

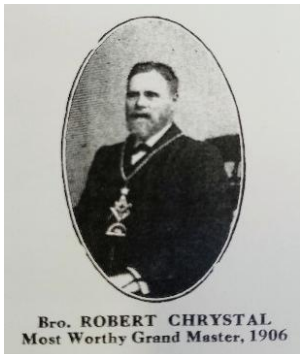


Kirkcaldy and the Ancient Order of Free Gardeners Who Were They and What Did they Do?



For Object 54, we embark on a journey of discovery into an organisation which is now almost forgotten but once played a significant role in Kirkcaldy and the local area. In fact, a number of houses, which were built by the Order, still stand as a reminder and testament to their presence and endeavours. Although after World War I, and the eventual onset of the welfare state, diluted the need for their existence – the Gardeners and other mutual benefit groups were, for many, all that had stood between survival and the abyss. Their story is well worth recounting and deserves its place in our spotlight.

To the team's surprise nothing appears to exist on the history of the *British Order of Ancient Free Gardeners* in Kirkcaldy and every word has been the result of painstaking research, primarily using the *Fife Free Press*. As the narrative unfolds and the size and extent of the Order's connection with Kirkcaldy are demonstrated, it is astonishing that this should be the case. We also have to thank Mrs Irene Gilbert who, by coincidence, had been in the library when the subject was being discussed. Her husband's great grandfather had been an official and she happily shared some information and publications with us. This has allowed some photographs of important local figures, which would have been impossible without that chance meeting, to be included in the text. They certainly enhance the Object.



To create initial interest in the narrative, an excellent starting point is found in the *Fife Free Press* of the 4th March 1905. This is far from the first newspaper reference to the Order but, in a few paragraphs, it sets the scene. The article is a report on the 26th Annual District Delegate Conference of this friendly society and had been held in the Swan Memorial Building the previous Saturday. Brother R. Chrystal was in the Chair and his first task was to mention the passing of John Brown who had served both Lodge and District for some 20 years.

The Secretary, George Wright, then covered the income and expenditure for the previous year. The highlights were that £4,100 had been paid in Sickness Aliment and a further £765 as Funeral Allowance. What is astonishing is that it was reported “there was a good balance to carry forward” - the figure being £29,372. Yes, that was the balance in 1905 – a figure which now equates to £4,564,000. It was also reported that there were 5,461 members.

Bailie Leslie, a Kirkcaldy town councillor, and a District Trustee reported on the *Investment Building Fund*. The Friendly Society, at that point, owned over 100 houses in Balsusney Road, Meldrum Road and Balfour Street. Without disclosing figures the

report indicated that these were “giving a good return on the £15,000 invested there”. This would suggest this sum had been used to purchase/construct properties and the returns were presumably by way of rent. It will be shown later that they were not purchasing property but in planning and organising their construction.

Office Bearers were then elected and these are shown for interest. With the more unusual names, there is always the possibility that some readers may recognise a family member. Those elected were R. Chrystal, J. McKinnon, J. Donaldson and J. McAughy. Mr. R.A. Henderson was appointed Treasurer and G. Wright as Secretary. With the exception of J. McAughy all played long and significant parts in the organisation – some only locally but others on the national stage.

In addition, Brothers; Leslie, Sinclair, Henderson, Lambert, Chrystal and McKinnon were selected to represent the District at the forthcoming *Annual Delegation of the Order* to be held in Hanley, Staffordshire, in June. A number of these names are woven into the story and played a significant part in the local, district and national movement.

This provides the starting point of learning that this was a friendly society which, while having its original purpose as the sharing of secret knowledge linked to the profession, it had by the 19th century metamorphised into predominately a provider of mutual self help. Given that this was the 26th Annual District Conference, this Kirkcaldy District would have been formed in around 1878/1879. Armed with the knowledge that various Lodges made up the District it is now possible to start looking backwards at both the local and national history of the organisation.

There can be nowhere better than the website of the *Ancient Order of Free Gardeners* to commence looking at the history. There we learn that this is “a fraternal society rooted in the Scottish tradition since the 17th century. It shares similarities with Freemasonry, emphasising brotherhood, self improvement and mutual aid”. Without shadow of doubt it was founded in Scotland before spreading to England and Ireland. The earliest recorded Scottish Lodges are:-

- Haddington Lodge - founded in 1676.
- Dunfermline Lodge - founded in 1715.
- Bothwell Hawthorn Lodge – founded 1796.
- Arbroath Lodge – founded 1796.
- Cambusnethan Lodge – founded 1796.

The Haddington Lodge was not formed by professional gardeners but by farmers and landowners who took an interest in gardening. Many landowners were interested in how to best display their formal gardens. The Lodge opened on the 16th August 1676 and was governed by 15 rules which were known as the *Inter junctions for ye Fraternity of Haddingtonshire* (The county only became East Lothian in 1921). As gardening was not seen as an urban profession – they could not turn themselves into a Guild – hence the decision to form themselves along the lines of freemasonry.

The lodge certainly offered co-operation between its members and provided practical training but, as its twin purpose, it supported the poor, the widows and the orphans of those in the profession. It is also suggested that these lodges were the first to offer floral exhibitions which were open to the public from as early as 1772.

In addition to the five mentioned above, by 1849 another 20 lodges had been created – always in Scotland. On the 6th November 1849, at a meeting in Penicuik, a *Grand Lodge of the Ancient Order of Gardeners in Scotland* was formed. This date is evidenced by an article appearing in *The Edinburgh News and Literary Chronicle* of the 21st December 1850. The item is replicated here and informs readers that a Grand Ball of the Ancient Order will take place on Tuesday the 18th February 1851 in the Music Rooms in George Street. Subordinate lodges were to accept this notice as their invitation. It is this umbrella organisation that the Kirkcaldy Lodges, in time, came to join.

ANCIENT ORDER OF FREE GARDENERS.
THE BALL of the GRAND LODGE of FREE GARDENERS, Scotland, will take place in the MUSIC HALL, GEORGE STREET, on TUESDAY the 18th of February 1851.
Tickets, 3s Each.
Subordinate Lodges will please accept this as an intimation.
For particulars see future Advertisements.

GRAND LODGE OF FREE GARDENERS, SCOTLAND.
THE COMMITTEE of the GRAND LODGE of FREE GARDENERS, SCOTLAND, have much pleasure in intimating to the Brethren of the Order that they have fixed their First BALL to take place in the MUSIC HALL, GEORGE STREET, on TUESDAY, the 18th inst.
Tickets, 3s each (admitting a Brother and Two Ladies), may be had from the M.W.G.M. Robt. Thomson, Lasswade; James Knox, G.P.M., 15 Catherine Street, Edinburgh; Wm. Dodds, G.S.W., Penicuik; David Scott, G.J.W., Duddingston; John Brown, G.T., Robin Hood Hotel, Edinburgh; Chas. Alexander, R.W.M. of the Barony of Broughton Lodge; Wm. Burge, 10 North Bridge; and Alexr. Miller, 56 Broughton Street.
JOHN THOMSON, Theatre-Royal Tavern, } Purveyors.
Shakspeare Square, }
NORVAL McLEOD, Infirmary Street, }
Doors open at Nine; Dancing to commence at Ten o'Clock precisely.
By Order of the Grand Lodge Committee,
DANIEL GRANT, Grand Secy.

On the 8th February 1851 a further advertisement, in the same outlet, gives far more details of the event including where the tickets can be purchased. The price was what is now 15p and this secured a place for a Brother and two ladies. The advertisement is again shown here as it does provide details of where some of the ticket sellers were based. These are mainly around the capital with a few based in the borders. Penicuik, where the Grand Lodge was born, is mentioned but without shadow of doubt Edinburgh appears to be the centre of the movement.

The same newspaper duly reported on the 22nd February 1851 that the event had taken place and was attended by upwards of 500 persons which included ladies. An interesting comment was that “the effect produced from the superb and elegant dresses of the ladies, combined with the clothing and decorations as worn by the brethren of the different lodges, was most striking”.

Statistical evidence demonstrates that the Order of Ancient Free Gardeners had many adherents. However, the 20th century brought about significant change to the social structure – not least by the advent of two world wars. This saw many members called up to the forces and the economic crash of the late 1920s certainly had a destabilising effect on membership. The crusading Liberal Government's *National Insurance Act of 1911* started to dilute the effectiveness of the objectives and the Labour Government's *National Insurance Act of 1946* almost removed the whole purpose of friendly societies at a stroke. All the national changes were a microcosm of what was happening in Kirkcaldy to the Free Gardeners.

It was agreed that the new lodge would be given the designation of *Scotch Thistle* and it was reported that 50 individuals were enrolled. Following the opening ceremony the following officials were elected. Given that both the forenames and surnames were given – they are reproduced here in the hope that some readers might recognise the name of a family member from close on 150 years ago. They were named as follows:-

James Saunders – G.M.

Romeo Drysdale - D.G.M.

David Nicholson - C.M.

James Martin - S.W.

William Dall - J.G.

Charles Munro - O.G.

William Ness - Secretary.

George Howie -Treasurer.

Robert Chrystal – Chaplain – who went on to become an outstanding figure in the organisation.

The following were appointed as Stewards:- Daniel Burns, James Napier, David Gold, William Hughes and Andrew Cant. Dr. J. Lindsay Porteous was named as the Medical Officer to the Lodge.

“The initiatory proceedings over, a concert was held in the school where a varied and lengthened programme was opened with a song given by Brother A. Henderson named *The Scotch Thistle*, which, on account of its appropriateness to the occasion, was well received. A happy evening was spent”.

ANCIENT ORDER OF FREE GARDENERS.

THE BLOOMING HEATHER LODGE
will hold its usual Fortnightly Meeting on
WEDNESDAY, 21st inst, at 7.30 p.m. Important business. Full attendance requested.

A typical advertisement taken from the *Fife Free Press* of the 17th August 1878 is reproduced here. It intimates that the *Blooming Heather Lodge* will be holding a meeting on Wednesday the 21st with the purpose of discussing important

business. A full attendance is requested. Strange to relate, a similar advertisement, this time from the 12th April 1879, is in the same vein – important business to discuss! The fact that there was important business became a common feature and often non attendance could result in a fine – if the adverts are to be believed!

The *Fife Free Press* of the 22nd February 1879 gives a report on the first Annual General Meeting of the *Scotch Thistle Lodge* which took place in the Lodge Room in Pathhead Public School. This was an excellent find during the research process as it follows on from the article relating to the formation of the Lodge covered previously. It also offers the opportunity to look at the significant changes in the office-bearers over the embryonic first 12 months.

Brother James Saunders was in the Chair and the meeting was opened in what was described as in “the due and ancient form”. Brother Howie gave the financial report for

the first 12 months of existence. Income was £107.90p and expenditure was £77.35p. The expenditure was noted as consisting of funeral grants, sick ailment, grants to members in impoverished circumstances and doctor's fees etc. This gave a balance to carry forward of £30.55p but what was described as *lodge property*, amounting to £26.00, was added, bringing out a net gain for the year of £56.55p.

The report went on to declare that the *Scottish Thistle Lodge, No.2* of the *Ancient Order of Free Gardeners* was taking the opportunity of offering to the working classes a list of “advantages which were rarely to be met with and certainly cannot be exceeded by any other friendly society in the Country”. In fairness, given this was in the days prior to the introduction of National Insurance/the Welfare State - these appear to be extremely worthwhile.

The benefits were:-

- The entry fees are in reach of all from 3/6d to 10/- according to age.
- Six months are given to pay this entry/initiation money.
- Members are entitled to full benefits 6 months from the date of initiation – unlike some societies who based the entitlement on 6 months from the last instalment of the initiation money being paid.
- Members who paid the initiation money in full were immediately entitled to a part funeral allowance for both himself and his wife.
- A funeral allowance was available for members children up to the age of 18.
- Members, when sick, were entitled to medical attendance, all necessary medication and 10/- per week allowance for 6 months. This was followed by 5/- per week for the remainder of the sickness period. In addition their weekly subscriptions were paid by the Lodge while the member was incapacitated.
- The funeral allowances were set at: – for members - £10; for a member's wife - £5 and for member's children at - £1.10/-
- Contributions were set at the lowest rates possible and did not rise with age.

Interested persons were asked to seek further information from either the office bearers or any member. The article ended with the election of the office bearers and these were listed below.

J. Saunders – G.M..

George Turnbull – D.G.M.

Robert Chrystal – designated as Chaplain.

James Martin – S.W.

George Craigie – J.W.

William Morgan - A.P.M.

George Howie – Treasurer.

Charles Hutchison – O.G.

John Hitchen – Secretary.

Brothers Simpson, Clunie, Williamson, Kay and Mitchelston and Stark were elected Stewards.

Brothers Brown and McFarlane were appointed auditors.

This time, there is no mention of the doctor being elected therefore we can only presume that Dr. J. Lindsay Porteous had been appointed rather than being elected annually. A comparison of the new office-bearers against those originally elected show only 4 names – Howie, Saunders, Chrystal and Martin which feature in both lists.

Therefore, to summarise, the lodges in Kirkcaldy were formed in the following order – the *Blooming Heather Lodge* was the first – the *Lily Lodge* followed and finally the *Scotch Thistle Lodge*, with all three being formed during 1877 or 1878.

However, matters did not end there as it soon becomes obvious that an over-arching District Lodge had been formed. This information was gleaned from the *Kirkcaldy Trades Directory* albeit from a decade later but it was a starting point. The title is listed as *Kirkcaldy District Branch of the British Order of Ancient Free Gardeners*. The officers listed are noted as District Officers and the 10 are made up by; 4 from the *Blooming Heather*, 2 from the *Scotch Thistle*, 2 from the *Lily* with one from the *Tree of Dysart* and finally an individual from *Rossend Castle*. The latter is a Burntisland Lodge whilst the *Tree of Dysart* needs some further research. Dysart at this time was not part of Kirkcaldy – the amalgamation not taking place until 1930.

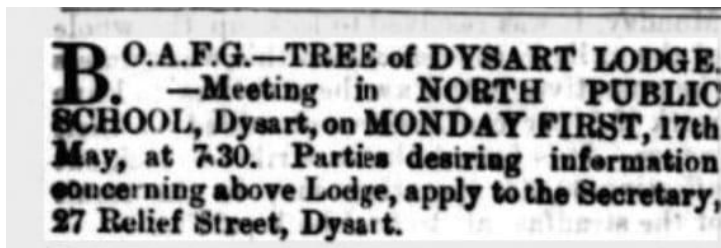
The Trades Directories are an excellent source of interesting material and a small number of the other Friendly and Investment Societies are given below. Such is their number, not all could be included but the list should give a flavour:-

- Masonic Lodge – Oswald of Dunnikier No. 468.
- Masonic Lodge - Lodge Kirkcaldie No. 72.
- Ancient Order of Foresters' Friendly Society.
- Court St. Brycedale, No. 5540. Kirkcaldy.
- Eden Lodge of Free Gardeners.
- Kirkcaldy and Linktown Yearly Benefit and Deposit Society.
- Abbotshall Yearly Benefit Society.
- Kirkcaldy and Abbotshall Funeral Society.

An advertisement taken from the *Fife Free Press* of the 21st February 1880 indicates interest in forming a Dysart lodge. The *Fife Free Press* of the 6th March then covers the formation of the new *Tree of Dysart* lodge. The article reveals that a meeting had taken place on the last day of February in the South Public School (now long gone) with a view to establishing a lodge in Dysart.

