



## There's no Place Like Home



History records the first mention of a Town Council in Kirkcaldy around 1582. The courts of the burgh met on the Common Muir of which all that now remains is the portion known as the Volunteer's Green. It is suggested that in the winter months the meeting place was the Tolbooth which is believed to date from certainly before 1678. This therefore may well be what was classed as the first Town House.

When Kirkcaldy was granted Royal Burgh Status in 1644 the duties of Provost were initially carried out by the Bailies, Councillors and Magistrates, and it was not until around 1658 that Robert Whyte was elected as the first Provost of the town.

If we accept that the Tolbooth was the first mention of a quasi-municipal building we get onto firmer ground when we move to the second. This structure was located on the High Street and constructed around 1678. It must have been a reasonably imposing building in the sense that it displayed a steeple, a bell, a clock and even a gaol.

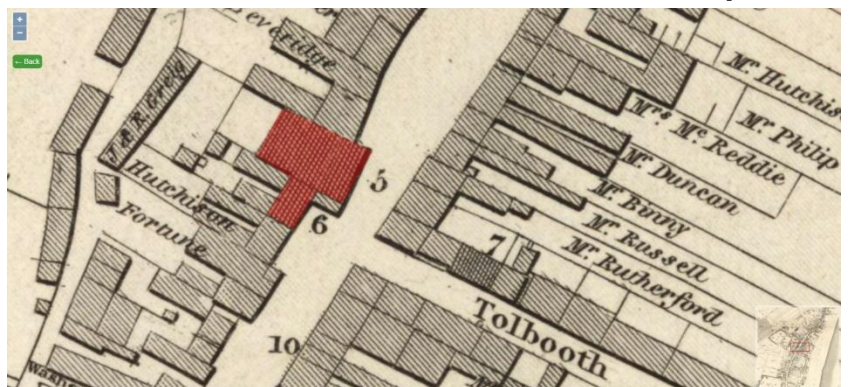
Regarding this second Town House, in the *Old Statistical Account* of 1791-3, the minister of Kirkcaldy noted that:- "The only public buildings worthy of notice are the town-houfe and the church. The town-houfe, which was rebuilt in 1678, ftands near the middle of the town and contains the hall in which the magiftrates and council affemble for

conducting the ordinary bufinefs of the burgh. Here too the baillies hold a weekly court for judging in queftions between the burgeffes, and the juftices of the peace have occafional meetings for determining queftions of revenue, and difcuffing petty cafes that are brought before them from the furrounding diftrict. Over the town houfe is the prifon, with feparate apartments for debtors and criminals; and under it is the guard-houfe, the meal-market, and the public weigh houfe. The whole forms a plain building of hewn-ftone, ornamented with a tower and fpire. The tower contains the town-clock and bell, and ferves as a repofitory for the archives of the burgh”.



Additions had been made in 1782 when the Mercat Cross was removed and some of the stones used to build the steeple. A commemorative plaque is now fixed to a wall close to where the cross stood and it is shown here.

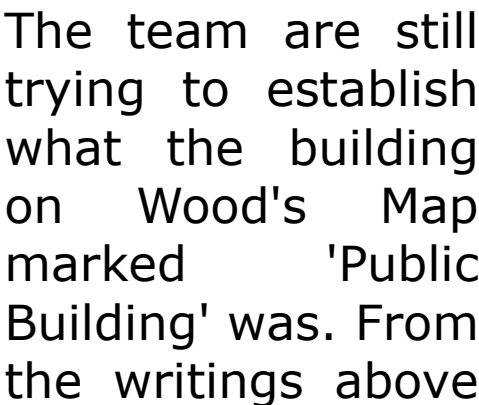
It is very helpful that, soon after, John Wood was busy surveying both near and far and thankfully Kirkcaldy was included. His survey of 1824 shows the Town House and jail which is highlighted here in red. It can be seen that the old building did indeed jut out into the thoroughfare.



Wood did not just produce the map but he added some notes and the portion relating to the Town House is replicated below. The Town is fortunate in that, between the First Statistical Account and John Wood's contribution, we have what amounts to witness statements of people who were there and saw it.

“The Town House and Jail, which formerly projected considerably upon the street, was in 1825 pulled down to remove the obstruction and an elegant building, with a handsome spire, has since been erected, after a design by Mr Angus, Architect, Edinburgh, containing thirteen prison rooms, besides ample accommodation for Courts, public business, &c., with airing ground and other conveniences. This building cost about £5,000, of which upwards of £600 was subscribed by individuals, and the remainder paid by the corporation funds of the Burgh”. (John Wood 1828)

It was our resident 'architectural guru', Tom Reid, who filled in the background to this George Angus (1792-1845). Perthshire born but practising from Edinburgh, George Angus, designed two Fife churches; Tulliallan and Kingskettle in addition to the huge Tudor arch over the entrance to what is now the Police College at Tulliallan. Kinross Parish Church was also the work of George Angus. He certainly did not stick to the one style as his Greek Revival Dundee High School testifies.



it does not appear to be related to municipal affairs but it has long been conventional wisdom that the Corn Exchange, opened in 1859, was the first building capable of hosting public meetings, gatherings and entertainments – so what was it?

The 1678 building seems to have served its purpose through to 1825 when the third incarnation of the municipal headquarters appeared. This building appears to have been opened in 1832 so, lost in the mists of time, the Council must have met somewhere in the interim – but where?

John Wood's notes have given us a little detail on these new headquarters and more will be added as we move along. The building is featured in many old photographs of the High Street with its high steeple and clock being a real local landmark. The property stood where Marks & Spencers traded from until recently and Kirkcaldy Civic Society have affixed an information plaque to the wall.

The whereabouts of the Town Clock, which was contained in the steeple, is something of a mystery and is certainly not the clock attached to the former

Marks and Spencers building. This clock only appeared in the 1930s.



The old Town Bell; cast in 1882, chimed from the same steeple for over 50 years until the building bit the dust in 1938. It was rescued from a scrap yard and can now be seen in the entrance area of the present Town House where it replaced a bust of Queen Victoria.

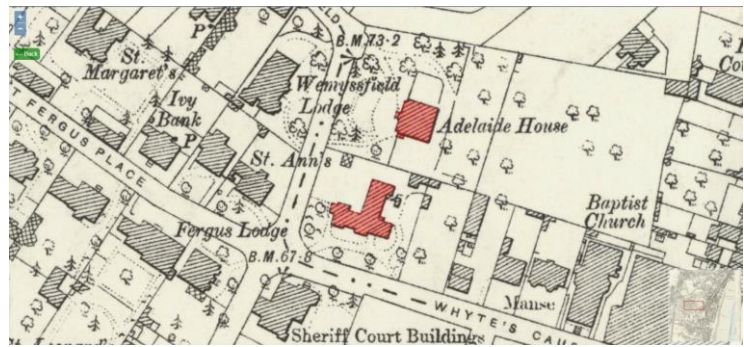
Although it no longer rings, it is a welcome addition to the very impressive collection of the town's heritage and history housed and displayed around the foyer. The staff at the reception desk are helpful and knowledgeable about both the artefacts and the building itself.

Although mention has been made in previous *Objects* it does no harm to re-state that in the late 1820s the town was governed by; the Provost, two Bailies, a Dean of Guild (responsible for building works in the town), a Treasurer and 21 Councillors. 10 of these were mariners, 8 were merchants and 3 were craftsmen. This is a clear reminder of the importance of the sea and the harbour to the *Lang Toun*. In terms of parliamentary representation the town was joined by Dysart, Kinghorn and Burntisland, in forming one Westminster seat. This



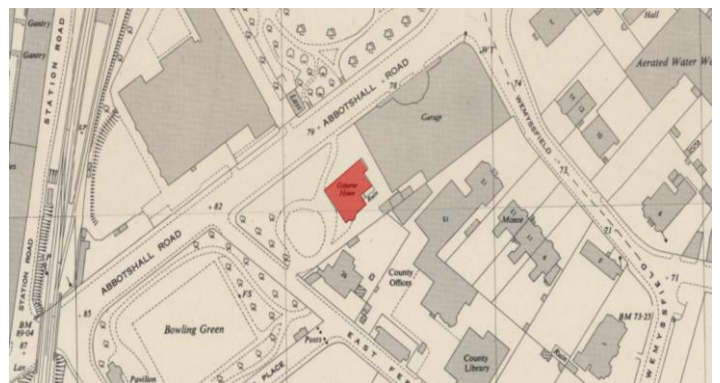
is further evidence that everything comes and goes in circles – with the Kirkcaldy West Council Ward now incorporating both Burntisland and Kinghorn.

- Before we launch into this Object, it might help to give the location of some of the buildings which will be mentioned in the narrative:-
- *Tylehurst* – A mansion which stood on part of what is now the Town House and Square – nearer Whytescauseway.



- *Wemyss Park/Adelaide House* – A mansion which sat to the east of Tylehurst, again covering what is now part of the Town House and Square.

- *Osborne House* – still standing at the junction of East Fergus Place and Abbotshall Road. Now luxury flat. This was in reality a fiasco and showed the Council in a very poor light. In 1936 there was a suggestion that the house should be bought to allow road widening to take place at the corner of East Fergus Place and also on Abbotshall Road (one of the widest streets in the town). The next day £1,275 was paid for house.



The idea, as well as the road widening, was to use the house as a 'Rest Home' for elderly and infirm gentlemen. Stanley Park was to be utilised for the same purpose for ladies.

Astonishingly having bought the house in June 1936, the Medical Officer of Health reported in October 1936, that it was unlikely to be suitable for that purpose! The next idea was to convert the ground floor into a hospital and the upper floor to a nurse's home.

Then it was considered as a refuge for families who were victims of flooding by the sea until they could return home. It was envisaged 14 families could be accommodated.

Finally, and we may be sceptics, it found a use in July 1937 to house the Town Chamberlain, the Burgh Surveyor and the Parks Superintendent until the new Town House was ready. Very conveniently that move would allow Tylehurst to be demolished! Was that always the intention? Numerous letters to the papers were suggesting that a mansion could not come on the market in Kirkcaldy without the Council snapping them up to convert, extend or demolish them!

- *Site at Whytescauseway* - is where Montague's now stands. For many years Burton's the tailor occupied this site.

For a way to ease into this story, we will start with the *Fife Free Press* of the 15<sup>th</sup> December 1934 and their headline **Municipal Building Scheme Proposed:-**

"The suggestion that Kirkcaldy should have new and centralised municipal buildings was made at a meeting of Kirkcaldy Town Council on Monday evening by Bailie Westwood.

"Bailie Westwood moved that it be remitted to the Provost's Committee to consider and report on the provision of new municipal buildings to effect centralisation of the town's administrative work; included in such remit consideration of the Whytescauseway site, the present Town Hall and buildings, and such other municipal properties as would be redundant when new municipal buildings were erected, the proceeds of such sales to be definitely set aside for the capital expenditure incurred in the erection of the new municipal buildings.

"I think it will be admitted by everyone that we have a long way to go before we can claim that Kirkcaldy is a modern town as far as its municipal buildings are concerned" he said. "We have no organisation of the housing of our staff. The Town Clerk is in Tolbooth Street, the Water Office is in the High Street, the police are in a different part of the town, as is the Burgh Chamberlain and the Medical Officer.

