed and met with hearty cheers. Provost Beveridge seems to have provided a perfect summing up with his words which included "Until they got the bust of Her Majesty presented to them they were beginning to think that Kirkcaldy would have to be left out in the cold at this eventful time, when nearly every town in Scotland was having its rejoicings, but he believed that before their proceedings were finished they would have every reason to be pleased with their festivities. They had a very admirable and pleasant meeting the previous evening in the Corn Exchange, when the old people seemed to enjoy themselves very much indeed, and he only hoped that they would be able to look back on it with pleasure".



In Pathhead Hall there was to be a similar meeting that night, and "he hoped it would prove equally successful". As to the service, "speaking for himself personally he must say that he enjoyed it very much indeed, and he believed that was the sentiment of all present". Reports of the time suggest that 400 individuals were present at the Pathhead event.

So, that was the extent of the town's celebrations of Queen Victoria's 50 years on the throne. It had commenced with hope and the ambition to produce a landmark memorial as the highlight. In the end the imperative became not to add one penny to the rates and that is what happened – for better or for worse! It must have felt to the Provost that despite his brave words it was a damp squib.

It is easy to look at the sub-committee and ask why they went to so much trouble for no tangible outcome. The answer lies in the brief they were given – it was simply to determine which of the three proposals should be selected – which they achieved. It was then for the full Council to determine if the one selected was achievable, especially in relation to cost – and they came down firmly against it.

No matter the angle taken, it can not be considered an auspicious start to Beveridge's term in office given one of the main planks of his manifesto had fallen at the first hurdle.

On a separate page, the paper also contained a report on the Dysart celebrations which could quite possibly have made Provost Beveridge reflect and compare. It is of course speculation but it may well have played a part when Beveridge framed his testamentary disposition.

On the afternoon of Friday the 17<sup>th</sup> June the full Dysart Town Council was meeting for a cake and wine banquet to celebrate the opening of the town's new public buildings. That was the scale of Dysart's celebration - “A new hall, with offices, police buildings and other tenements. The buildings were to be known as Victoria Buildings and the street they stood in was to have its name changed from Flesh

**THE VICTORIA BUILDINGS.**  
These buildings have been erected at a cost of nearly £4000. They adjoin the old Tower, and may be divided into three parts, the upper consisting of Council Chamber and Magistrates' Room, and offices for Burgh Surveyor and Chamberlain. The second part of police buildings contain Inspector's office, police office, witness room, and three cells, all on the grounds floor, while on the other flats are dwelling-houses for the police.

Wynd to Victoria Street, in commemoration of the Queens's Jubilee”. The buildings had been erected at a cost of £4,000 and adjoined the old tower where they stand to this day. The building contained three separate parts – firstly, the Council Chamber, Magistrates Room and offices for the Burgh Surveyor and Town Chamberlain. The Police section contained an Inspector's office, police office, witness room and three cells. There was also living accommodation for the police and on the ground floor housing for some of the Burgh workmen. If that was not enough, it transpires that work was in hand for a Jubilee lamp and drinking fountain!

*The Fife Free Press* on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 1887 reveals that “On Monday, Mr John Robb completed the erection of the Jubilee lamp and drinking fountain. The lamp had been lit in the evening and gives great satisfaction. The light is powerful, and has such an effect on the High Street, Cross Street and Victoria Street that the commissioners will be able to dispose with six ordinary lamps. A sill has been formed round the fountain base so that members of the canine race may, free of water rate, quench their thirst”.

It is difficult to believe that Provost Beveridge did not compare Dysart's efforts with the bust of Queen Victoria – which in essence the town had received as a gift. Speculation, yes, but we would argue reasoned speculation.

Regular readers will know that our stories display the team's inability to ignore a tangent and here we go again! In addition to Provost Beveridge's largesse in Kirkcaldy we came upon some other gifts or entertainments which were provided in the area. Although not central to the story, they form a part of the area's social history.

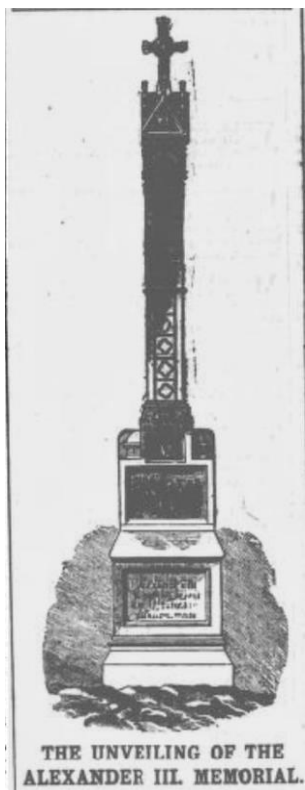
- Mrs Ferguson of Raith made a monetary gift to each person in the Kirkcaldy Poor-house in order to allow them to purchase a little luxury.
- John Dixon, of Laurel Bank in Markinch, arranged that the inmates of Markinch Poor-house were treated to a splendid tea. That was followed by a programme of songs, humorous recitations and dialogue given by the senior pupils of Markinch School. The inmates each received a gift of tobacco, snuff or confections. It appears that John Dixon who eventually served as Provost was heavily involved in supporting the Poor-house.
- Mrs James Normand's treat to the poor and infirm of Dysart took place in the Normand Memorial Hall. There were over 200 attendees together with an armada of town councillors and clergy. A sumptuous tea was enjoyed before entertainment was provided by way of a concert. However, there were so many speeches prior to the concert that Provost Terrace was required to ask that their words be limited or the concert would never start! The evening ended with the National Anthem sung by a choir and as they left each individual was presented with a half pound bag of tea.
- The Raith Gates were festooned with evergreens and flags. Further festivities were to take place on the 21<sup>st</sup> when the Raith Tower was to be illuminated. The flags being flown were the same ones which had flown on the same spot fifty years previously to celebrate Victoria's accession to the throne.
- Robert Stocks & Co. closed their Links Street factory on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> on account of the Jubilee celebrations.
- The first £5 gold sovereign which went into general circulation was issued to celebrate the Jubilee. The *Fife Free Press* of the 18<sup>th</sup> June 1887 reported that some were now in circulation in Kirkcaldy.

**THE CELEBRATIONS IN FIFESHIRE.**

**KIRKCALDY POORHOUSE.**

Mrs Ferguson, of Raith, with her usual thoughtful generosity, has, we learn, made a gift of a small piece of money to each inmate of the Poor-house, with the view of affording any little luxury on the occasion of the jubilee.

A *Fife Free Press* article which appeared on the 23<sup>h</sup> July 1887 must have been another source of frustration to Provost Beveridge. There had been, at best, what could only be described as low key civic celebrations in Kirkcaldy. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of July Kinghorn staged what can only be described as an august day in its long history, when the headline and accompanying illustration declared “For a place like Kinghorn to confer the freedom of its Burgh on two gentlemen, arrange a procession, unveil a monument, open a public park and give a banquet all on the same day is a feat which has seldom been equalled in any Scottish town”.



The monument in question was, of course, that which commemorates the death of Alexander III some 600 years previously. Public subscriptions (including that from the Queen) had helped raise funds to replace the wooden cross which had previously stood on the site. The Earl of Elgin was to unveil the memorial and it was he who also received the Burgess Ticket along with a Mr Nelson.

Mr Nelson, it transpires, was the co-proprietor of Thomas Nelson & Son, the famous Edinburgh-based publishers founded in 1798. His connection with the town was that “during most of the summers of his youth, he lived in Kinghorn with his grandfather and grandmother. He maintained an affection for the town and always ensured that he made a visit to Kinghorn each summer”. Both spoke highly of the town in their acceptance speeches. Nelson was certainly not without friends in high places. No less a personage than Andrew Carnegie attended the function “to support his friend”.

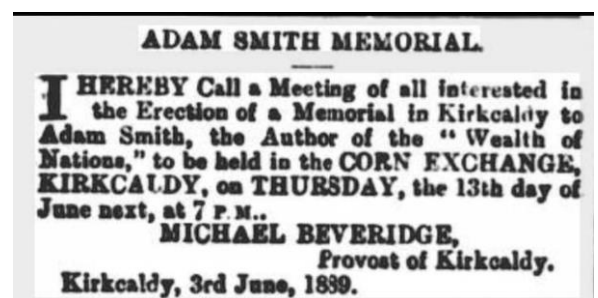
The ceremony over, the parade made its way to the monument where it was unveiled to much cheering. After the singing of the National Anthem, a speech by the Earl and a recital of “Scots Wha Hae” by school children, the parade returned to the town where the

park was opened by Mr Nelson.

The park in question is not a park in the traditional sense but was in fact the town's golf course. The ground had been purchased for £1050 by the Council, laid out by them and a green-keeper engaged. The park was, as mentioned previously, the Town's memorial to the Queen's Jubilee. After Mr Nelson had declared the course officially open, Mr Carnegie spoke a few words but there is no evidence of a gift to the town from his wallet! It would seem that, while not on the same scale as Carnegie, Mr Nelson was celebrated “for putting his surplus wealth to good use”.

The festivities ended with a banquet which Provost Beveridge attended having been a member of the official party. He may have pondered, while singing *Auld Lang Syne*, on how Kinghorn could arrange such spectacular events when Kirkcaldy had singularly failed. Dysart had, by any measure, outshone Kirkcaldy, and now, here was Kinghorn producing a park – the very thing that Beveridge had targetted in his first meeting as Provost. Again we concede that while only supposition, did these events weigh on his mind and influence his thinking when his will was written? Each reader must decide if our suggestion has any basis for belief.

Civic life moved on and Kirkcaldy remained without a park. However, on Saturday the 8<sup>th</sup> June 1889, Michael Beveridge, as Provost, had placed an advertisement in the *Fife Free Press* with the express intention of calling together all individuals who might be interested in Kirkcaldy erecting a memorial to Adam Smith. The advertisement is replicated here. It is clear that the matter had been the subject of prior conversations, the results of which had given the Provost the confidence to call the meeting.



The meeting, which was held on the 13<sup>th</sup> June, was well attended with an audience who had travelled from far, near and wide. Two prominent figures in attendance were Andrew Carnegie and Sandford Fleming. Even at this early stage Michael Beveridge had firm ideas on the shape of the memorial which was to provide “a hall for literary, scientific and general purposes, a prominent feature in it being a statue of Adam Smith, with two smaller halls, one to be a free library”. He went on to reveal that the cost would be around £50,000 as this was intended to be a national memorial and not simply a local one. The Provost went on to say that in terms of raising the sum that “I should never think of appealing to the general public, or rather to the admirers of Adam Smith throughout the country, to support our scheme, unless we were prepared to subscribe liberally to it ourselves first. I am happy to say that, from the promises of local subscriptions we have already received, that our community is fully alive to its duty in the matter, and can therefore, with confidence, ask others for help so that the memorial may be worthy of the great name we seek to honour”.

