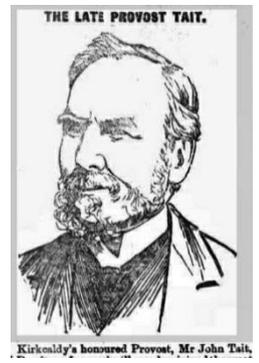
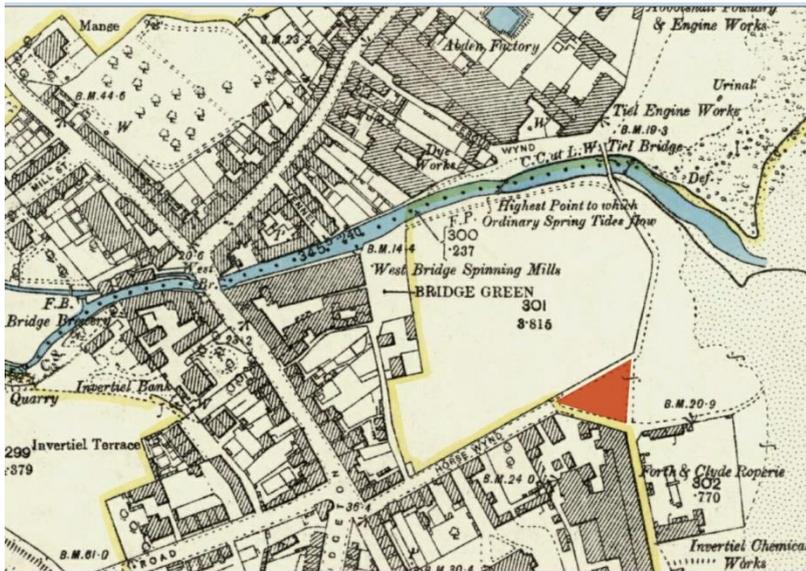




# Anarchy and Revolution in the Links The Barbarians are at the Gates



## The Battleground



**THE HORN.**

In Hendry's Mill there is a horn  
That blaws wi' unco blast,  
And as on the breeze it is born,  
You would think each blast its last.  
But as soon as day comes round,  
Wi' echoes loud and rank  
This awfu' horn's hideous sound  
Impinge the awaest repae o' Tiel Bank.  
Therein dwells a lady, o' mely and fair,  
And well advanced in years;  
She disdains and canna bear  
The horn wha's sound she fears.  
She canna sit, she canna speak,  
For it in her ear doth storm;  
She canna think, she canna blink,  
For this terrific horn.  
Some young chicks, no' mated in sense,  
Hae'n thechts o' their ain,  
Indulged in silly pranks, at wha's expense  
I dinna care tae name.  
Flowers, shrubs, and itter things  
That wis in their way,  
They destroyed and made rings round Invertel  
sae gay.  
That that wis wrang nane will deny,  
Nor applaud what they hae dune,  
As it only adds sigh to sigh  
Tae the horn's terrific bumm.  
Tae drag the culprits into court wid be wrang,  
And imprint a stain on their name through;  
Life viewing, be it short or be it lang,  
That law and justice is strong naebody does doot,  
But baith o' them can be maintain'd  
Outside a Police Court.  
Bairnies are bairnies to the very end,  
And what they canna smash naebody can mend;  
And as to punishment, their mither I advise  
To view the bairnies weel in bed afore they rise,  
And with the guid auld tawse apply on their back,  
And when that is done to Invertel they'll neer  
gang back.

D. J. M.

Sometimes while undertaking research an unexpected and hitherto long forgotten headline jumps from the page. That is exactly what happened when this month's Object surfaced. In all honestly it cried out to be told having a mixture of everything from – accusations of class preference, agitation, annoyance, crowds massing, windows and gardens damaged, the Council in uproar, appearances in the Police Court, payment of compensation and finally a U-turn by the Council.

To try and understand the how, the what and the why – Fife Council's Archives were consulted and researched to get a fuller understanding of just how the issue played out. We used our normal resources for the bulk of the narrative but, where we

consulted the Archives, the findings have been interspersed, where appropriate, in italics.

Let us take the starting point as the passing of the “Factories Steam Whistle Bill” which was mentioned by the *St. Andrews Gazette* of the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1872. The article was celebrating the passing of the Act which had as its object - “**the suppression of these instruments of supreme torture**”. The paper did not comment on values of local properties but rather quoted from an item written by a gentleman to a London Newspaper. Amongst the comments were “I was recently staying near a factory which had been reared near villas of a superior class in the suburbs of one of the pleasantest towns near London and I can testify that, through a steam whistle which is most wantonly and needlessly sounded five or six times per day, the surrounding property is injured enormously”. He adds “I fear that under the pretence (for it is a pretence, and nothing else) of encouragement to trade, nuisances of this kind are everywhere increasing”.

The *Gazette* then put its own spin on the issue with -”that may be, or not be: but there is no question that these infamous whistles must interfere with the value of homes. People will not stay near them when they can get accommodation far from them. It is unnecessary to have a musical ear to be tortured by them; while the prodigality of their performances in such small places as this, where it is conceivable one might be useful, were there not the town's bell, makes folk's interest the keener in the fortunes of this bill, which, let us trust will get royal assent.

“The owners of these odious inquisitorial instruments cannot be imagined as at all conscious of the care-ported misery they occasion. It would be a more generous attitude towards the public to do this in anticipation of the Legislators, than to keep screaming away as if it were worth anyone's while to thrill peaceable neighbours with the pain of innumerable needles stuck into them

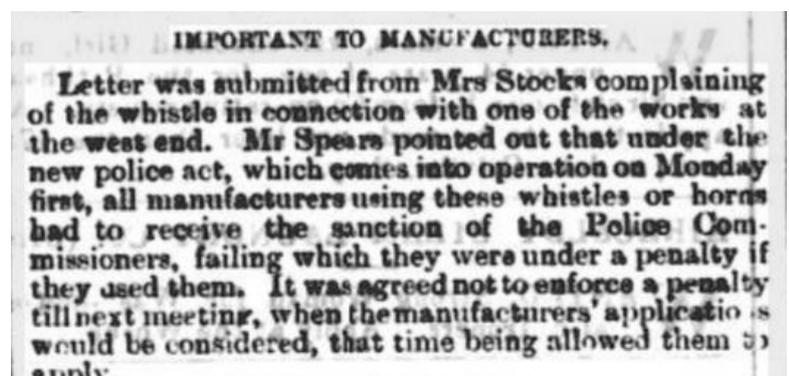
half-a-dozen times each day”.

So, there we have the problem – steam whistles sounding loudly any number of times per day. That would quite possibly cause distress in the rarefied and genteel atmosphere of St. Andrews – but surely not in the industrial heartland of Linktown of Abbotshall? We shall see!

Like most Acts there are always alterations and amendments over the years and it was no different in this case. The new Police Act of 1893 made changes to the roles of the Police Commissioners in general with one particular change relating to steam whistles. From Monday, the 15<sup>th</sup> May, factories and works wishing to make use of a steam whistle had to apply for the Commissioner's permission.

Saturday, the 13<sup>th</sup> May 1893, saw the first salvo fired in the celebrated Kirkcaldy whistle episode. The *Fife Free Press* reported on the monthly Council Meeting held the previous Monday. There had yet again been fireworks over arguments as to where the new Adam Smith Halls were to be sited. It had appeared, as cut and dried, that the site would be on land to be purchased from Mr Sang – in fact, where the halls were ultimately built. However, some Council members were now advocating/agitating to consider building the halls on the Minister's glebe of the Parish Church. For some reason it was suggested that the manse could be bought and then demolished thereby increasing the size of the available site. When that matter, which appeared to exhaust Provost Tait's patience, had been temporarily dealt with – a letter was read from a Mrs Stocks.

The Press reported that “Mrs Stocks was complaining of the whistle in connection with one of the works at the west end.



**IMPORTANT TO MANUFACTURERS.**  
Letter was submitted from Mrs Stocks complaining of the whistle in connection with one of the works at the west end. Mr Spears pointed out that under the new police act, which comes into operation on Monday first, all manufacturers using these whistles or horns had to receive the sanction of the Police Commissioners, failing which they were under a penalty if they used them. It was agreed not to enforce a penalty till next meeting, when the manufacturers' applications would be considered, that time being allowed them to apply.

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**STEAM WHISTLES OR OTHER SIMILAR CALLS.**

**T**HE Attention of Employers using **STEAM WHISTLES** and other **SIMILAR CALLS** is directed to Section 302 of the **Burgh Police (Scotland) Act, 1892**, by which the use must be sanctioned by the **Police Commissioners**. Applications for sanction will be received by the Clerk up to **1st JUNE**. Penalties are exigible in the event of Parties using same without the **Commissioners' Consent**.

**WM. ROY SPEARS,**  
Clerk to the Commissioners.  
Kirkcaldy, 9th May, 1893.

With some diligent research, a notice appearing in the *Fife Free Press* of the 13<sup>th</sup> May asking that applications be received by the 1<sup>st</sup> June was unearthed and is shown here. On the same page another unconnected but interesting notice was found and it will be reproduced later as possible 'evidence'!

The content of the next full meeting of the Council was reported on by the *Fife Free Press* on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1893. To be honest there was only a mention by Mr Spears, the Town Clerk, that he had received 17 applications for the use of steam whistles. The applications had been “remitted to the Provost's Committee with powers”. Nothing specific to Mrs Stock's letter was traced in the article although the 'with powers' is important as it gave the Provost's Committee authority to take action without recourse to the full Council.

**STEAM WHISTLES.**

Mr Spears intimated that he had received 16 applications for permission to use steam whistles, in terms of the new Police Act.

Remitted to the Provost's Committee with powers.