BRITISH ORDER ANCIENT FREE GARDENERS.—A Deputation from the above Order will Meet with those who are desirous of Forming a Lodge in Dysart on the EVENING of MONDAY FIRST, 23rd February, 1880, at 8 o'Clock P.M., in the SOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOL.
JAMES SAUNDERS, G.M.
JOHN HITCHIN, Secy.
Scotch Thistle Lodge, Pathhead.

The meeting had been held under the auspices of the *Kirkcaldy District Branch* rather than one of the 3 existing lodges. The Chair was taken by James Livesey, described as, the *Most Worshipful Deputy Grand Master*. Livesey gave a “clear and detailed outline of the progress of the Order as a friendly society, showing that the membership, in this district, had risen to nearly 400 in the short space of two and a half years. He then briefly explained the aims and object of the Order, after which a sufficient number signified their willingness to form themselves into a lodge. An adjourned meeting was duly held on the following Thursday night – Brother Livesey again presiding. It was agreed to designate the new lodge the *Tree of Dysart*. Office-bearers were then appointed and arrangements made for opening the lodge on Saturday 20th inst”. The edition of the *Kirkcaldy Times* reported, in its edition of the 17th March, that the new lodge had appointed Dr. J. Lindsay Porteous as its Medical Officer.



For interest, a notice published in the *Kirkcaldy Times* of the 12th May 1880, which is included here, shows that meetings were being held on Monday nights in the North Public School despite the formation meeting taking place in the South School.

Although the address of the secretary was shown as 27 Relief Street, Dysart, by the time the June notice was published that address had altered to 2 Coal-yard, Dysart. This suggests that either the secretary or his address had changed.

At this stage, establishing details of the formation of the *Kirkcaldy District Branch* had proved elusive. Very little had so far been unearthed from newspapers of the time. The *Fife Free Press* of the 16th August certainly confirms that the branch was in existence at that date. The article was in relation to a meeting of the members of the *Scotch Thistle Lodge* with Brother James Saunders in the Chair. The meeting had been held the previous Tuesday and covered the activities over the last 6 months. A total of 27 persons had joined the society with 5 leaving which brought the strength to 93. Due to the state of trade it was felt that these figures were satisfactory and indicated that “this was proof that working men were taking the order of friendly societies into consideration, so they may be assisted when distress overtook them”.

It was the final paragraph, written by the reporter, which indicated that:- “this order, though only lately opened in Kirkcaldy, has now over 800 members; in that, a district lodge has been opened for the whole of their business to be done by themselves. We hope they will still go on prospering and no doubt the fruits of gardenery will be greatly relished by every right minded person when old age, sickness or death occurs”.

Shortly after the formation of the *Tree of Dysart* what was termed the third annual Demonstration took place featuring the three lodges as well as the District. Given this was the first involvement of all the lodges acting together a little time may be spent on covering what a demonstration involved. In essence it would seem to be a procession

followed by a picnic.

The details of this event were taken from the *Fife Free Press* of the 3rd July 1880 with the demonstration having taken place the previous Saturday. The procession had formed up at Gallatown and set off at 2.00pm led by the Kirkcaldy and District Band. The *Tree of Dysart* delegation were followed by the members of the *Lily Lodge*. On arriving at Pathhead they were joined by the *Scotch Thistle Lodge*. The extended column made their way down the Path to the Port Brae. At that point, they were joined by members of the *Blooming Heather Lodge*.

The whole column then about turned and made their way back up the Path – still led by the Kirkcaldy District Band and the *Tree of Dysart* members. It was reported that the Dysart brethren were carrying two banners – the one of their Lodge but also the *District Lodge* Banner. Behind came the *Lily* and *Scotch Thistle* members who were in turn followed by the Kinghorn Band. Immediately behind came the officers of the *District Lodge* and a deputation from *The Ancient Order of Foresters' Friendly Society* which had similar aims to the Gardeners. The Foresters had appeared in Kirkcaldy in 1876 – therefore they were a slightly older organisation. The article reveals that “there were a number of banners of pretty design with floral decorations. One notable feature was a representation of Noah's Ark, made up of daisies and moss, with the dove seeking admission at the window and over this was the rainbow”.

The procession numbered around 200 and they made their way via Mid Street, Gallatown and Oswald Road to reach Dunnikier Park around 4.30pm. The grounds had been made available for the occasion by Mr J.T. Oswald. The company indulged in dancing, football and other amusements. Refreshments were supplied by Mr Kidd, a confectioner from Gallatown. Over 1,500 people had turned out to enjoy the day. Proceedings came to an end at around 8.30pm when Brother James Livesey thanked everyone for supporting the event. Livesey was the *District Grand Master*. He also thanked the Foresters for accepting their invitation and Mr Gourlay, the *District Chief Ranger of the Foresters*, in turn, thanked the Gardeners for the invitation.

Brother John McKinnon, the *District Deputy Grand Master*, called for a vote of thanks for Mr Oswald and also for Mr Kidd which were “heartily given”. Brother Robert Chrystal, the *District Past Master*, thanked the secretaries of the various lodges for the help they had provided to the District in the organisation of the function. The marchers then headed home by the same route – this time led by both bands.

As previously mentioned this was the third such event and certainly much more substantial than the previous two. The *Fife Free Press* of the 6th July 1878 covered the initial occasion. The previous Saturday, the paper had carried a report on the first

annual general meeting of the *Blooming Heather Lodge*. The article referred to this forthcoming event as a picnic! There were only the three lodges involved and the procession commenced from Burleigh Street Hall – this is where the *Blooming Heather Lodge* met. Two bands were involved, these being the Kirkcaldy Trades Band along with the Dysart Town Band. Interestingly, there seems to have been an 'advance guard' which carried a drawn sword! In terms of banners there was a major one carried by members of *Scotland's First Lodge* which was emblazoned with the insignia of the Order, whilst there were smaller ones inscribed with phrases such as *Unity is Strength*. The procession wound its way through the extended burgh arriving at Dunnikier Park around 4.00pm.

ANCIENT FREE GARDENERS—GRAND DEMONSTRATION.—A grand demonstration of the Ancient Free Gardeners (English Order) took place on Saturday last in Dunnikier grounds, kindly granted for the occasion by J. T. Oswald, Esq. The Kirkcaldy Lodge mustered at Burleigh Street, and were there joined by the Gallatown and Pathhead Lodges, when all three formed in procession order, and headed by the Kirkcaldy Trades and Dysart Bands, marched through the streets of the extended burgh. The procession presented a most imposing appearance.

There we are told “the participants were tripping the light fantastic and taking part in various sports akin to the occasion”. The evening ended as dusk fell around 8.00pm by the singing of *Auld Lang Syne*. Three office-bearers then made short speeches and, these were Brother Livesey – Grandmaster of the Blooming Heather, Brother McKinnon – Grandmaster of the Lily Lodge and finally Brother Saunders of the Scotch Thistle, who also provided a vote of thanks to Mr Oswald.

Brother Drummond of the *Glasgow Lodge* complimented Kirkcaldy on having, in such a short space of time formed three lodges with 300 members. He also mentioned the benefits which certainly includes what appears to be an early form of pension. It seems that a contribution of 6d per week could bring about a payment of 10/- per week for the 6 months after reaching the age of 60. This was followed by 5/- per week for life. Certainly the work done by most of the members would be manual, heavy and hard, therefore being physically difficult to follow after reaching 60. The sickness and death benefits, mentioned previously, were available in addition to this quasi pension.

At the time of the second demonstration/picnic the *Fife Free Press* was able to cover the event in its edition of the 28th June 1879. Here we learn the exact date that the *Blooming Heather Lodge* was formed - the 18th June 1877. Once again, the three lodges were involved and the route demonstrates just how far people were prepared to walk in the days prior to easy public transport.

BRITISH ORDER OF ANCIENT FREE GARDENERS.—The Kirkcaldy district of the above Order held their third annual demonstration to Dunnikier Park on Saturday last, kindly granted by J. T. Oswald, Esq. The procession left Gallatown at about two o'clock. The “Tree of Dysart Lodge” formed in front, followed by the “Lily Lodge,” Gallatown, preceded by the Kirkcaldy and District Band. On arriving in Pathhead, the “Scotch Thistle Lodge” Pathhead, took up their place in rear of the “Lily Lodge,” and they proceeded down the Path to Port Brae, where they were joined by the “Blooming Heather Lodge,” headed by the Kinghorn Instrumental Band.

Starting at Gallatown they marched through the extended burgh to the West Bridge and then – back to Dunnikier Park! The town's three brass bands led the procession from the first to the last and also provided the music for the dancing. The article noted that the refreshment stall, provided by Mr Kidd, was well patronised and that the lemonade stall was completely sold out. Representatives from the West of Scotland District were also in attendance but it was brothers

McKinnon and Livesey who made the closing remarks and provided the vote of thanks.

An interesting element in the report is the membership figures which were quoted as 70 for the *Lily Lodge* – 100 for the *Scotch Thistle* and above 150 for the *Blooming Heather* – a total of somewhere near to 400 was suggested. Brother Jack, from Glasgow, in his remarks on the growth of the Order, made it clear that “they were not banded together so much for the culture of flowers as for the alleviation of distress”.

Moving on just over 12 months, valuable information is obtained in the *Fife Free Press* of the 1st October 1881. In essence, this was a social gathering of the *Blooming Heather lodge* held in Burleigh Street Hall the previous Saturday. James Livesey was in the chair and, after the consumption of tea and cakes, he indulged in a few remarks. Confirmation was given of the dates of the lodges being formed but what was useful was the quoting of numbers of members on the respective formation days and at the present date.

- *The Blooming Heather* was indeed established in June 1877 with 37 members which had risen to 285.
- *The Lily Lodge* was established in October 1877 by 19 members and which now numbered 80.
- *The Scotch Thistle* was formed in February 1878 with a starting figure of 39 which had now climbed to 140.

Without mentioning the *Tree of Dysart* by name – Livesey went on to mention that “since then another two lodges have been opened, one in Dysart and one in Aberdeen. In August 1879, a District Lodge was formed in Kirkcaldy with a membership of 320 and at the present time has nearly doubled its numbers. At the formation of the order, the age of admission was from 18 – 45 but the rule had been altered since then and is now 16-40”.

The current admission/entrance monies were revealed as:-

- Ages 16 – 24 4/6d (23p)
- Ages 25 – 30 6/6d (33p)
- Ages 31 - 35 8/6d (43p)
- Ages 36 - 40 11/6d (58p)

The benefits were mainly in line with those revealed previously but there were some alterations/additions.

Sickness benefit remained at 10/- per week for the first 6 months with 5/- per week for the next 6 months. These were paid by the respective lodge. However, if the incapacity lasted more than 12 months, then it was the District who paid 5/- per week for the remainder of the period of the incapacity. The death benefit allowance had seen the addition of the sum of 15/- being paid if a child was stillborn.

An added benefit which members (of the *Blooming Heather Lodge at least*) could take up, if they so wished, was to pay the appointed doctor 3/3d per annum (around 17p). In exchange, this gave the member and his family access to the doctor and the appropriate medicine. It would seem that it was only married members who could secure this significant benefit.

Brother Livesey ended his remarks by stating that, in the month of April 1881, there were 94 lodges in England and Scotland with a total of 6,985 members. It was also revealed that in the year to April 1881, £1,367 had been paid in funeral allowances.

“With songs and recitations etc., a pleasant and profitable Saturday evening was enjoyed by members and their friends”. It may well have been that this social evening duetted as a recruiting event.

The town of Kirkcaldy and its Free Gardener's Lodges were paid a great compliment which was covered by the *Fife Free Press* in its edition of the 7th March 1884. The executive of the Order were holding their annual conference in the Lang Toun. This conference was known as the *Annual Moveable Delegation* as it moved around the country each year. The conference was held in Milne's Temperance Hotel. Without question, this is the building which sits on the corner of the High Street and Tolbooth Street and, if examined closely, part of the painted Temperance Hotel name can still be read. The hotel appears to have come to town in the 1870s but the Milne's seem to have left circa 1887, following the tragic drowning of their son Robert whilst swimming in the harbour. The conference lasted for three days and the following were amongst the lodges represented:-

BRITISH ORDER OF ANCIENT FREE GARDENERS FRIENDLY SOCIETY. — The annual moveable delegation of this body has been held in Milne's Temperance Hotel, Kirkcaldy during the present week, and delegates were present from the following places, viz., Newcastle-on-Tyne, Walker-on-Tyne, Durham, Barrow-on-Furness, Staffordshire, Kilmarnock, Ayr, Johnstone, Greenock, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Leith, Kirkcaldy, &c., representing about 120 lodges. The sittings of the delegates extended over three days, and the business transacted included several items of great importance to the order. From the report for 1883 submitted by the Grand Executive, it appears that the Order continues to make most satisfactory progress—13 new lodges having been opened during the year, viz.,

- Newcastle Upon Tyne.
- Walker Upon Tyne
- Durham
- Barrow Upon Furness
- Staffordshire
- Kilmarnock
- Ayr
- Johnstone
- Greenock
- Glasgow
- Edinburgh Leith
- Kirkcaldy

The report intimated that 13 new lodges had been opened in 1883 and that included one in the Cape Colony in South Africa and another in Demerara – now Guyana. Membership had increased by over 2,000 individuals and Scotland could boast 60

lodges with 10,000 members. “The figures show the great advantages of this Order as a benefit society are highly appreciated by those who know the importance of making due provision for times of sickness and other ailments”. Newcastle upon Tyne was announced as the venue for the following year.

PRESENTATION TO MR R. CHRYSTAL.— On Tuesday evening the members of the Scotch Thistle Lodge, B.O.A.F.G., met for the purpose of showing their respect and esteem for one of their number, namely, Brother Robert Chrystal. Brother Howie presided, and after some preliminary business Brother Gold stepped forward and said that the duty devolving upon him that evening was a very pleasant one, namely, to present their worthy Grand Master with a beautiful marble clock. (Applause.) He wished him to accept the gift, not for its intrinsic value, but as a small token of the respect and esteem in which he was held by all the members of the Lodge — (applause) — and as a remem-

The Fife Free Press of the 7th June 1884 recorded that a special meeting has been held of the *Scotch Thistle Branch*. It was specifically to present a marble clock to Bro. Robert Chrystal as a token of appreciation of his work with the Lodge over the past 6 years – three of which had been as Master. The clock was supplied by a Mr Davie from the High Street and was inscribed:- *Presented to Brother Robert Chrystal from the Scotch Thistle Lodge B.O.A.F.G., for his many services to them during the past six years. Pathhead June 1884.*

An interesting item and possibly an amusing one was unearthed in the *Fife Free Press* of the 23rd August 1884. The initial report was that a society by the name of *Knights Husbandman Free Gardeners* had been established in Burntisland the previous Saturday. It was opened by the Grand Lodge from Airdrie. This was the first mention of Knights but they are given a bit more prominence later in the narrative.

It is revealed that this is the 4th degree of Free Gardenery and is of ancient origin. This would suggest that this group is of more prominence and importance in the Order. The Lodge was to be named the *St. Andrew's Lodge of Knights* and this was the first one established north of the Forth. It was mentioned that it was hoped that one would soon be formed in Kirkcaldy. It should not be a subject for conjecture as to how much might have been imbibed over the course of the event but, the second snippet was an advertisement indicating that, on the same night – somewhere between Burntisland and Kinghorn two parcels had been lost – they contained Free Gardeners' sashes and aprons! A reward was available if they were returned to Duncan's, 21 High Street – we presume in Kinghorn.