As Smith had died in July 1790 the centenary of his death was looming large. It is a simple statement of fact that no serious attempt had previously been made to raise a memorial to honour Smith in Kirkcaldy.

Sir George Campbell, the Kirkcaldy MP of the time (1875-1892), tried to justify this glaring omission with “People stoned the prophets of their day. They did not exactly stone Smith, but they took time to learn all he told them. There were many differences of opinion about it; all did not agree with him. Now that 100 years have passed, we can look at his work without mist or prejudice and can see it is very good indeed. We who would now set up a monument to Adam Smith are purer and free from such feelings”.



What is certain is that in the short span of life left to him, Michael Beveridge relentlessly drove forward the plan for a memorial. He had realised that the centenary would fall during his first term in office and that mere words had to be turned into actions. Perhaps, without his dynamic approach, we would be left with only the bust of Smith, presented to the Council in 1851 by Walter Fergus, and Halkett's Close being renamed Adam Smith Close as perceptible recognition. The full story of the Hall was the subject of Object 11 but it deserves mention whenever Michael Beveridge is the subject of a narrative.

As alluded to earlier, Michael Beveridge was not destined to have a long life. As the life of Provost Swan was ebbing away, Michael Beveridge paid a last visit to his predecessor and friend - making his way from Beechwood to St. Brycedale House to do so. It appears that he caught a chill which turned into something far worse and much more dangerous – pleurisy. Although he briefly rallied during his three month illness – *The Kirkcaldy Times* on the 5<sup>th</sup> March 1890 broke the news that Provost Michael Beveridge had died the previous day. Provost Swan had died on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 1889 and his illness had precluded Beveridge from attending the funeral. Who was to know, that less than three months later, Michael Beveridge would follow him to the grave.

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 1**

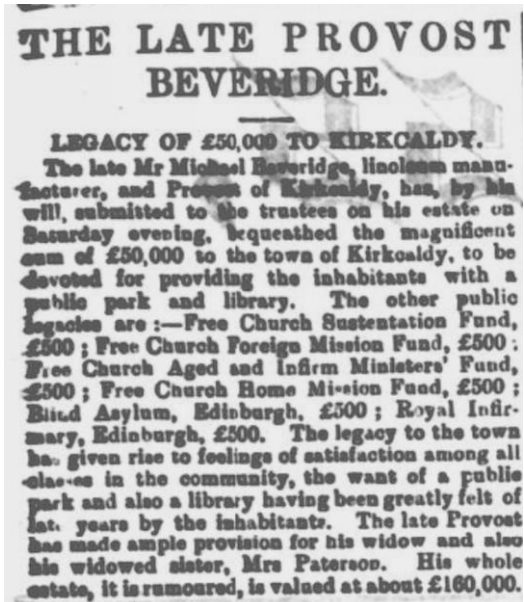
**DEATH OF PROVOST BEVERIDGE,  
KIRKCALDY.**

Kirkcaldy yesterday lost one of its foremost men, in one respect its foremost – Provost Beveridge. The sad event occurred in the afternoon, about a quarter past one o'clock, and gave rise to a profound feeling of regret in the community. Provost Beveridge took ill about three months ago, shortly after a visit to the late ex-Provost Swan. He caught a chill, which was followed by pleurisy, from which he rallied in a few weeks only to suffer a serious relapse, which ultimately developed into disease of the lungs.

*The Fife Free Press* carried a handsome obituary in its issue of the 8<sup>th</sup> March by which time Michael Beveridge had been interred in Bennochty Cemetery. Very surprisingly, given the death had only occurred on the 4<sup>th</sup> the article concluded by announcing that “we are



gratified to learn that the late Provost, who had amassed a splendid fortune, has made a most handsome bequest for public purposes. Particulars are not yet available, but we have reason to believe that his name will be perpetuated in connection with two most laudable objects – a public park for the burgh and a free library”.



The rumour mill was in full swing before further details emerged in the *Fife Free Press* of the 15<sup>th</sup> June. The edition also carried a number of letters already concerned about where the park would be sited. The suitability of the ground was important but equally so was where it could be easily reached by the majority of the inhabitants of the extended burgh. There were, as yet, no trams, no Victoria Viaduct and therefore for the bulk of the population

a lengthy walk was the only option open to them.

The monthly Council Meeting on Monday the 10<sup>th</sup> had been adjourned after the Town Clerk read verbatim the section of the Will which confirmed that £50,000 had been bequeathed to the town. This was contained in **Section four** and read:-

“For payment to the Provost, Magistrates and Town Council of the Burgh of Kirkcaldy, free from all legacy duty, the sum of fifty thousand pounds sterling, which sum the said Provost, Magistrates and Town Council shall expend in such proportions as they think proper in providing a park for the use of the inhabitants of the extended burgh of Kirkcaldy and providing a public meeting hall and free library for the use of the inhabitants of the said extended burgh, and for the permanent upkeep of same, all to be enjoyed by said inhabitants under such rules, regulations and limitations as the said Provost, Magistrates and Town Council may from time to time think proper, and no one shall be entitled in any way to interfere

with said Provost, Magistrates and Town Council in the application of the said fifty thousand pounds or interest thereof, nor shall my trustees be entitled or bound to see to the application thereof, as I have every confidence that the money will be properly applied, the only stipulation that I make being that the money be kept separate and distinct from the burgh funds.” There was loud applause from the chamber.

Subsequent research shows that £35,000 was spent on the two projects – the park and the library. The remaining £15,000 was invested with the intention that the dividends/interest would fund the maintenance of both. As will be shown later in the text – this soon proved to be a false hope.

The only other discussion that evening was the need to elect a new Provost and a meeting was arranged for the following Monday. Bailie Black, the Senior Magistrate, looked to be the most obvious choice. The next week Bailie Black was indeed elevated to the Provost's chair and the matter of the park was remitted to the Finance Committee for consideration and reporting.

On Monday the 24<sup>th</sup> March the Council's Finance Committee had held a meeting to isolate potential sites for the park. *The Fife Free Press* reported on the discussions on the 29<sup>th</sup> March and revealed the sites as:-

- The farm of Sauchenbush on the Bennochly Estate, sloping upwards from the railway station to the Longbraes and the farm cottages. (Lady Massereene)
- Robbie's Park and adjoining land on the farm of Southerton, with entrance near the Raith Gates. (Ronald Ferguson of Raith)
- The ground between the cemetery and Hendry Road on the west and Dunnikier Road on the east from the railway up to Hayfield Farm. (known as Spithead and the property of Mr Oswald of Dunnikier)
- The land to the north of Hayfield, including the Upper Den,

which it is thought might be beautifully laid out. ( Mr Oswald of Dunnikier)

It was thought unlikely that the last mentioned would be available but matters were left until prices etc. could be obtained. Had options one and three been undertaken – the shape of the town, as it is today, would have been dramatically altered.

The newspapers and public opinion were full of suggestions as to where the park would/could best be sited. As mentioned previously the geography of the town created issues for any site to be classed as central and, at a meeting held on the 14<sup>th</sup> April, the *Fife Free Press* revealed that the Town Council would seek advice from Counsel on two points:-

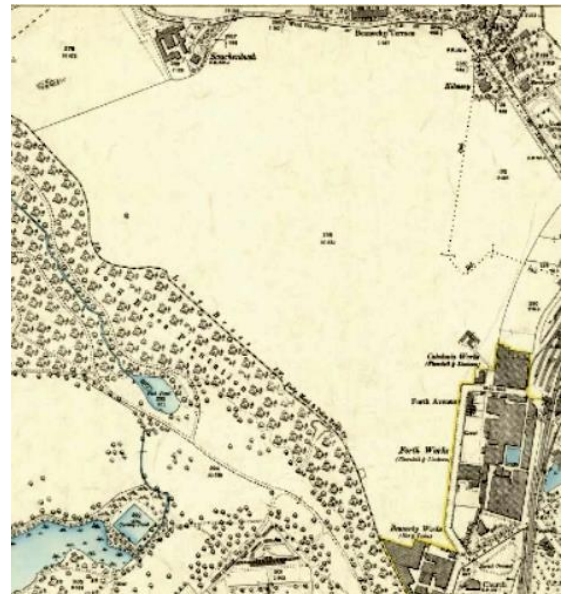
- Can the Council alter the terms of the Will to allow them to provide two parks?
- If the answer is in the negative – can they apply to the Court of Session to have such alteration made?

As it transpired the answer to both questions was no and therefore it was now a question of choosing one from three. Option four had indeed been unacceptable to Mr Oswald.

The culmination of the various visits to sites and the Finance Committee deliberations was reached at a meeting of the full Council on Monday the 23<sup>rd</sup> June. A full report was carried by the *Fife Free Press* in their edition published on the 28<sup>th</sup> of the month. The report reveals that the meeting was also attended by large numbers of the general public. This was a reflection of the interest the park had generated.

**Sauchenbush** was the first to be discussed but the stumbling block

was the price of £225 per acre. The Provost had had discussions with Mr Wynne, who was Lady Massereene's Agent, in the hope that the price might be reduced. While there was agreement that the site was very favourable, the Provost emphasised that the price was of considerable importance. Mr Wynne agreed to revert to the owner to see if there was any possibility of a reduction but none transpired.



Mr Oswald was offering the land at **Spithead** at £150 per acre. Mr Oswald wished to reserve two sides of the park for feuing and wished a carriage road to be constructed inside the park and his Feuers to have access to it. In addition £200 was sought for the Spithead houses and £75 for the recent improvements carried out to them. It seems that the Town Clerk Mr Spears was also Major Oswald's Factor – conflict of interests? As the story unfolds

it seems clear that the portion Oswald wished to reserve caused the issue. He had indicated that, as feuing ground, it was worth £600 per acre. The impression, rightly or wrongly was given/taken that this was the price which would have to be met – if the Council wanted to include this area in the purchase – which they did.

When they arrived at **Southerton** it was so wet that Mr Ferguson's Factor, a Mr Prentice, was asked to send the offer in writing to Mr Spears rather than the group get even wetter.