However, the applicants were uncovered from the Minutes and the list is shown below. While perhaps unnecessary, it nevertheless vividly demonstrates the industrial powerhouse Kirkcaldy once was:-

*N & N Lockhart – Bennochy Works.*  
*W.M. Melville - Sinclairtown Foundry.*  
*Peter Greig and Coy – Victoria Linen Works.*  
*A. Blyth and Coy – Hawkleymuir.*  
*John Barry, Ostlere and Co.–Forth, National and North British Works.*  
*Robert Stocks and Co. Abden Linen Works.*  
*John Main and Sons- Manufacturers.*  
*Kirkcaldy Linoleum Co. - Rosslyn and Lorne Works.*  
*Shepherd and Beveridge – Floorcloth Works.*  
*Kirkcaldy Steam Laundry Co.*  
*A. H, McIntosh & Co.*  
*Cooper and Allen – Lithographers*  
*The Steam Pipe Company.*  
*T. McLaren and Sons – Linen.*  
*W. L. Mitchell & Co. Engineers.*  
*M Nairn & Co. Scottish Lino Works.*  
*Messrs. J. & W. Hendry – West Bridge Mills.*

The Provost's Committee who met on the 16<sup>th</sup> June, to discuss the applications and who lit the blue touch paper were:-

*Provost Tait*

*Bailies – Halliday, Dale and Westwater*

*Dean of Guild Fraser*

*Treasurer Pratt*

*Councillors – Gourlay, Hunter; Leslie; Lockhart; McKenzie and Nicholson.*

16 of the 17 applications were authorised but not that from Messrs W & J Hendry. *Instead the Provost suggested that a sub-committee be appointed to look into the whole circumstances of the complaint. The Provost appointed himself, Bailie Halliday and Councillor McKenzie, to be the members.*

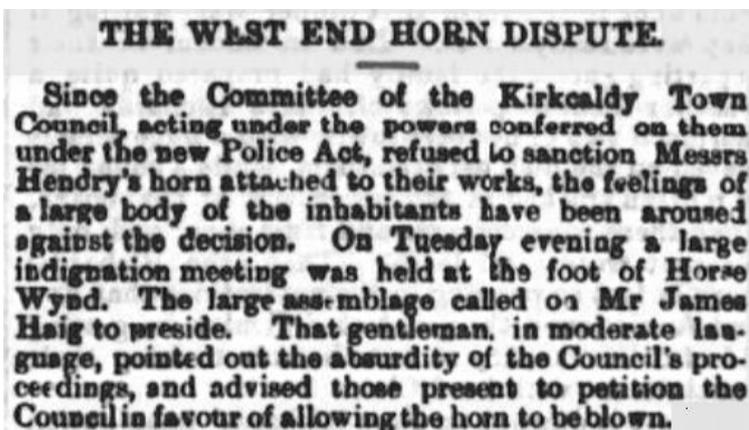
A further meeting of the Provost's Committee was held on the 24<sup>th</sup> June with the sub-committee reporting their findings. The same members were in attendance, other than Councillors Gourlay and Lockhart. The decision was taken to refuse to sanction the horn although Treasurer Pratt and Leslie dissented.

However, it was not long until the Committee's deliberation brought a degree of civil unrest to the west end of the town. Reports had surfaced in two evening newspapers on the 28<sup>th</sup> June but the local *Fife Free Press*, published on the 1<sup>st</sup> July, offers a far better barometer of the public indignation. A raft of letters sat side by side with the paper's own article and included an ode, penned by a local bard, regarding the issue.

The report itself was contained under the headline -

### **The West End Horn Dispute**

“Since the Committee of Kirkcaldy Town Council, acting under the powers conferred on them by the new Police Act, refused to sanction Messrs Hendry's horn attached to their works, the feelings of a large body of the inhabitants have been aroused by the decision.



On Tuesday evening (27th) a large indignation meeting was held at the foot of Horse Wynd. The large assemblage called on Mr James Haig to preside. That gentleman, in moderate language, pointed out the absurdity of the Council's proceedings and advised those

present to petition the Council in favour of allowing the horn to be blown. This was received by great cheering.

A Mr Watt thought if this was allowed to go on there was no knowing where it would stop. He wished to remind the Council and the “Whistle Committee” that the ratepayers had rights as well as them. The presumption is that 'them' must refer to Mrs Stocks but without saying so.

Mr Elder suggested that there was something wrong with the new Act or the Council. It seemed very strange that one complainer should get this horn stopped in the face of the thousands who were in favour of it. “It showed the interest people were taking in the matter when, by the simple matter of ringing the bell, that the people of the Links should gather in such numbers with an hour or two's notice”.

On a show of hands the decision of the committee was condemned and it was unanimously agreed to petition

**On a show of hands the decision of the committee was condemned, and it was unanimously agreed to petition the Town Council to “quash” the decision of the committee, and allow the horn to be used as formerly, and six of a committee were appointed to carry out the requirements of the petition.**

**Immediately after the meeting, a large crowd of young folks assembled in front of the door of Mrs Stocks, Inveriel Bank, and behaved in a very demonstrative manner, this hostility being due to the fact that she was the party who wrote to the Council first of all, strongly complaining of the noise made by this horn. The gates were burst open and some of the more daring rushed in and behaved in a very unseemly and disorderly manner. On inspection, the damage turns**

the Town Council to “quash” the decision of the committee and allow the horn to be used as formerly and six of a committee were appointed to carry out the requirements of the petition”.

However, things turned very nasty shortly after the close of the meeting. The *Fife Free Press* article reported that “Immediately after the meeting, a large crowd of young folks assembled in front of the door of Mrs Stocks, Inveriel Bank, and behaved in a very demonstrative manner, this hostility being due to the fact that she was the party who wrote to the Council first of all, strongly complaining of the noise made by this horn. The gates were burst open and some of the more daring rushed in and behaved in a very unseemly and disorderly manner. On inspection, the damage turns

out to be of a more serious nature than was first anticipated. Some of the shrubs and flowers were all torn up, while the door is very much damaged, as is also the case with other parts of the property. The sequel of this hostile attack on Mrs Stock's house will be that several of the deprecators will be brought up at the Police Court and have to answer for their conduct. The police are busy ferreting out those who committed the damage.

“Since the indignation meeting the excitement has not yet died down and the committee entrusted with the getting up of the petition have not been idle. So far, the committee report that they have been most successful in their mission, the number of refusals to sign the petition being easily numbered on the ten fingers. On the other hand, the number of signatures obtained for the repeal of the committee's order is over 700. The future action of the affair will very much depend on the decision of the Police Commission as to what action they will take in connection with the petition. Further developments of the case are, therefore, being watched with interest”.

The two evening newspapers mentioned earlier had indeed carried, on the 28<sup>th</sup> June, most of the detail which appeared in the *Fife Free Press* article but both hinted at class being the underlying reason for the refusal of this particular application. The *Dundee Evening Telegraph* said of the speeches - “the gist of which was to the effect that the working classes in the community would be greatly inconvenienced were such a course of action to be adopted”. This report also suggested that the crowd at the meeting was “an assemblage of several thousands”.

On the same evening, the *Edinburgh Evening News* remarked that the protestors “allege that out of deference to the well-to-do class who reside in the neighbourhood, and who do not require to rise at six to attend their daily toil, the committee have agreed to inconvenience the working class population who reside there”.



The second letter came from the pen of “*A Constant Reader*” who wrote that:-

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

SIR,—It is rather unfortunate that the Town Council have taken in hand with the steam-whistle business. I am very doubtful if they had received a petition from some poor working-class elector, living near a factory, that he felt annoyed by the bell or horn of said factory, that they would have given that petition five minutes' consideration; yet, sir, that poor labourer or artisan ought to have the same respect shown to his feelings as people who move in what they consider a different sphere in society, forgetful that we are all of one flesh, that we are all—whether men or women—on an equal footing in the sight of God.

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The writer then argued that the Commission would be better employed “trying to rid the air of the bad smells which so disgust the nostrils of the community, and tell, I have not the least doubt on the health of the inhabitants. The steam whistles are useful, and, on the good Christian principle of bearing one another's burdens, we ought to endeavour to put up with such petty little annoyances if thereby the interests of our neighbours – our poorer neighbour especially - is at stake” .

This one, without naming Mrs Stocks, certainly chides her actions and the style and content suggests the author may possibly be a 'man of the cloth'.

The third epistle takes a different tack and the non-de-plume is *Fair Play*. The address is given as Linktown:-

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

SIR,—It is a pity that so many of our young folks— I am just afraid some old ones as well—so completely lost their heads on Tuesday evening. What right they had to besiege the residence of a respected citizen—a lady to the bargain—and make a hostile demonstration of their feelings in connection with the proposed stoppage of a factory whistle I am entirely at a loss to understand. I can only account for their conduct from the fact that those who made up that rude band were chiefly thoughtless youngsters, misled, perhaps, by those who should have known better. It

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The writer went on to make the point that “every citizen had the right to approach the Council with a grievance, real or supposed, and it does not follow supposing a committee of the Town Council comes to a certain conclusion that the Council, in its general capacity, must sanction the course recommended”.

This writer's final paragraph was well constructed and homed in on the fact that the disturbance could have a contrary effect on efforts to reinstate the whistle. “Here sir, the rights and liberties of a citizen have not only been ignored, but shamefully abused. There has been undue haste in the matter, and it has unfortunately

led to loss, which, I have no doubt, will require to be made good by the ratepayers, while the important consideration of a subject of very great importance to the whole inhabitants is not likely to be advanced by what has occurred”.

This was a well written and balanced letter which deplored the actions of the mob but showed concern that the campaign to get the whistle reinstated could be derailed.

The next letter in the sequence came from *Linktonian* and again made no mention of Mrs Stocks by name but was fully supportive of the silencing of the horn. The letter included

(To the Editor of the Fife Free Press.)

SIR,—The announcement made in the *Times* on Wednesday that the committee appointed to deal with the applications for steam-whistles, &c., as required under the new Police Act, had refused Messrs Hendry's request was the first intimation I had received of the decision arrived at. I am certainly at one with regard to the Committee's decision, and, should their decision be upheld, I am sure they will earn the gratitude of a great many of the inhabitants for getting rid of such an unearthly noise early in the morning. Of course, I am met at once with the

the statement that “I am at one with regard to the Committee's decision and, should their decision be upheld, I am sure they will earn the gratitude of a great many of the inhabitants for getting rid of such an unearthly noise early in the morning”.