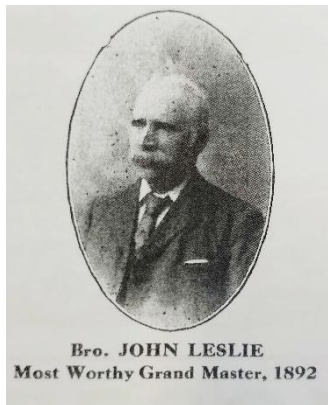
LOST, on Saturday evening, between Burntisland and Kinghorn, two parcels containing Free Gardeners' Sashes and Aprons. Reward at Duncan's, 21 High Street.

Kirkcaldy must have made a significant impression as it was only 8 years later that the Order returned to Kirkcaldy for what was its 15th Annual Moveable Delegation. There was significant coverage provided by the *Fife Free Press* in its edition of the 11th June 1892. In fact, it goes into great detail but an attempt will be made to cover the salient points without going into the content too deeply. The event was held on the High Street in the Assembly Rooms – how many know the site of that building which is still standing? In the Chair was the *Most Worshipful Grand Master* – who was none other than Kirkcaldy's Councillor/Bailie John Leslie. He was accompanied on the platform by a number of Kirkcaldy brethren including Robert Chrystal, the *Right Worshipful District Master*, plus brothers John MacKinnon, Roger A. Henderson, George Wright and William C. Clark. All had given or were to give sterling service to the Order both

locally and nationally.

Councillor Leslie gave a very much appreciated introductory speech which included an excellent description of the history and the delights of Kirkcaldy at the time. He paid particular attention to Robert Philp, Adam Smith, Michael Nairn, Michael Beveridge and the Laird of Raith. Keep in mind that the Beveridge Park was still to be opened later in the year and the Adam Smith Hall was only in the planning stages.

Turning to the past year, Councillor Leslie spoke about the continued growth of the movement. The Councillor had signed 25 new charters during his term in office which meant another 25 lodges being established. Overall membership had increased by 3,000 and £16,000 had been paid out in sickness benefits - £5,000 for funeral claims and £4,000 had been spent on medical assistance and medicines. Despite spending this £25,000 – the funds had increased by £7,000. It is worthwhile to quote a section of his speech, which more than anything, spells out what the Order existed for.



It could have come from no one better qualified than Councillor Leslie - a man who dedicated a huge part of his life to improving social conditions for working people both on an individual basis as well as via his position as a councillor and Bailie. He was born and lived his whole life in the Links although he died in the Cottage Hospital in 1921, which prevents the use of the phrase “born, lived and died”. He started his working career in the flour mills but moved into a drapery business where he eventually incorporated the Links Post Office into his shop. The building still stands at the corner of Ramsay Road and Links Street – still trading as a retail outlet to this

day! His obituary spells out the work he carried out on behalf of the community and the naming of Leslie Street after him is well and richly deserved. So what did he say that struck a chord?

“There is something, brethren, which has forcibly struck me since I began to take an interest in the welfare of my fellow men in connection with Friendly Societies and that is these Societies are composed chiefly of those who have to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. They come boldly to the front and invest a small pittance from their hard earned sum weekly, in one or another of these Societies, so as to keep from their door that cold hand of Parochial charity during sickness, be it of a short or long duration and to provide them with medicine and medical assistance and insure themselves for a sum for their wife and children on their death.

“This is not all our brethren are doing. They are, by their industry and thrift, relieving to a very large extent every ratepayer in the community of a very much heavier *Poor-Law Tax* than would be, if it were not for the existence of our friendly societies.

“So why is it that so many hold aloof from us? Is it indifference, or the want of sympathy, or is it their rank and position in life? If it is any of these three, the first we

will overcome, the second we may overcome and the third can be overcome by themselves coming forward and giving us a little of their abundance, knowing, at the same time, that there is no place for class or distinction in our Order, but they will have the satisfaction of knowing that they are assisting in a great, noble and philanthropic work for the benefit of mankind in general”.

Fine strong words from a man clearly immersed in social reform – his obituary is well worth a read.

On the Tuesday evening the participants enjoyed a meal in the Assembly Rooms with the food “purveyed by Mr Reekie of the National Hotel and, considering the large number he had to cater for, it must be stated that he did his work well, his arrangements being both systematic and expeditious”. When did anyone last say that about a meal? As always the evening ended with a tsunami of toasts!

A huge piece of legislation was enacted in 1896 which was of major significance to all friendly societies, including the Order of Ancient Gardeners. It would be too easy to give an overload of information on the content of the Act, hence the decision to restrict what is written to a short summary.

The act was introduced by the Liberal Government of Lord Rosebery and updated legislation, some of which reached back to 1820. There had been an earlier 1875 Act which had followed on from the *Royal Commission on Friendly Societies* who had deliberated from 1870 – 1874. It had been considered necessary following a number of high profile financial mismanagement and fraud cases coming to light. There was also an obvious benefit to be had from uniformity and transparency in friendly societies. Finally, there was a mushrooming in the numbers of friendly societies and along with that came more complex benefit structures – guidelines were seen as being necessary.

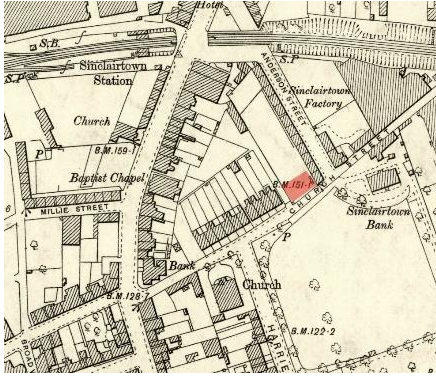
In essence the Act was a consolidation of earlier legislation governing friendly societies which, we hope we have demonstrated were vital mutual aid organisations offering insurance and support to members. The central pillars of the legislation were as follows:-

- Central registry established for societies and their rules
- Actuarial valuations required for financial transparency
- Branch societies regulated for consistency and accountability
- Limits on child death payments to prevent misuse

Without question, this legislation provided a legal framework for groups, such as the Ancient Free Gardeners, by the important step of reinforcing member protection and benefit schemes.

Saturday, the 12th of September 1896, sees a small article contained in the *Fife Free Press* in relation to the sitting of the Dean of Guild Court the previous Tuesday. Given its importance the article is reproduced here. This is a massive change in the activities of the Gardeners as the *Scotch Thistle Lodge* has sought and obtained planning permission

to erect a tenement in Church Street. Some further research shows that the ground had been offered for sale, along with other lots, following the death of Mrs Haxton of Sinclairtown Bank. The property had been advertised for sale in the *Fife Free Press* of the 22nd February 1896 and the following week in the same newspaper it was revealed that the houses and garden ground extending to .687 of an acre had been purchased by the Scotch Thistle lodge for £700. A map highlighting the parcel of land is reproduced here. Without doubt monies were not simply lying



in their bank but being invested in property in the hope of securing a good income via the rentals charged.

Moving into the 20th century, a report is carried by the *Fife Free Press* in its edition of the 3rd March 1900 on the annual meeting of the Kirkcaldy District with Brother Robert Chrystal in the chair. The meeting had been held the previous Saturday in the Swan Memorial Hall. The statistics for 1899 revealed that there were 26 active lodges. In terms of expenditure £2,799 had been paid out as sickness ailment with a further £539 in respect of death grants. As the new century dawned the funds were £17,477. The election of the office bearers followed and many familiar names were re-elected – Robert Chrystal, John McKinnon, Andrew Torrance, William Clark, George Borthwick, George Owler, John Donaldson, Roger Henderson and George Wright. Messrs Chrystal, Henderson and Wright were amongst the delegates appointed to attend the national conference to be held in Aberdeen. The article did not make mention of an important event which would take place in December.

A very full but extremely useful report was carried in the *Fife Free Press* of the 15th December 1900. The previous evening in the Adam Smith Halls an assembly and concert were held to celebrate the Kirkcaldy District B.O.A.F.G. reaching its 21st Birthday - these were the days when 21 not 18 was celebrated as the age of majority. The guest list is simply too lengthy to show fully but the names of the lodges which make up the district are worth listing.

BRITISH ORDER OF ANCIENT FREE GARDENERS.— Last night the majority of the Kirkcaldy District B.O.A.F.G. was held in the Adam Smith Hall by a concert and assembly. Bro. Provost Hutchison presided over a good attendance, and was accompanied to the platform by Bailies Peebles, Thomson, and Dishart, Councillor T. Renton, Dr Henderson, Bro. Robert Chrystal, District Worthy Master; Messrs A. H. M'Intosh, J. C. Lindsay, J. Garnock, Thomas Scott, James B. M'Laren, and Wm. Yule. The fol-

Before that, we note that it was Provost Hutchison who was in the chair and he was

DEAN OF GUILD COURT.—A Dean of Guild Court was held on Tuesday evening, when the following plans were submitted and passed:— William Burton, w.c., 208 Links Street; Messrs Lothian and M'Kay, villa, Munro Street; Scotch Thistle Lodge Free Gardeners, tenement, Church Street; Miss M. Reilly, w.c., 271 Rosslyn Street; Messrs T. M'Laren & Son, alteration, 13 Rosslyn Street; Thomas Buchanan, shop front, 178 High Street; Trustees of the late A. Harrow, alterations, 102 High Street; North British Rope Coy., extension of works.

accompanied on the platform by the three Kirkcaldy Bailies – Peebles, Thomson and Dishart. Other platform attendees were Robert Chrystal – the *District Worthy Grand Master* plus Messrs; A. H. McIntosh, J.C. Lindsay, J Garnock, Thomas Scott, James B. McLaren and William Yule. Although not stated these will presumably be other district officers.

There were a number of other similar style of societies invited and these were:-

- Court St. Brycedale – Ancient Order of Foresters.
- Court Sylvan Sisters – Ancient order of Foresters.
- Nairn Lodge – Loyal Order of Shepherds.
- L.O.A.G. - which we believe to be the Loyal Order of Ancient Gardeners.
- Lady Helen Lodge of L.O.A.G.
- Adam Smith Tent of Rechabites.
- Hope of Fife Tent of Rechabites.
- The Adam Smith Lodge of the Independent Order of Oddfellows.
- St. Clair Lodge of Scottish Mechanics.
- The Sons of Temperance.
- Representatives from the Aberdeen and Edinburgh districts were also present.

There followed a list of the Lodges making up the Kirkcaldy District and they certainly cover a wide area:-

- Nairn Lodge of Rechabites.
 - St. Clair Free Gardeners.
 - Rossend Castle – Burntisland.
 - Sunflower – Alloa.
 - Rothes Oak – Leslie.
 - Red Craig Flower – East Wemyss.
 - Honeysuckle – Perth.
 - Pine Apple – Dundee.
 - Newton Shaw Thistle – Tillicoultry.
 - Devon Lily – Alva.
 - Woodbine – Lochgelly.
 - Rose of Lebanon – Dundee.
 - Randolph – Dunfermline.
 - Holly Branch – Cowdenbeath.
 - St. Leonards – Kinghorn.
 - Wemyss Castle Lily – West Wemyss.
 - Lomond Oak – Falkland.
-
- Mistle-bough – were mentioned but nothing more than the names of the representatives who were both females. The name is a poem by Thomas Hayes

Bayly and based on a horror story where a bride died. (Could this be an all female lodge?)

- Knights – again named, but the only remark is that it was represented by Brother Livesey. The assumption is that this follows on from the 1884 Burntisland suggestion that a lodge may be opened in Kirkcaldy. However, by chance, research unearthed that in 1904 on the 8th November – the St. Thomas Lodge of the Royal Order of Knights – Ancient order of Free Gardeners – which had met in Kirkcaldy United Free Church was dissolved.
- The Tree of Dysart.
- We must then add on the three local lodges - Blooming Heather, Scotch Thistle and Lily.

Provost Hutchison then made some remarks commencing with he was delighted to be taking the chair on this the 21st Anniversary. He mentioned that the District had been formed in August 1879 with three lodges and 314 members. Now there were 25 male lodges, 15 juvenile and 1 female lodge. (it would seem that only 22 male lodges were present if we assume Mistle-bough was a female lodge) Since formation, it was estimated that over £6,000 had been paid out in the form of death allowances and over £20,000 as a result of ailment claims. These figures resulted in significant applause.

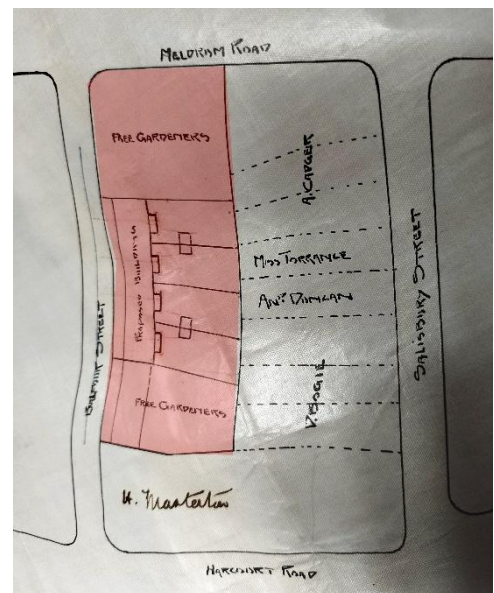
The funds in hand were quoted as £20,000. It was then revealed that £13,000 had been invested in working men's dwelling houses in – Anderson Street, Church Street, Meldrum Road and Balsusney Road. There were currently 84 tenants and the annual return by way of rent was £700. This drew even louder applause. This equates to an average rental per house of circa £8.70. The Provost concluded by stating that the district was obviously very well run and they should look forward to the future, with hope and courage, as they moved towards their Jubilee.

Mr A.H. McIntosh, of furniture fame, proposed a vote of thanks to the Provost and there followed a concert which was performed by, what was termed, “a capital company of Edinburgh artistes”. Tea was served at the conclusion of the concert and dancing ended the evening to the music of William Johnston's Quadrille Band. Brother A. Colston acted as the M.C. for the dancing.

TENDERS are invited for the Mason, Joiner, Slater, Plumber, and Plaster Works in connection with TENEMENTS proposed to be Erected by the Kirkcaldy District Free Gardeners in BALFOUR STREET, KIRKCALDY.
Plans may be seen at the Office of the Subscriber, and Schedules of Quantities may be forwarded to those leaving their names there.
The lowest or any Tender may not be accepted.
D. FORBES SMITH, A.R.I.B.A.
210 High Street,
Kirkcaldy, 28th Sept., 1900.

It will be seen that there was no mention of property in Balfour Street despite its being included in the introductory remarks on the first page of this narrative. The answer comes from an advertisement carried by the Fife Free Press on the 29th September 1900 seeking contractors to build the Balfour Street tenements. Unlike Church Street, this project was being instructed by the District not a lodge. The advertisement is shown here but, more importantly, we have been able to secure access to the plans thanks to

the On-fife Archives. A copy of the Balfour Street plan is shown here for interest (copies of the plans with finer planning details are to be found in the Appendix). This was not a one-off project – the whole run of houses was built in 4 tranches. *The Fife Free Press* of the 7th December 1901 shows that the Order will build a further 16 houses in Balfour Street in addition to the 8 already completed. Once again the construction of a third tranche is mentioned in the *Fife Free Press* of the 5th December 1903. This will be another tenement providing 8 homes. This time the snippet reveals that the significant and important Kirkcaldy builder, John Masterton, will carry out the mason work while David Simpson will provide the joinery.