The offer was £200 per acre but reduced by £50 per acre to defray the costs of setting out the park. However, in addition feuing rights

were to be granted to the Council over around 400 metres of frontage. Firstly, there were 305 metres, or thereby, on the Auchtertool Road towards Southerton (Now Boglily Road} and 82 metres on Mill Road (now Abbotshall Road) the

**Altogether, as to Robbie's Park, Mr Ferguson's terms were the first sent into Mr Spears. These were £150 per acre. In addition, they were to have feuing rights on two sides of the park. On the Auchtertool Road up towards Southerton there would be 1000 feet available for feuing, while on the road going westward to the Railway Bridge, and known as Mill Road, they would have 300 feet for feuing purposes, making 1300 feet of feuing frontage. The sum derived from this source would go very materially towards the upkeep of the park.**

feu duty from these would help offset the upkeep of the park. It was a condition, due to the proximity to Raith Gates, that houses erected on the feu had to :- cost at least £800 to build; be self contained; be detached and be no more than two storeys high. It was a further condition that they should not be seen from Raith House. There was to be no building in either direction within 70 metres of the Raith Gates. From observation it would seem that the detached rule must have applied only to Boglily Road and not both as there are a number of semi-detached properties in Abbotshall Road.

The ground offered would extend to 95 acres and a major positive was that only 25 acres were not already in grass. It was also seen that the existing walkways could easily be widened to make a carriage road which would encircle the park with little loss of acreage. Methven's Pottery had rights to around 30 acres of clay but Ferguson was prepared to pay £500 towards extinguishing these rights. It was also pointed out that the current tenants of the land were subject to a year's notice which would have to be given by Martinmas at the latest. A decision appeared time critical here.

Thus, having heard the terms and conditions it was now time to take a vote but the team were not prepared for what happened next!

Provost Black made the suggestion, just prior to voting, that instead of the normal open vote it was his wish that the vote be by ballot. "he thought that the Council should be protected in giving their vote, seeing the great amount of public feeling that existed with regard to this question". This seems to stem from his concern for men of business where they might discover, to their cost, how they voted

could have a detrimental effect on their livelihood. This had apparently been the fate of some members of Edinburgh Town Council when granting the Freedom of Edinburgh to Irish politician Charles Parnell. Some shopkeepers had lost their whole business/living as a result of being boycotted and this had transpired during the previous year.

This led to an immediate spat with Baillie Halliday who condemned it as unconstitutional before then accusing the Provost of saying more about the Raith site than any other – more or less accusing the Provost of being biased. Without stopping, Halliday went on to say that he would have opposed this site, even if the cost had been 6d per acre – it was not central! “They were there in the interests of the public and therefore they ought to vote in a public manner, so that the public might see how their representatives had looked after their interests”.

The Provost responded by revealing that having taken the advice of the Town Clerk – there was nothing unconstitutional about a ballot. He followed up with a further explanation for his proposal – which clearly showed, in his eyes, the public's depth of feeling at the time – “his only reason for the proposal he made was out of consideration for those who were more dependent on the public, especially seeing the great amount of feeling that existed on the matter, as he did not think it right that they should be subjected to any trouble, loss or inconvenience by their vote”.

He then turned to the remark made by Bailie Halliday classing it “unworthy of him” and made a spirited defence of his actions, stressing the amount of effort he had put into the Spithead site. It does seem that it was felt that Halliday had made his remark in temper and that “when Bailie Halliday had time to think over the little temper which he had thrown into the meeting he would lament that he had used the Provost in the way he had done”.

Without a shadow of doubt no one bar Halliday had initially questioned the Provost's actions but before moving on Black again refuted any accusation that “ he had given far more attention to the Robbie's Park site than I had given to the other sites and you led the Council to believe that I had been biased in favour of that park and had done my best to bias others in favour of it”.

That brought this argument to an end and the final words prior to the vote came from Provost Black;- “a certain party in the burgh had said that if they did not adopt a certain park there would be bloodshed in the town. If such is the feeling that is prevalent it is all the more necessary that I should wish to preserve my fellow councillors from harm”. This seemed a tad overstating the situation and it brought some laughter.

The vote was taken and 18 voted in favour of the ballot with 7 coming down on the side of an open vote.

The result of the ballot itself was clear cut and was as follows:-

- |                 |    |
|-----------------|----|
| • Robbie's Park | 16 |
| • Spithead      | 7  |
| • Sauchenbush   | 2  |

So, Robbie's Park won the day and a committee comprising of the Magistrates together with Councillors Westwater, Hutchison and Lockhart were formed to organise the purchase.

However, that was far from the end of it and again we emphasise it was the location which was the question – had the tramcars been in operation it is unlikely matters would have been so inflamed and heated. The Council followed the self same path some years later with the choice of site for the Adam Smith Halls – yes, central in location and proximity to the railway station but for Pathhead, St.Clairtown and Gallatown, not quite so! History repeating itself?

The above report had taken most of the edition's page 2 but the leader writer on page 4 was taking issue with the decision. It was well written and while the writer accepted that under the terms of the Will - "The Town Council, though they might have chosen to take the opinion of their constituents on the subject, possessed for themselves entire control to select and buy. They were the sole trustees in the matter, whose decision was to be final, unchallengeable and therefore unalterable. Invested with such power, and acting in the public interest – that is for the good of all – it was all the more necessary they should have taken the mind of the community in the matter".

To his credit the writer admitted that "by doing so they would not have been able to satisfy all parties but they would have prevented a large class of the community from feeling, and from saying that they had been unfairly and ungenerously dealt with, which was never the intention of the donor".

The writer conceded that the chosen site would make a magnificent park but that "the other sites possessed excellent qualities as well, and were more accessible to a large number of the inhabitants". Again the site is the contentious issue.

#### THE PARK QUESTION.

THE SITE of the future public park for the burgh has at last been settled. It is not the most central, nor the next central, but the very least central of the three sites offered. For centrality Spithead was really the spot, Bennochty being next in order; but that quality so important for a burgh of the well-known length of our "Lang Toon" has been made subordinate to some other points of excellence—at all events we hope they are so. A vote of the Town Council, on the ballot principle, taken on Monday evening, decided that the land on the Raith estate, known as "Robbie's Park," and consisting of nearly one hundred acres, should form the future public park for Kirkealdy.

The conclusion to the piece was that "it was not the most central, nor was it the next central, but the least central of the three sites offered. For centrality Spithead was really the spot, Bennochty being next in order; but that quality so important for a burgh of the well-known length of our "Lang Toun" has been made subordinate to some other points of excellence – at all events we hope that they are so".

Before the publication of the *Fife Free Press* on the 5<sup>th</sup> July matters were becoming more and more heated. The paper was consistent in



its message that the wrong site had been chosen – it was conceded that the selected site was the most attractive but Spithead, with some work, could be made to run it close, while, in terms of being central it had no equal. The paper looked at the Town's three Wards and concluded their positions as being:-

- “In the **First Ward**, which had been specially favoured, and is thankful, it is rightly regarded as the consummation of all wisdom.
- In the **Second Ward**, which would have been quite pleased with Spithead the choice of very many, Robbie's Park is viewed as extremely doubtful, and the hasty action of the Council is unfair.
- In the **Third Ward** there is but one opinion, namely, that the late Provost would have chosen the park in some accommodating situation for the inhabitants of the district, whereas the Magistrates and Council have made a choice quite the reverse.

Again, the article hammered home that to all intents and purposes the Third Ward was being denied access to the late Provost's bequest. “If they care to study that voice, the Council may yet be led to consider their position in relation to their constituents, of which for the time being they appear to have lost sight”. There was then a direct appeal to the Council that:- “The Trustees of the late Provost Beveridge in the disposal of his handsome legacy, should remember that they are also the trustees of those the late Provost intended to benefit, those who elected them to office as councillors, and that an obligation rested on them in the difficult and responsible work that they were called upon to perform to make sure they were acting without favour, as without fear, in the interests of all”.

Yet another page carried a full report of an Indignation Meeting held

in Pathhead Halls on the previous Tuesday. The hall was crowded and the Pathhead Band had marched the streets for half-an-hour prior to the meeting and the atmosphere was described as “a great deal of feeling and excitement seemed to prevail”. There was a significant number in the platform party which included – Dean of Guild Fraser, Bailie Halliday and two councillors – Messrs Robertson and Nicholson. Halliday was proclaimed Chairman and began on the well-trodden path of unfairness. That said he did concede that the Spithead site would be “susceptible to adornment, and in the course of time, with a little alteration, it might have been converted into a beautiful park”. It therefore seems that for natural beauty Robbie's Park held sway. Having exhausted the question of the site – he then turned his attention to the hall and library - “the balance of the money, they knew, after paying for the park was to go to endow a library. They would be lucky if the library was more accessible to them than Robbie's Park was”.

## THE PUBLIC PARK QUESTION.

### INDIGNATION MEETING AT PATHHEAD.

Considerable dissatisfaction still exists amongst the Third Ward inhabitants at the manner in which they have been treated, with reference to the selection of the public park by the Town Council, left by the late Provost Beveridge. On Tuesday a large indignation meeting was held in the Public Hall. The hall was crowded. The Pathhead Band paraded the streets for half an hour before the advertised hour of meeting, and a good deal of feeling and excitement seemed to prevail. On the platform were Dean of Guild Fraser, Councillors Robertson and Nicholson; Messrs G. Smart, A. Beveridge, J. Blyth, W. Williamson, A. Bogie, Jas. Lister, Jas. Orr, Alex. Fraser, jun., Peter Allison, A. Melville, W. Anderson, W. Ness, jun., W. Walker, K. M'Kenzie, J. Leitch, A. Petrie, and D. Ainalie.

On the motion of Mr M'Kenzie, seconded by Mr W. Anderson, Bailie Halliday was called upon to preside.

SIR,—The writer, on behalf of a large section of the ratepayers in Kirkcaldy, shall esteem it a great favour if you will be good enough to give us your opinion anent the following:—The late Provost Beveridge bequeathed a large sum to provide a public park for the inhabitants of the extended burgh of Kirkcaldy, and vested the power to select a site for same with the Town Council. The Councillors at their meeting took the vote by means of the ballot. Is it legal to take a vote in Town Council by means of the ballot box? Your reply before Monday will be a great favour. Thanking you in anticipation, I am, yours faithfully,  
W. Ness, Junr.

He then took a different tack which was the questioning of the ballot – he considered it possibly illegal. A number of letters and telegrams had been sent out, by a Mr W. Ness, a local draper, to seek the opinions of others and a copy of the letter is

shown here for interest. A raft of replies was received and some of these were:-

- David Marwick, the Town Clerk of Glasgow, believed that in

the absence of express statutory provision, he did not consider it a legal mode of ascertaining the opinion of the Town Council.

William Skinner, the Town Clerk of Edinburgh, had “Never known of a vote being taken in a Town Council except openly”.

- The Town Clerk of Dundee considered “vote by ballot in your Town Council illegal”.