That said, the writer did accept that, for every one person who did not have to rise, six did. However, the argument was that those who did not have to rise “were entitled to protection from the noise especially as those who require this noise to raise them from their slumbers have other means of providing themselves with such without annoying outsiders. Alarm clocks can now be purchased for a small sum”.

The sick were again mentioned and the original point from away back in 1872 was made with “The commencement of this noise is only of recent date and, if a party has gone and erected property in that locality, are they to be discomfited by the introduction of a

nuisance of such recent date?” Again it is only one interpretation, but the tone and thrust of the letter suggests that this is perhaps what happened to this writer.

However, they did marshall their thoughts and ended with a reasonable summary - “What about those public works which have no horns? Why, one of the largest floorcloth manufacturers in the district has only a bell to summon his workmen. How did Messrs. Hendry's workpeople do before the introduction of this hideous noise? I sincerely hope the authorities will not be coerced by this hue and cry of interested parties, but that having given a conscientious decision on the matter they will stand by it”.

In all the research carried out for this project – this was one of the few times a *Letters to the Editor Page* was monopolised by one subject. The final letter took a far different tone and created a clean sweep of non-de-plumes being used as it was penned by *Labourer*.

This was indeed a pointed letter beginning with “It is quite evident that things are coming to a crisis when we find a committee of our Police Commissioners being influenced by one lady. What was the committee's grounds for refusing to allow the Messrs Hendry to

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

**SIR,**—It is quite evident that things are coming to a crisis when we find a committee of our Police Commission being influenced by one lady. What was the Committee's ground for refusing to allow the Messrs Hendry to use their new horn? That is a question I would like to hear answered. I say it is quite intolerable for the hard working classes to sit still and allow this piece of class legislation to pass unchallenged, for I consider it nothing more nor less than a direct pandering to those of the moneyed class, who are not dependent on a weekly wage.

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for I consider it nothing more nor less than a direct pandering to the moneyed class, who are not dependent on a weekly wage. It is urged that the horn is a nuisance because it creates a noise, but is that not the very object it was erected for?”

A tirade then followed in relation to why Hendry's horn had been singled out and the answer, in the writer's eyes, was Mrs Stocks using both her name and position? The letter asked where were the rest of the objectors before making a forceful final point:-

“I understood that the spirit of the age was the greatest good for the greatest number. Apply that principle in this case and what is the result? Why, the largest part of Linktown district is composed of workers in our public works and who depend on this noise to waken them, and tell them that the time for resuming labour has arrived. We are counselled against oppression, but the working classes are demanding nothing but what they are entitled to. The oppression rather lies on their shoulders, the shoulders of those who have made their pile, and, being right themselves, they don't care a fig for others in a less fortunate position. Let us have our petitions signed and show the Police Commissioners we are in earnest in this matter and I am confident that by showing them it is the wish of the people to retain this horn, they will overturn the committee's decision”. By far the strongest letter and, in fairness to the *Fife Free Press*, they published letters representing all sides of the argument – they had offered a balanced view.

As mentioned earlier a poem had been composed and appeared along with the letters and report. It will be added in at the end in its entirety but the final verse in particular focuses of the workers being downtrodden:-

*They that roll in the lap o' luxury,  
Or their Christian love or charity;  
Alack! they made but a pair display  
When they pit oot their spite on the spinnin o't.*



Moving on, *The Fife Free Press* of the 8<sup>th</sup> July carried three separate items pertaining to the dispute. They will be taken in date order with the first being a letter from Mrs Stocks which she had penned on the 4<sup>th</sup> of the month. What is certain is that Mrs Stocks was not taking it lying down. We learn, from the letter, that it was her late husband's father who had built and enclosed the property in 1825. Also indicated was that the Stocks family had been in the area for seven generations (Kinghorn Parish) and “she had been resident for forty-six years, long before Mr Hendry was born”. She asked “if Mr W. J. Hendry and his

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.**

**THE WEST END HORN QUESTION.**

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

SIR,—One of the speakers at the meeting, preparatory to the siege of Inverlief Bank last Tuesday, is reported to have said “he would remind the Council and the Whistle Committee that the ratepayers had rights as well as *them*, one of these rights being to take a saw or an axe and cut off the branches of the trees that overhang the street at West Bridge.” (Great cheering.) As to this right I express no opinion, but it does seem an ignoble spirit to vent animosity on the unoffending and ornamental trees. My object in writing, however, is to inform the speaker and his hearers of a fact of which they are probably ignorant, viz.—When my late husband's father built and enclosed this property in 1825, he kept back all the width of the footpath, in order to widen the street, so that the public are indebted to him for the footpath overhung by those trees. When Mr Henry's grandfather built the mill opposite, he appropriated as much ground on the other side (which he had no right to do) as Mr Stocks had freely relinquished. The Road Trustees, having got information, took out an interdict. After the wall was five or six feet high it was arrested, and stood thus for some weeks. Meantime Messrs Henry, father and son, exerted themselves to the utmost of their power to have this interdict removed, and, strange to say, succeeded—by what means was never known. My husband, rather than awaken strife, remained passive.

followers were happy and satisfied with the punishment inflicted on me, since doubtless, through their example and influence, such a savage and destructive attack was made last Tuesday on two unprotected and defenceless ladies”.

Mrs Stocks described the unfolding of the events as:-

“The booning and bellowing, hooting and hollering, in front of my house was surely bad enough, though comparatively harmless, but after in this way working themselves up into uncontrollable fury, they burst open the large gate, rushed in like a horde of savages,

rampaged helter-skelter round the lawn, breaking down shrubs and bushes and flowers, battered the newly painted door with stones, beef tins and all sorts of missiles, rang the doorbell almost continuously for two hours, broke the drawing-room plate glass window and garden chair, chipped the front steps, and finally burst open the front door, so that only the iron chain, which providentially prevented their entrance, saving myself and my daughter from their lawlessness and cruelty.

I should like to know what Mr W.J. Hendry thinks of this performance? It reminds one vividly of some of the scenes related by Mr Paton in his book about the naked barbarians in the New Hebrides. Will it be believed that all this was done, without the slightest provocation, in the civilised and educated town of Kirkcaldy? The wonder is that the respectable and law-abiding community has not risen in righteous indignation that such a blot has been cast on the town.

The letter went on to ask “if her servant had not volunteered to go by a circuitous route to summon help there was no telling how much longer it would have continued – or how the tragedy would have ended – the only policeman on the spot having deliberately walked away and left us to the “tender mercies” of these wicked people”.

The lengthy letter then asked the rhetorical question of what she had done to deserve what had happened. Answering the question Mrs Stocks pointed out that she had “endured the horn for ten months with its unearthly rasping at untimely hours”. The letter catalogued that, “my health is injured, my nerves excited, my sleep disturbed, and perhaps my life shortened, by a nuisance which all but those interested have declared to be intolerable and unnecessary”.

The letter maintained that the only step open to her was to ask that

the Police Commissioners use their new powers and refuse to sanction the horn. “I little dreamed that in thus seeking protection from Mr Hendry's horn I would bring down such a hornet's nest about our ears. One would have thought that, even if I had done something offensive, my sex, my position, and especially my advanced age, would have secured me – even from these barbarians – from such indignity and rowdyism”.

her quarters. For the few remaining years of my life, if I *must* remain here, surely Mr Hendry might leave me the peace and comfort of my home, when he can easily do so without the slightest sacrifice on his part. Is it worth his while to incur so much odium, the disapproval of his own conscience, and, above all, the condemnation of Him who has declared Himself “the Judge of the fatherless and the widow,” for a gratification so paltry as this contemptible horn, even if his motive be, as a writer in a local paper has suggested, “to make a noise in the world?” Painful and trying as my position is, I do infinitely prefer it to his, since it is far preferable to *suffer* wrong than to *do* wrong.—I remain, yours faithfully,

ANNE J. STOCKS.

Inveriel Bank, 4th July, 1893.

Mr Hendry was exonerated from any direct involvement but it was made crystal clear that Mrs Stocks believed “he and others, although out of sight were responsible for what had happened. If this is not so, let him publicly disown the dastardly deeds of his employees, and make an apology to me in his own name and theirs. Surely this is the very least that could be expected by way of reparation from anyone who claims to be a gentleman? Such an ebullition of rage could never be awakened at a moment's notice, had not the spirit of spite and lawlessness been fostered and the flames fanned for months previous. Mr Hendry should beware. The same crowd may one day, on very slight provocation, turn upon himself and give him a taste of mob law, or rather nob tyranny”.

The second item carried by the newspaper was also a “Letter to the Editor”. This one was signed by *Neutral* and was penned on the 6<sup>th</sup>. The letter unfolded with the writer bring sorry to discover, some days previously, that a member of the police force had been suspended or relieved of his duties in connection with the steam horn dispute. “From all I can learn this was not an incident for one policeman, single handed, to rush into. It was more a case calling for two or three men. One man might have been quite over-

mastered in that disturbance, and his interference made things worse. At the same time I grant that prompt interference might have stopped the rioters in their work”.

The writer's belief was that in that particular situation the policeman had to judge for himself what was his best course of action and that no two men might think alike. He questioned why the “perfectly well-meaning official should be suspended and hoped that he would be reinstated”.

So, Mrs Stocks had penned her letter on the 4<sup>th</sup> and on the 7<sup>th</sup> she appeared as a witness in the court case following on from the attack. This was the final article in the trilogy published by the *Fife Free Press* on the 8<sup>th</sup> July.

The article revolved around an appearance at the Police Court the previous day in what the paper headlined as the “**Sequel to the West End Horn Dispute**”. The article reported that the Bench comprised of Provost Tait and Bailies Halliday and Westwater. Before them appeared:-

Joseph Jarvis.

James Blackwood.

David Morton.

Alexander Shand, Jnr.

William Arthur

John Leitch.

Dougal Neilson.

Esther Hunter.

Ann Reid.

Margaret Hamilton.

Susan Robb.