The *Fife Free Press* of the 2nd March 1901 is an interesting read. An article covers the annual concert held by the *Scotch Thistle* and the *Blue Bell* lodges. The concert was held in the Pathhead Hall the previous evening and was well attended. We learn that the *Blue Bell* lodge is a juvenile section of the *Scotch Thistle*. Prior to the concert commencing, Brother Peter Sinclair gave the audience some details of the past 12 month's activities. The Lodge was now 23 years old and had a strength of 752 individuals. Funds in hand and at the bank – which was the Trustee Savings Bank - amounted to £3,495-5s-11d. During the past year £460-7s-1d had been paid out as sickness benefit - £85 in relation to funerals and doctor's bills and medicines has amounted to £107-3s-4d.

We learn that there are two investments – the primary one being the sum of £3,495-5s-11d which was presumably the sum spent on the construction and any improvements to the tenement block which is classed as being on Anderson/Church Street. The sum of £200 was said to be invested in Balsusney Road – an explanation of this follows later in the narrative.

Turning to the *Blue Bell*, we learn that their cash in hand is £26-13-1d and there are 103 members. Sickness benefits of £18-11- 4d along with doctors bill and medicines of £7-5-5d had been paid out. The tables having been cleared away led to a lengthy programme of dancing to bring the evening to an end.

Being a tangent – the *Blue Bell Juvenile Lodge* merited some attention. As the advertisement in the *Fife Free Press* of the 19th December 1891 shows – it was certainly in existence at that date. The *Fife Free Press* of the 5th February 1898 adds some flesh to the bone. Again the article revolves around the annual concert, which this time saw the District Secretary, George Wright, in the chair.

ber. (Applause.) The Lodge funds amounted to £2667 2s 6½d, and of that amount they had invested in property £2100. They were also met that evening under the auspices of the Blue Bell Juvenile Lodge, which had a membership of 125. (Applause.) The idea in having a juvenile lodge was to inspire early in their minds saving habits, and in the future these young people would take their places in the senior lodge, when he hoped they would strive as they, the present members, had done, to make it a blessing to many households. (Applause.) To Leslie belonged the honour of being the first to open a female lodge in the Kirkcaldy district, and he did not see why they should not have a female lodge connected with the Scotch Thistle, and when they had the fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, all Free Gardeners, following out the motto, "Love, wisdom, and harmony," they would surely then have happy homes. (Applause.) The concert, which was at

After providing the usual statements on numbers and funds he made the following remark - "the idea of a juvenile lodge was to inspire, early in their minds, savings habits and in the future these young people would take their places in the senior lodge, where he hoped they would strive, as the present members had done, to make it a blessing to many households. He followed that up with praise for the lodge in Leslie, which had become the first in the Kirkcaldy District to form a female lodge. He could

not see why the *Scotch Thistle* should not follow that example and, when "mothers, fathers, sons and daughters were all free gardeners – they could all follow the motto of "Love, wisdom and harmony". A number of invited lodges were in attendance and the report disclosed that there were indeed a number of female members in the audience.

Given the fact that Leslie was the first Lodge in the district to open a female lodge it is worth a little research. – which led to the *Fife Free Press* of Saturday the 3rd August 1901. Here it was revealed that the name of the lodge was *The Rothes Oak* and that they had recently passed plans, prepared by John Murray, a Kirkcaldy architect, to build a row of continuous tenements in Douglas Road. The site was described as one of the finest in the town.



The *Fife Free Press* of the 7th March 1903 reveals that the block had been completed and that the architect and the contractors were entertaining the committee to a congratulatory supper in the Station Hotel. After some speeches there was entertainment in song by Misses Adamson, Speed, Borthwick, Wallace, Carmyllie Bain, Forsyth and McGill. The names are given as many Leslie families stretch back generations in the town. One name which we can be sure of being recognised is that of Henry Mitchell who both made a speech and proposed the health of "mine host Mr Moffat". Members of the Mitchell family still have a connection with the town.

By great good fortune on the same page an article relating to the *Tree of Dysart* was unearthed. The half yearly general meeting had been held with Bro. W. Ross in the chair and when the financial statement was delivered it was one where, as in the previous two years, "heavy sick claims were resulting in the income barely meeting the cost of the claims". However – there "was a proposition on hand to invest their spare capital in building working men's houses in the town". We believe that the site was Berwick Place but more will follow later in the narrative".

The *Fife Free Press* of the 18th June 1904 carried a snippet advising that the annual conference of the British Order of Ancient Free Gardeners had been held in Stirling. The article helpfully reported that there were 1,500 members in the burgh of Kirkcaldy.

The Kirkcaldy District delegates included some well known 'gardeners' from the Lang Toun – Robert Chrystal, Peter O. Stirling, Roger A. Henderson and George Wright.

On the 3rd September 1904 the *Fife Free Press* was able to report another presentation to Robert Chrystal. The event was the Annual Kirkcaldy District meeting held in Strathore School, Thornton. The meeting over, the delegates had adjourned to the Crown Inn to be the guests of the local lodge. There George Wright presented Bro. Chrystal with a handsome gold watch and barometer as a token of his 22 years service as the District Master. His wife was presented with a diamond set gold brooch. Chrystal went on to complete 25 years in the position and his highlight was most probably being the Order's Grand Master in 1906.

Saturday, the 29th April 1905, saw the *Fife Free Press* reveal that a new District had been opened in Dundee to cover some of the lodges which hitherto had been controlled from Kirkcaldy. Present at the ceremony were Brothers Wright, Chrystal and McKinnon in their respective positions of Grand Past Master, District Master and Deputy District Master of the Kirkcaldy District. Most of the new district centred on Perth and Dundee.

It is noticeable that not a great deal has been written in relation to the *Lily Lodge*. It was still going strong and the *Fife Free Press*, in its columns of the 27th January 1906, reports on its 28th Annual Meeting held in Gallatown Public School. The oft mentioned Brother John McKinnon was in the chair. Interesting figures were provided including 2,572 sickness days were paid at a cost of £225.16s.4d. The sum of £38 was paid in funeral claims. The income was £523.5s.4d against expenditure of £440.8s.11d. The surplus saw the lodge funds climb to £1,967.0s.8d. Another example of the charitable work was that the widows (presumably of former members) were each granted half a ton of coal plus half a pound of tea.



Karel Nekola

After the office-bearers were elected that other redoubtable figure, Robert Chrystal, was there in his capacity of *Grand Worshipful Master* of the District and he installed those elected into their offices. Brothers Bayne and Wallace were appointed to attend the district delegate meeting. A better item could not have been landed upon, as in the very week that the new Kirkcaldy Wemyssware Cat Trail is announced – we find that at this meeting Karel Nekola is mentioned as an office-bearer. The article also reveals that the lodge had a juvenile section.

A further feather in the cap for Kirkcaldy occurs when the *Fife Free Press* of the 9th June 1906 announced that the Annual Moveable Conference of the *British Order of Ancient Free Gardeners* will be held in the town from the 12th until the 15th with the Beveridge Hall being the venue. The most Worshipful Grand

FREE GARDENERS' VISIT TO KIRKCALDY.—The annual moveable delegation of the British Order of Ancient Free Gardeners takes place at Kirkcaldy next week. The proceedings are to be opened in the Beveridge Hall on Tuesday, and are to continue for four days. The delegates are to be welcomed by Provost Barnet, and the Town Council have further shown their sympathy with the object by arranging for the entertainment of the delegates. Within the past twenty years the membership of the Society has increased from 15,363 to 48,385, while in the same time the funds have risen from £20,287 to £256,589. During the past year the funds

Master, Robert Chrystal presiding over the event. At the previous year's conference, held in Hanley, Robert Chrystal had secured his appointment and Roger Henderson and John McKinnon had been appointed to the executive.

Provost Barnet would be welcoming the delegates and the council were showing their sympathy for the Order's objectives by laying on entertainment. It would seem that the entertainment, which had been revealed in the *Fife Free Press* of the 19th May, was to be in the form of a temperance lunch or tea which was not to cost more than 2/6d per head. This "generosity" saw some letters to the *Fife Free Press* of the 26th May demanding that all societies should benefit from this "new found Council generosity".

In point of fact there had been issues all along the path of attempting to acknowledge the visitors with some form of entertainment. The *Fife Free Press* of the 17th March had reported on the original suggestion which had been made by Bailie Leslie. However, Councillors J.F. Beveridge and Kellock had objected to this expense by taking the view "they were opening a wide door". Beveridge even mentioned that he would support the idea if another Corporation was visiting but not for this. It almost sounds like an argument based on class lines. Councillor Gourlay however responded with "it is not very often that they spent money on working class visitors. This was about the only chance that working men would have to share in the common good, so he was prepared to support Bailie Leslie's motion in this case". It certainly seemed that most councillors were unaware that the Order had 2,000 members in Kirkcaldy – housing worth £20,000 – which brought in taxation of well over £100 per annum as Bailie Leslie had been at pains to point out. Councillor Gourlay may well be the representative of the *Ancient Order of Foresters* mentioned in July 1880.

Returning to the conference, the article was able to quote some national statistics one of which was that, over the past 20 years, the movement had risen from a membership of 15,363 to 48,385. Over the same period funds had climbed from £20,287 to £256,589. The past year had seen £4,518 paid out to widows with £1,507 being paid to widowers. A further £565 had been paid out in respect of deceased children. The reporter could not resist pointing out that membership was very strong in the Kirkcaldy District by quoting figures of 26 lodges, 5,302 members and funds of £32,808.

The following week's edition of the newspaper provided a full and substantial report of each day's activities. On the Wednesday the business activities were concluded at 12.00 noon and some of the delegates were carried to Falkland by way of Raith and Dunnikier travelling in 7 brakes. At Falkland they were welcomed by the local lodge with the town hall having been decorated in "banners and bunting of welcome". The group travelled home via Freuchie, New Inn and Thornton where they were greeted by pipers. They arrived back at their starting point – the halls at 10.15pm.

More building work was afoot when the pages of the *Fife Free Press* of the 27th January 1906 are consulted. This time it is the youngest lodge – *The Tree of Dysart* who are undertaking the project. The article reveals that there is substantial building work

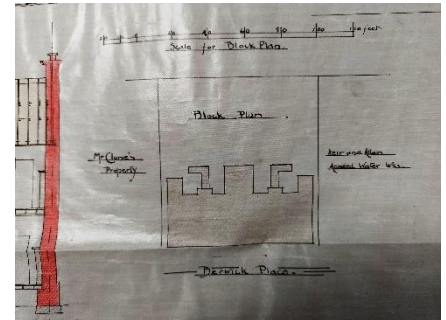
DYSART.—Free Gardeners Buildings, Houses of 2 and 3 Rooms to Let in Berwick Place, Sculleries, Washing-houses, Gardens, &c. ; Rents, £8 and £10. Apply R. Young, 1 Station Road.

taking place in Dysart and makes specific reference to the foundations being cut for the Free Gardener's Buildings in Berwick

Place. By the 8th September 1907, the *Fife Free Press* carries advertisements for the letting of 2 and 3 bedroom homes at a rental of £8 or £10 per annum. The properties are offered with sculleries, washing-houses and gardens.



Yet again, the plans are available via the Fife Cultural Trust Archives in Glenrothes and the armorial of the Lodge was affixed to the property. Seemingly, this block is the only one to have been demolished – despite it being the last to be built. It would seem that all the other tenements built by the movement remain standing. Research here proved problematic as at some point the whole block was transferred to the ownership of Robert Wood & Sons – Joiners in Thornton.



It would seem this change of ownership took place at some point in either the late 1920s or early 1930s. At the time, the leading light in the firm was Percy Wood, who had taken over the joinery and undertaker's business which his father had started in 1868. Percy had clearly built up the business but he also worked as a clerk of works and, when he died suddenly in 1931, he was involved with the building of the Harris Academy in Dundee, dying on the site. His obituary mentioned that he was a well known figure in Thornton and the owner of many properties there. He had moved to Kirkcaldy a few years prior to his death living at 145 Rosslyn Street. His only son Robert had taken over the business but he died aged 63 in May 1945 at his home *Northend* in Thornton.

A scan of the valuation rolls of the time shows Robert Wood & Sons as significant property owners in both Thornton and Kirkcaldy. Clearly the tenements had been added to the portfolio but was that when Percy was the firm's leading figure or was it by Robert after his father's death? What is known is that in 1972 the properties in Berwick Place were subject to a compulsory purchase order and had been demolished by 1974. Although 7 of the 8 properties had been sold – *the Trustees of the late Robert Wood* still clung onto one house until the bitter end. So why were the properties sold and why were they demolished?

Nothing has been uncovered in regard to the former. It is intended to search out the demolition order from 1972 in the hope it offers an explanation. What may well be the case is that the lodge appears to have come to an end in the 1930s. We can trace an advertisement in the *Fife Free Press* on the 19th December 1931 asking for all contributions to be brought up to date. Not a word, never mind an article, appears in the whole of 1932 and it is not until the 28th January 1933 that a notice appears

indicating that the annual general meeting will be held on Monday the 30th in Dysart School. No report follows, in fact nothing at all, for ever and a day. This may well be why the Berwick Place properties were sold – the lodge was possibly closing with the proceeds going to the District?

The *Fife Free Press* in an article on the 2nd March 1907 covers the annual delegate meeting of the District which had been held the previous Thursday in the Swan Memorial Hall. It contained a genuine milestone in the final sentence – this was that Robert Chrystal had now presided at his 25th consecutive gathering. In any language that is impressive.

However, by the following year's delegate meeting, the same newspaper, in its edition of the 7th March, revealed that it was Bro. John McKinnon who presided. What is also interesting is the meeting was held in the Pioneers Hall. This hall still stands having been built by *The Pioneer Lodge of Good Templars* and opened on the 1st June 1907 in front of an impressive audience of local dignitaries.. How many readers know of its existence or of its location? As the bottom of Carlyle Road is reached, a close inspection of a building on the left – will show that, on the door lintel, it is still possible to read Pioneer Hall.

More on Bro. John McKinnon is reported in the *Fife Free Press* of the 8th July 1908. He has been the recipient of a barometer supplied complete with an inscription to recognise his involvement with the District since its 1879 inception. Each lodge had expressed a desire to show appreciation of the many hours he had spent working on their behalf. Mr McKinnon was delighted with the gift and indicated that, although he was now out of office, he would continue to take an interest in all matters relevant to the district. The barometer was supplied by the well known local jeweller – Alex Constable.

The National picture had been the subject of a full report in the columns of the *Fife Free Press* of the 24th April 1909. The following is an extract from the report taken from the annual conference of the *British Order* held in Galashiels. Over the country, membership stood at 46,487 at the close of 1908 which was a slight decrease from the starting figure which was given as 46,926. The sum of £28,699 had been paid out in sickness claims with a further £4,673 in respect of funerals. Medical aid paid out over the country had amounted to £6,897. The funds at the end of the year had stood at £321,628 and as a comparison 10 years previously they had amounted to £127,444.