As each reply was read out the cheering grew louder. It then fell to Peter Allison, a Gallatown schoolmaster, to take a reasoned view and he would also appear to be the architect of the resolution which was finally produced. Allison made a very telling point which the meeting fully supported - “As to the desirability of a central site, the people of Gallatown could not be expected to go away down to Robbie's Park to enjoy an hour or two. Was it reasonable to expect anything of the kind, or even to go to Sinclairtown station and get a return ticket, and on arriving at Kirkcaldy station walk along Abbotshall Road to the park, and then hurry back to catch the train again and perhaps lose it? Why, to trudge home would in itself swallow up all the pleasure”. He was certainly both reasoned and articulate and he accepted that with the shape of the town people at the extremities would expect to have a longish walk to the park but to have the park at an extremity was nonsense.

Allison had marshalled a number of reasons why he believed that the late Provost would not have supported Robbie's Park and would look towards Spithead – the sight closest to the Third Ward.

- The money to pay for the park was earned in Pathhead (Shepherd and Beveridge were established there)
- The greater portion of the Provost's public life was in the Ward. (He was a Third Ward Councillor)

- Michael Beveridge had been reared in Pathhead. (Harriet Street)
- He had been the Chairman of the Third Ward School Board.
- His great interest to the last was in the affairs of the Third Ward.
- His home, Beechwood, was close to Spithead and he had spent many hours walking in the area.

To be honest the opening remarks by Bailie Halliday and then Peter Allison were subsequently articulated, time without number, by the remainder of the speakers if only using different words. All suggested that they were looking for no favours or specific privileges but to be fairly treated as part of the extended burgh.

There was however a dark side to some of the arguments, especially one which was advanced by Mr Allison, and that was - “another point, to him the saddest of them all, was the consequence it might have on the feelings of the burgh in times to come. This was the bitter feeling which would be engendered if the Council's resolution was carried out”.

It is difficult to count the number of times Provost Black was criticised as was Councillor Kinlay. Black especially suffered through his advancement of the ballot with the comment that “they had in abundance toleration for the difference of opinion provided it were openly and honestly expressed, but they could have no toleration for opinions secretly voted upon”.

A Mr Williamson had noted that he had seen Provost Black in Pathhead the previous week and commented to much laughter that was “like an angel's visit – few and far between”. Even the Town Clerk, Mr Spears, was accused of “Sneeringly saying that the Third Ward people could get down for a penny”. (via the Railway)

Councillor Kinlay had written to the meeting having decided that there was little point in his appearing. He made what is a valid point in that, under the terms of the Will, the Council/Councillors were left free to determine where the park should be. He had made his decision to the best of his ability and had nothing more to say at that stage. He was clear that “meantime in the circumstances of intense excitement such as at present exists, it is utterly impossible that any arguments or defence, however good, could obtain a fair hearing or consideration”.

As one of the late Provost Beveridge's trustees—(laughter)—I was left free to exercise my judgment in the choice of a park, and having done so to the best of my ability I have nothing more to say on the subject, yet at the proper time and place, and out of my usual courtesy to my constituents—(laughter)—I may give a reason for my action. Meantime you must be aware that in circumstances of intense excitement such as at present exists, it is utterly impossible that any arguments or defence, however good, could obtain a fair hearing or consideration.

There were clear suggestions that although, up to this point, Kinlay had been considered a good representative for the Ward – a veiled threat to try and unseat him at the next election hung in the air. Despite the rhetoric, we note that Councillor Kinlay retained his seat throughout the 1890s – so tempers did cool down in time.

The resolution which had been prepared by Mr Allison was described as being in two parts – appreciation and condemnation. It read as follows:- “*That this meeting records its high appreciation of the munificent gift of the late esteemed Provost Beveridge for the purpose, among other things, of providing a public park for the extended burgh of Kirkcaldy, but expresses its deep regret and dissatisfaction at the actions of deciding to purchase Robbie's Park, which on account of its position, must to a great extent defeat the benevolent intention of the late Provost, and because this decision is fitted to engender unkindly feeling in the different districts of the burgh, the very opposite of what was exemplified by the worthy donor, and what every person, especially those in authority, should seek to prevent*”.

However that in itself was insufficient to satisfy the meeting and a

further resolution was proposed and seconded. It read as follows  
*“This meeting deprecates the haste with which the Town Council have resolved to purchase Robbie's Park, and respectfully trusts that, in a matter of such importance, every available means should have been taken to ascertain the wishes of the inhabitants of the extended burgh before the Council finally decided on so momentous a question”*.

The final proposal which was proposed by a William Walker and seconded by an Andrew Melville was that *“copies of the foregoing resolutions be sent to W. Roy Spears, Esq., Town Clerk, Kirkcaldy, to be submitted to, and considered by the Town Council before the approval of the minute of the special meeting of the Council on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 1890.*

With that approval the meeting closed, it is nigh on impossible, without reading the full page article, to convey the depth of feeling which was aroused. In the letter's page of the same edition there was a defence of Councillor Kinlay by *“One Who was Present”*. It

I was sorry to see and listen to the mushroom-like exhibitions of a yeung man attempting to ridicule Councillor Kinlay at the public meeting. It seemed to me as if between Pathhead Sands and the Mill Dam he could not collect enough of mud to throw at him. He managed to raise a laugh now and again as he laboured to bedaub the painter, but I am not sure, on reviewing what he said, if it was really at Mr Kinlay's expense or at his own. It is pitiable at any time to see full-blown egotism in the eye, on the tongue, and in the attitude, and especially so in the form of a yeung man across whose chin no razor has yet passed. The demeanour of that gentleman

perhaps does give a stark and clear indication of the temperature reached inside the hall when reading the following excerpt - “I was sorry to see and hear the mushroom-like exhibitions of a young man attempting to

ridicule Councillor Kinlay at the public meeting. It seemed to be that between Pathhead Sands and the Mill Dam he could not collect enough mud to throw at him. He managed to raise a laugh now and again as he laboured to bedaub the painter, but I am not sure, on reviewing what he said, if it was really at Mr Kinlay's expense or his own. It is pitiable at any time to see full-blown egotism in the eye, on the tongue, and in the attitude, and especially so in the form of a young man across whose chin no razor has yet passed”.

Councillor Kinlay had also written a withering response to the young man's efforts to demean him. It turned out this was the draper and tailor, Mr W. Ness, who was mentioned earlier. Kinlay was quite complimentary in some of his writings - "The Indignation Meeting from the Third Ward point of view was a decided success. The speakers were brilliant as well as pungent, and without taking into account any possible traitors on their own platform, the supposed traitors outside their circle were severely handled. That fellow Kinlay, of course, was made a special target of and the pantaloons of the company, with tape line and shears, made it his "special" duty to straight away measure and mince up his helpless customer in a style that evoked the risibilities of the purely fun-loving portion of his auditors. Regarding the ordinary orators I have little to say; they did fairly well, and even their little rubs amounted to fair compliments, but the buffoonery element was undoubtedly the attraction of the evening".

The Letters Page certainly carried a variety of opinions with one from *Robbie's Park* highlighting the need for work to be carried out at Spithead while "the Devine Architect has laid out Robbie's Park beautifully and ready for the use it will soon be put to". He then asked "if it would be a greater grievance for the people of Pathhead to come to Robbie's Park than for those from the Links to go to Spithead, a bit of land so poor and altogether free from beauty and adaption."

**The divine Architect has laid out Robbie's Park beautifully and ready for the use it will soon be put to. Next consider, I pray you, whether it would be a greater wrong or grievance for the Pathhead people to come to Robbie's Park, with all its natural beauties and advantages, than it would be for the Links people to go to Spithead, a bit of land so poor and altogether free from beauty and adaptation? That is the question.**

**ROBBIE'S PARK.**

*The Voice of the People* took the Pathhead stance and was demanding that no further action be taken in relation to the park until such time as the inhabitants of the burgh were consulted.

It has to be kept in mind that this was 1890 which was only 14 years after Pathhead became part of the extended burgh. There were still parochial tendencies in the areas that were subsumed. The Third Ward certainly felt, in this matter, they had been unfairly treated. The letters were simply a reflection of the divisions prevalent in the town. While it would be possible to quote from more letters, in reality, it would serve little purpose as the arguments which they contained have all been aired previously.

*The Fife Free Press* covered the final battle in their edition of the 19<sup>th</sup> July 1890 when the Council Meeting of the previous Monday was covered in great detail. Every member of the Council was present and local interest was so heightened that every seat in the public area was taken, some were standing and the door to the chamber remained open in order that those on the stairs could hear the debate. More still had to remain outside in the street.

It was the Town Clerk, Mr W.R. Spears, who spoke first and reaffirmed his previous advice that as long as there is no regulation by statute, charter or deed of constitution, then there was nothing to prevent the use of the ballot. What had been done was legal.

The next item on the agenda was the resolutions from the Indignation Meeting. Once again the same arguments were aired and as members spoke, there was a mixture of hissing, booing and applause from the public gallery. Such was the extent of the noise that Provost Black indicated that if this behaviour did not cease he would have the police clear the gallery.

Provost Black spoke at some length on “it had been urged in the newspaper press and at the so called Indignation Meeting that he had had his eyes on Robbie's Park, and that he had been doing everything in his power to secure that site as the public park. He wished to state that he had done nothing of the kind, and that if people did not believe him they would surely believe the minutes



taken from Mr Spear's book. In consequence of the remarks made against him, from all quarters, that he was making a conspiracy to buy and obtain Robbie's Park in preference to all others, he wished to lay everything before the public and leave honest minded men to say whether he had done what was honourable in trying to secure the best terms for the public park". He went on to quote at length from the Minute Book.

Astonishingly, Bailie Halliday again went on the attack by suggesting that the matter of the park "had not been remitted to Provost Black personally, but to a sub-committee. As far as he (Bailie Halliday) was concerned he had never been consulted in the matter. Provost Black had taken this upon himself". The tone was set and it was Councillor Robertson who proposed the motions which had emanated from the Indignation Meeting. The terms were clear meaning that if the motion was adopted it would mean a lengthy delay while "every available means should be taken to ascertain the wishes of the inhabitants of the extended burgh before the Council finally decided on so momentous a question" - however that might be done?

There followed fairly heated and robust arguments which only came to an end with an intervention by Councillor Westwater. His proposal was that "*in view of the differences of opinion in the legality of the ballot vote taken at the last meeting on the public park question, said vote and its result be rescinded; the whole question be opened up again for discussion, and an open vote on the respective sites be taken thereafter*".

After a good deal of persuasion, Councillor Robertson agreed to let his motion drop in favour of Councillor Westwater's which was as follows:—"That in view of the differences of opinion regarding the legality of the ballot vote taken last meeting on the public park question, said vote and its result be rescinded; that the whole question be again opened up for discussion, and an open vote on the respective sites taken thereafter."

After a great deal of persuasion, Councillor Robertson agreed to drop his resolution in favour of that of Councillor Westwood. Councillor Gourlay then enquired, if the motion

were adopted, would he be in order to propose that the whole idea

be settled only after a plebiscite of the inhabitants was taken? The answer to that, based on the terms of the Will, was an emphatic no.