“Their ages ranged from 12 to 15, and they were charged with having on the 27<sup>th</sup> June, at Invertiel House, occupied by Mrs Stocks, behaved in a riotous and violent manner, shout, bawl, break a garden chair, a pane of glass, and break and destroy flowers, shrubs, trees, injure the door, and rang the bell of the house for upwards of an hour. Shand and Arthur pled guilty and

the others pled not guilty”.

Mrs Stocks was the first witness called, and in reply to the Fiscal (Mr Williamson), said she resided in Inveriel Bank House. On 27th June, she believed, there was a meeting of inhabitants in the Links district. About a quarter to eight o'clock at night a lot of people assembled at the entrance to her house. From the great noise they made she thought there was a large number at the gates. At first they howled and went on outside the gate, and she said to the policeman who came up that she did not mind that, but as soon as he went away they broke the gate, and came in just like a hoard of savages.

Mrs Stocks was the first witness and she was examined by the Fiscal, Mr Williamson. Her evidence was quite straightforward in that she knew of the meeting earlier that

evening and around a quarter to eight a crowd assembled at the entrance to her house and they were noisy. A policeman had come to her door and she had said she had no problem with the noise or the fact the crowd were gathered outside her gate. It was when the policeman went away that “they broke the gate and came in just like a hoard of savages”. The damage mentioned in the charge was seemingly then carried out although she tried to stay away from the window. Her servant had volunteered to go to the police station and in her evidence she (the servant) indicated that she had not seen the damage being carried out but on her return the damage was obvious. “She could not say that she knew any of the people who were there”.

Alexander Leslie, who lived next door, testified that he had seen a policeman in attendance and that no damage was done while the policeman was there. After he (the policeman) had gone he saw “a number of boys there who seemed to take liberties with the place. He saw them amongst the bushes, but he couldn't identify the accused as being amongst the crowd”.

On being questioned by Bailie Halliday “he didn't think it was right for the crowd to behave the way they did, but he didn't think it right to blame the “bairns” for destroying the property. He did not think it was his duty to lend assistance when he was not asked, it was the policeman's duty”.

Provost Tait asked “Did you think it your duty to see the lady being assaulted and not take any steps to find a policeman and give assistance?” The reply was that “I did not wish to get myself into a scrape”.

Seven mill workers then gave evidence which was described as “all being of a similar nature”. All of the accused had been seen in the garden although there was some doubt about Neilson's presence. Only one witness placed him in the garden.

Jessie Wilkie, a millworker, the next witness, spoke to having seen all the accused there. She saw all the boys into the garden. She further spoke to having seen the boys do more or less damage, except Neilson. The girls, she stated, only ran round the house once. Isabella Ferguson, Janet Buff, Robina Robertson, John Dunn, Margaret Dryburgh, Elizabeth Dryburgh, gave evidence of a somewhat similar nature.

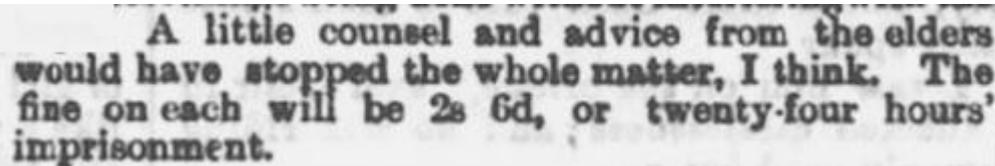
Next to be called was Detective Rhynd who listed the damage which he had examined. Further to the items listed on the charge, he had counted 16 indentations in the door, the lock on the gates was broken and there were four chips in the steps leading to the house. The brass nameplate had also been damaged.

Constable Grant, who had accompanied the servant back to the house, was then examined by the Provost. Grant testified that he had not come upon the constable who was meant to be on duty during the disturbance and that he had no idea where the constable had been/was. It suggests that the policeman had indeed taken discretion to be the better part of valour.

The Fiscal then asked that the case against Neilson be dropped. He then maintained that the evidence clearly proved the others were in the crowd and the garden, although he accepted that they might not have done all of the damage. He then sought a conviction.

Tait asked Arthur if it had been anything said at the meeting which had induced him to go to the house? Arthur replied that “I was not at the meeting”.

The Bench agreed that the case against Neilson be dropped but before passing sentence Provost Tait remarked that:- "Wherever I have been we Scotch folks have a name for manliness and fairness in our dealings, but we are in a fair way now of losing that name if we go on in this way. This was a pure matter of ill feeling against this lady – nothing else. You are all very young, and I hope you will take thought and not do the like again. I cannot help saying that the bigger people ought to have shown a little more manliness. It is the duty of every good citizen to protect not only his own



A little counsel and advice from the elders would have stopped the whole matter, I think. The fine on each will be 2s 6d, or twenty-four hours' imprisonment.

goods, but the goods of others, and I think it says very little for our friends who were

looking on and seeing these things being done without interfering with the boys. A little counsel and advice from the elders would have stopped the whole matter, I think. The fine on each will be 2s 6d (12½ p) or 24 hours imprisonment".

Now would seem to be the time to look at Mrs Stocks who, most certainly, seems to be painted, by some, as the villain of the piece. This element of genealogy is not central to the story but it is included for two particular purposes. Firstly, it gives historical context to the story and the Stock's family. Secondly, without doubt, it offers a potential explanation as to how Mrs Stocks was able to wield the power which stopped the horn. We will demonstrate that she had meaningful and important family connections although she seems to have been a formidable lady in her own right. Each reader can decide for themselves whether to read or skip this element.

Anne Janet Laing was born in Edinburgh on the 19<sup>th</sup> May 1819. She married John Stocks, a brewer, in Kinghorn on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 1847. Keep in mind that, at that point in time, Inveriel, Bridgeton,

Morningside and even the West Bridge School, were in Kinghorn Parish.

Given the name Stocks was well known in Kirkcaldy a little further research was done. The name John is constant and often confusing, in this particular family, but we can start with John Stocks\* who married Christian Wilson in Kinghorn on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 1774. The children were:-

- Margaret 9<sup>th</sup> April 1775
- Margaret Dowie 7<sup>th</sup> September 1777
- John 9<sup>th</sup> May 1779
- Robert 13<sup>th</sup> February 1785
- Christian 18<sup>th</sup> February 1787
- William 8<sup>th</sup> May 1791

If we accept the statement in Mrs Stocks letter to the *Fife Free Press* then this John Stocks\* built Inveriel Bank in 1825 (her husband's grandfather). His son John married Margaret Beveridge in 1808 and they had two children – John Stocks in 1810 and his sibling Thomas (1811). It was this John Stocks who married Anne Laing.

There is no question that John, (the builder of Inveriel Bank) was the brother of Robert Stocks who founded the Abden Linen Works



in Links Street in 1805. Robert assumed his younger brother, William, into the business. The starting up capital of £1,000 was borrowed from their father. It is not a great leap of faith to imagine that Robert would

assist, where he could, his brother John's grandchildren.

We make this claim believing that both Johns, the father and grandfather, were dead by the late 1820s. Only two John Stocks are registered as dying in Fife between 1811 and 1841, therefore it is reasonable to believe that our assumption is correct. We never tire of reminding readers of the paucity of information available from Church Registers – assumption is part of the stock in trade when dealing with these records.

Turning to Margaret Stocks/Beveridge, it is an almost impossible task to trace her death. There is no trace of a death in the name of Stocks and an unwieldy number of Margaret Beveridge's.

Although not strictly part of the narrative there is certainly a puzzle which we have not yet solved. Something has happened - either between the parents or between the boys and their father. The facts are as follows:- in the 1841 census, both John and Thomas have reverted to their mother's maiden name (Beveridge). In Thomas's case, when we examine the census records of 1841/51/61, we can safely say that he was found farming in the parishes of Dalgety, Auchterderran, Kinghorn and Beath prior to his 1873 death in Burntisland, but always going by the surname Beveridge.

Thomas had married a Jane Aitken in 1842, using the surname of Stocks but when their only daughter, Agnes, was born in 1845, she was certainly registered as Agnes Stocks Beveridge! When Thomas died it was John who registered the death and he seemed to debate how the name should be framed. In the line reserved for the surname – both Stocks and Beveridge are shown.

Page 19.

1873. DEATHS in the District of Kinghorn in the County of Fife

No.	Name and Surname, Rank or Profession, and whether Single, Married or Widowed.	When and Where Died.	Sex.	Age.	Time, Duration & Rank or Profession of Illness, and 10 other Names of Mother.	Cause of Death, Duration of Illness, and Medical Opinions by whom notified.	Signature & Qualification of Informant, and to whom, if not of the Parish in which the Death occurred.	When and Where Registered, and Signature of Registrar.
55	Thomas Stocks Married	1873 October Kinghorn	M	62	John Stocks Deceased	Heart Disease & Dropsy as testified by James Melch M D	John Stocks Beath Kinghorn	1873 October 8th as Kinghorn M D Beath Kinghorn
	Margaret Stocks Widow	Kinghorn	F		Deceased		Beath Kinghorn	
56	John Davidson Millener Clergical	1873 November 24th Kinghorn	M	21	Alleged Davidson Deceased	Influenza 19 Days as testified by James Melch M D	James Davidson Beath Kinghorn	1873 November as Kinghorn Beath Kinghorn
57	Jane Mell Farmer	1873 October 1st Kinghorn	F	77	James Melch Deceased	Wound of Heart as testified by James Melch M D	James Melch Beath Kinghorn	1873 October 11th as Kinghorn Beath Kinghorn
	Margaret Mell Widow	Ballintrae Kinghorn	F		Deceased		Beath Kinghorn	

Thos. Beveridge Registrar.

We can be more definite in relation to John who is easily traced on each census from 1851- 1871 as John Stocks. However, in 1841, he is possibly calling himself John Beveridge. There is no John Stocks in the correct age bracket but there is a John Beveridge. We can be categoric in claiming that Thomas certainly used his mother's name and possibly John did likewise for a short spell.

Returning to Mrs Stocks there were eight children from the Stocks/Laing marriage with John Laing Stocks the only boy. It would appear from the off that the couple settled down at the West Bridge where they are found in the 1851 Census along with their first child, Mary, and two servants.