A practical example of the benefits of being a Gardener and how they could occasionally backfire was reported in the *Fife Free Press* of the 19th June 1909. This was a court case in which a baker – Andrew Sibbald, was suing his employer William Wilkie. Sibbald, a very good worker, had suffered severe injuries to his right hand on 15th December 1908 and had been unable to work for a spell. His normal weekly wage was £1.40p and, during the period of incapacity, he was paid compensation (sick pay) of 70p per week. He was able to return to light duties on the 17th April and Wilkie

offered him a re-start at his former wage - which he refused. This saw the end to the compensation and the reason why Sibbald went to court. He was claiming for the 70p per week for the period from the 17th April until the date of the trial. The court found that he could have returned to work at £1.40 per week but, as a Gardener, he was receiving 52p per week from the society for the first 6 months and 37p after that. Therefore, if he received the full 70p compensation plus the 52p he would have been receiving £1.22 per week for the remainder of the 6 months and then £1.07 for the next 6 months – all, as the court suggested, for doing nothing! He was given compensation at 20p rather than the 70p. The sickness benefit had resulted in a welcome boost when Sibbald could not work – but, perhaps unfairly, it was being suggested he would rather sit at home than return to work. From the report it would seem that the £1.40 was an excellent wage as other master bakers had testified during the hearing a fair wage would have been between £1 and £1.20 per week.

Once again, maintenance was on the mind of Mr R.A. Henderson when he advertised for painters to carry out work on the Order's properties in Balsusney Road, Balfour Street and Meldrum Road in the *Fife Free Press* of the 8th April 1911. This would be the District and not a specific lodge seeking the estimates.

We believe that, at the time, only the Scotch Thistle and Tree of Dysart Lodges has properties outside the District portfolio.



TO PAINTERS
WANTED offers for the Painting of Properties belonging to the Kirkcaldy District Free Gardeners, situated in Balsusney Road, Balfour Street, and Meldrum Road. Specifications to be seen at R A Henderson, 287 High Street, to whom offers may be lodged on or before Wednesday 12th April.

In 1912 the *Tree of Dysart* and the *Lily* Lodges both lost their medical practitioner. Rather unusually, we learn from the *Fife Free Press* of the 27th January 1912 that Dr Derrick, who had not been in the best of health had decided to go to sea. He had accepted a post as a doctor with the Cunard Steamship Company of Liverpool.

Worse was to follow in the March, when the *Fife Free Press* of the 2nd revealed that the *Blooming Heather* lodge along with a number of other organisations had lost their Doctor – William B. Crichton who had passed away at the age of only 44.

The same edition covered the annual meeting of the Kirkcaldy District which had taken place in the Sauchie Hall in Alloa. The location is another reminder of the importance and size of this district. William Clark was in the chair and the figures quoted were a membership of 5,827 – funds of £43,933 - an increase over the previous year of £1,500. However, in this time of change two items featured highly – firstly, the *House Letting and Rating Bill of 1911* and secondly, and probably more importantly, the *National Insurance Act of 1911*. In the case of the former it was important as, at the time, the district had £21,000 of properties for rent in Kirkcaldy. It was determined that it should be left to the trustees to make the best possible arrangements with the tenants. In terms of the latter it was reported that arrangements were being made for the Order to become an Approved Society and that the new conditions of membership would be issued shortly.

Given these were of immense importance – a little summary is appropriate. Again it would be very easy to detract from the narrative by providing too much information on these acts – hence they are covered in summary only:-

The National Insurance Act 1911 was a landmark welfare reform introduced by the Liberal government under Prime Minister – Henry H. Asquith - who was in office from 1908 until 1916. It was driven through parliament primarily by the Chancellor of the Exchequer - David Lloyd George ably assisted by the Home Secretary – Winston Churchill. Lloyd George replaced Asquith as Prime Minister in 1916 but as an aside H.H. Asquith was the recipient of the freedom of Kirkcaldy in 1908.

The whole ethos of the act lay in it being designed to protect working people from income loss due to sickness or unemployment. There were three principal strands to the legislation:-

- Tripartite funding: Contributions from workers, employers, and the state.
- Health insurance: sick pay, maternity benefits, and access to panel doctors.
- Unemployment insurance: Support for workers in cyclical industries like construction.

The prime legacy of the legislation was that it firmly reduced reliance on the Poor Laws and, without question, it laid the groundwork for the N.H.S. to be enacted three decades later.

The House Letting and Rating (Scotland) Act 1911 was another valuable piece of legislation which affected the Society in their position of being a landlord. The act was introduced to bring clarity to small dwelling houses, primarily in working class areas. The 19th century industrialisation had led to overcrowding and poor conditions for many tenants. A large percentage of landlords let on informal and inconsistent arrangements which could lead to confusion – especially as to who paid the rates (local taxes) – this was the responsibility of the owner and not, as all too often happened, the tenant. This was the backdrop to the act which offered clarify via:-

Regulating the letting and rating of small dwelling-houses in Scottish burghs and also some special districts thereby improving fairness in local taxation.

- It defined small dwelling-houses by rental value and burgh population
- Clarified liability for local rates between landlords and tenants
- Excluded owner-occupied homes, inns, agricultural tenancies, and shop-linked properties

The act had a huge impact by standardising rating practices and improved urban housing administration for tenants. As already mentioned, as the Order was a landlord, it had to comply with the new legislation.

BRITISH ORDER ANCIENT FREE GARDENERS.
NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE.
A BRANCH has now been formed for Female Workers. Forms of application for Membership may be had from any of the Members, or from the Secretary, **MISS BARTLETT.**
 37 Bank Street, Kirkcaldy.

In the *Fife Free Press* of the 27th June 1912 an advertisement reveals that a female branch of the Order has been established, primarily to take advantage of the new National Insurance Act. There is no name given for the branch but forms are available from the Secretary – a Miss Bartlett, at 37 Bank Street. This was one of a raft of advertisements

by similar organisations all on the same theme.

The year ended with a notable presentation which was covered by the *Fifeshire Advertiser* of the 28th December 1912. The item recorded that the *Scotch Thistle Lodge* had made a presentation to Robert Chrystal on Christmas Eve in the Gospel Temperance Hall. The presentation took the form of a beautifully framed *Emblem of Merit* as a token of this long and faithful service to the Order. It was “Andrew Forrester who made the presentation and Bro. Chrystal feelingly replied”. The Gospel Temperance Hall still stands in Commercial Street complete with its 1892 date-stamp. It is now occupied by Allan Duffus – Motorcycles.

Much of the content of the Kirkcaldy District Delegate Conference which was reported in the *Fife Free Press* of 8th March 1913, surrounded the attempts by doctors to secure extra fees for signing sick lines. The view was that no further fees should be paid as they were already being paid handsomely by the government.

The potential first cracks in the workings of these friendly societies were seen in a report in the *Fife Free Press* on the 27th February 1915. These were, it was suggested, as a direct result of the National Insurance Act and that membership of the Kirkcaldy District had fallen by 408 over the year. Kirkcaldy itself had been hardest hit with 239 of the 408 being Kirkcaldy members. It was noted that there had been 47 member's deaths recorded over the past 12 months with 3 dying for their country at the front. Was contributory national insurance taking its toll?

Towards the end of 1916 many newspapers carried details of the membership and funds of various friendly societies and the *Fife Free Press* was no exception with an item appearing on the 30th December. The British Order of Ancient Free Gardeners was said to have 59,243 Voluntary Members with funds of £427,362. The State Section – those who paid National Insurance were said to be 60,363. It would seem that around 1,000 were members simply for the ability to secure the payment of state benefits and did not take advantage of the voluntary benefits available.

The apparent decline in interest in these type of societies was vividly demonstrated by an article in the *Fife Free Press* of the 10th February 1917. This item related to the half-yearly meeting of the *Tree of Dysart*. Yes, there was certainly a war on but “the turnout was showing the great lack of interest in these useful institutions, as out of a membership of 280 only nine members attended”. The amount of Lodge funds was quoted as £1,389. All office bearers were re-elected. Clearly the committee were

greatly disappointed by the attendance.

As an aside, it would appear that the *Blooming Heather* had held their meetings in Burleigh Street Hall since their inception. However, in the *Fife Free Press* of the 7th April 1917 a notice is carried indicating that the military have taken over the hall. This

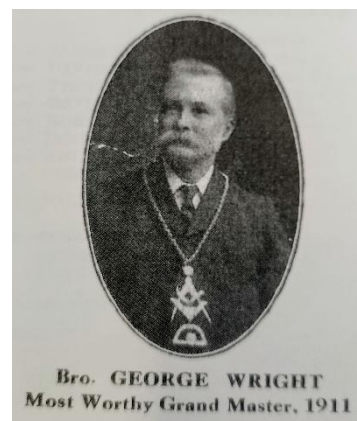
B. O. A. F. G. BLOOMING HEATHER LODGE.

THE Military having taken over Burleigh Street Hall, Members will please Note that Contributions will be taken in RECREATION ROOMS, High Street. Time and Dates as usual.

R. BARCLAY, Secy.

had to have proved problematic for many organisations, both political and social, as a significant number used that hall for their meetings. The notice indicates that in this instance monies will now be collected at the Recreation Rooms on the High Street. Maps of the time do not disclose the exact location of the hall but what is certain is that after 1919 it is no longer mentioned in any of the local newspapers – where did it go?

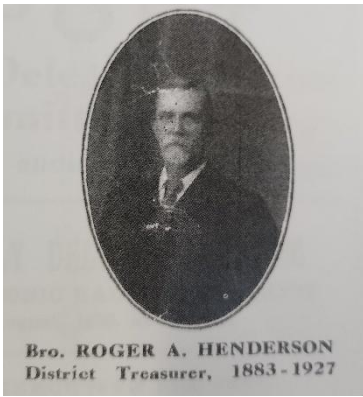
A more positive anecdote is revealed by the *Fife Free Press* in their edition of the 7th September 1918. Once again it takes place at a half-yearly meeting of the Kirkcaldy District which had been held in Keltie. At the close of the meeting, Bro. George Wright was presented with a gold watch and chain as an appreciation of his 37 year stint as the District Secretary. At the time he was the oldest man holding that position in the Order. The presentation was made by Bro. Roger A. Henderson who himself had been District Treasurer since 1883 – 35 years in total. George Wright lived in Bandon Avenue and was a member of the Lily Lodge.



This short mention does not give due credit for the great voluntary work which George Wright carried out. He was a shoemaker in Gallatown and, in 1884, he was approached to ascertain if he would consider housing a Post Office in his shop!! At the time the closest post office was in Pathhead. He had been approached by a number of local businessmen – chiefly by Mr McKenzie of Gallatown Malt Barns and Mr Cornfoot – a local shipowner. They ensured that Mr Wright had the sum of £200 for the Cautionary Bond required at the time and, on the 10th May 1885 – Gallatown had a post office!

Believe it or not he was giving up the post office at the age of 85 in October 1933. The *Fife Free Press* covered the event on the 7th October. He had hoped to do 50 years service but ill health got in the way. He served under 10 Kirkcaldy postmasters. On top of the long service to the Gardeners, he was the Clerk, for 28 years, to the *Sinclairtown and Pathhead Area of the Philp's Trust* and had been one of the original members of the *Gallatown Mutual Improvement Society* which was celebrating its 70th anniversary. Over and above he served as an elder of Gallatown Church for over 50 years. They don't make them like that anymore!

A quick glance into Roger Henderson revealed an obituary in The *Fife Free Press* of the 26th November 1927. He lived at 21 Dysart Road and for many years had been the proprietor of a toy shop in the High Street, known locally as Henderson's Bazaar. The



obituary mentioned that although he had recently retired from business he was still treasurer of both the *District* and the *Blooming Heather Lodge*. He was given great credit for his “capabilities and shrewd business methods when the Order decided to build houses in the burgh and since that time had successfully filled the office of Factor. His worth was also recognised by the Executive Order, an Order of a higher calibre and here he fulfilled various important positions, his last tenure in office terminating in 1906”. He was an office-bearer in the Sinclairtown Church of Christ and, being of a musical bent, acted as conductor to the Band of Hope.

The same newspaper in its edition of the 22nd March 1919 carried an item indicating that Thomas Greenhorn had been elected the Chairman of the *Fife and Kinross Miners Association*. “He was heavily identified with social advancement and was a prominent figure with the Free Gardeners – and was the Worthy Master of the Kirkcaldy District and had also served on the Grand Executive Committee”. We learn that some 20 years previously he had been involved in football – having played as goalkeeper with Lochgelly United. During research Thomas Greenhorn's name had started to become prominent in the Order and he served in several lofty positions.

Two interesting items were unearthed in the *Fife Free Press* later in 1919. At the Annual Meeting of the British Order Executive, which was held in Kilmarnock, a motion has been raised that a levy be charged against each member of 6/4d or 1d per week for 18 months to meet the significant costs which had arisen in respect of funeral allowances following the number of war casualties. In the September, the half-yearly Kirkcaldy District Delegate Assembly, in Alloa, had accepted a motion, that the District Office should work on a Roll of Honour for the members who had fallen in the war.

Moving into the 1920s, an advertisement is included on the front page of the *Fife Free Press* of the 27th August 1921. The advertisement is aimed at painters and is seeking estimates for painter work on the properties, owned by the Gardeners, in Balsusney Road, Balfour Street and Meldrum Road. It is the district which has placed the advertisement and estimates are sought by the 3rd September.

In specific terms, the 1920s were dominated for the local Gardeners by the *Annual Moveable Delegation* once more returning to Kirkcaldy. The event ran for four days from Tuesday the 11th August 1922. Full coverage was provided by the *Fife Free Press* in its edition of the 15th. On this occasion it was the long standing local figure of Bro. William Clark who was in the Chair as the *Most Worshipful Grand Master*. The conference was held in the Beveridge Hall and, on this occasion, was well supported by the Town Council led by Provost Kilgour.

The opening address by Bro. Clark centred around three planks – the National Insurance Act issues, problems caused by enhanced payments to doctors and also falling membership numbers. The financial repercussions of the first two were that the Societies were to have a levy placed on them between the 1st April 1922 and the 31st December 1923. “This was in consequence of an increased allowance paid to doctors – conceded by the Treasury and paid for by the State – but – these additional payments were now being transferred from the State to Approved Societies until, at least, the 31st December the following year”.

The annual movable delegation of the British Order of Ancient Free Gardeners, which is being held in Kirkcaldy this year, was opened on Tuesday in Beveridge Hall, when there was a good attendance of delegates. The Grand Master (Bro. Wm. Clark) presided.

The first business was to receive a deputation from the Town Council headed by Provost Kilgour, while representatives were also present from the various friendly societies in the district. The delegates were asked to be upstanding to receive them.

The Grand Master, in introducing Provost Kilgour and Bailie Blyth, said both these gentlemen were very busy men, but they thought so much of the friendly society work that they had left their business that morning to come and give them a welcome. (Applause.)

In terms of the third item, Bro. Clark pointed out that the huge wave of industrial depression had had an impact on many of the members and, unsurprisingly, with high unemployment, for many it was difficult to maintain their subscriptions. “To meet the crisis the Order had disbursed its *Subsidiary and Distress Fund* to allow lodges the opportunity of paying subscriptions for those members whom they determined, due to unemployment, were unable to maintain their payments. They could not by any means regard the crisis as over, but time alone would repair the wastage, and they trusted that the dark clouds, which had enveloped them during the past year, would disperse and there would soon be a revival of the trade of the Country”. His address ended with mention of the late Bailie John Leslie and other former officials who had passed away over the past year.