Councillor Westwater's amendment was successful by 18 votes to 8, with Bailie Barnet abstaining. So, the whole can of worms was open and up for discussion once again. Would an open vote produce a radically different result from the secret ballot?

The three sites were discussed at length once more and unsurprisingly there was little new in any of the arguments. The fact is that the best site was Robbie's Park and the most central Spithead. The major plus for Spithead was the views which could be obtained. However, all seemed to agree that what they wanted was "an attractive place where all classes of people could sit and enjoy themselves". John

Tait, who went on to become Provost, made the telling observation that the money was not for a public park alone and it would be wrong to spend more than

**And further, they had to remember that the £50,000 was not left for a public park alone, but for a library and hall as well. Seeing the money was to be divided amongst the three objects, he held that they had no right to spend £100 more on one object that would detract from the other two. They might have a good library, with a branch in Pathhead. (Laughter and hisses, and a voice—"Hear the sop.")**

was necessary on the park and that in Robbie's Park they were getting the best bargain. This salient point had until then hardly featured, if at all. It quite possibly did focus the minds of the members on the full picture rather than a portion.

Councillor Westwater dismissed the Sauchenbush site, on cost alone, as it was £7000 dearer. He fully accepted that the people of Pathhead were justified in their discontent and suggested that "if it were legal, he would attempt to get a local branch of the library in Pathhead, and, even if there were two or three sites available for a public hall and library, he would be inclined to accept the one nearest the Third Ward if it were suitable, and all other things were equal".

Bailie Barnet, another who eventually sat in the Provost's chair, was voting for Robbie's Park on the basis it was far and away the best site although not central, and had it been the other way round, and the best site been at the top of Gallatown, he would have voted as readily for it. It was also the cheapest option. He then supported John Tait's observation - "Provost Beveridge has not only enjoined them not only to provide a park, but they were to provide a public hall and a library, which in his opinion, were far more crying necessities than a park. (applause.) Robbie's Park he contended would also be self supporting".

The vote was then taken and was as follows:-

**Robbie's Park. 17**– Provost Black; Bailies Dowie, Barnet and Nicol; Treasurer Yule; Councillors Hunter, Beattie, Leishman, Rodger, Thomson, Rough, Westwater, Ramsay, Tait, Lockhart, Kinlay and Hutchison.

**Spithead. 8** – Baillie Halliday; Dean of Guild Fraser; Councillors Gourlay, Cornfoot, Birrell, Nicholson, Robertson and Skinner.

**Sauchenbush. 2** – Councillors Dale and Gillespie.

Therefore despite the open vote, all the hostility and resentment – all that had happened is the result had hardly altered.

The result was received with applause from a section of the audience as it was agreed to purchase Robbie's Park.

However, Bailie Halliday remarked that "I admit that the vote was fairly taken. I have no fault to find with that, but I beg to protest against the purchase of this site from Provost Beveridge's bequest".

This was followed by Councillor Roberson intimating that "I beg to protest against the decision of the Council likewise".

The last rites of the meeting were carried out and -

“The agreement, for the purchase was then read over, and ordered to be signed in the name of the Council”.

“It was also agreed to offer Messrs Methven £1000 for their clay rights, it being explained that would only be £500 they would have to pay, as Mr Ferguson was giving the other £500”.

“The matter was remitted to the Parks Committee, who were also instructed to consider the question of the laying out of the park”.

The final paragraph of the report on the momentous meeting observed that “A large crowd of people had assembled outside the Town Hall to hear the result, and the greatest excitement was prevalent throughout the town over the decision.

There soon followed another spat, this time, played out in the Letters Page of the *Fife Free Press*. It seems bad and bad enough that a Bailie and the Chief Magistrate had had such a vociferous fall-out in the Council Chamber which was subsequently reported by the newspapers. What was more astonishing was that a major

landowner, in the shape of J.T. Oswald, and Provost Black crossed swords in the letters column. Did Mr Oswald have a genuine grievance or was he disappointed that his land was not chosen?

On the 21<sup>st</sup> July, Oswald had written a letter to the Provost which was also published on the 26<sup>th</sup>. His tones were brusque and indicated that he had not said the words which the Provost attributed to him at the full Council Meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup>. The words centred around the purchase

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

##### THE PUBLIC PARK.

(To the Editor of the Fife Free Press.)

DEAR SIR,—I observe, at a meeting of the Town Council of Kirkcaldy, reported in your paper of the 19th July, that Provost Black stated that I offered the land (that I had reserved outside the proposed Spithead Park) to the deputation which I met at Mr Spears' office at £600 an acre. I wish, in justice to myself, to say that I never intended to sell the land I reserved. I have no doubt that I said that that land was worth £600 an acre, and considering that I shall probably see considerable portions of it at from £30 to £35 an acre, I do not think I over-estimated its value.

Most fortunately for me, I requested Mr Spears to make a memorandum of the offer I had made. This I did, and I enclose it to you for publication, requesting you to return it to me at Dunsicker. You will observe that there is not one word of any offer of mine to sell land at £600 per acre.

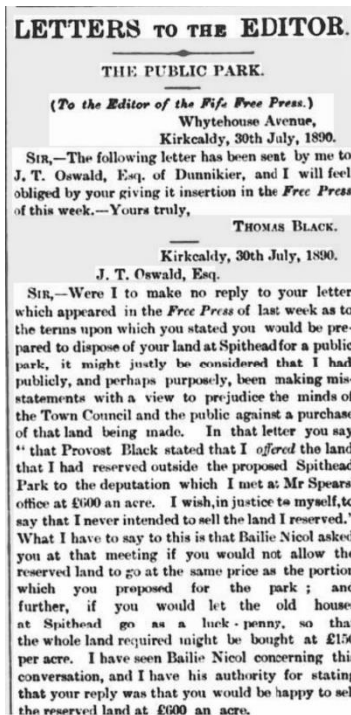
With regard to the Provost's remarks about the proposed roads, I again refer you to Mr Spears' memorandum. I believe that an arrangement could have been easily and fairly made between the Town Council and myself, by which my fears and the rest of the community might have mutually made use of these roads.

price, the land he wished to hold back for feuing and the proposed carriageways. As mentioned earlier, Oswald had indicated it being worth £600 per acre for feuing purposes but strenuously denied he had ever considered selling it - while the Provost had taken it as the price which would have to be paid. The Provost and the Committee considered that without this extra land – the site was not suitable. In his letter Oswald also claimed that “I do not consider that the respective merits of the two sites were fairly brought before the Town Council. Had the Provost treated me with the same courtesy he showed to Mr Munro-Ferguson, and asked for any explanation of my offer, the vote might have been different, and more in accordance with the wishes of our late esteemed Provost\*, and with the feelings of the majority of the inhabitants of the extended burgh”.

\* this is certainly erroneous – the Provost made no mention of any preference at any time.

Provost Black was not taking this lying down and he responded by replying directly to Mr Oswald as well as providing the *Fife Free Press* with a copy, which they published on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August. He refuted every claim that Mr Oswald made and in very strong terms. He was able to rely on the corroboration of Bailie Nicol to support much of his response but ended by indicating that most of the members had visited each of the sites and, twice now, Robbie's Park had been the clear choice.

In the edition of the 9<sup>th</sup> of August both had letters printed. They had written to each other yet again with neither giving an inch. However, Oswald ended his letter with “I shall not prolong this correspondence, and as you sent your letter to me to the newspapers, I shall do the same, but as far as I am concerned, the correspondence must now cease. The Provost once again defended each and every step he had taken and again totally refuted he had been in favour of Robbie's Park from the first.



The trouble was that the letters had set off a chain reaction within the Third Ward and once again letters piled in hoping to destabilise the earlier decision. Councillor Robertson was at the forefront of the agitation and was especially exercised by the fact that Mr Oswald had not been asked for a written offer. In simple terms Mr Spears (also Mr Oswald's legal agent) had always maintained that Mr Oswald's *word was his bond*. It was clear that the Committee believed that a request for written details was unnecessary from a man of such stature.. Again, Black was forceful in his reply dismissing Robertson's suggestion that he had failed in his duty to write to Mr Oswald, as instructed on the 16<sup>th</sup> June, seeking a written offer for the price sought for the Spithead land. He maintained that no such instruction was given to him and that in any event that duty would have been the responsibility of the clerk – Mr Spears. Black ended by also indicating that “As a final remark, I have to say that in consequence of the absurd statements which have been made so persistently, through the medium of the press and otherwise, concerning my conduct on the park question, I shall take no notice on any communications which may appear on that subject”.

So, neither Mr Oswald or Provost Black were prepared to say any more – the spat came to an end and the business of purchasing and laying out the park finally got under way.



Try as the team might, we were unable to discover any photographs of the opening in either of the local newspapers. The best alternative is the sketch shown here which was taken from the Edinburgh Evening News on opening day. The key presented to Mrs Beveridge is also included and the short notes confirm that it was the work of Mr Constable. More on the key is included later in the story.

*The Fife Free Press* of Saturday the 24<sup>th</sup> September 1892 carried the timetable of the arrangements which would be in place for the opening of the Beveridge Park that afternoon. The day would begin with a procession, the meeting place being the Burgh School, with the marshalling carried out in the playground. The line of the procession was as follows:- Kirkcaldy Trades Band; the Volunteers; Provost, Magistrates and Town Council; Harbour Commissioners; School Board; Water Commissioners; Pathhead Brass Band; Forrester's; Working Lads' Institute Band; Free Gardeners; Ancient Order of Shepherds; Boys' Brigade Band; Linen Industry; Gas Company and Dunnikier Band. By kind permission of the Colonel, the Kirkcaldy troop of the Fife Light Horse would muster and take part in the procession.

The route would be eastwards to Coal Wynd – along the High Street – then up Nicol Street to the Park. At the entrance gate Mrs Beveridge would be waiting to carry out the opening ceremony, thereafter the circuitous procession gathers at the bandstand, where a programme of speeches would be undertaken after the formal opening:-

- Prayer by Rev. Bruce Beveridge Begg, the Minister of Abbotshall.
- Band will play the “Old 100”.
- Provost Black will introduce Mrs Beveridge.
- Mrs Beveridge will declare the public park open and give it the name of the Beveridge Park.
- The Band to play “Ye Banks and Braes”.
- Provost Black to give a vote of thanks to Mrs Beveridge.
- Band will play “Scots Wha Hae”.
- Mr Ferguson of Raith will give an address.
- Band will play “The Flowers o' the Forest”.
- Mr Dalziel M.P. will give an address.
- The Rev. Dr Baxter will perform the benediction.
- The Band will play the National Anthem.