"The time has arrived in the interests of efficiency and economy – for there would be an economy in your staff – for the consideration for the providing of new municipal offices.



"One of the arguments used against the scheme was the capital expense involved, proceeded Councillor Westwood, but his motion tried to meet that. First of all they had the Whytescauseway site. Many of those present had thought it wise to erect municipal shops there, under the control of the Town Council, but if the buildings were sold, the claim in his motion was that the capital realised would form the nucleus for the capital required. It might then be possible to get rid of Tylehurst, and so on, until all the town's buildings were put on the market.

"Whilst those who had preceded the Town Council had done good work there had been a great deal of sentiment attached to them in respect of the municipal buildings. Now however, there was not so much sentiment and he believed there was a desire to put Kirkcaldy on the map as far as municipal offices were concerned.

It was unanimously agreed to remit the matter to the Provost's Committee for consideration".

Saturday, the 19<sup>th</sup> of January 1935, saw a report in the *Fife Free Press* where it was reported that "The Provost's Committee had taken up the

#### NEW MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS.

The Provost's Committee have taken up the Council's remit to consider Bailie Westwood's motion regarding the provision of new municipal buildings, and the following sub-committee has been appointed to go fully into the whole question of centralising the town's administrative staffs and report:—Provost Wilson, Bailie Westwood, Treasurer Young and Councillor Wright.

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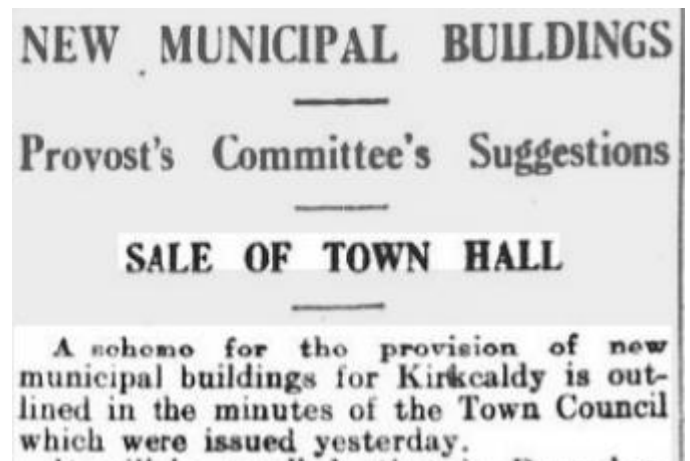
centralising the town's administrative staffs and reports. The committee consisted of Provost Wilson, Bailie Westwood, Treasurer Young and Councillor Wright”.

The same newspaper had a further report carried in its edition of the 11<sup>th</sup> May 1935 indicating that;-  
“The motion had been considered by the Provost's

Committee who have recommended that the Town Hall, including the Town Clerk's office and the adjoining property at present occupied by the Water Department, be exposed to public roup, at the upset price of £15,000,

on condition that the clock remain the property of the Town Council, and be left in the tower as long as the tower stands, and be removed by the Town Council as and when the tower is demolished.

“The Committee considered that temporary accommodation for the Town Clerk, Water Engineer and Town Officer, may be found in Stanley Park. If necessary Council meetings could be held in the old Beveridge Library or the Beveridge Hall.





On the suggestion of Provost Wilson it was further resolved to recommend that the property at the corner of Whytescauseway and High Street,

including the site of the lavatory, be exposed to public roup at the upset price of £10,000. A portion of the site however is to be retained for the widening of Whytescauseway and High Street". (This site will form part of a future Object on the High Street and therefore little need be said here. What is very noticeable, however, is how the *Burton building* does sit much further back than its neighbour *Cosmic Phones* as a direct result of this road widening).

The die was cast – in the few short months from the first mention of the project, there in the Fife Free Press of Saturday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 1935, was the advertisement for the sale of 'Valuable Properties by the Corporation of Kirkcaldy'. The sale was scheduled to take place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the following month at 3.00pm within the confines of the Town Hall itself. Full particulars could be obtained

CORPORATION OF KIRKCALDY.  
VALUABLE BUILDING SITES FOR SALE.

**T**HE following Properties, which are situated in the most valuable Shopping Centre in Kirkcaldy, will be exposed to Public Roup within the Town Hall, Kirkcaldy, on TUESDAY, 2nd JULY, 1935, at 3 o'clock afternoon.—

1. THE TOWN HALL with OFFICES, Etc., behind (part of which forms part of the Common Good of the Burgh).  
The site extends to approximately 1123 square yards and has a frontage to High Street of approximately 50 feet and a frontage to Tolbooth Street of approximately 85 feet.  
UPSET PRICE, £15,000.
2. HIGH STREET - WHYTESCAUSEWAY CORNER.  
The site extends to approximately 479 square yards and has a frontage to High Street of approximately 66 feet, a frontage to Whytescauseway of approximately 57 feet, and a frontage to Hill Street of approximately 63 feet.  
UPSET PRICE, £10,000.

Entry to both subjects will be given on 23th November next.  
Further particulars may be obtained from the Undersigned, who holds the Titles and Articles of Roup.  
**WILLIAM HUTTON,**  
Town Clerk.  
Kirkcaldy, 1st June, 1935.

from William Hutton, the Town Clerk. A copy of the advertisement is shown here indicating the date of entry for both properties will be the 28<sup>th</sup> November. The fascinating part of the advert is that it states that "*part of which forms part of the Common Good of the Burgh*". This would suggest that part of the sale monies will not be able to be directed to the proposed new build, but rather to the Common Good Fund.

"Monday, the 8<sup>th</sup> July 1935, brought sobering news when the *Dundee Courier* reported in a headline '**Upset Price Reduced**' that another effort was to be made to sell the Town House and the corner site on Whytescauseway. "Last week the properties were put up for sale at a public roup at an upset price of £15,000 for the Town House and £10,000 in the case of the Whytescauseway property. No offers were received.

The Provost's Committee of Kirkcaldy Town Council has reviewed the position and has agreed to re-offer the properties for sale at the amended upset price of £13,500 for the Town House and £8,000 for the Whytescauseway property".



An advert for the revised sale was traced and is shown here. Once again contained within the notice is the phrase "*part of which forms part of the Common Good of the Burgh*". It will certainly be interesting to learn what happens

to the proceeds (or part of them) as and when the sale takes place.

Saturday, the 10<sup>th</sup> August 1935, saw the *Fife Free Press* report that a sale had been accomplished. The headline was "**Town House Sold**" with a strap line of "Purchase Price £13,500".

The article ran:- "Kirkcaldy can no longer boast a Town Hall. On Tuesday, the well-known property was exposed for sale by public roup by Mr John Rough, Jnr., Auctioneer, and was purchased at the upset price of £13,500. The purchasers are a London firm of Solicitors, Messrs Healy & Baker, who acted for clients in conjunction with Charles Wood & Son, Solicitors, Kirkcaldy. They were the only bidders and in a few moments the sale was effected.

## TOWN HALL SOLD

Purchased for £13,500

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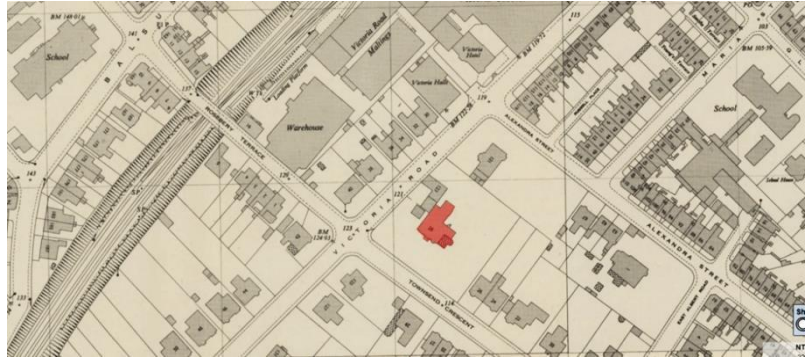
It will be recalled that the upset price was reduced to £13,500 from £15,000 after the buildings were originally exposed for sale early in July.

"It will be recalled that the upset price was reduced to £13,500 from £15,000 after the buildings were originally exposed for sale in July.

"The sale of the buildings, which comprises the Council Chamber, Town Clerk's offices, Water Engineer's Offices and dwelling house of Mr John Hutchison\*, Town's Officer, marks the first step in a policy of centralisation of municipal offices. New municipal offices are to be erected, but it is doubtful



if this can be accomplished for several years and the present arrangement is that, with the completion of the new maternity home at



Forth Park, the building presently used for this purpose at Stanley Park will be available for the temporary accommodation of the displaced officials and their staffs.

“Since the sale provides for occupation in November, it is anticipated that Town Council meetings will be held in the Beveridge Hall or the Beveridge library.

A condition of the sale\* was that the town clock should be allowed to remain in the steeple as long as the steeple stood but that, should this part of the building be demolished, the clock should be removed by the corporation.

The Town Hall was erected in 1832 at a cost of between £4,000 and £5,000”.

- Poor John Hutchison, the Town Officer, not only was his home seemingly going to disappear but, on the 14<sup>th</sup> June, at the junction of Bell Inn Wynd and the High Street, a car had mounted the pavement and pinned him to a wall! The driver was fined 20/-.
- Observation - “as long as the steeple stood” turned out to be not very long! Question –just where is the Town Clock?

Interestingly, a few days earlier the *Dundee Courier* of the 7<sup>th</sup> August had carried almost the same report but with some further detail at the end:-

"*Town Steeple* – Although it does not refer to the present steeple at the Town House, there is an item in the burgh records which indicates that the stone from the old town cross was used in 1782 to erect the town steeple.

"Immediately to the rear of the present premises is the site of the old Tolbooth. The Town Clerk's offices, which are included in the property sold, are actually on the site of the one-time prison vaults and jailer's house.

"About three years ago the Council had the premises converted into offices for the Town Clerk and his staff. Apartments on the second floor are used as offices for the Sanitary Inspector and his staff.

"The part of the building on the ground floor facing the High Street is used by the Water Engineer and staff.

"On the first floor are the Council Chambers, Magistrates room and a committee room. The Town Officer is accommodated in a dwelling house on the second floor".

The earlier advert had disclosed that the total area of the premises was 1,123 square yards with the street frontage measuring 50 feet and the Tolbooth Street frontage at 85 feet. Entry was set for the 28<sup>th</sup>

#### TOWN HOUSE SALE.

##### TO THE EDITOR.

Sir,—With reference to the reported sale of the Kirkcaldy Town House, can you, or any of your readers, inform me if this property forms part of the Common Good of the Royal Burgh of Kirkcaldy.

If it be part of the Common Good, then I apprehend that the Town Council have no right to sell, as the property is inalienable and is held by the Corporation only as trustees for behoof of the inhabitants.—Yours, etc.,

ENQUIRER.

November 1935.

It was the pure chance of stumbling on a letter to the *Fife Free Press*, published on the 19<sup>th</sup> August 1935, which prompted the team to research this particular Object at this point in time. It was just too intriguing to resist!

"Sir,-

With reference to the reported sale of the Kirkcaldy Town House, can you, or any of your readers, inform me if this property forms any part of the Common Good of the Royal Burgh of Kirkcaldy?