In the 1861 Census the enlarged family are again found at West Bridge. However, in 1871 the Census address alters to Invertiel Bank but it is one and the same house!

We can be confident of this as the Census records of 1861 and 1871 both helpfully record that the house had 13 rooms with windows. Maps show there were no other houses in the area capable of having 13 rooms hence our statement.

1871 STOCKS, JOHN (Genus 422 / 35 / 13) Page 13 of 14  
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The enumerated Houses are situate within the Burghs of the												
Civil Parish of		General name Parish of		Parliamentary Burgh of		Regal Burgh of		Burgh of		Village or Hamlet of		Page 13
Ward	NAME of HOUSE	HOUSE No.	NAME and surname of each Person.	RELATION to Head of Family	SEX	AGE	Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION	WEDDED	WIFE	CHILDREN	REMARKS	
1	Abden	1	John Stocks	Head	M	61	Master Brewer	Married	13	13		
1	Abden	2	Mary Stocks	Wife	F	57		Married	13	13		
1	Abden	3	Thomas Stocks	Son	M	25		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	4	John Stocks	Son	M	23		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	5	James Stocks	Son	M	21		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	6	William Stocks	Son	M	19		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	7	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	17		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	8	John Stocks	Son	M	15		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	9	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	13		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	10	James Stocks	Son	M	11		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	11	William Stocks	Son	M	9		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	12	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	7		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	13	John Stocks	Son	M	5		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	14	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	3		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	15	James Stocks	Son	M	1		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	16	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	17	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	18	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	19	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	20	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	21	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	22	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	23	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	24	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	25	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	26	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	27	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	28	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	29	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	30	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	31	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	32	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	33	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	34	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	35	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	36	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	37	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	38	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	39	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	40	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	41	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	42	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	43	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	44	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	45	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	46	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	47	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	48	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	49	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	50	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	51	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	52	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	53	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	54	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	55	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	56	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	57	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	58	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	59	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	60	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	61	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	62	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	63	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	64	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	65	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	66	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	67	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	68	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	69	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	70	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	71	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	72	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	73	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	74	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	75	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	76	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	77	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	78	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	79	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	80	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	81	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	82	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	83	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	84	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	85	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	86	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	87	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	88	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	89	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	90	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	91	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	92	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	93	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	94	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	95	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	96	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	97	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	98	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	99	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	100	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	101	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	102	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	103	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	104	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	105	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	106	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	107	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	108	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	109	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	110	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	111	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	112	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	113	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	114	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	115	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	116	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	117	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	118	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	119	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	120	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	121	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	122	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	123	John Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	124	Mary Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	125	James Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	126	William Stocks	Son	M	0		Single	13	13		
1	Abden	127	Elizabeth Stocks	Daughter	F	0		Single	13	13		

**A**LL PARTIES having Claims against the late Mr John Stocks, Brewer, West Bridge, Kirkcaldy, are requested to lodge the same, within Fourteen Days, with Alexander Beveridge, Solicitor, Kirkcaldy, the Agent for Mr Stock's Testamentary Trustees.  
Kirkcaldy, 20th March, 1874.

John Stocks passed away in 1874 and his obituary in the Fife Free Press on the 28<sup>th</sup> February of that year reported that he had suffered “several months

of great suffering and exhaustion”. The newspaper painted him as a man of great decency and integrity also reporting that he was the oldest ordained Elder of Kirkcaldy Free Church. He had not sought to take any part in public affairs. It was his only son, John Laing Stocks, who took over the brewery on his father's death. On the 24<sup>th</sup> December 1881 the *Fifeshire Advertiser* reported that the brewery had been sold to a William Leishman from Glasgow. John and his wife eventually settled in Canada.

So, from the Stocks side Anne Stocks could boast through family connections:—

- The late Robert Stocks, founder of Abden Linen Works.
- His son, John T. Stocks – now owner of the above.
- Robert Stocks – son of John T Stocks – partner in the above.
- Harris L Stocks - “ “ “ “ “ - Shipping Owner.

Make no mistake these were powerful and influential figures in the town. John T. Stocks as well as owning the Abden Linen Works also owned the Kirkcaldy and London Steamship Company. He had a lengthy civic career and rose to become Provost. On his death the two businesses were split between his two sons. Robert inherited the linen works and Harris L. Stocks rose to great prominence with his dedication to the Boys Brigade. When he died on the Somme, in 1916, it was



found that he had left £25,000 to the Brigade.

For further support and influence we have to look at the marriages of some of the daughters of Anne Stocks. We have stopped at three which is probably sufficient to make the point:

- Margaret B. Stocks married George Aitken, a hugely influential figure in both farming and the Free Church at Inveriel. This was Aitken's second marriage but a son from the first was George L. Aitken, a solicitor, who along with Alexander Beveridge founded the firm of Beveridge and Aitken. They, through amalgamations, became Beveridge, Herd and Sandilands, one of the towns most enduring and respected names.
- Mary E. Stocks married Thomas Dale. Dale's brother, James, came to Kirkcaldy as a partner in the Townsend Foundry along with David Landale (of duel and twice Provost fame). When

Landale withdrew Thomas joined his brother and they became significant engineers in the town with a large workforce. Thomas took an interest in civic affairs and in 1893 he was a Bailie on the Council. Thomas died very young the following year.

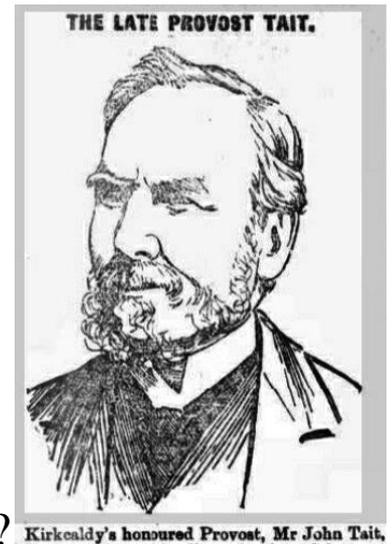
- Elizabeth H. Stocks probably takes top place. Elizabeth had become the second wife of Michael Beveridge – yes, he of the park and library fame. They were married in 1886 with Michael passing away in 1890. Mrs Beveridge gifted the fountain in the park in 1935.

Even the most cursory glance at this bevy of names would show that Mrs Stocks was most certainly not short of friends and relatives of influence. Her influence could certainly have reached high places. That said, she certainly appears to have been a formidable figure in her own right and later in the narrative it will be revealed she was certainly made of stern stuff.

#### THE LATE BAILIE DALE.

LAST NIGHT on many countenances in our community there was a feeling of deep sorrow, such as comes straight from the heart. From London there had come the news that at a quarter to five in the evening, one of our best known and most widely-esteemed townsmen had passed away, namely, Bailie Dale. The

The figure who seems to have firmly nailed his colours to Mrs Stock's mast was Provost John Tait. Tait was a central figure in last month's object and had many business interests as well as featuring on the Town Council. In 1851 he was found on the Census to be a butler in Dunnikier House. Whether with or without help/influence from the Oswald family he was a self-made man. The question is, was he coerced into taking this stance or was it his own decision?



No one can tell at this distance – but we produce a notification for a meeting taking place in May 1893 where their two names indicate their attendance. Can anyone believe Mrs Stocks would not take that opportunity to 'bend the Provost's ear'? It would seem that Tait was possibly in a no win situation.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> November 1892 *The Fife Free Press* reported that despite all efforts to get him to rescind the decision Provost Black had announced his resignation. By law, he was required to serve for a further three weeks from the date of his resignation. This was to allow a successor to be found.

The Council did not look to immediately appoint one of their number to the Chair. Instead they approached John T. Stocks asking him to accept being co-opted onto the Council with the intention of immediately installing him as Provost. A letter signed

Kirkcaldy, 25th Nov., 1892.

MY DEAR Sir,

The requisition which you handed me last evening, signed by eight-ninths of the Town Council of Kirkcaldy, to enter it at the coming vacancy, with the view as therein expressed, is an honour which I cannot too highly appreciate, and the more so as I see that you, as senior Bailie, also sign it, to whom the Provostship *ad interim* usually falls.

In coming to the resolution which I now do, after thoughtful consideration, bearing in mind the heavy work I am engaged in at present with the Harbour Bill, which we have good reason to hope will pass next session of Parliament, I feel that I am doing more good work for the town if I do not enter the Council just now. I therefore beg you to convey to the requisitionists my sincere thanks for their kindness and good will, and I hope they will see that in declining the request at present I am acting in the best interests of the town by giving as much time as possible to the Harbour question.

Yours sincerely,  
JOHN T. STOCKS.

by all of the Council, bar two, was sent to Mr Stocks asking him to accept the post. John Tait, a Bailie at the time, was a signatory.

*The Fife Free Press* of the 26<sup>th</sup> November carried a report together with a copy of Stock's response where he

turned down the invitation. It was the custom of the time that, when an ad interim vacancy occurred, the senior magistrate should be the first in line to fill the Chair but Bailie Halliday did not wish to be considered for the post. Instead he nominated Bailie Tait and indeed John Tait took his seat as reported in the *Fife Free Press* on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 1892 with Bailie Halliday placing the Chain of Office around his neck. It was Bailie Dale (mentioned above) who seconded the motion. John Tait would not in the circumstances serve the normal period but only until the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday in November the following year when the next elections would be due.

But why was John Stocks approached, given he was not a member, and could the following be the reason? We find from the columns of the *Fife Free Press*, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October, that Bailie Tait was in the dock! He was appearing before Sheriff Gillespie accused of slandering ex-constable Cruikshank who sought £1,000 in damages. It was said that during a Council meeting Tait had described Cruikshank as a 'drunken constable'. The grounds of the defence were "privilege and veritas".