There would then be a cake and wine banquet in the Town Hall over which Provost Black would preside. The day's events would end with a fireworks display in the park which was timed for 7.30pm. The public works were to close early on the opening day and

**OPENING OF BEVERIDGE PUBLIC PARK  
ON SATURDAY, 24<sup>TH</sup> INST.**

**NOTICE.**

**I**N order to enable the Employees of the Public Works to attend the Opening Ceremony, the PROVOST, MAGISTRATES, and TOWN COUNCIL recommend that the Works be CLOSED at 12 o'clock Noon; and also that the Shops be CLOSED from Two to Five o'clock.

**W. R. SPEARS, Town Clerk.**

**NOTE** — Public Bodies and others wishing to take part in the Procession are requested to meet at the BURGH SCHOOL, not later than 2.15 P.M.

some had decided not to open at all. Many of the shopkeepers were intending to close their business during the afternoon of the 24<sup>th</sup>.

The paper's leader writer had naturally picked up his pen to mark the momentous occasion and this time there were no harsh words over the choice of the site. The article was effusive in its praise and included lines such as “the desire to possess a public park for the district had again and again found expression, but few believed that the esteemed Provost, dying in harness, in the prime of his days, had solved the problem for the community. Out of his magnificent bequest of £50,000 for specified local purposes, the public spirited Provost ordained that a park be provided for the use of the inhabitants of his native town. He had considerately laid to heart the needs of those who toiled midst the heat and smells in his own and neighbouring public works, and the fact that the general community, large and growing, possessed really no piece of ground, saving the beach, upon which they might roam at will, or meet for the purposes of recreation. He saw the greatness of the want, which he also saw lay in his power to make good, and most nobly he discharged his self-imposed duty”.

The paper considered that “the legacy of a public park which he bequeathed to his native town, is one by which his good name, ever associated with honour and integrity, will be remembered. From its



imposing nature, large and grand, enclosing a free space of 110 acres, the Beveridge Park will speak for all time of its donor's unstinted liberality”.

With the preparations seemingly well in hand, we can move forward by a week when, the *Fife Free Press* of the 1<sup>st</sup> October carried a report on the opening festivities. The team had anticipated significant column inches being devoted to the subject but, in reality, not quite a full page was needed to contain the article.

The initial paragraph carried a description of the site and confirmed that the price paid had been £150 per acre. The park was described as being “situated near the Raith Gates, at the extreme west end of the burgh. The greater part of the ground is almost level, and there is a gradual rise to the west side, so that from the top of the slope there is a good view, over the town and of the Firth of Forth. An ornamental pond, covering eight acres, has been made in the centre of the park. The ground is in the process of being laid out with walks and shrubbery. A handsome bandstand has been erected at the foot of the slope, and within the grounds near the eastern gateways are a couple of prettily designed cottages for the gardener and ranger”.

It would certainly seem that the programme was strictly adhered to and went like clockwork. This was attributed to the efforts of James Cook - the person responsible for marshalling the procession and getting it underway. The weather was sunny which had to be a bonus.

The procession was led by the Fife Light Horse and the town's Artillery and Rifle Volunteers. The Kirkcaldy Trades Band separated the Light Horse from the Volunteers. There followed a long line of carriages which carried the officials and dignitaries up to and including the Water Commissioners. Pathhead Brass Band led the remainder of the procession who were all on foot. The lengthy procession followed the route described earlier and the

paper reported that the route “was densely crowded by spectators”.

**Mrs Beveridge was in waiting in company with Miss Stocks, Mrs Patterson, and Mr J. Stocks, Alva. The Provost received Mrs Beveridge. After passing through the gateway, the lengthy procession filed round the park, the Fife Light Horse under the command of Captain Munro Ferguson and Lieutenant Prentice leading the way. This part of the proceedings occupied some time, but the immense crowd waited round the bandstand, the centre of interest, with exemplary patience.**

Mrs Beveridge (nee Stocks) along with her sister Miss Stocks; Mr John Stocks (her brother) and Mrs Patterson (the late Provost's sister) were on

hand to meet the Provost at the park gates\*. Mrs Beveridge was handed a key with which she opened the gates and the whole procession filed in. The procession carried out a complete circuit of the park before arriving at the bandstand. The length of the procession “meant that this part of the proceedings took some time, but the immense crowd awaited round the bandstand, the centre of interest, with exemplary patience”.

\* the plaques on the gates were not in place at that stage – they followed later.

No time was lost in carrying out the important part of the day. It was estimated that “a crowd of 10,000 surged and swayed around the bandstand in endeavouring to hear the speeches”. The Provost introduced Mrs Beveridge and, just prior to her declaring the park formally open, he presented her with a key as a memento of the occasion. The key was a duplicate, in gold, of that which Mrs Beveridge had used to earlier open the park gates. On one side was the coat-of-arms of the town of Kirkcaldy, and on the other the crest of the late Provost. The key carried an inscription which read “Presented to Mrs Beveridge, of Beechwood, on her opening the Beveridge Public Park, 24<sup>th</sup> Sept 1892.” The applause at this time was long and loud. The key which was presented to Mrs Beveridge is shown in the photograph. Nine years later, Mrs Beveridge was



presented with another golden key, this time marking the opening of the Adam Smith and Beveridge Halls.

After the formal opening it was time for the speeches with Provost Black leading the way – his theme was “For a long series of years almost the only ground the people of this town had at their disposal for

cur to hear the speeches. On the stand a large contingent of ladies and gentleman had assembled, Provost Black of Kirkcaldy presided, and had on his right Mrs Beveridge. Amongst other ladies present were, Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, Mrs Black, Mrs Steeks, Mrs Dale, Mrs Paterson, Mrs Black, Mrs Spears, Mrs Callender. The gentlemen included— Mr R. C. Munro Ferguson, M.P., Mr Dalziel, M.P., the Rev. B. B. Begg, the Rev. Dr Baxter, the Rev. Mr Callender, Mr Aitken of Tyrie ; Provost Terrace, by art ; Provost Smith, Kinghorn ; the members of Town Council. &c.

recreation purposes has been confined to the sea shore and the highways. But thanks to the kind consideration and the munificent bequest of our late highly esteemed Provost, Michael Beveridge Esq., of Beechwood, the public of Kirkcaldy have been placed in possession of a park, which for beauty of situation, could scarcely be surpassed, and for extent is all that is required to meet the wants of a growing population”. The Provost believed that as far as possible they had carried out what they believed was Provost Beveridge's objective - ”that is to make the park a place of beauty and attraction for the inhabitants”. He conceded that the adornment of the park had not yet been completed but more trees, bushes and shrubs would be planted, as artistically as possible, so that the park would improve year on year. He particularly spoke of how the park would change in appearance with the seasons and he prophesied that the Floral Garden, which was just being sketched out, would in time bring a burst of colour to the surroundings. He felt that each of the seasons would highlight the changes brought about by nature

and especially bring people great pleasure in the long Summer evenings. He believed that the Winter season would provide the added bonus of bringing skating to the pond and that would be an attraction to people of all ages, but particularly the juvenile portion of the community. The photograph



shown here was taken in 1894 and is a fine study of the park in its infancy. The skaters add to its beauty and interest. Provost Black firmly believed that pleasure and profit for all could be obtained by the proper use of the Beveridge Park. Before finishing he sounded a note of caution in that “it will be the fault of all classes of this town if this beautiful park, which they can now call their own, does not receive their protection against injury and unseemliness in every form, and is not taken reasonable advantage of to the fullest extent. He concluded by again thanking Mrs Beveridge and asking that a cordial vote of thanks be given – the request was met with loud cheering.

Mr Ferguson of Raith, on whose former land the park stood was next to speak. He opened with fulsome praise of the late Provost both in terms of character and generosity before suggesting that acquiring the park was a statement of intent by the Town Council. He believed that the linoleum industry was a sound foundation on which to build the town's future but that the gift of the park offered opportunities in other directions and was not limited to recreation. “The Town Council had been making the most of these new burgh lands and fitting them up. That was a new and fresh experience which might be of the very greatest advantage. Were the scope of the municipal leaders to be limited merely to water and drainage works, the erection of police cells, and other local requirements, Kirkcaldy might well become the centre of all that was useful and all that was praiseworthy, but it might be absolutely devoid of the simplest forms of art. The influence of the park might spread so far that they might see the whole town brought to be less like a desert, and that the influence of the architecture of their surroundings would tell upon the architecture of the town.

“Thanks to Michael Beveridge the right to take a Sunday stroll was now established and it was a pleasure for him to think of the scenes of happiness for young and old which the park might give”. He ended with the hope that some consolation would be taken by Mrs

Beveridge from the “deep and sincere sympathy which had been extended to her” and “how deep was the appreciation of her husband and his munificence”.

The final speaker was 24 year old Henry Dalziel M.P. who that same year had won the by-election for Kirkcaldy Burghs following the death of Sir George Campbell. Dalziel went on to serve as M.P. until 1921. Along the way he collected the Freedom of the Burgh in 1917 as an acknowledgement for 25 years service. Interestingly enough, although a liberal he was a strong supporter of Home Rule and in later life became a member of the National Party for Scotland.

A journalist by profession he gave a well constructed speech and some parts deserve mention. On Provost Beveridge he had this to say- “if a man of wealth gives freely to some great public purpose, there is sometimes a disposition to suggest an ulterior motive, and even the gain of personal popularity is whispered by the base and poison minded. In our case there is no room for base suggestion or whispered ulterior motive. This, at least, we can say truly of the Beveridge Park, that it has been given without thought of the laudation of men, without hope of the passing applause of the multitude, and alas! Without even affording the opportunity to the recipients of an expression of grateful thanks”.

Mr Dalziel moved on to speak about the benefits of exercise and athletics. He went as far as suggesting that the Council should “never miss the opportunity to champion among the younger men of the town a love of manly sport and vigorous physical exercise”.

He showed verbal skill in reaching the climax of his observations to growing cheering and sustained applause with - “It is indeed a red-letter day in the history of Kirkcaldy. Let the flag of pleasure be hauled to the mast head, and wave o'er a joyous

It is indeed a red-letter day in the history of Kirkcaldy. Let us then celebrate the event to the uttermost. (Cheers.) Let the flag of pleasure be hauled to the mast head, and wave o'er a joyous people. (Renewed cheering.) In a word, let the cup of jubilation be filled to overflowing, rejoicing in the knowledge that to the end of time this Beveridge Park, which we have opened to-day, will stand out as a monument to the public generosity of one of the truest and most beloved of Kirkcaldy's sons, and be handed down to succeeding generations of its citizens as a noble and a priceless heritage. (Loud and prolonged cheering.)

people. In a word, let the cup of jubilation be filled to overflowing, rejoicing in the knowledge that until the end of time this Beveridge Park, which we have opened today, will stand out as a monument to the public generosity of one of the truest and most beloved of Kirkcaldy's sons, and be handed down to succeeding generations of its citizens as a noble and priceless heritage”.