If it be part of the Common Good, then I apprehend that the Town Council have no right to sell, as the property is inalienable and is held by the Corporation only as trustees on behoof of the inhabitants".

Yours etc.,  
Enquirer

The enquiry by the anonymous writer elicited no immediate response from the Council or the readership but certainly focussed the team's minds on ascertaining why the Town House was for sale or sold – and so this narrative was born!

The month of September 1935 saw the *Fife Free Press* report that on the 14<sup>th</sup> a motion had been passed where "A small committee be formed with power to visit other large towns and investigate their arrangements for municipal buildings and report. Power was also granted to ascertain the available

sites for such buildings in Kirkcaldy and to consider and advise as to a scheme for the centralisation and re-organisation of all existing departments”.

**KIRKCALDY TO PAY UP DEBTS**  
WITH PROCEEDS FROM SALE OF TOWN HOUSE.  
The proceeds of the sale of Kirkcaldy Town House and the Whytescauseway property are to be used by Kirkcaldy Town Council to liquidate debts of many years' standing.  
The following proposals of the town chamberlain have been accepted by the Finance Committee:—  
**Whytescauseway Property** (sale price, £8000)—In liquidating outstanding debt on property itself, £5213; liquidating certain other balances of roads debts, £1787; liquidating £1000 of the debt of £2328 outstanding on cleansing freighters, £1000—a total of £8000.  
**Town Hall and Adjoining Properties** (purchase price, £13,500)—Liquidating the outstanding debt on town clerk's office, £1096; outstanding debt on the portion of property belonging to the Water Department, £542; balance to common good, £11,862—total, £13,500.

Returning to the earlier letter, further research indicated that 'Enquirer' apparently need not have worried – or perhaps his letter had altered the plans for the disbursement of the proceeds. The *Dundee Courier* of the 14<sup>th</sup> October 1935 produced a headline “**Kirkcaldy to Pay off Debts**”:-

“The proceeds of Kirkcaldy Town House and the Whytescauseway property are to be used by Kirkcaldy Town Council to liquidate debts of many year's standing. The following proposals of the Town Chamberlain have been accepted by the Finance Committee:-**Whytescauseway Property** (sale Price £8,000) In liquidating outstanding debt on the property itself £5,213; liquidating certain other balances of road's debts £1,787; liquidating £1,000 of the debt of £2,328 outstanding on cleansing freighters – Total £8,000.

**Town Hall and Adjoining Properties** (Purchase Price £13,500) – Liquidating the outstanding debt on Town Clerk's office £1,096; outstanding debt on the portion of property belonging to the Water Department £542; balance to Common Good Fund £11,862\* – total £13,500”. This then was the proposal and hopefully we will find confirmation that

it was the route followed when the sale proceeds came to hand.

The previous month, on the 7<sup>th</sup> September, the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* featured two interesting points - with the second apparently being a poorly kept secret.

The first re-affirmed Kirkcaldy Town Council's support of a new Forth Road Bridge at Mackintosh Rock. The anticipated cost was £3,250,000. The report suggests that Lord Elgin had an alternative site, but no mention was made of where it was located.

Secondly, Councillor Grieve had drawn the Council's attention to the fact there was a great deal of uncertainty about who had purchased the two properties recently sold. The Town Clerk had indicated that he had been told not to disclose the names of the purchasers but, after some further verbal sparring, "the Town Clerk revealed that Messrs. Marks and Spencers were purchasers of the Town House and Messrs. Montague Burton for the Whytescauseway corner".

Tradition was such in Kirkcaldy that outside the Town Hall was a favourite meeting place for public events such as the declaration of election results and even pronouncements/proclamations such as the Relief of Mafeking. Huge crowds also gathered to celebrate the New Year – chimed in by the town clock. As the *Fife Free Press* wrote in its review of 1935:-



"Hogmanay 1934; the tolling of midnight; the ushering in of the New Year in the raw darkness; the cheerful crowd at the Town House – they didn't know then that there wouldn't be a Town House before another year had sped by – then the breaking up into groups who departed arm-in-arm to first foot; the cheerful parties marching up to the front doors; the whizz of motor cars whose occupants are bent on the same purpose; then silence broken occasionally by the none-too-melodious song of a belated reveller".

With the sale of the building, the last public gathering took place on Friday, the 15<sup>th</sup> November 1935.

This auspicious occasion was the declaration of the result of the fight for the Parliamentary seat at the General Election where Tom Kennedy



recovered his seat from Arthur Russell. Russell had been the victor in 1932 but this time round Kennedy secured 19,457 votes beating Russell by a margin of 4,371. *The Fife Free Press* photograph of the last declaration to be made from the old Town House is reproduced here. In those far off days, although the election was held on the 15th, the result was not declared until the following morning.

Although the Town Hall had been opened in 1832 it was not until the 27<sup>th</sup> January 1841 that there was an election result to declare! The three previous contests had seen only one candidate contest the seat resulting in a hat trick of unopposed elections. Eventually, January 1841 saw a by-election with Robert Ferguson the victor over John Bowring by 219 votes to 131. The electorate at the time was only 657.

The Town House had seen many prominent local figures hold the office of Provost and these included:-

1828 George Malcolm

1830 William Swan

1832 George Malcolm

1835 David Landale (He of duel fame).

1836 George Anderson

1837 Alexander Ferrier

1839 George Anderson

1841 Patrick Don Swan

1845 Samuel Davidson

1847 Thomas Russell

1850 Edward Sang

1853 Henry Beveridge

1859 James Birrell

1860 Patrick Don Swan

1886 Michael Beveridge

1890 Thomas Black

1892 John Tait

1893 John T. Stocks

1896 Alexander Hutchison  
1902 John Tait  
1903 Henry M. Barnett  
1906 Ronald C. M. Ferguson  
1914 Sir Robert C. Lockhart  
1919 Alexander Kilgour  
1934 James Wilson



Patrick Don Swan strode the municipal stage, being re-elected in 1843, 1845 and 1860. His unbroken period in office from 1862 until 1885 is staggering and the *Object* covering his life and times will be a challenge to research and write, such is his legacy. Meantime we could not other than include a portrait of Patrick Don Swan. This particular portrait hung in the Council Chambers from 1874 and is now in

the possession of Fife Cultural Trust.

Provosts after the move from the 1832 offices until the full opening of the present building were:-

1946 James Young  
1954 David Wright

The *Dundee Evening Telegraph* of the 28<sup>th</sup> November 1935 made mention that this was the last day of the Council's possession of their Town Hall which had hosted the Council's meetings for over 100 years,

but what caught the attention was again the stressing of the fate and future of the clock:-

"The Town Clock was to remain in the town's possession, *and will be erected in the new municipal buildings*, a site for which is being searched for". *Observation* – Whatever is housed in the clock tower of the present building – it is certainly not the Town Clock as we will evidence later – so, again, where is it?

One article was insufficient for that edition of the newspaper. On another page we discover that the 28<sup>th</sup> November possession date would not be met. The Town Council had been granted an extension of one month and we learn that; "Preparations have not wholly been completed for the transferences of the staff of the Town Clerk's department and the Water Engineer's department to the old Maternity Home at Stanley Park by reason that the home itself has not been vacated.

"Forth Park Maternity Hospital\* had only opened a week earlier, but more equipment has yet to be transferred. It is expected that this transference will take place within the next fortnight and, as soon as the home is empty, the Corporation departments will be transferred.

"Meantime, the police courtroom has been made ready for the next meeting of Kirkcaldy Town Council. Minor alterations have been made to the adjoining offices.

"While these alterations to the town administration are only of a temporary nature, it is regarded as certain that no definite centralisation scheme of new municipal buildings will be completed within the next two years". \*Forth Park was a gift to Kirkcaldy by the family of the late John Nairn. John Nairn also gifted the Museum and Art gallery.

Saturday, the 14<sup>th</sup> March 1936, shows matters are moving onwards with the *Fife Free Press* indicating that on the 21<sup>st</sup> February the Provost's Committee had taken up the suggestion of new municipal buildings when "It was resolved to recommend the Council to remit, with powers, to the Municipal Buildings Sub-Committee the question of the acquisition of a site. It was agreed that Dean of Guild Simpson and Councillor Menzies be added to the Committee".

Completely separate from this subject there was a discussion around the suggestion of turning Dysart Harbour into a municipal swimming pool. With so many old houses being demolished the suggestion was that the rubble could be used as bottoming. At

this stage the harbour had been closed for some years. Some time later the idea of placing a gasometer in the harbour was considered but also rejected!

On Saturday, the 4<sup>th</sup> April, the same newspaper gave the first hint

**WEMYSS PARK UNSOLD**

**No Offer for Mansion**

A Kirkcaldy mansion, Wemyss Park, was on Monday exposed for sale in the offices of Messrs Dow & Son, solicitors, Kirkcaldy. The house contains three public rooms, hall, cloakroom, six bedrooms, dressingroom, two bathrooms, three maids' rooms, maids' bathroom, servants' hall, kitchen, laundry, wash-house, pantries, etc.

The house stands in approximately two and a quarter acres, and has a chauffeur's house and extensive garages and stables. Wemyss Park occupies a prominent corner site, and has frontages to Wemyssfield, Whytescausway, Hunter Street, with an entrance from Balfour Place.

Mr David Simpson, auctioneer, Kirkcaldy, conducted the proceedings. He stated that the total assessed rental was £153, and that the upset price was £7000.



of a potential site when reporting that there had been no bidders for the mansion house of Wemyss Park but that:-

"The only persons present at the sale were members and officials of Kirkcaldy Town Council but no offers were made and the sale was accordingly adjourned.

"The Town Council, however, are at present considering a scheme for the establishment of new municipal buildings and it is considered probable that definite negotiations will be entered into for the acquisition of the property later".



The following Saturday's edition of the local paper had a potentially disquieting headline:- "**Sale of Town Hall** – Council May Consider Legal Proceedings". The report then went into detail and some of the content was; "For many weeks rumours have gained currency in Kirkcaldy

regarding what was believed to be a hitch in the transactions following the sale of the Town Hall. In November the Council gave up their occupation and since then nothing has happened in the way of renovation or alteration by the purchasers. Yesterday, however, some light was thrown on the situation, when the minutes of the Town Council, which will come before the monthly meeting on

Monday evening, were issued.

"In these, the Provost's Committee are recommending that, in view of the fact that the purchasers of the Town Hall have not yet completed the transaction, the Town Clerk be instructed to write to their Solicitors informing them that, if settlement is not made within 28 days, the Council will consider instituting an action of implement".

Interestingly, the same article carried another point of interest to the story in that;

"Meanwhile, steps are being taken towards acquiring new municipal buildings. A preliminary report by the Town Clerk and the Burgh Chamberlain on the various departments, etc., as to what provisions require to be made was underway.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> April 1936, the *Fife Free Press* was able to report that a deputation from the Council had visited both Dundee and Perth to be shown over their municipal headquarters. "The deputation consisted of Provost Wilson, Treasurer Young, Dean of Guild Simpson, Bailie Westwood, M.P.; Councillors Wright and Dall, Mr Hutton (Town Clerk), Mr Maxwell (Town Chamberlain), Mr Duffus (Burgh Surveyor) and Chief Constable Baldie".