The case was dismissed but an appeal was lodged. The outcome was reported in the same edition of the *Fife Free Press* which had carried the refusal of John Stocks to accept office (26<sup>th</sup> November). The

#### **THE ALLEGED SLANDER ACTION AGAINST BAILIE TAIT.**

##### **SHERIFF GILLESPIE'S DECISION SUSTAINED.**

The appeal against Sheriff Substitute Gillespie's decision in the action at the instance of ex-Constable Cruickshanks against Bailie Tait for alleged slander was up for debate in the Kirkcaldy Sheriff Court on Monday before Sheriff Mackay. The ground of action, it will be remembered, was that at a meeting of Kirkcaldy Town Council Bailie Tait referred to pursuer as a "drunken constable," the defender being sued for £1000.

outcome was that Sheriff Gillespie's decision was upheld by Sheriff Mackay. It does seem that the Council were concerned that Bailie Tait may have been found guilty and that would not reflect well on them – Stocks would be an unblemished civic leader.

We can now return to the main narrative where the climax is

approaching at the monthly meeting of Kirkcaldy Town Council and Police Commissioners with Provost Tait presiding. Once again the vexed question of the site of the Adam Smith Halls had already raised the temperature of the members. The following was reported by the *Fife Free Press* on the 15<sup>th</sup> July 1893.



The Horn discussion opened with a letter from Messrs. J. & W. Hendry being read out by the Town Clerk:-

Dear Sir – We have your letter of yesterday, refusing the sanction of the Police Commission to our using the steam horn, which has proved to be a great convenience to our own work people and to hundreds besides and, so far as we have heard, has been objected to by only one person. We bow, of course, to the decision of “the powers that be” and in the meantime will obey their rather peremptory command, but we do so under protest. Before we can yield a cheerful obedience we would require to know why of all the steam horns and whistles in use in the municipality of Kirkcaldy – some of which blow louder, longer, and more frequently than ours – ours alone is singled out for suppression.

Yours faithfully,  
J. & W. Hendry.

When the reading of the letter was completed by Mr Spears a burst of loud applause rang out – presumably from the large numbers of the general public who were in attendance. The Provost – “silence,

we must have nothing of that here”.

“Mr Spears then submitted the following petition signed by around 1,000 people:- We, the undersigned inhabitants of Bridgetown and the west end of Links Street, humbly beg your honourable Council to allow the horn or buzzer of Messrs J.&W. Hendry to continue as hitherto, as it is the only instrument of its kind that suits the want of this community and for which your petitioners will be ever grateful”.

The debate itself quickly moved on to Councillor Kinlay asking if

Councillor Kinlay—I would like to know if the windows and doors of Mrs Stock's house were open when the sub-committee went to hear the horn?

The Provost—What difference would that make?

Councillor Orr—It would simplify matters very much if the sub-committee would first state upon what grounds they had refused to allow Messrs Hendry the use of this horn.

The Provost—As convener of that Committee, I may state the sub-committee went to Mrs Stocks' house to hear the noise caused by the horn for themselves. We heard the horn sound for a minute and three quarters, and the noise occasioned by it was so great that we could not hear ourselves speak.

Councillor Brodie—But were the windows and doors not open all the time. (Laughter.)

The Provost—I only saw one window open.

Councillor Brodie—It is said, at all events, that you sat with the windows and doors open. (Laughter.)

The Provost—Is Mrs Stocks to be compelled to shut all her doors and windows every time the whistle blows? In this weather people are glad to have their windows and doors open, and why should Mrs Stocks be deprived of this liberty?

Councillor Brodie—But is one party to rule the whole of the Links? (Hear, hear.)

the doors and windows were open during the visit. This was followed by Councillor Orr asking for the reasons the decision was reached. The Provost, as convener of the sub-committee tried to bat away the questions by saying only one window was open and that they heard the “whistle for a minute and three quarters, and the noise occasioned by it was so great that we could not hear ourselves

speak”. On being pressed about the windows being open the Provost once again, while admitting the bedroom where they sat did have its windows open, he felt that Mrs Stocks should not be denied this liberty in hot weather. “Is Mrs Stocks to be compelled to close her doors and windows every time the whistle blows?”

Councillor Brodie asked the valid question if “one party is to rule the whole of the Links?” This drew further loud applause.

Treasurer Pratt then spoke reminding members that he had dissented at the Provost's Committee meeting “on the basis that

the window was open and the subcommittee would have as well been standing in the street”. His opinion was that the decision was arbitrary and should not be given effect to. He had been taken aback by the Committee being able to stop the horn but conceded that the matter had been remitted with powers and that when the Town Clerk wrote to stop the horn being sounded – he was only carrying out the terms of the remit. Having thought that the subcommittee was only investigating the noise he was surprised they took this arbitrary action – but the terms of remit did clearly allow them to follow their course of action. He took the view that “J. & W. Hendry were being treated harshly and also fully accepted that Mrs Stocks or any other inhabitant should not be disturbed uselessly and that only a fair amount of noise should be allowed, suitable for the circumstances it was intended to meet. Had the committee approached Messrs Hendry and asked them in a friendly spirit to reduce the tone of the horn, and give it a month's trial, he would not have objected, but by ordering its silence without a warning and fair trial was, in his opinion, acting in a too arbitrary spirit”. His words had been punctuated by applause which increased when he asked for disapproval of the minute of committee”. Treasurer Pratt is remembered by Pratt Street being named in his honour.

When first obtained it might have been that it blew too loudly, but it had since been toned down, and if it was too loud yet let them approach Messrs Hendry in a proper spirit and the noise might yet be further reduced. One great thing, in his opinion, that showed the necessity for having such a horn was that it was no uncommon occurrence, when their scavengers and carters were going their rounds in the early morning, that people would lift their windows and ask what time it was, and they were informed a quarter-past five or half-past five, as the case might be. This was evidence that these people had no clocks, or, at all events, they could not depend on their correctness. In these circumstances, he thought, a horn was a necessity in a working-class locality.

In all honesty, there appears to have been an undercurrent of not quite knockabout fun involved – and with the Provost seeming to be on the receiving end. A continual theme as the debate moved on was the belief that the sub-committee were expected to only investigate and report back – then a word with J. & W. Hendry would probably have solved the issue and that the 'decision to silence' was seen by many as arbitrary. The sheer volume of

printed words on the matter far outweighs the rest of the meeting in its entirety.

Bailie Halliday who had been a member of the sub-committee indicated that the noise did not bother him and he was there to “advocate for those who were not there and he considered that if any person was annoyed, and any person claimed redress, he did not care how many inhabitants were effected, the complaint should be attended to”.

Very interestingly, Bailie Halliday then disclosed that the sub-committee had spoken to the Works Manager, asking if he “had

**In that spirit he went to hear this horn. It elicited a great noise, and was no doubt quite up to the mark so far as summoning people to their work was concerned, but it was just possible that the firm might have taken a means of summoning their work people as effectually and without creating such a great annoyance to others not dependent on this means of call. In dealing with the matter he had had a conversation with the manager of the works, and in presence of the Provost and Councillor M'Kenzie he asked the manager if he had any difficulty in getting his people together before the horn blew at all. He replied "No." He (Bailie Halliday) then said—"Why did they go in for such a horn?" and the reply he got was—"I suppose it is to be up to the spirit of the times. Other people have horns, and why should we not have a horn, too?" If**

any problem getting his people together before the horn blew and the answer was no”. He also asked “why did they go for such a horn?” The answer was “I suppose it is to be up to the spirit of the times. Other people have

horns, and why should we not have a horn too?” It has to beg the question as to why they did not speak to the owners at that stage and Halliday indicated that he did suggest at the Provost's Committee Meeting, when the decision was made, that they could ask the firm to tone down the horn. It seems however that the decision, with the exception of Pratt and Leslie, was that it should be discontinued.

The Works Manager had asked why their horn was under investigation when others were not? The subcommittee's answer was this was the only horn complained about. Halliday helpfully added that the horn from Abden Linen Works had sounded when

they were in Mrs Stock's house and it was easily heard even with its lower tone.

Councillor J. Robertson fully supported the suspension on the basis that if Treasurer Pratt suggested that the firm could be asked to tone it down – this was crystal clear evidence that it was too loud and thereby a nuisance.

Councillor Orr took a completely different stance – his view was to compare the usefulness of the horn against Mrs Stock's complaint. The greatest good for the greatest number was his stance. He argued that “theirs was an industrial community, and they had to submit to

small annoyances, if they benefited the greatest number”. He then very sensibly moved on to other horns and why had they singled out this horn. He pointed out that the

**He sympathised with Mrs Stocks and any other people who had suffered inconvenience from the blowing of these whistles and horns, but theirs was an industrial community, and they had to submit to small annoyances if they benefitted the greatest number, and that could not be helped. (Applause.) They could not legislate [for every member of the community. But again, why, in the name of common sense, single out Messrs Hendry's at the West End? They had the North British horn; it was heard up the length of Cardenden.**

North British horn could be heard in Cardenden! and by virtue of the Council's action they were doing an “injustice to the people of the First Ward”. He was convinced that horns prevented some workers sleeping in.

Councillor W. Robertson warmed to that theme and his firm used a horn. He argued not everyone had clocks and even if workers were as little as five minutes late “their pay was quartered”. Yet again, as with Councillor Orr – he felt a word with Hendry should have been the route initially taken.

Councillor Lockhart who had moved the idea of the sub-committee in the first place thought that the idea was if the horn was too loud then they would “quietly consult with Messrs Hendry and ask them to tone down their sound and, had they done

so, they would probably have heard nothing more on the matter". He believed that if Hendry's horn be silenced then so should others of a similar nature. Lockhart had been the author of the sub-committee but was not present when the report was communicated back.

Councillor Leslie who had voted against the action taken restated his belief that they were "acting unfairly against those employing labour in the west end" and that "had the committee decision been that all horns were to be put down as a body, then there would not have been so much to say in regard to the matter". Councillor Leslie felt his statement at the time of the original decision – "that

whistle or horn. He referred to the Steam Laundry whistle, and stated that he heard it out at Auchtertool Post Office quite distinctly.

Mr Spears—The Steam Laundry is not within the burgh.