That section of the article concluded by giving credit to Superintendent Gatherum and Inspector Hunter for the police arrangements. A photographer, Mr R Milliken, had taken a number of successful photographs of the event and in particular one taken of the opening ceremony was highly praised. We found mention of Milliken working as far back as 1883 and learned that he retired in 1928, his stock and shop at 82 High Street going under the hammer in the October.

#### CAKE AND WINE BANQUET.

Immediately after the opening ceremony a cake and wine banquet was given by Mrs Beveridge in the Town Hall. A company of about sixty invited guests was present. Provost Black presided. Amongst those present were—Major Oswald, Mr Dalziel, M.P., Provost Smith, Kinghorn; Provost Terrace, Dysart; Bailies Barnet, Tait, and Nicol; Treasurer Yule; Councillors Kellock, Orr, Gourlay, Leslie, Dale, Skinner, Leishman; Rev. Messrs Callander, Milne, Campbell, and Baxter; Major Storrar, Captain Herd; Messrs Nichol, Leven; W. R. Spears, M'Indoe, and D. J. Wilson, &c.

The Cake and Wine Banquet which followed was hosted by Mrs Beveridge and was held in the Town Hall with the Provost in the chair. Suffice it to say that Kirkcaldy's “royalty” was in attendance. We have made

mention of these celebrations in previous Objects and the stand out feature is that after the number of toasts and replies – anyone was capable of standing in a vertical fashion. It was never just a simple toast and response, anecdotes, praise and memories being a standard feature.

The Provost set the tone with a toast to **The Memory of Provost Beveridge** which was followed by Bailie Barnet toasting **Mrs Beveridge of Beechwood**. These were, by tradition and manner, devoid of responses but that was not the case with the following :-

- **The Army, the Navy and the Volunteers** proposed by the

- Provost and replied to by Major Oswald and others.
- **The Clergy of all Denominations** – proposed by Councillor Gourlay and replied to by the Rev. Mr Campbell.
  - **The Town and Trades of Kirkcaldy** – proposed by Councillor Lockhart and replied to by Councillor Kellock.
  - **The Provost, Magistrates and Councillors of Kirkcaldy** was proposed by Mr Dalziel with the Provost carrying out the reply.
  - **The Engineers, Architect and Contractors connected with the Park** – proposed by the Town Clerk and replied to by Mr Sang. This was William Sang, the son of the illustrious John Sang, who has vanished from Kirkcaldy's radar. William Sang followed in his father's footsteps as an engineer. His son William Alistair seemingly followed in the tradition. He was with the Canadian Railway Building Corps when he fell in March 1916.

The proceedings were closed by the Reverend Milne pronouncing the benediction. A display of fireworks were held in the evening which the *Fife Free Press* reported that “the illuminations being watched by a large assemblage of people”.

The Town had its park after a number of false dawns, not without anger and recriminations plus Indignation Meetings and petitions. Never did the team anticipate on researching this story that the park itself would be reduced to a minor role by the shenanigans which sprung from Provost Beveridge's generosity. Never for a second did we imagine that the Beveridge Park itself would not take centre stage in the story but that is what transpired.

## Features at the Outset

Mr Beveridge's Park enclosed around 108 acres and without question it had a natural adaption for a pleasure ground. The site

was enhanced by the woodlands bordering the west side and the Raith Estate formed a boundary to the north. The principal entrance



was the one closest to the Raith Gates but both had a half moon to allow carriages to turn after dropping off their passengers. The pillars from which the entrance gates were hung were made from red sandstone from the Moat Quarry in Carlisle. There were

some elaborate carvings on the pillars to take away from the monotony of the flat stone. This was the work of a Kirkcaldy sculptor – Mr Henderson. The pillars featured 4 gargoyle heads – the inner ones of a girl while the outer ones were of a rather grotesque looking male. The gates themselves were manufactured from wrought iron and displayed the coat of arms of Kirkcaldy along with the motto of the Beveridge family - “Up and be Doing”. Along the top portion of the gates, in ornamental lettering was - “The Beveridge Park”. The central opening was for the use of carriages and the side openings were for pedestrians. Between the two entrances were railings but they did not extend around the whole circumference – nevertheless each evening the gates were locked! Sadly very few readers will have seen them – the gates and railings were removed for scrap metal during the Second World War. In a way it was a blessing that Mrs Beveridge was not alive to see that.

Two lodges had been built prior to the opening with the Raith Lodge being a house for the Park Ranger. The Southerton Lodge was built for the Head Gardener. Both lodges were the work of John D Swanston and in fact were his first commissions in Kirkcaldy. He went on to rebuild the Feuers Arms before going on to the now



Kings Theatre and the demolished Port Brae Cinema. For more information on Swanston's considerable body of work refer to our Blog section. The first occupant of the post, in 1892, was paid £60 per annum plus he lived rent free and with coal supplied. Beside the gardener's house a large greenhouse and forcing-house had been erected to supply plants for the park. The Raith Lodge was in the Scottish baronial style and again built with Moat Quarry stone.

The grass was kept in shape by the use of sheep and an advertisement seeking offers for grazing rights is shown here. In 1895 in an effort to raise the revenue from the park

**SHEEP GRAZING IN THE BEVERIDGE  
PUBLIC PARK, KIRKCALDY.**

*Terms of Let altered.*

**T**O LET, from date of acceptance of offer to 11th November, the GRAZING in the PARK. Extent about 70 Acres. Offers (a slump sum) to be lodged with W. R. SPEARS, Town Clerk, not later than 28th inst.

– Councillor Aitken had the idea of fencing off 25 acres of the park which was to be used for cattle grazing. It was Councillor Robertson who, once again, led the opposition by taking the view that the park was left for the people – the whole park and fencing off of a substantial acreage was not permissible. The *Fife Free Press* of the

**THE FINANCES OF THE PARK.**

Councillor Gourlay, in terms of notice given at last meeting, moved "That the Beveridge Park Committee inquire into the income and expenditure of the park, with a view, if possible, of reducing the expenditure, and increasing and taking a better supervision of the income." In submitting such a motion for their acceptance, he said he did not consider it necessary to go into any lengthened details. He would only refer them to the abstract of income and expenditure for the past year, and if they referred to that statement they would see that the sooner a policy of retrenchment was adopted the better in the management of the park. From the abstract they would find that the revenue from the park was £136 10s, being grazing rent from 5th August, 1893, to 11th November, 1894, covering a period of fifteen months, £81 10s, and £55, the rent of Southerton House. The expenditure was £559 6s 6d, which left £422 16s 6d to be taken from the upkeep fund. The fund for the upkeep of the hall, library, and public park was £15,000, which, invested at the rate of slightly over 3 per cent., brought in £498 17s. Now, if they took £422 16s 6d deficiency from this sum, it only left £76 11s 6d for the upkeep of the hall and library. This was not anything like a fair share of the upkeep fund

16<sup>th</sup> February 1895 demonstrated the cause of the issue. The previous year had seen income of £138 with expenditure of £559 which left a shortfall of £423. The income from the £15,000 upkeep fund was £488. This sum certainly extinguished the deficit but left only £75 towards the upkeep of the halls - hence the need to increase income or reduce expenditure.

The famous cannons which sat outside the Raith Lodge were not there in 1892. They made their appearance in 1903 courtesy of Colonel Johnston of the Volunteer Artillery. He had purchased them from the Government when there was no further use for them. The

Colonel had bought all four of the cannons which so often feature on photographs of the Volunteers Green Battery. Best guess is they vanished along with the gates between 1939-45.



Again, as with the cannons, the famous lions were not present on opening day. These appeared in 1903 when along with a large urn were the gift of John Nairn. This is the same John Nairn who presented the town with its museum and art gallery plus his home, Forth Park, was gifted to the town as a maternity hospital after his death in 1935. The urn was originally placed in the formal gardens but was moved when the centrepiece became the fountain presented by Mrs Beveridge in 1931. It is believed that the lions and urn were manufactured by the Methven Pottery in Links Street.

The pond/lake was originally very boggy ground which was fed by a spring. It had been known as the Kirkcaldy Skating Pond but was doubled in size when purchased by the Council. An island was formed in the middle to provide a breeding ground for water fowls. By the opening day the island boasted a substantial amount of shrubbery to assist the nesting of the birds. Talking of birds, three swans were already on the lake – these being the gift of Dr Welsh of Kinghorn. The same gentleman had gifted a number of ducks to the park and by opening day the pond contained a number of freshwater fish. Being a tangent, we simply had to find out who this Dr Welsh was. It transpires that he was firstly a doctor in Kinghorn and in later years the Medical Officer of Health for the Burgh. He was also the medical man attached to the Artillery Volunteers. No trace could be found of a Kirkcaldy connection in 1892 but some success was ultimately achieved. In 1903 one of his daughters married J. Ernest Shepherd – the only son of James Shepherd of Barry. Ostlere & Shepherd fame. Strange to relate Welsh and Shepherd died within months of each other in 1906.

The bandstand was a striking feature of the park and had been erected by Messrs McDowall, Steven & Co., of Glasgow. It was constructed from cast iron on a raised stone base. It was octagonal in shape surmounted by a dome with a high pitch which itself was supported by eight columns. The eight bays were surrounded by a scroll work railing and in the middle was the Kirkcaldy coat of arms. The



Each bay in the octagon is filled in with a very handsome scroll work railing, in the centre of which is the Kirkcaldy coat of arms. The painting and decorating of the band stand and entrance gates was entrusted to Mr David Blewes, of the firm of A. & J. Scott, Kirkcaldy, and the work has certainly been executed with great taste, the various points being very finely brought out by the free application of gold and fine colours, the town's arms being of solid gilt on a blue shield surmounted by the motto "Vigilando Munio," also in gold.

ornamental brackets supporting the Column were also of intricate scroll work. The decoration of the scroll work on the bandstand and the gates was carried out by David Blewes of the

Kirkcaldy firm of A & J Scott. Newspaper reports highly praised the execution of his work and the *Glasgow Herald* of the 26<sup>th</sup> read - "The work has certainly been executed with great taste, the various points being very finely brought out by the free application of gold and fine colours, the town's arms being of solid gilt on a blue shield surmounted by the motto *Vigilando Munio* also in gold. The bandstand fell into disrepair and bit the dust in the 1950s.

Understandably, in 1892, much of the park was still under construction and this was especially the case with the Formal Gardens. It was from the outset a lovely area with the pond/lake being its major feature. It was a wide open space, enhanced by mature trees and for the first time offered recreation for Kirkcaldy's



young and old, even if it was only for a stroll. Over the subsequent years, the Council has to be given credit for its efforts of building on its features and producing a wonderful array of gardens, flowers, trees and shrubs. In addition many pitches and play areas became available for sport and leisure. It was not by accident that the park became so famous and so well used not just by the inhabitants and visitors from all over Fife and beyond.