A major part of the jigsaw fell into place when the *Fife Free Press* of the 25<sup>th</sup> April



**WEMYSS PARK SOLD**

**Acquired by Town Council**

It was announced on Wednesday that Kirkcaldy Town Council had purchased privately Wemyss Park, the large mansion house situated in extensive grounds opposite Kirkcaldy Post Office.

The house, which was the property of the late Mrs Methven, has twice been exposed for sale by public roup, but no offers were forthcoming.

The price paid by the Corporation is £6,000.

1936 advised readers that *Wemyss Park*, situated in Wemyssfield, had been purchased by the Town Council. 'Adelaide House' has featured in the past, especially in relation to the Elder family who had built and lived in this substantial house. When Mrs Elder passed away the house was bought by Mrs Methven of pottery fame and re-named *Wemyss Park*.

Mrs Methven was the widow of John Methven who had died in April 1892. Along with his partner, A.R.Young, they had been partners in the business of David Methven & Sons, Links Potteries, since 1872. The pottery closed in 1929, but had been sold to a private buyer some weeks previously. The Council had shown an interest but were outbid. It would seem likely that this site became the Raith Cinema and subsequently the iconic Raith Ballroom.

The house had twice been offered for sale, initially at £7,000, but found no takers. The Corporation paid £6,000 to acquire the property, as their previous offer of £5,000 had been rejected. "With the acquisition of the mansion the Town Council will now be able to proceed with their scheme for the centralisation of municipal offices which at present are scattered throughout various parts of the town".

The *Fife Free Press* of the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1936 appeared to announce the end of the saga previously mentioned under the headline **Delay in Completion to be ended :-**

"The Disposition *for Sale in regard to Kirkcaldy's Town House* will be executed before the next meeting of the Town Council. This will be in the nature of a happy ending to a matter which has been the subject of a great deal of adverse rumour during the past few months.



"The Town House was sold at a public roup in October last year and the Town Council gave up tenancy in November but no action was taken by the purchasers to put the final seal on the deal, as they evidently had some doubts about the terms of a part of the Title Deeds.

"It will be recalled at the March meeting of the Town Council that the Town Clerk reported that there was undue delay in completing the bargain and the Council decided to authorise him to write to the purchasers, stating that unless the matter was concluded within 21 days the Council would take proceedings.

"The Town Clerk has now disclosed that the purchasers have intimated their willingness to execute the Disposition of Sale".

Saturday, the 13<sup>th</sup> June, saw the same newspaper reveal that progress was indeed being made with a

#### MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS.

The Council approved a recommendation of the Provost's Committee to authorise the Committee to engage the services of a suitable party to advise the Council in connection with the new municipal buildings and the development of Wemyss Park, and to act as an assessor and otherwise.

report that:- "The Town Council approved a recommendation of the Provost's Committee to authorise the Committee to engage the services of a person to advise the Council in the new municipal buildings and the development of Wemyss Park and to act as an assessor and otherwise". Matters moved on quickly and soon an update was available.



Saturday, September the 12<sup>th</sup> 1936, saw *The Fife Free Press* report that :- "The Provost's Committee of Kirkcaldy Town Council had agreed to appoint Thomas S. Tait. F.R.I.B.A., of Sir John Burnet, Tait & Lorne of London to advise them in relation to the erection of the new municipal buildings on the

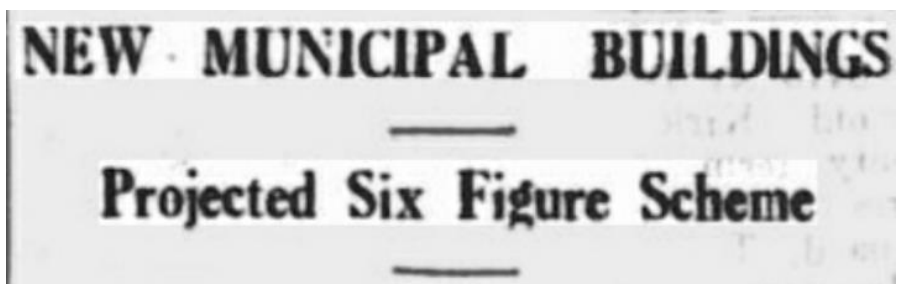
site of Wemyss Park. For this work, Mr Tait is to be paid 500 guineas, plus travelling expenses from Edinburgh, the fee to include his acting as assessor in any proposed architectural competition and advising generally up to the completion of the new buildings". Mr Tait had apparently visited Kirkcaldy on the 14<sup>th</sup> July and been shown over the site by Provost Wilson and Mr Hutton, the Town Clerk. The article mentioned that a report would be submitted in due course.

"Mr Tait is at present engaged on the erection of the new "Scottish Whitehall" buildings on the Calton Hill,

Edinburgh, to which position he was appointed by the Government."

The same newspaper provided an update in its 17<sup>th</sup> October edition. It is important to stress that seemingly the article was not written as a result of a formal announcement by the Council, or taken from the Minutes. Instead it would appear to be the first sparks of a flame that burst into life in the December. The newspaper admitted that the article was written from information they had received - "On good authority". This suggests that a leak/s of confidential information was finding its way into the newspaper's hands.

"However, the headline, in terms of amount, certainly lit the blue touch paper -



**Projected Six Figure Sum;-** "We learn on good authority that a report on the proposed new municipal buildings to be erected on the Wemyss Park site has now been furnished by Mr Thomas S. Tait F.R.I.B.A., who was recently appointed at a fee of five hundred guineas to advise the Council in this respect.

"Mr Tait, it is understood, has provided a comprehensive report in which he discusses, in particular, the layout of the grounds and includes in his suggestion the demolition of Tylehurst.



"He estimates the probable cost of the municipal buildings at £123,000, adding £6,000 for the layout of the grounds and a service road and a probable cost of £2,000 for special finishings for the Council Chambers, at a total of £131,000.

"If, however, Tylehurst is allowed to remain, this sum would be reduced by £15,000 to £116,000.

"The question of the municipal buildings was remitted some time ago to the Provost's Committee who will bring forward a report in due course". This certainly seems a staggering sum and surely it will be challenged.

The team are divided on the question of the effect Tait had on the design and particularly the cost of the new building. It can certainly be argued that given his reputation and body of work it was very unlikely that a modest design/cost would be the order of the day. Among other works he had designed St. Andrew's House in Edinburgh, the Daily Telegraph Building in London, The Great Western Railway War Memorial in Paddington Station, Tait's Tower which was the central focus of the 1938 Empire Exhibition in Bellahouston Park; and even the pylons of Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Of course it can be argued that he could and did carry out more modest designs but somehow the idea that Kirkcaldy's councillors could hold their 'architectural own' with this 'design giant' is difficult to accept.

There can be little doubt that the question of expenditure of circa £130,000 on the new municipal headquarters was high on the voter's minds in the run up to the October 1936 Council Elections. It also seemed to be exercising the minds of many of the candidates. *The Fife Free Press* of the 24<sup>th</sup> October 1936 covered amongst other hustings, one in the Third Ward where Mr Napier, who had previously been a member of the Council for 12 years, made various comments including:-

- "It is evident that it is time that something is done, because matters are obviously soaring too much in the wrong direction at the present time. There is a campaign of lavish and reckless expenditure which must be stopped".
- "The upshot of the whole thing is that the Council are left without a meeting place. It seems to me to have been nothing less than an act of gross madness. Had I been a member of the Town Council I would certainly have raised my voice strongly against it and I am surprised that no member of the Council opposed the proposal that the Town Hall be disposed of, thus putting the Council in the ridiculous position that they have no room in which to be housed and are obliged to go to the police for shelter. There is no doubt that it is a safe place for them to be meeting in but, at the same time, it is not the most desirable".
- He also added that "the procedure adopted by

the Town Council in disposing of the old building first was, to his mind, putting the cart before the horse”.

- Mr Napier also had an opinion on Tylehurst which he understood had cost the Council somewhere in the region of £5,000. He further understood that a large sum had been spent on converting it into offices and he believed that not much less than £10,000 had been spent in total. “Yet it was now proposed that this large sum should be thrown into the sea. No wonder the ratepayers were groaning under the heavy burden of taxation”.
- John Anderson made another telling point that:- “He had the feeling himself, whether it was right or wrong, that instead of disposing of their old Town Hall the Town Council should have acquired The George Hotel next door when that came into the market some years ago. If that had been done he felt that they could have had all their offices under one roof without any question of spending £130,000 on the job”.
- Ex-Bailie Roberts also weighed in with his thoughts:- “What had been said about the Town House and the George Hotel was quite right, and that the George Hotel could have been got for £3,000 or £4,000, but when he brought it forward at the Town Council they laughed at it and said it was no use. They had sold the Town Hall and were now in the Police buildings .About

six years ago, continued Ex-Bailie Roberts, they were a bit cramped for room for their officials in the municipal buildings and as a result they agreed to purchase Tylehurst. Tylehurst was bought and the three main officials dealing with the town's finances – the Town Chamberlain, the Burgh Surveyor and the Factor – were provided offices there. This was a scheme that was supposed to last for twenty years and yet at the end of only four years they are coming forward with an altered scheme which is to cost £130,000. It is nothing short of a scandal”.

The following week's edition (31<sup>st</sup> October) of the same newspaper showed Councillor Dall (who had been a member of the deputation mentioned earlier) having to try and defend the Council's plans with:-

“Criticism was being raised as to expenditure on what is known as the new municipal buildings. The figure had been mentioned at £130,000. That was

#### NEW MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS.

Criticisms were being raised as to expenditure likely to be incurred in connection with what was known as new municipal buildings. The figure had been mentioned at £130,000. That was an exaggeration, said Mr Dall. The architect's figure was somewhere in the region of £123,000. That was not for municipal buildings alone. It included expenditure in making improvements in the centre of Kirkcaldy, extending from the Station to the Esplanade. It was out of that municipal buildings were being planned, and when that was carried through Kirkcaldy would be the possessor of a beautiful city centre, a credit to the town and something that would remain there for two hundred years. Kirkcaldy was moving towards a state of efficiency in administration that might well become a model for other towns similar in size.

an exaggeration said Mr Dall. The architect's figure was somewhere in the region of £123,000. That was not for municipal buildings alone. It included making improvements in the centre of Kirkcaldy extending from the Station to the Esplanade. It was out of that that municipal buildings were being planned and when that was carried through Kirkcaldy would be the possessor

of a beautiful city centre, a credit to the town and something that would last for two hundred years. Kirkcaldy was moving towards a state of efficiency in administration that might well become a model for other towns of a similar size”.

There can be little doubt that it appeared as if the methodology had not been well thought out and the lure of a new building seems to have launched a vanity and legacy project for the Councillors.

Another report in the same edition, in relation to a Second Ward hustings, found Dean of Guild Simpson in a defensive mood when the questions were flying:-

“No decision had been arrived at by the Provost's Committee in regard to the new municipal buildings and nothing would be done until the report was considered. He thought the matter should have been kept private until that had been done. The fact was that they had had trouble with architectural problems in the past and they were advised to ask Mr Tait to give them his ideas regarding the site and how best he could lay out the ground there and the immediate district. Mr Tait was asked to draw up conditions for an architectural competition and to act as adjudicator and assessor of competing plans and they were to have the benefit of his advice until the work was finished. Mr Tait had given them an elaborate set of plans suitable for the finished buildings and a survey of that part of the town from the Station to the Esplanade.