The Provost and many members of the Council were in attendance. The Provost gave what was termed an outstanding address – taking as his theme the changes to Kirkcaldy since the 1892 Moveable Delegation which had been chaired by his late friend, John Leslie. His speech covered the great progress seen in Kirkcaldy – the Beveridge Park, the Adam Smith Halls, tramcars, electric light, a hospital, free libraries, the harbour extension and the Victoria Viaduct. His highlight was “the condition of our beach which has long been a disgrace and the butt and taunt of visitors. Now in the removal of this blight we are shouldering a burden of £120,000”.



When Provost Kilgour moved on to the changes in the Order over that same period, he had clearly done his homework – after all, this was a Philp scholar who had risen from poverty, with no advantages, to become the Managing Director of *Ireland & Wishart* and the town's Provost. Whatever else can be said about Kilgour – he understood working people. He quoted all the statistics but naturally homed in on the funds of 1892 being £31,000 and by 1921 - £512,000. Kilgour was recognised as having an outstanding skill with figures and, prior to taking the Provost's chair, had been the town's treasurer. “To achieve this growth requires abilities and qualities of the highest order in those charged with these great responsibilities. Fortunately, for the Free Gardeners and

similar provident and friendly societies, there has always been men of probity, zeal and high character who have been willing to come forward and help their fellow men in this great and onerous task. Personally, I have been privileged to know many of them in this district, which is one of your greatest strongholds, and I have been able to form a high estimate of them. As long as you have men of this type coming forward to take the place of and tread in the footsteps of those who did so much valuable work in their day and generation, I will never despair in the success and progress of this and similar societies operating in our midst”.

When he moved on, he asked the question “But whither will this policy of compulsory State Insurance tend? Will it in time subvert your efforts and therefore your societies become *Puppets of the State*? I don't pretend to prophecy and answer this question in the negative or the affirmative but that this is the usual trend of events is undoubted and I am naturally apprehensive. That the collection and application of these vast funds should ultimately be controlled by a soulless, red taped, bureaucratic department, would, in my opinion, be a most regretful ending of the great ideals on which your society has been built”.

While the above is only a fraction of the content it was such an excellent speech that, Bro. Berrie, the Order's General Secretary, declared that the best three speeches he had heard on matters relating to the Order had now been added to with a fourth. “It was one of the very best speeches, on friendly society matters that he had the pleasure of listening to”.

In the evening, delegates and their friends were treated to a musical entertainment organised by James Gray – the Hall's Organist at which tea was served. The floral decorations were said to be outstanding and were organised by Mr Sinclair from the Beveridge Park. This gentleman, as we have previously mentioned, won eventual further acclaim for his layout of the Memorial Gardens.

Some minor snippets from the event included the delegates having a day's outing in charabancs around Loch Leven and visiting both Kinross and Scotlandwell. On the return journey, via Leslie, a high tea, hosted by the local lodge was enjoyed in the Prinlaws Church Hall. Afterwards, they visited the bowling green and a match was played between 20 delegates and an equal number of the members of the *Roths Oak Lodge*. The local team won the match.

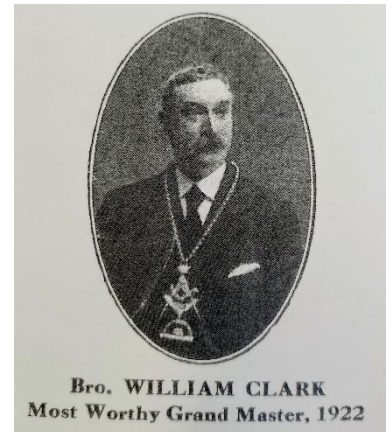
At the conclusion of the conference the sum of £55 was donated to the Kirkcaldy Cottage Hospital and Bro. Clark was presented with a gold albert and master's jewel, with his wife receiving an umbrella, as a token of appreciation of his time in office.

William Clark was born in Sinclairtown in 1868 and due to difficult circumstances his education was provided by the *Pathhead Philp School*. By 1891 he was employed as a Linen Dresser which remained his occupation in the 1901 census. However, by 1911, aged 43 with a wife, son and 2 daughters, he was now an Insurance Agent. In 1921,

the year previous to the conference, he was living at 39 Loughborough Road but his occupation was now *Secretary of the B.O.A.F.G.* He died literally in office as his death took place in the Order's premises at 47 Balsusney Road.

While nothing in the least to do with the story, a page of his handwriting was unearthed from 1882 – while he attended the Philp School – which demonstrates why he was able to secure the post of Secretary with such an excellent hand. There is little doubt that the huge contribution made to the town by the Philp Trust has slipped under the radar – perhaps the 200th anniversary of Philp's death in 2028 might be an ideal time to revisit his legacy?

It was William Clark as *Secretary of the Kirkcaldy District* who featured in a report carried by the *Fife Free Press* on the 1st March 1930. The report related to the 50th Annual General Meeting of the Kirkcaldy District which had been held in the Pioneer Hall the previous Saturday. It was very fitting that the Chair was occupied by James Chrystal, the son of Robert Chrystal, who had for 25 years had held the position of Worthy District Master. Bro. Clark gave a lengthy talk on the history of the District. Much of that history has already been mentioned but there are always interesting items which crop up during reviews. What was of great interest is the stumbling on the subject of investments which brought some greater clarity and understanding on the operations between the lodges and the District. Bro. Clark intimated that the first investment he could trace was one made in 1889 when £150 was invested with the Kirkcaldy Police Commissioners. It would seem that to secure the best interest rates possible the Lodges pooled funds and the District invested the total amount. At the end of 1929, it was reported that £32,433 was invested in this way with the individual lodges being paid 4³/₄%.



What was even more enlightening was that the housebuilding programme was funded in the exact same way, which possibly suggests why properties were mainly built in Kirkcaldy, despite a wide geographical spread of lodges. Bro. Clark intimated that the idea was first mooted in 1896 and, that by 1898, the bulk of the fine properties in Balsusney Road were completed - "which, so far, has seen us being able to pay, and with something added, the interest promised to those lodges who invested their funds in this class of investment".

The figure of the total paid in respect of funeral claims over the 50 year period was given as £31,629. Naturally, the names of those seen as the pioneers of the movement were mentioned and, not unexpectedly, contained those of George Wright, Roger Henderson, Robert Chrystal, John MacKinnon, John Leslie, Charles Beveridge, John Brown and Andrew Todd.

Robert Chrystal was still alive and his outstanding service has been mentioned previously. Andrew Todd was also still alive and it transpires that he was the Secretary

of the *Lily Lodge* for 39 years. George Wright has been Bro. Clark's predecessor and had served as Secretary for 37 years and he also spoke during the conference reminiscing about some of his experiences.

The conference was once again chiefly concerned with unemployment and its effect on membership numbers but that was allied to the concern that there was apathy being displayed by the younger generations when asked to join a society and “ I sincerely trust that this feeling will in time wear off and they will see it to be their duty to make provision for the time when, unfortunately, they may be laid aside by sickness”.

BRITISH ORDER OF ANCIENT FREE GARDENERS.

Annual Meeting in Kirkcaldy Next Week.

After a lapse of only nine years, the annual general meeting of the British Order of Ancient Free Gardeners is to be held again in Kirkcaldy, this being probably a tribute to the “Lang Toun” and district as a stronghold of the movement.

With a membership of 5959 men and 1933 women, a total of 7892, Kirkcaldy district is second only to East and West of Scotland Districts, which have memberships of over 10,000, so that the compliment is well deserved.

The annual meeting is to be held in the Masonic Hall, Thistle Street, Kirkcaldy, commencing on Thursday of next week and being concluded on Saturday.

The 8th August 1931 saw the *Fife Free Press* report of the 5th time that the Annual Moveable Delegation was held in Kirkcaldy. The event was held in the Masonic Hall in Thistle Street on the 6th & 7th with Bro. Joseph Lindsay from Alloa in the chair. The building still stands and is currently *Society*. The Council were represented by Bailies Gourlay and Roberts along with Treasurer Reekie. As far as can be ascertained there appears to have been no civic reception before, during or after on this occasion.

The introductory remarks were quite interesting as Bailie Gourlay indicated that he was a member of the Independent Order of Foresters which he had joined 6 years before the Gardeners arrived in Kirkcaldy! Bailie Roberts was able to say that he was a member of the Gardeners which seems to balance things out. The Bailies both spoke on the delights of Kirkcaldy and provided the warm welcome. Treasurer Reekie was more pertinent as befits a man who was a colleague of Provost Kilgour. Both were figures who had risen from office-boys to hold senior positions with *Ireland and Wishart*, the linen manufacturers. As well as working together Reekie had followed Kilgour as the town's Treasurer when Alexander Kilgour was elevated to Provost.

Reekie understood that much of the work of the Order was based on the grand old principle of self help. He went on to say “that it was somewhat out of date to preach the doctrine of self help. People nowadays were more inclined to look for State help instead of the fine old principle of self help”. He hoped that the Order would continue “to preach that principle to lead people to higher things in the future”.

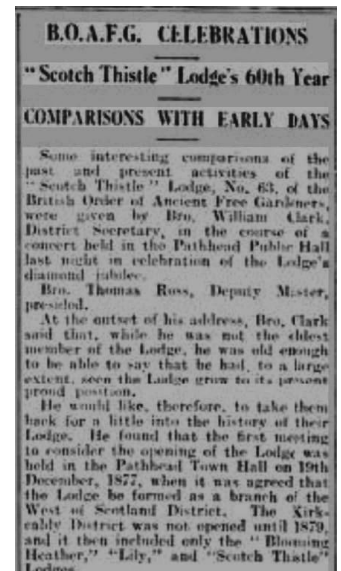
When Brother Lindsay addressed the conference it was back to the concerns over the decline in the membership, although funds appeared to be on the increase. Once again, unemployment featured as an issue but a third subject had entered the arena of potential problems. This, even in 1931, was the discussions surrounding the establishing of a National Health Service.

Included in his remarks were - “this may lead in time to the probability of the disappearance of the Approved Society along with any little freedom they still possess in the management of their own affairs”. He also indicated that some districts were

intending to give part of their surplus balances to local hospitals. When he went over the deaths of colleagues/brothers over the past 12 months – Bro. James Chrystal was one of the names read out. On a more positive note, Bro. Berrie, the General Secretary, had reached 25 years service and it was interesting to note that he had been appointed to the position at the 1906 Kirkcaldy conference. Once again, reading over the report it seems there is much gloom and concern but despite this all seem to live in the hope that there will be a better tomorrow.

Moving onto page 3 of the *Fife Free Press* of the 5th March 1938 we find a piece on the celebrations of the *Scotch Thistle Lodge* reaching their 60th year. Interestingly, while Bro. Thomas Ross was in the chair it was the District Secretary, Bro. William Clark who gave the keynote address. The centrepiece of the event was a concert and the venue was Pathhead Public Hall. The address took the form of reminisces over the 60 years. Some of the content has already been highlighted but it does no harm to give a summary.

“The meeting held to consider the formation of the lodge took place in Pathhead Town Hall on the 10th December 1877. It was to be opened as a branch of the *West of Scotland District* as the *Kirkcaldy District* was not opened until 1879. It was recorded that a meeting to examine the applicants was held on the 21st January 1878 and that those who passed were “initiated into the mysteries of the Order on the 2nd February 1878”.



As previously mentioned the initiations were carried out by members of the *Blooming Heather* and the *Lily Lodges*. Again, mention was made that Dr Porteous was appointed the Lodge Doctor but what was added was that he took no fee for examining candidates for the first 6 months. This would suggest that a medical examination may well have been a factor in being allowed to join. The fee paid to Dr Porteous was put at 2/- shillings (10p) per annum per member. It would seem that the Lodge was ahead of its time as the Doctor agreed to attend to the children of members – boys to 14 years of age and girls to age 18 for the sum of 3d per week. The Lodge had met in various places ranging from the Back Street Hall (now Commercial Street), Pathhead Public School and finally to the Co-operative Hall in Commercial Street from 1928.

Some statistics were then given on both membership numbers and funds over a 47 year period. They reflect both rises and falls in each segment and are shown as follows:-

• 1890	Membership	322	Funds	£1,229
• 1900	“	712	“	£3,799
• 1910	“	742	“	£6,550
• 1920	“	573	“	£7,209
• 1930	“	612	“	£8,319
• 1937	“	572	“	£7,627

The highest membership had been in 1907 with 770 members. In the 60 years a total of £32,700 had been paid out on sickness benefits with £6,284 on funeral benefits. The variances in membership caused by the National Insurance Act can be clearly seen.

It transpires that, initially, all members paid a uniform subscription irrespective of age and that graduation only came into effect in 1898. He made mention of a number of long-standing members with a connection of over 50 years with, in particular, John Park having been a member since the day the Lodge opened. He laid a great emphasis on the juvenile members and how they had their part to play in taking the movement forward. He could hardly fail not to make mention of the whole concept and purpose of the Order with:-

“It has been said that the friendly society movement has been bred and reared mainly by the working class. It has played an important part in the building up of the nation and, as he believed, the greatness of the nation was to be measured by the happiness to be found in the homes of the people, then they, as friendly society workers, could claim and, he thought justly so, that they were doing their share in the building up of the nation in those principles by which it was considered great, the principles of thrift, mutual help and true brotherhood”.

Bro. Clark welcomed guests and members from other societies while appealing that they become members of an approved society if they were not already one. “he wanted to see among the rising generation more of that spirit of independence which had characterised their forefathers and in joining a society they would only be doing their duty to themselves and those dependent upon them”.

During the course of the evening Bro. Clark handed over to the Lodge a bound copy of the balance sheets of the last 60 years. Similarly, as a mark of appreciation of his services to the Lodge over a long period of years, Bro. Clark was presented with a case of two pipes by Bro. Thomas Mitchell, Secretary, of the *Scotch Thistle Lodge*.

An excellent concert completed the evening featuring Miss Jean Pye, Miss Ruby Kay and Andrew Corner as vocalists. Andrew Nicholson was the accordionist while Messrs Kirk and Blair provided the comedy. The McArthur Troop of Dancers were in attendance, Mr John Morrison was the accompanist and Willie McArthur was the piper for the dancing. Do any of these names mean something to readers?

B.O.A. FREE GARDENERS' Friendly Society, Kirkcaldy Centralised District.—Applications are invited for the position of District Secretary; salary £325 per annum. State age and qualifications. Applications with testimonials to the Secretary, 47 Balsusney Road, Kirkcaldy by 7th July, 1948.

Saturday the 3rd of July 1948 brought about an employment opportunity via the columns of the *Fife Free Press*. The Kirkcaldy Centralised District were seeking a District Secretary. The salary on offer was £325 per annum and details including age and accompanied by testimonials

were to be send to the incumbent secretary at 47 Balsusney Road by the 7th July. It was

noted that after B.O.A.F.G. had been added “Friendly Society”.

Saturday the 13th May 1950 gave rise to a mystery. The *Fife Free Press* report on the third annual delegate meeting of the *recently constituted Kirkcaldy Centralised District* was held in the Y.W.C.A. In Kirkcaldy – this was a new phrase, first seen in 1948, and bears investigation. In terms of the meeting it was chaired by Bro. Andrew Roy from Glenrothes and there were 37 representatives from 19 lodges. The meeting learned that ££2,700 had been paid in total to members reaching the age of 65. A Further £1,400 had been paid in death benefits in respect of 95 brethren who had passed away. There were two very attractive proposals put forward and approved – firstly, the payment of contributions for death benefits were now to cease at age 65 for adult males – down from 70. Therefore, if you survived to 65, then you retained the death benefit without having to make contributions. While this seems very generous in today's terms – in 1950 the average life expectancy was just a fraction over 69. Secondly, it was agreed to lift the death benefit payable by 5%. In terms of the Lodge Secretaries – they were to be given an increased allowance for postages and also to have an increased introduction fee for new members they introduced.