Councillor Leslie (continuing) said he was glad to find that his statement made at the Provost's committee had been proved that they would not find 1 per cent. in that locality that were against the horn. The plebiscite bore that out, although he was laughed at for making the statement, and was told he was speaking a lot of nonsense. The decision of the committee might be law, but it certainly was not justice. They should, therefore, reconsider the decision arrived at, and try to get the Messrs Hendry to tone down the sound of the horn, and he quite believed they would do so. (Applause.) The Messrs Hendry had already given practical evidence of their intention of causing as little annoyance as possible, and had got a man from Glasgow to tone it down, so that the sound now was greatly reduced from what it used to be. (Laughter from the Provost.) The Provost might laugh as he liked, but he was better informed on the subject than the Provost, having lived in the locality, and was personally acquainted with the noise. (Loud applause.)

The Provost—If that demonstration is repeated I will clear the room.

they would not find one per cent in that locality against the horn was fully justified". Again he went on the theme that a word with the firm would have saved this situation from arising. He made mention that the firm had previously sent for a man from a Glasgow firm to tone the horn down. He spoke about the Steam Laundry horn which he stated could be clearly heard at Auchtertool Post Office! His thoughts were that "The decision

of the committee might be law but it was not justice".

It seems that at some point during Leslie's remarks, the Provost had laughed, which drew the response that "he the Provost might laugh as he liked, but he (Leslie) was better informed on the subject than the Provost, having lived in the locality, and was personally acquainted with the noise". This drew thunderous applause and the Provost countered with "if this demonstration is repeated I will clear the room". Councillor Leslie then asked that

“the committee's decision should be thrown to one side”.

Bailie Dale felt it had been a mistake to deal with Hendry's horn in isolation and that they should have been considered all together. It was well known that there were equally loud horns in other parts of the Burgh but would complaints be received after what happened at Inveriel Bank?

It seemed that everyone had a viewpoint but the central theme was that it was a mistake to treat Messrs. Hendry's horn differently and the situation had been made worse by no attempt being made to ask that the volume be reduced. The fact was that Kirkcaldy was an industrial town and that horns to gather the workers were a necessary evil. Time without number it came back to the handling of the complaint.

The Provost said “that reflections had been cast on the sub-committee, but he did not have to point out that the sub-committee had no power at all: they were merely asked to go and judge as to the nuisance and, having done so, they submitted their opinion to the committee – that was all”. He explained that his laughter earlier had been caused by the statement that the horn had been toned down. If that was the toned down version that the sub-committee had heard then “he pitied everyone who lived in that district”.

There had been several sharp exchanges amongst the members with the Provost often having to intervene. Eventually after many words had been aired it came to the vote. Not unexpectedly the motion to defeat the minute was carried by almost two to one.

Those who approved of the minute numbered 8 – Provost Tait, Bailies Halliday, Dale and Westwater, Councillors Blyth, Black, Nicholson and J. Robertson.

Those who disapproved numbered 16 – Dean of Guild Fraser, Treasurer Pratt, Councillors Leslie, Rough, Kinlay, Lockhart, Brodie, Hunter, Paterson, Todd, W. Robertson, Gourlay, Bennet, Orr, Guthrie and Kellock.

Councillor Mackenzie declined to vote.

Even after the vote there were arguments over how to proceed –

**Treasurer Pratt—Messrs Hendry may make another application.**

**Mr Gourlay—Is that necessary?**

**The Clerk—Certainly.**

**Mr. Gourlay—Don't we disapprove of the committee's action, and it, therefore, falls to the ground?**

**The Clerk—But Messrs Hendry have got intimation to stop the horn.**

**Mr Lockhart—I move that it be remitted to the Provost's Committee to ask Messrs Hendry to modify their horn, and if this is done Mrs Stocks will have no cause to complain.**

some thought that a new application from Hendry's was required with others seeing no need for this as the banning order had fallen. It was left with the matter being

remitted to the Provost's Committee to contact J.&W. Hendry to have the horn toned down leaving Mrs Stocks no room to complain.

The eventual minute, from the next Provost's Committee meeting, indicated that *the Town Clerk was to write to Messrs. Hendry to reduce the volume of the sound of their horn as far as will be consistent with its usefulness and on being done it was agreed that the Committee should visit the locality and hear the result of the alterations.*

That was not quite the end as another letter was read out which was again addressed to the Town Clerk:-

Dear Sir,

I beg to say for the last five years I have lived opposite the Town House and each morning at 5.40 have had to patiently endure the noise caused through the ringing of the bell. I hope, however, that

as the complaint lodged by Mrs Stocks was instrumental in putting to silence the Messrs Hendry's horn that my complaint will, on the principle of equal justice to the rich widow and the poor working man, be equally instrumental in putting a stop to the tolling of the Town's bell at that early hour. Also, I do hope that the current Town Council may modestly dispense with the ringing of the bell previous to meeting to discuss municipal matters. Please oblige by laying this matter before the Town Council on Monday.

Yours respectfully  
R. Howie.

The letter brought about laughter and seemed to tone down the atmosphere. The Town Clerk assuming that the letter was a joke suggested that it may lie 'on the table' – not discussed or considered. To this, the bruised and battered Provost to much laughter suggested it “should lie under the table”.

Councillor Kinlay—That's surely intended as a joke.  
(Laughter.)  
Mr Spears—I suppose the letter will lie on the table? (Laughter.)  
The Provost—Yes, or under the table. (Renewed laughter.)

But that was not all! The next item was a letter from Messrs Beveridge and Aitken seeking redress of £10:13.0 in respect of damage to Invertiel Bank. It was remitted to the Provost's Committee but not before Councillor Robertson, in jocular fashion, asked it were to be levied on the whole Burgh or just the First Ward!

The Clerk read the following letter he had received from Messrs Beveridge & Aitken with regard to the attack made on Mrs Stock's house, Invertiel Bank :—

DEAR SIR,—We enclose a report by Mr Paxton of the damage done to Mrs Stocks' property at Invertiel Bank on the occasion of the recent riot or tumult there, and we shall be glad to receive payment of the estimated amount of damage—£10 13s.—We are yours truly,  
BEVERIDGE & AITKEN.

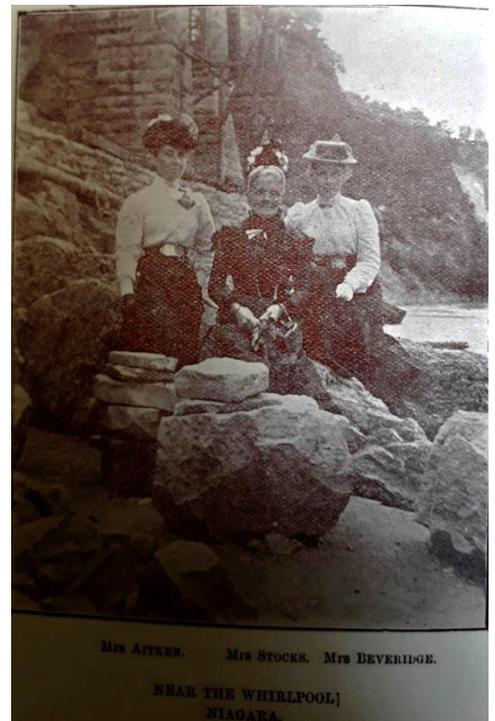
*It transpires that an offer of £5:5:0 was made which was rejected by the solicitors with eventually a final offer of £7:7:0 being made. For whatever reason the Minutes show that the Provost dissented*

*from the proposed reduction.*

The whole affair led to Messrs Hendry being asked and presumably agreeing to tone down the horn with the first morning call being restricted to 30 seconds and the second morning call restricted to 15 seconds.

Believe it or not shortly afterwards the Council came up with a future standard for steam horns – not many will know or care that “*the horn had to be an ordinary organ type of 2 inches in diameter supplied with steam at a maximum of 7 pounds per square inch from a half inch pipe*”.

It is hard to believe that in the space of a month such scenes and arguments could come and go. Mrs Stocks continued to live in *Inveriel Bank* until 1899 when the property was exposed for sale. Mrs Stocks had continued with her good works most especially with Inveriel Free Church, Kirkcaldy Women's Liberal Association and the Women's Mission. There are any number of examples of challenging letters from her pen in the local press. She was certainly not afraid to put her head above the parapet. When the Adam Smith Halls were opened, in the same year, Mrs Stocks found herself, not unnaturally, as part of the platform party accompanying her daughter Mrs Beveridge. This narrative has argued that, setting aside the armada of individuals known or connected to her, without question she was a doughty lady. Keeping in mind that she was born in 1819 we find that on the 29<sup>th</sup> May 1900 she set out from her home to visit her son John in British Columbia . Staying in 19 different hotels during the trip she returned to her new home in Townsend Crescent on the 10<sup>th</sup>



November that same year. Given it involved sea voyages and she was aged 81 – you have to accept she was made of strong stuff. On the trip she was accompanied by her widowed daughters – Mrs Aitken and Mrs Beveridge. The diary she kept throughout the trip was published in book form on 15 January 1901 and dedicated to her grandchildren in Canada. Mrs Anne Laing Stocks died at her home *Addinstone* on the 20<sup>th</sup> December 1912. As with the sale of *Invertiel Bank* it was Beveridge and Aitken who wound up her estate.

**NOTICE**

**A**LL Parties having CLAIMS against the late Mrs ANNE JANE LAING OF STOCKS, "Addinstone," Townsend Crescent, Kirkcaldy, are requested to lodge the same within Ten Days from this date with Messrs Beveridge and Aitken, Solicitors, Kirkcaldy, the Agents for Mrs Stocks' Testamentary Trustees.  
Kirkcaldy, 20th Dec., 1912.

The book, which we knew nothing about, was uncovered by one of Kirkcaldy's library staff and from this we have been able to uncover photographs of Mrs Stocks and some of her family.

**FOR SALE.**

**I**NVERTIEL BANK Dwelling-House, Offices, and Garden. The House contains 3 Public Rooms, 4 Bedrooms, large Kitchen, and servants' accommodation, Laundry, Washing-House, W.C., Cellars, &c. Apply to Messrs Beveridge and Aitken, Solicitors.