“Bear in mind this said the Dean. These are only put

by way of suggestion and, while £130,000 is the first cost, we hope to get in the competition a set of plans costing much less and I may say that Mr Tait is at the top of the tree in regard to architectural work and as an architect he gets the best every time. In his plan there is a great deal of new ideas and experimental work which has to go onto the cost of the building so I think that in getting competitive plans we will get plans much cheaper than Mr Tait's probable plans will cost”.

But the Fife Free Press was in no mood for excuses with two further stentorian outpourings when leaders were written on the 28<sup>th</sup> November which reflected on the recent local elections:-

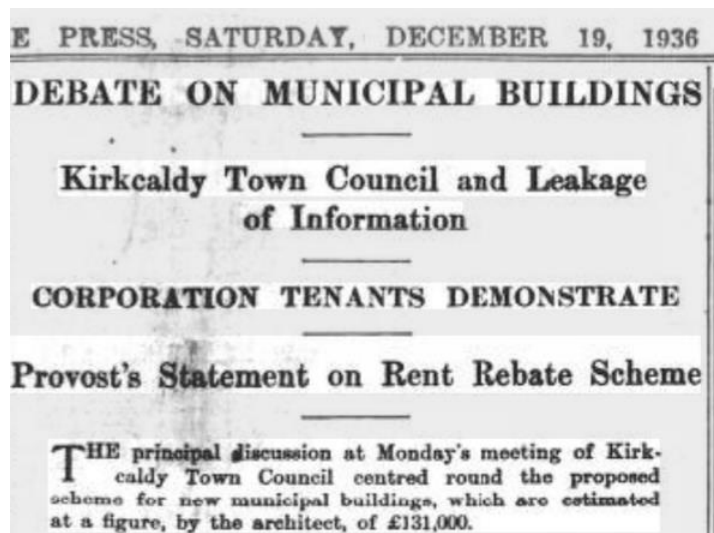
- 1.“The recent election showed that there was strong public feeling against the expenditure of £130,000 on the provision of new municipal buildings, yet little more than a fortnight later a decision was reached by the Provost's Committee recommending that the architect's report concerning this scheme be circulated to members of the Council with a view to having it remitted to the Provost's Committee to proceed with the scheme, even if in a modified way”.

**I**F there be any responsible persons in the community who questioned the advisability of setting up Rate-payers' Associations in the various Wards of the Burgh, the next meeting of Kirkcaldy Town Council should provide sufficient evidence to convince them that such a step on the part of those who are called upon to foot the municipal bills was not only wise but absolutely necessary. The recent election showed that there was strong public feeling against the proposed expenditure of £130,000 on the provision of new municipal buildings, yet



2. "Taking the whole financial position of the Burgh into consideration it is essential that no large public expenditure should be entered into until it has been proved to be necessary and desirable. In fairness to all concerned, we suggest that, in the matter of new municipal buildings, no such expenditure as £130,000, or anything approaching that sum, should be decided upon without taking a plebiscite of the ratepayers".

One of the most important Council meetings in relation to the proposed new municipal buildings



took place on Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> December 1936, with several hundred protesters creating a febrile atmosphere outside. It was extensively reported in the *Fife Free Press* on the following Saturday.

Having read the full article several times it seems impossible that the eventual outcome could have come to pass. Was some braking going to be applied or was the Council about to commit to eye-watering expenditure on an important, necessary, but which could be considered possibly also a vanity project?

It also provides the opportunity to quote Winston Churchill when he said, "The further back you can look, the further forward you are likely to see". There is currently a major undertaking in Kirkcaldy

which seemingly only the Councillors appear to see any merit in, despite eye watering costs.

Returning to the 14<sup>th</sup> December meeting the *Fife Free Press* very succinctly summed up the eventual outcome prior to launching into the detailed report.

"The principal discussion at Monday's meeting of Kirkcaldy Town Council centred around the proposed scheme for new municipal buildings which are estimated at a figure, by the architects, of £131,000.

A motion was submitted by Bailie Collyer asking that the matter be delayed pending the result in the Court of Session, in regard to the sale of the Town Hall. However, the recommendation of the Provost's Committee, that the Town Council agree in principle to the suggested scheme, was carried by an overwhelming majority. Other important questions dealt with included the decision not to enquire further into the project of a municipal swimming pool or baths". (every penny needed for the new Town House?)

The motion put before the Council was worded, "After full consideration the Committee, on the motion of Provost Wilson, seconded by Bailie Westwood; resolved to recommend the Council to agree in principle to Mr Tait's proposals and to remit back to the Committee to meet Mr Tait to discuss with him the details of the scheme and thereafter report".

Bailie Collyer immediately indicated he wished to move disapproval of the recommendation. His was a lengthy plea and here we can cover only some of the content:-

"When this matter was up before the Committee I submitted a motion that, pending the result of the Action of Implement, raised by the Town Council in the Court of Session against Marks and Spencers, pending that result being known, we take no further steps meantime in proceeding with the scheme as submitted by Mr Tait. It was, if I may say so, a reasonable and sensible motion, but, unfortunately, I got no seconder, and so it was not printed in the minutes.

"During the recent municipal election the question of the municipal buildings loomed largely in front of both ratepayers and the candidates, and I am not saying anything in an exaggerated manner when I say that probably nothing before the Town Council of Kirkcaldy and the public for many years has caused so much astonishment as this suggested scheme and particularly the cost of it as outlined by the architect who submitted it.

"But I do not think anything will be lost by delaying until we know the result of this action because, if this action goes against the town, we will still have the old Town House on our hands.

"I do consider that this scheme, as submitted by this firm in London who are being paid 500 guineas, is a most extravagant and fantastic one and one outside the needs of Kirkcaldy at the present time or in the

future. The plans would do honour to a very large city, even perhaps London.

I repeat the motion – that the Town Council delay taking any action with the scheme outlined until we know the result of the negotiations for the settlement of the question of the Town Hall which at present is in the Court of Session.

I would remind you that Marks and Spencer offered to pay the sum of £13,500, not one penny of which has been paid to us, nor yet the interest we are charging, and yet it is thirteen months since the sale went through”.

Bailie Collyer, a director and future chairman of Barnet and Morton, then launched into supporting a potential alternative site for the Town House which the Council already owned:-

“When I was convenor of the Fire Brigade, I carried out with ex-Firemaster Pordage of Edinburgh, an

examination of the various sites in the town. We looked at the site between the Police Buildings and St Brycedale, and Mr Pordage told us that,

“When I was convenor of the Fire Brigade,” proceeded Bailie Collyer, “I carried out with ex-Firemaster Pordage, of Edinburgh, an examination of the various sites in the town. We looked at the site between the Police Buildings and St Brycedale, and Mr Pordage told us that, in his opinion, it was the ideal site for the new fire station. We were, however, told that that site was ear-marked for municipal buildings.”

in his opinion, it was the ideal position for the new fire station. We were, however, told that the site was earmarked for municipal buildings”.

Bailie Collyer also gave the costs associated with the purchase of Tylehurst and Wemyss Park and the works which had been carried out to them. He then added in the alterations to the Town Clerk's offices

and stated that circa £12,000 had already been spent with another £130,000 looming large.

This time the motion found a seconder in Councillor Carmichael.

Provost Wilson then moved adoption of the Committee's recommendation.

"There was no doubt whatsoever he said that they were all in agreement that Kirkcaldy must have municipal buildings. "The fact that they were in the Court of Session with an action did not weigh with him at all for the reason that it was in the lap of the gods whether they won or lost. But, even supposing they lost, they could not go back to the former chambers. They were quite unsuitable and inadequate from every point of view. As to increasing rates, the minute recommended that they discuss details and thereafter report.

"The next part of the Provost's remarks was drowned by the noise created by the protestors outside. When the Provost was again audible he was heard to be saying that, as far as the

The next part of the Provost's remarks was drowned by the noise created by the demonstrators outside, and when the Provost was again audible, he was heard to be saying that as far as the expenditure of the £12,000 was concerned, to his mind, that was washed out by the price the Council had got for the High Street property. That meant that they were starting

expenditure of the £12,000 was concerned, to his mind that was wiped out by the price the Council had got for the High

Street property. That meant that they were starting with a *considerable sum of money*\*. The question of a Town Hall had been going on for years and years".

"At this point there was further uproar from outside

and the Provost was understood to say that Kirkcaldy must advance and that the new municipal buildings would be a centre for the town. It will make the ground round about more valuable and I have no hesitation in giving the scheme my full enthusiastic support”.

“Councillor Westwood said that, as seconder of the Provost's motion inside the Committee, he had very much pleasure in seconding it now”.

**Question** - This “**considerable sum of money**” had been allocated to the Common Good Fund– how can it possibly now appear to have another use?

That was the manner in which the motion was carried – despite issues with the sale of the Town House, a potential spend of £130,000, which Treasure Young claimed would only add *something like 2d to the rates*. All this against a backdrop of anxiety from the ratepayers, a noisy protest and the admission that indeed the area of land adjacent to the Police Station had indeed been earmarked for the municipal buildings. This was neatly sidestepped with “but never since 1932 has any member of this Council ever said that the site was either suitable or big enough for carrying through a scheme with credit of centralising the municipal staff”.

The motion was carried by 25 votes to 2 with only Collyer and Carmichael opposing the motion.

Much of the evening was also taken up by the suggestion that important matters from Council



meetings were being disclosed to the *Fife Free Press* and there were strong feelings about some of the articles appearing in the newspaper, but most of the ire was

"Reference was made," he said, "to a leader which appeared in one of the local newspapers, the "*Fife Free Press*," a fortnight ago. That leader, I think, can only have been written by one of the most dastardly actions which seems to be typical so far as certain unknown individuals in the Town Council are concerned. I can't name them; I don't know them. It is perfectly clear we can't discuss anything in private now. It is also perfectly clear we cannot wait until the Town Council.

saved for whoever was revealing information to the Press:-

"That leader, I think, could only have been written by one of the most dastardly actions which seems to be typical so far as certain unknown individuals in the Town Council are concerned. It is perfectly clear that we can discuss nothing in private now".

It would seem that the Press did not always have access to Sub-Committee meetings and should have had to await publication of the minutes. Clearly however, the *Fife Free Press* were receiving early reports on the proceedings/decisions from someone!

Several Councillors were also taking solace from the fact that they were certain that, firstly, they were committed to nothing and, secondly, plans would ultimately be secured at a far lower cost than the figure quoted. It really appeared that many were simply hypnotised by the thought of a municipal palace as the motion was carried by 25 votes for, with only 2 against, would suggest.

But the *Fife Free Press* was not letting matters rest and the first issue of 1937 found *Enquirer* back in

action. In a blistering letter to the paper he showed the calculations which he had made that suggested a spend of £130,000 would add not 2d but 9d to the rates. There can be no doubt that *Enquirer* knew what he was talking about and his argument was both cogent and coherent.