## Some Additions Over the Years

Some of the additions have already been mentioned but here are some of the many which have come and remained, or come and gone.

- Almost from the off, in 1892, – Kirkcaldy Naturalists proposed that a botanic garden be established in the park. The site chosen was just behind the main lodge and consisted of four beds. Specimens were to be gathered from all over the world and it was estimated that 400 separate plants might be gathered. After a tricky start it was said that by 1897 the plants were thriving. Eventually the Botanic Garden was incorporated into the Rock Garden.
- At the time the park was created there were a number of mature trees in the park. Some of these trees still remain and are estimated to be over 200 years old. Systematic planting of trees has taken place over the years. There is Chestnut Avenue between Balwearie Road and the lake. Other varieties which can be found include cherry,



sycamore, maple, elm, lime and copper beech. To celebrate the centenary of the park in 1992 many young trees were planted by various societies.

- 1904 saw the introduction of rowing boats and in 1908 that was followed by the first motorboats. These motorboats caused much annoyance to Kirkcaldy Model Yacht Club which in turn led to copious letters to the local newspapers. Those who championed the cause of the model yachts were often referred to as *overgrown schoolboys*. The days of the motorboats came to an end as the propellers became continually entangled in the weeds.
- One of the park's more intricate features was an Ornamental Garden (in front of the main lodge) which often in Summer celebrated people, events or societies, by having their names highlighted in flowers. This practice went on for many years



before being transferred to the Memorial Gardens below the Museum and Library – which was considered more central. This photograph is a fine example in that it celebrates *Michael*

*Beveridge Esq., the Donor of this Park*. It is certainly not from 1892 as those who have managed to struggle through this epic will know that the cannons only appeared in 1903. A little research was carried out and when consulting the *Fife Free Press* of the 5<sup>th</sup> December 1903 it is discovered that all four cannons, not just two, had been presented to the park and accepted by Provost Barnet. The idea had been first suggested in May of 1903 and the article indicates that the cannons were 32 pounders with smooth bore and mounted on common standing garrison carriages. It goes without saying that

following the handing over, a Cake and Wine Banquet was held, with once again copious toasts and replies. The Council Meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> January threw up some interesting items which were reported by the *Fife Free Press* on the 14<sup>th</sup>. It transpires that the *British Automatic Company Ltd* were seeking to renew a lease from the previous year. It transpires that between April and September they were able to place two weighing machines on the Promenade at a cost of £8. However, they had a new site as well – they were permitted to place a machine in the Beveridge Park, for the same period, at a cost of £4. It seems the machine was close to the Rock Garden.

At the same meeting the lease, for the provision of rowing boats on the lake was renewed for another 3 years. Once again, it was the tender of Alexander Robertson of 118 Links Street which was successful at £10 per annum.



1931 saw the introduction of putting and crazy golf. Drinking fountains were introduced at both gates with another being introduced to Ravenscraig Park – which had been presented to the town two years earlier by Sir

Michael Nairn. That same year the ornamental fountain was presented by Mrs Beveridge. The fountain was the work of Kirkcaldy firm J & D Brown. The fountain carries the inscription – *This fountain was erected in 1931 by Mrs E.H. Beveridge in memory of her husband Provost Michael Beveridge the Donor of the Park.* The fountain became the centrepiece of the Formal Gardens.

- In 1970 an aviary was set up in a corner of the gardens by the Cage Bird Society of Fife and in the early years was

maintained by the Boy's Brigade.

- The Lily Pond in which the fountain now sits was put in place in 1958 and contains a variety of fish.
- The Rose Garden was created in 1952 and remains a delight to walk through, especially between June and September. Originally there were two shelters at the eastern end but after repeated acts of vandalism they were replaced by seats.
- The Rock Garden was established in the 1930s. Unfortunately it was also a target for vandalism and was demolished – it is now part of the picnic area close to the play area.
- The iconic Scented Garden for the Blind was close to the Rock Garden and was donated by the *Business and Professional Women of Kirkcaldy*. Substantial sums were raised and the garden was sheltered and contained many scented plants. Kirkcaldy had the first such garden in Scotland and the experience was enhanced by the names of the plants being included in Braille on the tags. The driving force behind this garden was Mrs Beveridge of the firm of D.S. Beveridge – Outfitters who operated a large business at the foot of Oswald's Wynd. Mrs Beveridge, as far as we can tell, was not a relative but the President and founder of the Women's group. The garden was their contribution to the 1953 Coronation.
- In 1969 a paddling pool was presented by Kirkcaldy Round Table but naturally it too became a target for vandalism and broken glass.

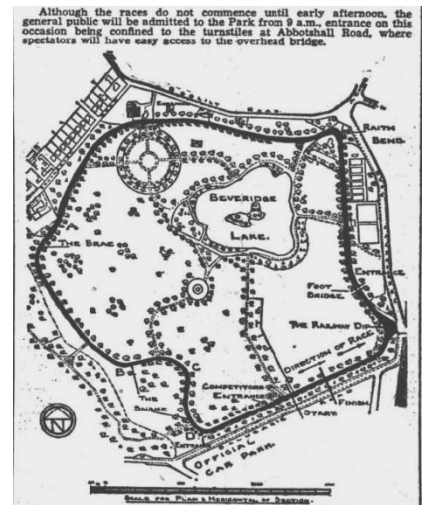
## Scented Garden for the Blind

### Opening Ceremony at Kirkcaldy

To commemorate the Coronation, Kirkcaldy & District Business and Professional Women's Club last year decided to inaugurate in the town a scented garden for the blind.

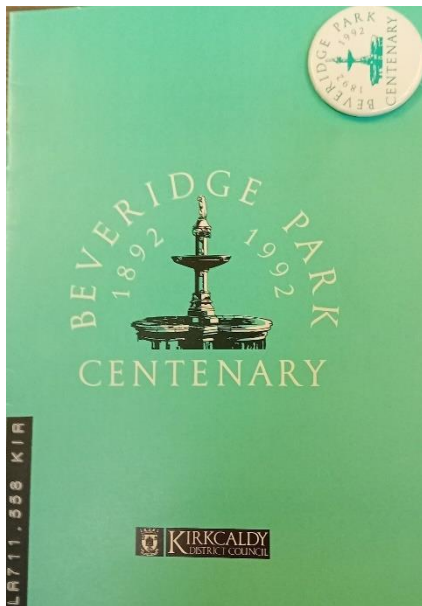
Permission was granted by the Town Council for the garden to be laid out in the rock garden at Beveridge Park, opposite the tennis courts, and the work was carried out by the Parks Department, under the supervision of the superintendent, Mr J. R. Spray.

- A pet's corner was established in 1972. This was the third to be established in Fife and followed Letham Glen and then Dunfermline Glen.
- Kirkcaldy Model Railway Club built a track for model steam engine rides near Southerton Lodge.
- At one time there was motor cycle racing in the park but this came to an end when regulations required an increase to the width of the track. A Map of the course – featuring the overhead bridge – is shown here for interest. The last races took place in 1988. The park has a memorial to World Sidecar Champion, Jock Taylor, who was killed while racing in Finland. The memorial was erected by his fellow members of *Kirkcaldy and District Motor Club*.

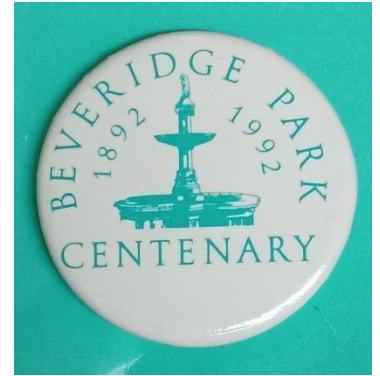


- The tennis courts and a small pavilion were erected in 1926 and five years later, in 1931, the Beveridge Park Bowling Club with its two greens was established. The original grass was Cumberland sea-washed turf – the finest available at the time.
- Cricket, football, rugby, and even American football, have all been played in the park. The Cricket Club eventually moved to Bennochty. In 1975 the Rugby Club extended their pavilion adding a bar and club rooms. In 1991 the Club built their 250 seater stand.
- Football saw new changing rooms built in the 1950s and in January 1953 the *Fife Free Press* reported that hot water was now a feature for the benefit of all the teams using the changing rooms.





The foregoing is a potted history of some of the facilities which have been available over the years. In 1992 the park celebrated its centenary with a number of events and a booklet was produced to mark the occasion and a photograph of the booklet and the badge which came with the publication is shown. 1992 seemed the place to end Object 41 which, if lengthy, possibly for the first time examines why a park



and this particular site was chosen to house one of Kirkcaldy's finest and most attractive recreational areas.

Provost Beveridge is certainly remembered in Kirkcaldy, most notably by the park which bears his name. Several streets in the town carry Beveridge in their names and, in June 1992, the Civic Society unveiled a plaque to Michael Beveridge which is affixed to a wall at Beechwood, his former home. Part of the Adam Smith complex carries/carried the name of the Beveridge Hall as a significant sum from the bequest was devoted to the hall and library. As highlighted previously, as well as providing the park, Michael Beveridge was the spark behind the Adam Smith Hall getting off the ground. Surely, as with John Nairn, – the Kirkcaldy's Famous Folk board needs to be expanded to include the name of Provost Michael Beveridge.

## Acknowledgements

Mapping – The maps on page 19 and 36 are reproduced with the kind permission of the National Library of Scotland.

The lower map of Spithead/Hayfield on page 36 is produced with the kind permission of Chris Sparling of the Fife Miners Memorial Website.

The map on page 73, showing the route of the motor cycle racing track, is from the Fife Free Press. The sketch of Michael Beveridge which appears on page 11 is also from the Fife Free Press. Both are via Findmypast Newspaper Archive Ltd – as are all the Newspaper cuttings where the individual newspapers are credited in the text but again the information is obtained from Findmypast Newspaper Archive Ltd in partnership with the British Library.

The photograph of Michael Beveridge on Page 2 is courtesy of Fife Cultural Trust – Kirkcaldy Galleries Collections.

The photographs of the bust of Queen Victoria (page 25), Adam Smith (page 32) and the Golden Key (page 59) are courtesy of Fife Cultural Trust - Museums Collections.

The photographs on pages 60,64,67,68,69,70,71 and 73 were provided by Fife Cultural Trust – Kirkcaldy Galleries Collections.

The photograph on page 66 is courtesy of William Fiet and is from his extensive postcard collection.

Special mention must go to Tom Reid for his unstinting efforts in reading and, where appropriate, correcting errors in the text.