We can have a quick look at William J. Hendry who owned the mill at the time of the dispute. The mill had been built in 1855 by William Hendry and operated with success by his sons Daniel and Thomas for a decade. In 1866 a spectacular fall out between the brothers saw the mill stand idle for three years before Thomas restarted production on his own account. Thomas Hendry married Mary McGlashan in 1861 with William J. Hendry born the following year. He would be 32 in 1893 giving credence to Mrs Stock's claim that she was in *Invertiel Bank* before he was born. The business carried on until 1921 when it closed for good. It stood empty until the death of Mr Hendry in 1933. He was a bachelor and died in his home in Milton Road aged 70. An advertisement for the sale of his various properties is shown, if only for interest. A

**KIRKCALDY.**

WAREHOUSES, DWELLINGHOUSES, ETC.

THERE WILL BE RE-EXPOSED TO SALE, by Public Roup, within the Writing Chambers of CHARLES WOOD & SON, Solicitors, 115 High Street, Kirkcaldy, on TUESDAY, 25th September, 1933, at 2.30 o'clock afternoon, unless previously sold privately,

**T**HE following Properties belonging to the Estate of the late Mr W. J. Hendry, all as previously advertised:—

LOT No. I.—The Dwellinghouses, Nos. 2 to 6 Mill Street, No. 2 Pratt Street, and No. 303 Links Street, and the large substantial Warehouse and another smaller Warehouse, No. 4 Pratt Street.

REDUCED UPSET PRICE, £900.

LOT No. II.—The Shop and Dwellinghouses, Nos. 281 to 285 Links Street, with Ground behind extending to about three Acres, used as a Market Garden, and also the Warehouse and old Dwellinghouses at Nos. 13 to 15 Pratt Street.

REDUCED UPSET PRICE, £650.

For further particulars apply to the said Charles Wood & Son, or to Thos. Thornton, Son & Co., Solicitors, 15 Albert Square, Dundee, who have the Titles and Articles of Roup.

**DEATH OF KIRKCALDY MANUFACTURER**

Late Mr W. J. Hendry

The death occurred in the early hours of Monday morning of Mr William James Hendry, Maryfield, 85 Milton Road, Kirkcaldy.

Mr Hendry, who had been ailing for several days, was found lying dead in his bedroom by his housekeeper.

A native of Kirkcaldy, Mr Hendry was a member of the firm of Messrs J. & W. Hendry, who, up till the war period, carried on business at the West Bridge Spinning Mills.

brother, Thomas Oliphant Hendry, was born in 1868 and died in Edinburgh in 1938.

In 1934 a rumour circulated that, as smoke was coming from the chimney of West Bridge Mills – it was perhaps reopening under a new owner. *The Fife Free Press* raced to the scene and a report in the edition of the 10<sup>th</sup> March shattered the dream – the new owner, John Bayne, metal merchant of Den Road, was burning rubbish as the machinery was being dismantled.



John Tait lost the Provostship in November of 1893 being replaced by John T. Stocks. He remained a Bailie until in 1902, on the resignation of Provost Hutchison, he was restored to the position of Civic Head. He was still Provost when he died on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 1903. Make no mistake – he may or may not have felt obliged or coerced into the stance he appeared to take over the whistle affair. However, there is no doubting his contribution to the town where he had been first elected to the Council in 1880. It is not for now to cover his career but these few notes will paint him as no weakling.

THE LATE PROVOST TAIT.



Kirkcaldy's honoured Provost, Mr John Tait, J.P., after a few weeks illness, has joined the great majority, sleeping peacefully away on Saturday afternoon last a little before one o'clock. The deceased gentleman's was a well-known form in our midst. Physically, he was a man of very fine appearance, his tall figure, erect almost to the last, being familiar to everybody. Mr Tait, who was a native of Dirlتون, East Lothian, came to Kirkcaldy when a young man to fill an appointment on Dunnikier estate, and, in the laying of drains, and the carrying out of general improvements, his services, as an adviser and otherwise, were highly appreciated by the late Major Oswald. He was afterwards in business as a commission agent in Kirkcaldy. The

In his early years he was heavily involved with the Volunteer Movement where he rose to command a company. He was a noted marksman and when long service medals were struck he was one of the first recipients. He retired from active service with the honorary rank of Major. He became involved in the town's staple industry – floorcloth manufacture where he was an energetic and successful businessman. He served on the Town Council rising to be appointed a bailie both before and after his first Provostship stint.

A keen supporter of an extended harbour, he was also a driving force behind improved sanitation and the construction of the well equipped fever hospital. The hospital paid huge dividends when smallpox broke out in the Burgh. When Edward VII ascended to the throne he visited Edinburgh and held a Royal Levee. Provosts from all over Scotland were invited and John Tait was the oldest of their number – sadly he was also the first of them to die.

Just three months before his death he set in motion both the town's Tramway and Electric Lighting system. He had been a widower for many years, his wife dying in 1843.

His funeral saw the shops in the town closed for an hour at the time of the funeral, the town and church bells were tolled, and flags were flown at half mast on public work's buildings and from shipping in the harbour. Large crowds followed the cortège from his house at 1 Beveridge Road to St. Brycedale and then to the burial ground of the Parish Church. *The Fife Free Press* covered the funeral in its 13<sup>th</sup> June 1903 edition – reporting that the three nephews of his brother Thomas were the principal pallbearers. They were William, James and Thomas Tait who tragically were not only mourning the loss of their uncle that day but also their father! Thomas Tait, John's elder brother, had died in Edinburgh 48 hours after his brother. He was also heavily involved in civic affairs serving on Edinburgh Council for 23 years.

John Tait was certainly no ordinary man and we will never know why he was so supportive of Mrs

Stocks but it did seem to land him in some bother. This was brought into sharp focus when, at that full Council meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July, the *Fife Free Press* reported that following another

**The Provost—Stick to the point.**  
**Treasurer Pratt—Perhaps Bailie Halliday knows how to conduct the meeting better than—**  
**The Provost—I insist on you keeping to the point.**  
**Treasurer Pratt—I am sorry to see the Provost so nervous over this matter. (Laughter).**  
**The Provost—I'll have none of this.**  
**Treasurer Pratt then continued that at the com-**

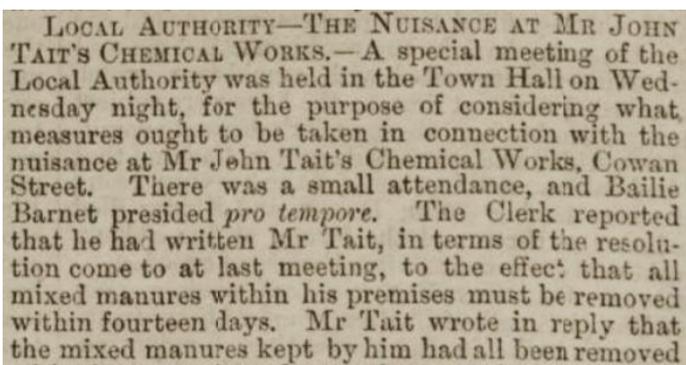
spat between members – Treasurer Pratt commented – “I am sorry to see the Provost so nervous over this matter (laughter). The Provost's response was “I'll have none of this”. Was he nervous – why was he nervous – did he regret his stance – had his judgement been clouded?

If any good came from the whole furore it is that Mrs Stocks recovered from the episode and got on with her life, living until 1912. Provost Tait also recovered his aplomb and went on to again secure the Provost's chair, dying in harness.

This was where the story was scheduled to end but reading through a report on an 1872 outing of the workers of Robert Stocks & Co we found an astonishing article on the same page. It simply has to bring down the curtain. The item came from the *Fife Herald* of the 27<sup>th</sup> June 1872. The headline was:-

### **The Nuisance at John Tait's Chemical Works**

In essence, a special meeting of the Council was called to discuss the above. The matter had been discussed at a previous meeting and the Town Clerk had been instructed to write to John Tait asking him to remove what was termed all of the mixed manures in his Cowan Street premises. Tait had replied that all had been removed bar a few tons which would be sold over the next few days. He hoped this would satisfy the Council - which it did not!



LOCAL AUTHORITY—THE NUISANCE AT MR JOHN TAIT'S CHEMICAL WORKS.—A special meeting of the Local Authority was held in the Town Hall on Wednesday night, for the purpose of considering what measures ought to be taken in connection with the nuisance at Mr John Tait's Chemical Works, Cowan Street. There was a small attendance, and Bailie Barnet presided *pro tempore*. The Clerk reported that he had written Mr Tait, in terms of the resolution come to at last meeting, to the effect that all mixed manures within his premises must be removed within fourteen days. Mr Tait wrote in reply that the mixed manures kept by him had all been removed

The Town Clerk had asked for confirmation that he (Tait) would desist from storing mixed manures in the future. Tait had replied saying that he had consulted a Dr. MacAdam in Edinburgh and if he (Tait) carried out the recommendations given then the nuisance would

no longer exist. This did not satisfy the Clerk who now wanted a prosecution under Section 30 of the Nuisance (Removal Act) of 1867. This could lead to Tait facing a penalty of £50 plus expenses.

However, the town's inspector, a Mr D.D. Arnot, reported that he had visited Cowan Street and found that there were still some 50 tons of mixed manure on the premises. The Councillors took a view, unlike 1893, and offered time for Mr Tait to remove the manure and give an undertaking to no longer keep mixed manures on the premises. They even added the proviso that they would accept mixed manures if Dr. MacAdam could satisfy them that, by adopting his plan, the nuisance would be removed. The Clerk was instructed to write giving Tait eight days to comply or the Council would petition the Sheriff to have Tait prosecuted. Wiser counsel had prevailed giving living proof that a quiet word might have paid dividends 21 years later!

The circle had been completed.

## Acknowledgements

Mapping - Maps reproduced with the permission of the *National Library of Scotland*.

Newspaper Cuttings - Individual newspapers credited in the text but the information is obtained from *Findmypast Newspaper Archive Ltd* in partnership with the *British Library*.

We acknowledge the valuable assistance given by *On-Fife Local Studies Team* by finding and providing a copy of Mrs Stock's Travel Journal and for allowing

the use of the two photographs – one of Mrs Stocks herself and the other of herself and two of her daughters.

*Tom Reid* for his invaluable assistance in checking and correcting the text where appropriate.