The paper, the next week, launched yet another article on the subject under "**Something Like Twopence**":- A very pertinent question with regard to the proposed new municipal buildings was raised

### "SOMETHING LIKE TWO PENCE"

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A VERY pertinent question with regard to the proposed new municipal buildings for Kirkcaldy was raised by a correspondent in last week's "Press." The question had reference to a statement by Treasurer Young at the December meeting of Kirkcaldy Town Council that "even if they went the whole hog of £131,000, it would be something like twopence on the rates over the shortest period," and our corres-

pondent, after giving calculations which he estimated would work out at "something like ninepence", asked the Treasurer how he arrived at his more modest twopence. That there is no reply so far may be due to any one of many reasons including the intervention of the New Year holidays. But the question is one of first class importance to the ratepayers and should not be allowed to be shelved".

Having had no response *Enquirer* was back in print with a further letter published on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January. He was disappointed to have had no response and his letter included:- "This is a very serious discrepancy and I think it was the Treasurer's duty to prove or withdraw his remark. The Council look to the Treasurer to be sure of his figures when discussing finance. The ratepayers also expect his figures to be trustworthy. I would again appeal to our Treasurer to prove his statement, as silence on his part can only prove he can not do so".

Saturday, the 20<sup>th</sup> February, saw what surely amounts to the Council adopting the attitude that this is going ahead come what may. The *Fife Free Press* reported that the Committee "have resolved to recommend that the Council appoint Mr Tait as architect for the new municipal buildings. The Committee arrived at this decision by 5 votes to 3, the counter motion being that an architectural competition be held with Mr Tait acting as assessor".

## MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS

### Recommended Appointment of Architect

As was reported last week, a special meeting of Kirkcaldy Town Council is to be held to deal with the question of the new municipal buildings.

The meeting, it was intimated by Provost Wilson, is to be held after all the members have inspected the plans prepared by Mr Tait.

Meanwhile, a minute of a meeting of the Provost's Committee has been circulated containing the following information:—

"The Committee, having considered the correspondence passing between Mr Tait and the secretary of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, and the Town Clerk, and having heard the report (as to costs, etc.) of the members who met Mr Tait on 20th January, 1937, resolved to recommend the Council to appoint Mr Tait architect for the new municipal buildings."

The 17<sup>th</sup> April 1937 saw the *Fife Free Press* report on a plea by some councillors to delay the "proposed architectural competition on the grounds, that owing to the rise in costs of materials, it would be better to wait until prices returned to normal or stabilised. It

was also pointed out that if, after the competition, an architect was appointed and the Town Council delayed in proceeding with the scheme, the architect would be entitled to a percentage for his work in preparing plans.

“By 18 votes to 7, it was decided to proceed with the competition and to adopt the recommendation of the Provost's Committee”.

## £100,000 LIMIT FIXED FOR MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS

Plea For Delay Fails at Council Meeting

A recommendation which was adopted was that the cost of the building was not to exceed £100,000. It was

also agreed that the winning architect had to be Scottish, or working for a Scottish firm.

The team have as yet had no success in ascertaining when it was agreed to run an architectural competition. Mr Tait, as we have seen earlier, had been appointed as architect and yet by the 17<sup>th</sup> April that was no longer the case. Perhaps the Council thought someone who produced a grandiose plan at a cost of £130,000 might have issues in trimming the cost down to nearer their expectations.

We can move away from the squabbles when we view a report in the Fife Free Press of Saturday, the 10<sup>th</sup> July 1937. The headline proclaimed that the Council was

## ENTITLED TO SELL OLD TOWN HALL

Judge's Decision in Kirkcaldy Case

Lord Jamieson in the Court of Session on Tuesday gave judgment in an action by the burgh of Kirkcaldy against Marks & Spencers, Ltd., general merchants, 8, Baker Street, London.

indeed **Entitled To Sell The Old Town Hall**. Lord Jamieson, in the Court of Session, had found in favour of Kirkcaldy Town Council against Marks and Spencers Ltd., London.

The report was very thorough on the background to the case. The reason why the firm had refused to complete the transaction was that:-"Defenders had refused to implement the contract on the grounds that it related to inter alia subjects, which being part of the old commonalty of the burgh, were inalienable and the action had been raised to ordain them to do so". (Did Marks and Spencers not read the advert?)

It transpired that Lord Jamieson believed "that if the reason for portions of the old commonalty of a burgh being held inalienable was, as he thought, their necessity for the proper administration of the burgh, that reason found no place in the circumstances or the present case". He indicated that he could not interfere with where the Council held its meetings and to hold the meetings in the Burgh Court would

not affect the efficiency of administration of the Council or its dignity. So the case was won and the monies from the sale would now be paid.

Saturday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1937, saw the *Fife Free Press* announce the results of the competition. The results had been discussed at a special meeting of the Town Council the previous evening. Provost Wilson was in the chair.

#### PROPOSED MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS

##### The Adjudicator's Awards

PRIZE-WINNING AWARDS ALL  
OVER £90,000

The result of the architectural competition in connection with the proposed municipal buildings for Kirkcaldy, was made known at a special meeting of Kirkcaldy Town Council last night—Provost Wilson presiding.

The report of the adjudicator, Mr Thomas S. Tait, architect of the Scottish Empire Exhibition, which was submitted, was in the following terms:—

"I have examined and carefully considered the designs submitted for the above competition, together with their accompanying reports and statements of costs.

"Thirty-three competitors have sent in sets of drawings, some of which show a high standard of design.

The adjudicator was Thomas S. Tait and thirty three entries had been received. At this stage Tait made remarks on three of the entries:-

“Design No. 4 presents a simple and direct plan with dignified elevations to be executed in stonework. The plan also shows an excellent garden layout. I think this design would be suitable for its position and would add to the amenities of the town.

Design No. 28 shows a modern design with well-lighted rooms and corridors.

Design No.19 shows a good arrangement of plan with facade finished in harling and stone dressings.

“I award the premiums to the following designs:-

1<sup>st</sup> premium design – No.4 – buildings £82,780, gardens - £8,000. Total £90,780.

2<sup>nd</sup> premium design – No.28 – buildings £90,073, gardens - £2,000. Total £92,073.

3<sup>rd</sup> premium design – No 19 – buildings £ 88,900, gardens - £5,000. Total £93,900.

The above figures do not include professional charges. I highly commend designs 2 and 31”.

“After some discussion as to procedure, the Town Clerk was instructed to open the envelopes and reveal the names of the successful competitors.



The following were the prize-winners:-

1. **Mr David Carr**, of Carr & Howard, 3 Rutland Square, Edinburgh. £500
2. **Mr Stuart R. Matthew**, 43 Minto Street, Edinburgh. £250.
3. **Mr Alister G. Macdonald**, 121/3 George Street, Edinburgh. (in collaboration with Mr John Paterson) £100.

Highly Commended

1. **Messrs J & J. A. Carrick**, 7 Alloway Place, Ayr.
2. **Mr William H. Kinninmonth**, of Messrs Rowan, Anderson & Paul, 16 Rutland Square, Edinburgh.

After detailing the total cost of erecting the building, £82,780, the report went on to give an estimate of additional charges.

- Architects fees accounted for approximately £5,400.

Quantity Surveyors fees £2,250.

Consulting Engineer's fees £500.

Clerk of Work's Fees £550

This totals £8700 and £100,000 was stated as being sufficient to cover all building costs, site works and fees.

There were a number of concerns and suggestions from the Councillors which were especially over the anticipated costs of the gardens. Others questioned if they were duty bound to accept the winning design. Some of the comments included:-

Bailie Adamson - "well, while we are committed to accept the plan placed first, I don't think we as a Council are committed to spending £8,000 on gardens". (Bailie Adamson's year was about to get better, certainly until May 1938. As a Director of Raith Rovers he saw the team score what remains the British record of 142 league goals while winning promotion).

"Bailie Jeffrey – we are honour bound to accept the first premium design – that is No. 4 – but I think the sum of £90,000 is extraordinary when you consider what we suggested when we debated the matter in the Council. Might I ask if furnishings are included in the £82,780 for buildings?

Provost Wilson – "No". (presumably not included, and not, no you cannot ask!)

"Councillor Jeffrey – if you have £90,000 plus furnishings, plus professional fees, it will bring it in at £115,000!" The Berwickshire Advertiser on the 28th of October 1937 made mention of the competition, most probably, due to

#### **KIRKCALDY MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS**

##### **WINNING DESIGN BY BERWICK MAN**

At a special meeting of Kirkcaldy Town Council on Friday night, Provost Wilson presiding, the adjudications by Mr Thomas S. Tait, London, architect of the Scottish Empire Exhibition, of the plans submitted in the architectural competition for the proposed municipal buildings were made known.

The design selected for first place was submitted by Mr David Carr, 3, Rutland Square, Edinburgh, and provides buildings to the cost of £82,700 and gardens costing £3,000.

Mr Carr is a son of Mr and Mrs R. Carr, The Elms, Berwick.

the fact that David Carr's parents lived in Berwick itself. It was not until 8 years later that the paper was able to mention his name again in connection with the Town House. In June 1945, the same

#### PROMOTION TO COLONEL

Promotion to the rank of Colonel has come to David Carr, Royal Engineers, youngest son of Mr Robert Carr, The Elms, Berwick, and the late Mrs Carr. Colonel Carr is on service in India and volunteered during the first week of the war. In pre-war days he was an architect in Edinburgh, being a professional member of the Society of Scottish Artists. In 1937 his plans for municipal buildings at Kirkcaldy were adjudicated for first place.

newspaper, were delighted to report that the same David Carr, now of the Royal Engineers, had been promoted to the rank of Colonel. He had volunteered for the army in the first week

of the war and was currently serving in India. The report showed that his mother had died between the publication of the two articles. The paper reminded the readers of his 1937 winning design. It would be late 1949 before David was able to pick up on this particular assignment.

The *Dundee Courier* was again in action on the 27<sup>th</sup> bringing readers a photograph of David Carr's vision of the completed building. Ploughing through the Fife Free Press of the 30<sup>th</sup> October the self same sketch, which was slightly clearer, was found. It is reproduced here.

The *Fife Free Press* was still in an aggressive mood and on Saturday, the 4<sup>th</sup> December, the cartoon shown below was published without any accompanying article. It does not take a genius to work out which organisation was the target!



The Municipal "Edison"—A Free Suggestion for Superior Disposition of the New Municipal Buildings.

The same newspaper disclosed on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 1937 that a draft agreement of the contract had been sent to the architect, David Carr. It was also arranged that the Committee should meet Mr Carr to have a general discussion about the project. The Town Clerk was asked to invite other members of the Council to attend. Yet again, Bailie Collyer tried to delay the project but again his effort ended in failure.

*The Fife Free Press* was in trenchant mood in its leader of the 9<sup>th</sup> July 1938. In a no-holds barred challenge to spiralling civic expenditure it opened with:- "To forecast unpleasant things is normally to court unpopularity but to refrain from telling the truth simply because it may be unpalatable is neither more nor less than moral cowardice. "Forewarned is forearmed" is just another way of saying that it is the unexpected blow which does the most damage.

Consequently, on the eve of the revelation of the local budget, we feel it our duty, albeit a doleful one, to prepare the general ratepayer for a substantial increase to the rates for the current year".