The answer to the question raised above was eventually answered by the *Fife Free Press* of the 1st March 1947. This was in the form of a report to the Annual Meeting of the Kirkcaldy District Delegates, although the venue was only mentioned as Kirkcaldy. The membership was listed as 12,077 and cash had been paid out in respect of sickness plus the cost of treatment amounting to £14,180. It was still a period when monies were deducted from the members' wages but benefits were forwarded to the Lodge, by the Government, and from there disbursed to the appropriate members. This meant that the lodges were acting as agents for the government and therefore still had a part to play with the provision of sickness benefits.

However, the tone of the meeting was dampened by the fact that, despite extensive lobbying, Friendly Societies would not retain their place in the new scheme – quite simply, they had no further part to play. The report went on to say that “amendments of General Rules have now been registered, making provision for a centralisation of Lodges and the transfer over to the Individual Account System throughout the order”. This information in turn required more research, at a level which was never anticipated at the outset of this Object.

As already, hopefully evidenced, mutual aid organisations existed to provide, sickness, unemployment and burial benefits to members. There can be no question that they played a vital role in working class communities – especially in terms of trust, given their local roots and governance. In terms of sickness benefits they had at least been included as agents for the government since the passing of the 1916 Act, but now a far larger threat loomed. Friendly Societies, which included the Gardeners, had hoped to retain a position within the operations of the new 1946 National Insurance Act but, despite intense lobbying, were excluded. The 1946 Act decreed that payment of National Insurance Benefits would be centralised and only government officials would

be utilised/involved – suggesting this option would create both uniformity and efficiency. This rejection was viewed by many as breaking the long standing connection of such societies with social welfare and local trust.

This decree led to a pivotal change in that many societies now moved towards life assurance and savings products but, without question, their influence in the realm of public welfare had waned. Probably it is fair to say that the act partially created the shift from community based mutualism to state administered welfare – a philosophical and operational change which, without question, reshaped British social policy.

Turning to the centralisation aspect, it has to be assumed that, until now, the local lodges had managed their own records in relation to; finances, memberships and possibly governance. This was being swept away to be replaced by a unified central administration – presumably the District Office, which was to provide streamlining, remove duplication and ensure consistency of the records. The supposition is that this would result in a centralised individual account covering each member in the district.

The 19th April 1952, again in the *Fife Free Press*, saw coverage of the Annual Delegate Meeting of the Kirkcaldy Centralised District being held in the Station Hotel. There were 37 delegates representing 14 lodges present with Bro. D. Peggie from Kirkcaldy in the chair. Two enhancements had been made during the year – firstly, an Accident Benefit Fund had been created which had “a very cheap contribution rate”. Secondly, single female members were now allowed to enrol in the Individual Account Fund. The onus for attracting new members lay with the lodge secretaries and Brother Peggie appealed for their cooperation in this endeavour. During the year 85 members had passed away resulting in payments totalling £1,400. The sum of £2,500 had been paid out to members reaching age 65 and sickness benefits amounted to £1,650. A report was given on the Annual Moveable Delegation which had been held in Edinburgh and it was then disclosed that the 1952 event would be held in Kirkcaldy – for the first time since 1931. Brothers D. Peggie and R. Kennedy were elected as the district's nominees to the Order's Executive.

True to the above, the Annual Moveable Delegation did indeed arrive in Kirkcaldy for the 1952 Conference which was held in the Station Hotel on the 28th and 29th August. The event was reported in the pages of the *Fife Free Press* on the 30th. The Chair was William Cowe from Edinburgh. The Wednesday prior to the conference saw the Executive of the Order given a civic luncheon by Provost Young. We learn that this was the 71st annual conference and it seems highly commendable that Kirkcaldy had hosted 5 of these events. Without question, this was a rather downbeat conference. It was set against a change of government and significant inflation. On the international front there were issues between the East and the West in what was termed the Cold War.



At the same time Britain was trying to rebuild its armaments which was putting a strain on the country's finances. William Cowe spoke about all these concerns and, in particular, that while wages were rising – their purchasing power was diminishing with the increased costs. He suggested that while rationing was being eased – inflation's effects were bringing about another form of rationing. The knock on effect was that people were having to take care before spending their money. In addition, the new National Health and Insurance Acts were leading to both a significant drop in memberships and, probably of greater concern, was the failure to attract new members. As Cowe saliently pointed out - “it took a good line in salesmanship to sell voluntary insurance along with compulsory national insurance”. He thought that well organised advertising, followed up by personal contact, was one of the main ways they might be able to turn the tide.

Provost Young, in his address, mentioned he was always delighted to welcome men who dedicated their time and interests to public welfare and he was pleased to see that the Order had 1,000 members in the area. He fully appreciated the difficulties which the new legislation was placing on friendly societies. In fact, he went as far as saying “that their activities were being curtailed and handicapped by the operation of the acts. He did however offer positivity with “while it may be that the society's work might require a new outlook, he did not think that anyone could suggest that their day was done. Despite all the benefits which come with legislation, there still remains a vast field for voluntary effort, because voluntary effort could touch a section of the community with a kindred, happy feeling and with pleasure and pleasantness which was not obtained by the hard and dry official pattern and outlook”.

In truth the whole business of the conference appeared to centre on how to reinvent themselves to become a provider of insurance products which would enhance/compliment the State offerings. The Order faced what seemed monumental change and the question was how to deal with it and, at the same time, try and halt the haemorrhaging of numbers. It was a difficult quandary and perhaps the writing was starting to appear on the wall.

B.O.A.F.G. Friendly Society

75th Anniversary Celebration at Kirkcaldy

Speaking at the 75th anniversary celebration of the Kirkcaldy Centralised District of the British Order of the Ancient Free Gardeners' Society, in the Station Hotel, Kirkcaldy, last night, the Grand Master of the Society, Bro. H. A. Spencer, Glasgow, said that it might be thought that the Welfare State had left the movement without a foundation.

This was not the case, however, and he was glad to say that there was now a tendency on the part of the public again to interest themselves in taking out Friendly Society insurance.

The members of the Order had earlier been welcomed to the town by Provost D Wright.

Chairman for the evening was Bro. J. MacGregor, Alloa, District Master of the Order. Grace was said by Bro. D Deas, Kirkcaldy, Trustee, and the toast “The Queen” was proposed by the chairman.

The Thursday afternoon session was followed by the Provost, Magistrates and delegates being treated to tea by the Kirkcaldy Centralised Branch. After tea the delegates enjoyed a bus trip to St. Andrews. Reading the report, it does seem that there were more questions than answers in relation to the future.

What was not mentioned, was that the District would reach its 75th anniversary that same year. It was celebrated by a dinner/dance/social in the Station Hotel on the 5th November. The Chair for the event was the District Master – John McGregor from Alloa. David Wright, who was a guest, had replaced David Young as Provost during the year. The toast to the Kirkcaldy District was proposed by Bro. H. Angus Spencer from Glasgow, the Grand

Master of the Order. He made mention of the fact that earlier in the year he had been present at the 70th Anniversary celebrations of the *East of Scotland District*. He admitted to having little connection with Kirkcaldy but had met many of its stalwarts at other events. John McKinnon was highlighted as having been the first Master in 1879 and Robert Chrystal was mentioned having been District Secretary for 25 years. He had chosen to highlight these two names as they were “pioneers in the movement and its foundation was built through them. They might say that they no longer had a foundation due to the advantages derived from the Welfare State but he would like to confute that impression by saying that from the Register of the National Council of Friendly Societies, compiled to the 31st December 1953, they (the B.O.A.F.G.) were still in the first dozen societies in the Country in terms of membership and finance”.

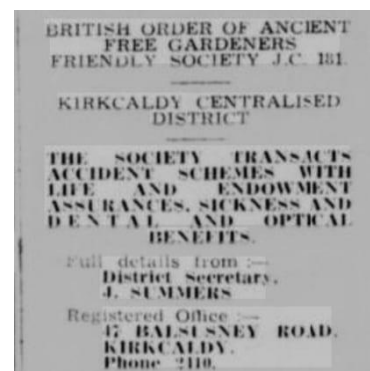
He went on to say that like everyone involved with these societies he regretted the rapid decline in numbers but he felt that perhaps the tide was turning and “there was now a general tendency on the part of people to interest themselves again in taking Friendly Society insurance. It is an additional safeguard against the day of sickness and distress and therefore it should be our duty to continue our propaganda to recruit new members. We are in a solid financial position and I have quiet hopes that now having weathered the storm, the beam will again move upwards once more”.

The team were both relieved and delighted to learn that when Bro. Spencer ran over the Annual Moveable Delegations held in Kirkcaldy – we had both identified and mentioned each of them!

The musical part of the programme was sustained by Mrs M. Deas and Mr R. Young, with Mr J. Marshall at the piano. Music at the dance was provided by Mr Jack Pillans and his band.

Saturday the 5th May 1956, again in the *Fife Free Press*, saw a report on the Annual District Delegates Meeting of the Kirkcaldy Centralised District held in the Station Hotel. There were 37 delegates present representing 15 lodges. Bro. J. MacGregor from Alloa was in the chair. The reports revealed that 92 members had died during the year resulting in £1,500 being paid out. £2,000 had been paid out in total to members who had reached the age of 65. In terms of sickness benefit - £1,200 had been paid away. Once more, one of the main discussions was around attempts to get each existing member to introduce at least one new member over the coming year – in an attempt to keep numbers up. One resolution, which was passed, but now required the sanction of the Order's Actuary was that members' widows should no longer pay any contribution and should be provided with a free death benefit policy on their own lives.

Saturday the 4th March 1967 saw an interesting notice in the pages of the *Fife Free Press*. It took the form of an advertisement of the facilities offered by the British Order of Free Gardeners. This advert had Friendly Society incorporated into the name. The main part of



the notice indicated that the Society transacts accident schemes with life and endowment Assurances, sickness and dental and optical benefits. The lack of punctuation makes it difficult to determine exactly what was on offer but, it probably meant – The Society transacts accident schemes, life and endowment assurances, sickness, dental and optical benefits. The notice was signed by the District Secretary - J. Summers and the office was still in 47 Balsusney Road.

Rather akin to hen's teeth a report was stumbled over from the *Fife Free Press* of the 19th May 1972. This was the Annual District Delegates meeting and was held in the Ollerton Hotel. It mentioned that there was a full representation from the Kirkcaldy Centralised District but very little else. No numbers were quoted only that “ The financial statement of accounts for the year 1971 were presented to the delegates, showing the society to be in a very sound financial state. Benefits had all been substantially increased”. It has to be assumed that the increased benefits probably refer to the sickness, dental & optical benefits. It has to be said that this was a much truncated report than it days of yore and possibly indicates the falling off in interest.

The following were appointed as office-bearers for the following year:-

- District Master - A. B. Laing – Falkland
- Deputy District Manager - R. Grieve – Kirkcaldy.
- Trustees - R. Kennedy – Falkland, A. Roy – Kirkcaldy and J. Doig. Kirkcaldy.



The faithful *Fife Free Press*, in its edition of the 15th August 1975, appears to bring down the curtain on Kirkcaldy's involvement with the Annual Moveable Delegation. The report is, to say the least, condensed but we learn that the conference was held in the Town House over the previous week-end with what is termed the Kirkcaldy Branch hosting the event. The delegates were welcomed by Robert King, Convenor of the District Council, who presented Mr Andrew Taylor, the Worthy Grand Master of the Society

with an Adam Smith plaque. We are informed that there were representatives from various districts of the B.O.A.F.G. including:-

- Aberdeen
- Edinburgh
- Glasgow
- Falkirk
- English Centralised District
- Welsh Centralised District

The article indicates that general affairs and the finances of the Society were discussed and the programme was laid out for the coming year.

It was the Kirkcaldy District Secretary, James Summers, who reported that the local

branch was in a very healthy financial state but:- “we would feel happier if a large influx of new members could be obtained but it would appear that the working man in this affluent time finds difficulty meeting the present commitments of national insurance, income tax and such like”.

The great thing about this item was that the article was accompanied by photograph and Robert King is on the right centre with Mr Taylor, to his left, receiving the plaque. The others in the photographs are delegates and their wives.

It is a very unfortunate and unsatisfactory manner in which we come towards a conclusion to the narrative. As the years passed, the content of newspaper material on the Order gave much less context and also became much less frequent. There are no lines drawn in the sand until we reach 1981. All we can say, from the result of extensive research by ourselves and our good friends in the Local Studies section of Kirkcaldy Central Library, is that the last mention in newspaper archives are as follows:-

The Tree of Dysart Lodge B.O.A.F.G. was last mentioned in the *Fife Free Press* of Saturday 28th January 1933. This is only notification of the Annual General Meeting but not a single word follows.

TREE OF DYSART LODGE, B.O.A.F.G.
THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the above Lodge will be held in Public School, Dysart, on **MONDAY**, the 30th inst., at 8 o'clock p.m.
 Fines for non-attendance.
ROBT. SPEED.

B.O.A.F.G. LILY LODGE
ANNUAL MEETING on **WEDNESDAY**, 12th March at 7.50 p.m.
A. R.

B.O.A.F.G. Lily Lodge – last mentioned in the *Fife Free Press* of Saturday the 8th March 1958. Once again this is a notice for the Annual General Meeting and once more not a syllable follows.

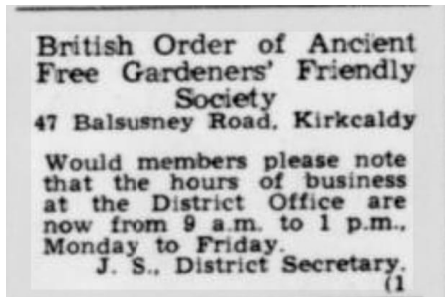
B.O.A.F.G. (Kirkcaldy Centralised District) This is the heading in the *Fife Free Press* of the 7th September 1963 and makes mention of the Scotch Thistle Lodge. It points out a change of address to 245 Commercial Street and indicates the next meeting will be on the 11th. Once again – nothing after that.

B.O.A.F.G. FRIENDLY SOCIETY
 (Kirkcaldy Centralised District)
SCOTCH THISTLE LODGE. —
MEMBERS PLEASE NOTE
CHANGE OF ADDRESS TO 245
COMMERCIAL STREET.
 Next Meeting, Wednesday, 11th September, 6.45 to 8 p.m.
DAVID PEGGIE, Secy.

B.O.A.F.G.
BLOOMING HEATHER LODGE
MEETINGS FOR 1973
 February 14; March 14; April 11; May 9; June 6; August 15; September 12; October 10; November 7; December 5.
J. D., Secy.

B.O.A.F.G. Blooming Heather Lodge – the *Fife Free Press* of the 9th February 1973 carried a note of the meetings for the year. Once again this is the last mention of the Lodge.