The portion of the lengthy article concerning the municipal building was substantial and included:- "Long term finance, in moderation, may have its good points, but it is not seen at its best when applied in such a way that the community will continue to pay for buildings for a full generation after said buildings have been razed to the ground.

Yet, that is what is happening with Tylehurst and Wemyss Park which, as we mentioned last week, are to be demolished to clear the site for the new municipal buildings.

"Tylehurst, which was acquired some nine years ago, stands in the balance sheet as having cost £4,000, repayment of which is spread over 25 years. The cost of Wemyss Park, which was purchased only two years ago, is given as £6,070 and repayment is spread over a period of 30 years. In the case of Tylehurst, nine payments of £160 each, totalling £1,440, have been made, leaving £2,560 to be paid off over the next 16 years.

"Towards the cost of Wemyss Park two payments of £202 each have been made, leaving £5,656 to be repaid over the next 28 years.

"Thus, from now until 1954, the community will be paying roughly £1 per day, and for the following twelve years until 1966 approximately £4 per week, for buildings which were wiped out of existence in "this year of grace" 1938!

"To the experts who hold our views on civic finance in supreme contempt, this long-term policy may be the acme of economy in municipal administration, but to plain folks like ourselves it is gross extravagance verging on sheer madness!

The *Fife Free Press* of the 5<sup>th</sup> February 1938 brought a report of a meeting of the Dean of Guild Court the

previous Thursday. The article centred around a petition from Marks and Spencer Ltd of Glasgow to erect new business premises on the site of the Town House which had been standing empty for two years:-



"The petitioners stated that they intend to demolish the old Town House and office buildings attached, and on the cleared site to erect a new building which will be of three storeys fronting onto the High Street. It will cover an area approximately equal to the present Town House and will be two storeys high at the back which will stretch down Tolbooth Street. The street floor, covering practically the whole area of the site, is to be sales departments.

Subject to minor alterations, the plans were passed".

#### Opening of Marks & Spencer

The transformation of Kirkcaldy's former Town Hall into a modern store is now complete, and yesterday the firm of Marks and Spencer opened their doors for the transaction of business.

For some time the structural alterations have been a centre of interest, and it was not surprising, therefore, to find large crowds paying visits of inspection to the store.

The area covered by the counters and island stalls is extensive, measuring roughly, from the frontage to half way down Tolbooth Street, and the fittings are of an attractive nature. As for the articles on sale, the variety is as large as one expected, ranging through a wide variety of goods.

Upstairs have been placed the administrative offices and stock rooms, which include vermin-proof food rooms. For staff requirements there is a kitchen and canteen; cloak rooms and a rest room.

On the ground floor, which by reason of panelling presents a handsome appearance, special attention has been paid to lighting, which is adequate and pleasing.

Purely for interest, we include a snippet from the *Fife Free Press* of the 20<sup>th</sup> August giving details of the opening of the Marks & Spencer emporium. Given demolition was authorised in February, it does seem remarkably swift work to have the building opened by the August. It is very obvious that the store was opening in Kirkcaldy, if the headline is anything to go by. The King's English is not used in "Opening of Marks and Spencer" - rather the Fife vernacular is in

use with "Opening af Marks and Spencer". Could we again re-state that the clock attached to the premises is not the Town Clock – whose whereabouts remain unknown.

Interestingly, at the same Court, plans were passed for the erection of an £18,000 cinema on Links Street on part of the Methven's Pottery site. This and other cinemas will form a future Object over the coming months.

The 20<sup>th</sup> August 1938 brought news in the *Fife Free Press* that demolition was under way:-"with the rapid disappearance of Wemyss Park to make way for the new municipal buildings, the demolition squad has now moved onto Tylehurst, until recently the offices of the Burgh Chamberlain and Burgh Surveyor's Departments. In the course of a short time this building too will be speedily razed to the ground".

**DEMOLITION WORK.**—With the rapid disappearance of Wemyss Park to make way for the new municipal buildings, the demolition squad has now commenced on the adjoining Tylehurst, until recently the offices of the Burgh Chamberlain's and the Burgh Surveyor's departments. In the course of a short time this building too, will speedily be razed to the ground.

**NEW MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS**

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**Plans Passed by Dean of Guild Court**

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**FEATURES OF THE BUILDING**

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Plans for Kirkealdy's new municipal buildings, which have been estimated to cost between £90,000 and £100,000, were passed at a meeting of Kirkealdy Dean of Guild Court on Thursday, Dean of Guild Menzies presiding.

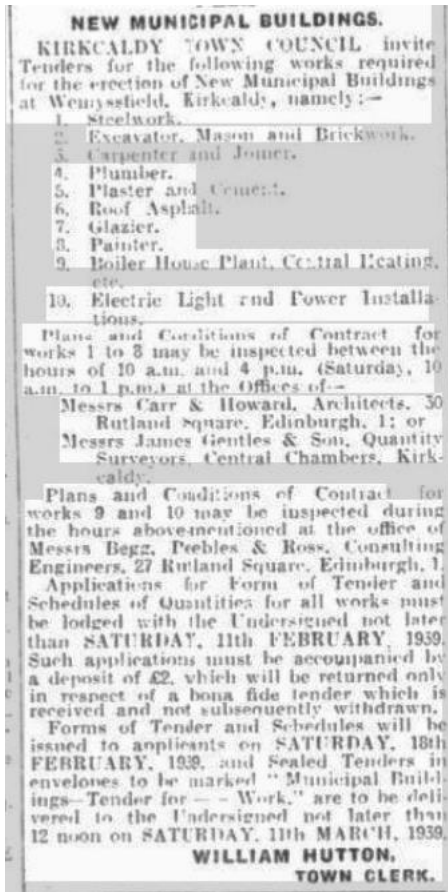
The 21<sup>st</sup> of January 1939 was a red letter day in the move to finalise the plans. We learn from the *Fife Free Press* that the plans for the municipal buildings had been passed at the Dean of Guild Court with Dean of Guild Menzies presiding. It was estimated

that the final cost would be between £90,000 and £100,000. Readers learned that as well as the staircase there would be a lift running from the basement to the top floor. All the windows were to be manufactured from steel and the walls throughout were to be finished in lime plaster. The Council Chambers and Committee rooms were to feature wood panelling on some of the walls. The entrance hall and the staircase were to be of polished stone. Heating would be provided by a low pressure hot water system utilising radiators and ceiling panels. It seems that natural ventilation would be used throughout, bar in the Council Chamber, which would benefit from heating and ventilation provided by a special plant erected in the rood space of the main building. The construction was generally considered to be fireproof.

Our local crusading newspaper commented on the same day that: "The plans and particulars of Kirkcaldy's new proposed municipal buildings, submitted to the Dean of Guild Court, foreshadow a structure of some magnificence, which is as it should be when one considers that the site alone has cost the town well over £10,000, or nearly £4,000 an acre. However, there are things that should not be measured in terms of money alone and perhaps Kirkcaldy's new Town House is one of them. At any rate, the accommodation seems to be on an ample scale, even for Kirkcaldy's rapidly growing bureaucracy, and it is nice to know that storage room for the Magistrates' fur coats and cocked hats has not been overlooked".



Saturday, the 4<sup>th</sup> February 1939, saw the long awaited advertisement seeking tenders for the building of the new Town House appearing in the *Fife Free Press*. Sadly, the only copy of the advertisement which could be secured is a poor one but, hopefully, it will be readable. Ten separate works were listed with the plans available for inspection at *Carr & Howard* in Edinburgh or at *James Gentles & Son*, Quantity Surveyors in Central Chambers, Kirkcaldy.



The heating and painting plans and terms and conditions were with *Brown, Peebles & Ross*, Consulting Engineers in Edinburgh. The two Edinburgh

based firms were almost next door neighbours in Rutland Square. Tenders were to be delivered by the 11<sup>th</sup> March to William Hutton, the Town Clerk.

Letter to the Editor – *Fife Free Press* 25<sup>th</sup> March 1939.

Sir,  
May I through your columns suggest to the Council that they consider the following proposal, viz., that the baths be included in the scheme for the new municipal buildings.

This would be convenient for the Councillors, who, when heated in debate, could go and cool off.

It would also be suitable for washing their dirty linen.

Yours faithfully  
S.G.D.

We were slightly perplexed when we came to reading the Kirkcaldy Budget Report carried in the *Fife Free Press* of the 15<sup>th</sup> July 1939. Under the heading *Common Good* we find;

“The Common Good has been described as the corporate property and estate of a burgh as distinct to the monies available to it by the levying of taxes and assessments. It consists, in Kirkcaldy, of a number of heritable properties, including Pathhead and Philp Halls, Muirton and Bogwells farms, Dysart Town Hall and other subjects, valued in all at £16,449. There is also a fund of £12,147 available from the sale of the old Town Hall towards the cost of the new municipal buildings”.

We fully understand that the fund consists of property both heritable and moveable that previously belonged to a burgh, but it has always been our understanding that the purpose of such a fund was to support services and projects for the community by way of an application. Is it really being suggested that the provision of municipal buildings is a qualifying application for the funds?

An exchange of views which had taken place at a Council meeting in April of the same year drew our attention to this situation:-

**“Councillor Dall** – it is stated in the Press that £21,000 was got for the old Town Hall and the site at Whytescauseway and that has gone into the Common Good. Now, as the Chamberlain's department is represented here, I would like to know if the £21,000 went into the Common Good fund because the Finance Committee has turned down applications from various local clubs on the basis there was not a penny piece in the Common Good. I want to know where the £21,000 went.

**Bailie Jeffrey** – it is still in the Common Good.

**Councillor Dall** – did you say it was still in the Common Good?

**Bailie Jeffrey** – exactly.

**Councillor Dall** – I understood it was used to pay off debts.

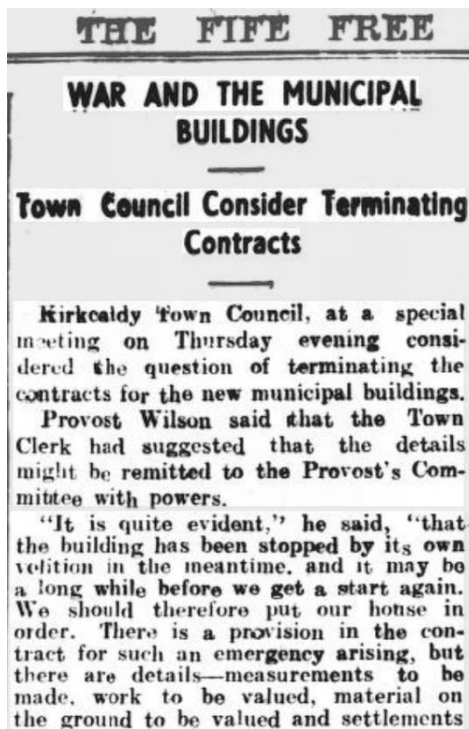
Mr Lumsden of the Chamberlain's department explained that the £13,000 received for the sale of the Town Hall was in the Common Good as the Town Hall belonged to the Common Good.

**Councillor Dall** said he would like to know why they had refused to assist the clubs in that case.

**Treasurer Adamson** – you don't require to ask that question”.

End of conversation – most mysterious!