In terms of the many houses which the Organisation had built and acted as a landlord over, once more, information is extremely limited. We know that the houses in Berwick Place were demolished. In relation to the remainder, they all appear to have remained in the hands of the Order during and after the Second World War. It is then, by judicious use of the Valuation Rolls, we see change starting, accelerating and then ending in oblivion. As houses became empty, they only remained



in the Order's hands if there was a widow or widower involved. Otherwise, as soon as they became unoccupied they were being sold. As every Valuation Roll was published so the number of houses held by the Order diminished. There are too many to check each and every house but it would appear that, by the time of Local Government re-organisation in 1975, all are in private hands. There is one exception however and that is 47 Balsusney Road which for many years had been the

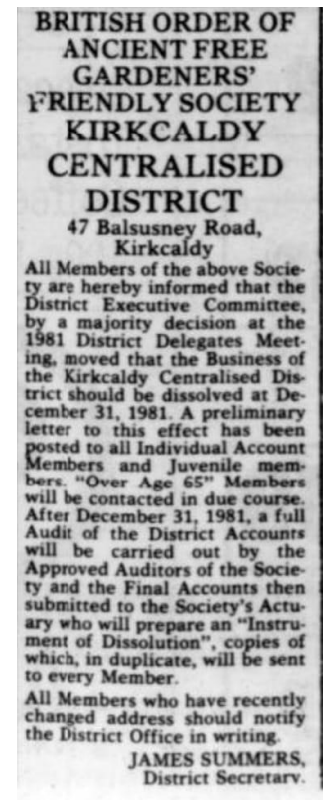
office of the District. The notice, which is shown here, indicated that the hours of opening were altering to mornings only. This was taken from the *Fife Free Press* of the 5th November 1976 which is in the Kirkcaldy District Council regime. The lack for material on the sales of the properties leaves only a presumption that the sale proceeds went to the District. Where the funds went from there has to be conjecture – there is nothing to provide a definitive answer. Whatever did eventually transpire, it certainly had to have been before the end of 1981 given the following paragraph.

The *Fife Free Press* of Friday the 4th December 1981 published a notice that the *British Order of Ancient Free Gardeners - Kirkcaldy Centralised District* would be dissolved on the 31st of the month. A majority decision to that effect had been secured at the 1981 District Delegates Meeting. A preliminary letter was being sent to all members, including juveniles, stating that a full audit of the accounts would be carried out and then submitted to the Society's Actuary who would prepare an instrument of Dissolution. A copy in duplicate would be sent to every member. The notice was signed by James Summers the District Secretary.

The conclusion to this narrative feels both clunky and unsatisfactory and the hope is that a reader, perhaps even a former Gardener, can shed some light on the final years of the Order in Kirkcaldy. As mentioned previously, there appears to be nothing in the public domain recounting the years the lodges were active in Kirkcaldy. Trying to piece together 110 years of history via the pages of a newspaper archive always leaves the research open to missing important information.

As the story unfolded it was astonishing to learn given the huge numbers employed in local industries how active and successful the *British Order of Ancient Free Gardeners* was in the town. It is remarkable to see just how important and substantial the Kirkcaldy Centralised District was. It is also plainly obvious that Kirkcaldy men played a huge part in the local, district and national picture and yet every trace of the organisation bar a substantial number of tenement houses are all that remains.

One of the most pleasing aspects of the research was that for once, we were not dealing with the higher echelons of Kirkcaldy's society – here we were dealing with working people coming together for the betterment of the working classes and doing it very well



and very successfully. Yes, John T. Oswald was a member, as was James. H. Dalziel the M.P. for Kirkcaldy Burghs between 1892 and 1921, but this was primarily all about working people striving together for a better tomorrow. There are, within this narrative, a number of figures who gave decades of their time and unstinting effort to help their fellow man and perhaps deserve some recognition – never mind better recognition! Kirkcaldy needs a few working class heroes to cement its industrial legacy! Given the geographical spread of the Lodges perhaps 2026 – the 150th anniversary of the extended burgh, might be an appropriate time.

Acknowledgements

This story has been produced almost exclusively through researching newspapers. Most of the individual newspapers used for articles, advertisements and photographs are credited in the text. All the newspaper information was obtained from **Find my past Newspaper Archive in partnership with the British Library**. It has to be said without the back copies of the Fife Free Press this story could not have been produced.

Mapping – The maps throughout the text are reproduced with the kind permission of the **National Library of Scotland**.

The photographs of the Order's Officials which appear on pages – 1, 14, 28 and 32 plus the brochure cover in the appendix, were provided by **Irene Gilbert**. The team are most appreciative of her assistance and authority to reproduce the photographs.

The plans of the houses built by the Order and shown on pages 18,22 and 23 plus in the appendix are thanks to **Fife Cultural Trust -Archives Section**. Their assistance is hugely valued.

The Photograph of Provost Alexander Kilgour is reproduced by the kind permission of **Fife Cultural Trust – Museum and Art Gallery**.

The photograph of Douglas Road in Leslie is reproduced by the kind permission of **Bill Fiet – an avid postcard collector**.

A special mention, as always, has to go to the staff of the **Local Studies Room in Kirkcaldy Central Library**. Their unfailing assistance is very much appreciated.

Appendix

Space is not always kind when it comes to adding pictorial information, hence this additional information, which it is hoped will add interest to the narrative.

Probably one of the most anticipated questions will be– where are these houses and details are given below.

Built by the Scotch Thistle Lodge.

Numbers 1-35 Anderson Street.

Numbers 29-37 Church Street.

Built by The Tree of Dysart Lodge (now demolished.)

Numbers 19 – 33 Berwick Place.

Built by The British Order of Ancient Free Gardeners – Kirkcaldy District.

Numbers 35 – 119 Balsusney Road.

Numbers 62 – 92 Balfour Street.

Numbers 47 - 53 Meldrum Road.

Believing that readers may enjoy investigating if a family member was connected with the Order, we provide three items:-

The first is a list of the Officials of the three Kirkcaldy Lodges plus the Kirkcaldy District Lodge, taken from the Kirkcaldy Trades Directory for 1885 – 1886.

The second is more limited entry of the Officials taken from the Kirkcaldy Trades Directory of 1924-1925.

The third item is one which came to us via Mrs Irene Gilbert and is a delightful acquisition. It is a report of the Jubilee Delegate Meeting and the Committee Meetings for the half year to 30th June 1930. A facsimile of the District Banner takes pride of place at the top of the page but, the names and addresses of the Executive Committee are all included showing the various Lodges which made up the executive at the time.. It was a wee bonus to see that the printing was carried out by Kirkcaldy's own Allen Lithographic (Object 47).

To round of the narrative, some of the superb plans provided by the On-Fife Archives in Glenrothes are shown. Most were in superb condition with the only sign of wear being in the folds.

We hope that this information adds to the reading pleasure.

BRITISH FREE GARDENERS.

Kirkcaldy District Branch of British Order of Ancient Free Gardeners:—

DISTRICT OFFICERS.—D.G.M., Robert Chrystal, Borsland, Dysart Scotch Thistle; D.D.M., George Craigie, Birrell Street, Pathhead Scotch Thistle; D.P.M., Andrew Michie, Russell Place, Kirkcaldy Blooming Heather; D.A.P.M., John Fisher, Back Street, Pathhead Tree of Dysart; D.S.W., John McKinnon, Rosslyn Street, Gallatown (Lily); D.J.W., Thomas Wood, 198 Links Street, Kirkcaldy Blooming Heather; D.G., William Cant, Alexandra Street, Kirkcaldy (Blooming Heather); O.G., Andrew Robertson, 4 Bridge Street, Kirkcaldy (Rossend Castle); D.T., Roger Henderson, Harbour Head, Kirkcaldy (Blooming Heather); D.S., George Wright, Rosslyn Street Gallatown (Lily).

LODGE SECRETARIES.—Blooming Heather (Kirkcaldy), Roger Henderson, Harbour Head; Lily (Gallatown), Andrew Todd, Rosslyn Street; Scotch Thistle (Pathhead), John Hitchin, Mid Street, Pathhead.

BLOOMING HEATHER LODGE OF FREE GARDENERS.

Richard Sinclair, G.M.; John Cuthill, D.G.M.; William Cant, P.M.; Francis Arnott, S.W.; Thomas Fallen, J.W.; James Adams, C.; Henry Stoddart, A.P.M.; James Aitchison, O.G.; Roger Henderson, Secretary; Andrew Michie, Treasurer.

LILY LODGE OF FREE GARDENERS.

John McKinnon, G.M.; Alexander Crawford, D.M.; Jas. McDonald, P.M.; Alexander McIntyre, S.W.; David Meldrum, J.W.; Henry Crombie, C.; John Barclay, O.G.; Robert Anderson, J.G.; Andrew Todd, Secretary; Peter Weepers, Treasurer.

SCOTCH THISTLE LODGE OF FREE GARDENERS.

Brothers Chrystal, G.M.; Craigie, D.G.M.; Brown, P.M.; Lawson, P.M.; Wotherspoon, S.W.; Butterfield, J.W.; Napier, C.; Forrester, O.G.; Howie, Treasurer; Hitchin, Secretary.

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-20- OFFICIAL LIST

FRIENDLY SOCIETIES.

Ancient Order of Foresters, Gaird St Bryceedale—A. Robertson, 24 Octavia Street.

B.O.A.F.G., Tree of Dysart Lodge—R. Speed, 43 E. March Street.

B.O.A.F.G., St Clair Lodge—Mr Allison, 68 Institution Street.

B.O.A.F.G., Blooming Heather Lodge—A. Barclay, Tod's Buildings, Esplanade (West).

B.O.A.F.G., Lily Lodge—Mr Bayne, 175 St Clair Street.

B.O.A.F.G., Scotch Thistle Lodge—J. Chrystal, 81 Commercial Street.

Independent Order of Rechabites, "Hope of Five Tent"—J. Roamer, District Secretary, 180 Mid Street.

Sons of Temperance, St Clair Division, No. 1029—A. Simpson, 4 Oswald Road.

Sons of Temperance, Rosslyn Division, No. 1215—D. Duncan, 39 East Quality Street, Dysart.

Sons of Temperance, Pioneer Division, No. 468—Alex. Mathewson, 29 Lady Helen Street.



REPORT

of Jubilee Delegate Meeting and of Committee Meetings,

For the Half-Year ending 30th June, 1930.

THE HALF-YEARLY DELEGATE MEETING

will be held in the MASONIC HALL, EAST WEMYSS,
on SATURDAY, 30th August, 1930, at 12 noon.

MEMBERS OF EXECUTIVE FOR 1930.

Office.	Name and Address.	Lodge.
W.D.M.—	JAMES MICHIE, Grey Gorn, Saucie.	Newtonshaw Thistle.
D.M.—	DAVID DEAS, 5 Viewforth Terrace, Kirkcaldy.	Lily.
P.M.—	THOMAS KNOX, 90 Cairns Street, Kirkcaldy.	Blooming Heather.
S.W.—	DAVID PAGE, 11 Regent Pl., Balfour St., Kirkcaldy.	Scotch Thistle.
J.W.—	ROBERT KENNEDY, Elmlea, Falkland.	Lonond Oak.
Chap.—	JAMES ANDERSON, 8 Maryfield Crescent, Leslie.	Roths Oak.
I.G.—	ANDREW L. HOGARTH, Unitas House, Dunfermline.	Randolph.
O.S.—	CHARLES IRVINE, Main Street, Thornton.	Pride of Thornton.
SECV. & TREAS.	WILLIAM CLARK, 47 Balmoney Road, Kirkcaldy.	Scotch Thistle.
TRUSTEES—	ROBERT SPEED, 48 East March Street, Kirkcaldy.	Tree of Dysart.
	GEORGE WRIGHT, 3 Bandon Avenue, Kirkcaldy.	Lily.
	JOHN M. CAIRNS, 69 High Street, Kirkcaldy.	Blooming Heather.
AUDITOR—	Mr. JAMES B. ANDERSON, C.A., 154 High Street, Kirkcaldy.	
ARRISTERS—	Ex-Provost ANDERSON, Loughborough Road, Kirkcaldy; Ex-Bailie BLYTH, Blythwood, Kirkcaldy; DAVID MITCHELL, Esq., Commercial Bank, Pathhead; DAVID INGLIS, Esq., National Bank, Pathhead; W. T. DUNCAN, Esq., Whytescausway, Kirkcaldy; Mrs. BLYTH, Blythwood, Kirkcaldy.	

The Allen Lithographic Co., Ltd., Kirkcaldy.

GRAND MASTER'S ADDRESS.

Fourth Kirkcaldy A.M.D.

GRAND DEPUTY MASTER, OFFICERS, and Brethren.—After a lapse of 16 years you are again welcomed to the ancient and Royal Burgh, which I am pleased to have the privilege of doing. This is the fourth occasion the "Lang Toon" has been considered worthy of housing the A.M.D., and the District desire me to express its warm appreciation of the decision of the last A.M.D. in deciding that they would renew their acquaintance with the Kingdom of Fife. For myself, I can only express my personal indebtedness to those who took part in the 1921 A.M.D. in electing me to the high and honourable position which I occupy this morning. I sincerely trust that your sojourn in our midst will be pleasant and that each will return to his place of abode none the worse of his stay in our midst, but rather refreshed by a break in the ordinary day's work inseparable from the exacting nature of the multifarious duties which you are called upon to perform from day to day and from which the business of the meeting to be transacted here during the course of the current week may be found not only a relaxation from your everyday humdrum occupation, but in some respects compensate you for the hours you have spent at meetings and the time you have devoted in spare hours to studying reports and considering generally what is for the advantage and future well-being of your Lodge, District, and Order.

The Lang Toon. Kirkcaldy, as a Burgh, is one of the oldest in Scotland, being in possession of full Burghal privileges at the time Bannockburn was fought. I cannot tell you how the town came to assume the motto "Vigilando Munio," but, critics outside of the Kingdom have, been unkind enough to suggest that the proper interpretation is "watch the money." With Kirkcaldy are associated the names of several men famous in the history of our country, particularly Adam Smith and Thomas Carlyle. The author of the "Wealth of Nations" was born here, whilst the Sage of Chelsea spent a few years of his life as a teacher in our ancient town. Kirkcaldy has been more fully described by Bro. Berrie in the January Report, so that I need not further allude to it, but trust you may be able during your spare time to visit some of the places of interest in our town, and that you will enjoy your visit to the Kingdom of Fife.

1921 Valuation. During the past year your Executive have had under consideration serious questions relating to the work of the Order. The Valuation of the Order is due this year, and your Executive appointed Mr. E. J. Farnworth, Preston, to prepare the same. Mr. Farnworth, as you are aware, previously dealt with the Order's Valuations, and in making the appointment the Executive considered it in the hands of a capable Valuer. Unfortunately there has been a considerable volume of correspondence between the Valuer and the G.S., which necessitated a visit to Preston of a deputation appointed by the Executive to consult Mr. Farnworth on the matter. We trust that he is now devoting himself to the work which he has undertaken, and that the results will be received by Lodges and Districts much earlier than was the case for the last Quinquennial. We hope that despite the very serious times through which we have had to pass in the period covered by the Valuation ended 1921, Lodges and Districts will show an upward solvency rate.

Industrial Depression. Unfortunately during the past year has been a great wave of industrial depression has been and still is affecting the trade of the country, in consequence of which a very considerable number of our members have been unemployed. In these circumstances the maintenance of regular contributions has been in many cases impossible, and to meet the emergency you will find from the January Report that the Order disbursed its Subsidiary and Distress Fund to give Lodges an opportunity of paying the contributions of those members whom they considered were unable, owing to unemployment, to keep up their regular contribu-

Lodges Planning Documents