It was barely a week after the declaration of war that the first signs of construction being halted came to the fore. *The Fife Free Press* reported on September the 9th that a special meeting had been held on the Thursday night with a view to making a decision.



Provost Wilson opened the meeting with;- "It is quite evident that the building has been stopped by its own violation in the meantime and it may be a long time before we can get a start again. We should therefore put our house in order. There is a provision in the contract for such an emergency arising, but there are details – measurements to be made, work to be valued, material on the ground to be valued and settlements to be made with the contractors”.

There were some who thought that work should continue meantime, but it was agreed to remit the question to the Provost's Committee for their recommendation. There appeared to be reasonable arguments on both sides especially that possibly the material on site should be utilised – then again would the labour required be available? Many

tradesmen had been directed to the building of air raid shelters etc.

*The Fife Free Press* of Saturday, the 16<sup>th</sup> September, brought the news that work on the Town House would be brought to a halt. It had not been a unanimous decision as there was a counter motion that work should continue.

It was ultimately decided to suspend operations and to terminate the contracts. This would of course give rise to compensation for the

## **HALT CALLED ON ERECTION OF MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS**

**Council Decides To Cancel Contracts**

**SUGGESTION TO CONTINUE VETOED**

**Compensation To Be Paid Contractors**

work already done. The main thrust of termination lay in the availability of manpower and materials. While many of the contractors were happy to continue – they were all interdependent. The main contractor, the builder, Alex Fraser Ltd, was uncertain of the availability of men and materials and Captain Fraser was already away with the forces. It certainly appeared to be the case that without the builder being certain of carrying out their part of the contract all the other trades would be in limbo.

It has to be said that the architect was not in favour of continuing and a rather cheap remark was aimed at him to the effect that, as architects were in high demand for war work, perhaps he had better opportunities. In fairness, David Carr was defended

on the basis that this was by far his largest contract and for his future reputation he would if possible wish to see it completed.

Those against the move were Bailie Wright and Councillors Dall, Williamson, Smith and Kay. It was their belief that any decision should be delayed to allow the material on site to be utilised and see how the labour situation looked after the Air Raid Precautions work was completed. The reality was that the Council were caught between a rock and a hard place and if a decision needed to be made – it was better made as soon as possible.



So, there was Kirkcaldy left high and dry for the duration of the war and, in fact, beyond. It would be 1949 before serious attempts could/would be made to complete the plans. For the whole of the war the area could only boast a basement

liable to flooding and a steel skeleton which became known to some as "Kirkcaldy's folly".

It was in March of 1949 that the first signs of an appetite to complete the building surfaced. Once again, it was the *Fife Free Press* who broke the news on the 19<sup>th</sup> of the month. It transpired that, on the 28<sup>th</sup> February, Council officials had had an informal meeting with Messrs. Carr and Howard with a view

to the resumption of work. It required the authority of the Home Department to resume work and it was agreed that all available information should be supplied to the architects thereby allowing them to prepare a report for submission to the Government. The intention was to seek permission to allow the work to be carried out in its entirety and not in stages. This request proved to be unacceptable given the volume of material and men a "one-off" build would demand.

The 10<sup>th</sup> September 1949 saw the *Fife Free Press* report that in January 1950 a start would be made although it would only be the south wing initially. The paper gave a potted history of the progress or otherwise of the building and that the estimated cost of this section would be £81,000. When the south wing was completed it would cover roughly two thirds of the whole planned building. The wing was described as the portion from the tower to Whytescauseway. While tenders for the work were being gathered in – the paper very helpfully gave the winning tenders from 1939.

- Steelwork – Redpath, Brown & Co. £3428
- Excavator mason & Brick – Alex Fraser\* £40,759
- Carpenter & Joiner – Bogie & Nicol\* £9,029
- Plumber – Hutchison Brothers\* £2,735
- Plaster & Cement - J.F. Scobie\* £6,236
- Asphalt Roofing – Limmer & Trinidad £1,727
- Glazier – John Haxton\* & Co. £713
- Painter – Neil Nicholson\* & Co. £2,083
- Boiler house and Heating – G. N. Hadden £5,008

- Electric light & Power – Oliver Melville\* & Co £5117.

\*signifies local Kirkcaldy firms.

**THE MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS**

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**£78,000 Tenders Recommended**

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The tenders for the new municipal buildings were before the Provost's Committee on Thursday, and the recommendations of that committee will come before a special meeting of the Council on Tuesday evening.

Should these recommendations be adopted, the total building costs will be fully £78,000.

We believe that this figure includes marble walling of the main staircase and hall, stone carving on the piers of the main feature window, special joinery and Council chamber seating, and the introduction of bronze hand-rails on staircase, etc., but contains no provision for roadmaking.

"In the next few weeks tenders for the work now to be done will be in the hands of the Town Council and will give a sound indication of how the cost of living has increased over the intervening years.

Kirkcaldy citizens have argued for and against the municipal buildings for years. The majority realise however that, for the efficient working of the Corporation, central offices and suitable chambers are required. They will watch with

increasing interest the gradual fulfilment of plans formulated by many men who have long since retired from active participation in Council affairs.

Nevertheless, among the members who will have a voice in the final selection of contractors are several who exercised that authority ten years ago. They include Bailies Wright, Jeffrey and Livingston, Dean of Guild Dall and Councillors Maxwell, Neil, Kinnear and Cook. Surely, on this occasion, the buildings will be completed in time for the councillors who gave approval being present at the opening ceremony".

The 17<sup>th</sup> of the month saw the same newspaper give



## KIRKCALDY MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS

READY BY 1952

BUT NO COUNCIL CHAMBER

(By Our Own Reporter.)

A START will be made early in the new year to complete the south wing of the new municipal buildings at Wemyssfield, Kirkcaldy, and I understand that the architects, Messrs Carr & Howard, London, anticipate that the work will be completed in eighteen months to two years from the time of commencement.

As was reported exclusively in last Saturday's "Free Press," Kirkcaldy Town Council has received permission to proceed with the south wing of the buildings. The clock tower and the portion of the building on the Hunter Street side will not be completed until a later date. As this portion was meant to accommodate the new Council Chamber and the main committee room, even after the completion of the south wing, the Town Council will have to hold their meetings and those of the Housing Committee in the Court Room at Police Headquarters as at present. The other committee



The South Wing, Wemyssfield.

some more details which included:-

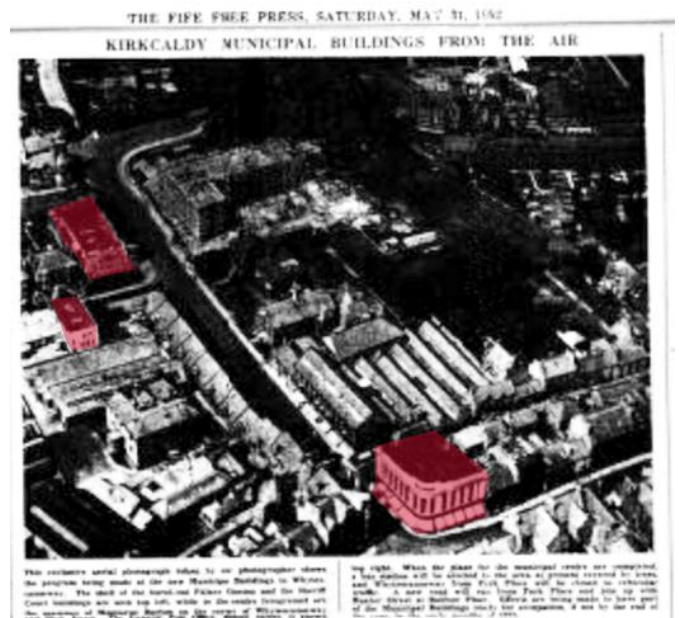
- The architects anticipated completion by 1952.
- "Permission to proceed was only given for the south wing. The clock tower and portion of the building facing Hunter Street will not be completed till a later date".
- As the unbuilt portion was meant to house the Chamber and main Committee room – "Council meetings and Housing Committee meetings will continue to be held in the Court Room at the Police Headquarters. Committee meetings will be held in the lesser Committee Room in the new building".
- On completion in 1952, the staffs of the Town Clerk, Burgh Chamberlain, the Burgh Factor and the Water Engineer will all be accommodated under one roof and "Osborne House and Stanley Park will be freed up for other purposes".
- "The facade of the building will be finished in Blaxter stone, a stone similar in texture to the War Memorial buildings".
- "The Provost's Committee had decided the

previous week that they should instal solid fuel heating apparatus. The boilers will be automatically fed so there is no need for a full time stoker”.

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“The citizens await developments with curiosity and lively interest”.

The *Fife Free Press* carried an ariel photograph of the central area of the town on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 1952. The reason for its inclusion here is it shows the progress made on the Town House. To assist with orientation – Burton's building, the burnt out Palace Cinema and what was (now Thorntons Law), have all been marked in red. One of the most marked changes over the years is Hill Street, where the photograph captures the commercial, industrial and domestic buildings which have long since been swept away. It is hard to believe that, in living memory, that particular street was where many called home. The site of the current bus station is simply a mass of trees and grass.



Another excellent photograph appeared in the *Fife Free Press* on the 28<sup>th</sup> June 1952. The paper indicated that it had been a year since they had provided a photographic update of the Town House.

They noted that at that time progress appeared to have been slow, "for the outside walls had only



reached the lintels of the ground floor windows. Today, however, as our illustration shows, the last twelve months have shown headway being made and the stage has been reached when the masons are erecting the

coping stones at the top of the building. The central heating plant has been installed and progress inside the shell of the building is satisfactory".

Excellent news was carried by the *Fife Free Press* of the 13<sup>th</sup> December 1952. The paper was able to report that permission had been granted to allow completion of the whole of the Town House. A way forward could now be seen to add the Council Chambers, the clock tower and the remainder of the items, intended to be completed in stage II. The article also reported on the progress of the carriageway which was being constructed to the front of the building. This is the road which we all assume has been there for ever and connects Hunter Street to Whytescauseway. This had seen the demolition of yet another Villa, St Olaf's in Whytescauseway, to complete this road. St Olaf's had been procured as a children's home as recently

as 1946 and like the others before it – now razed to the ground.

The first stage of Kirkcaldy's new Town House was formally opened by the Earl of Home, Minister of State for Scotland, on Monday, the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 1953. In bright weather, the opening ceremony took place at the main entrance of the building. The guests attending the ceremony included Government officials and many local and county dignitaries. It was shortly before noon that members of the Town Council and guests arrived and were directed to the roped off area in front of the main entrance.



Lord Home was welcomed by Provost Young who then introduced him to Miss K. Young, the Lady Provost, and then to an assembled line of Councillors, officials of the Burgh and David Carr, the architect.



The platform party took up position at the entrance which was laid out with colourful floral decorations. The party was, however, minus the Town Clerk, Mr Charles D. Chapman, who had suddenly taken ill the

previous day.

The Union Flag, the St. Andrew's Cross and the Town Flag, all fluttered from the three high masts.

Provost James Young said "It was a red letter day as far as Kirkcaldy Town Council was concerned. The new building had been underway for a long time but, at last, the first stage was completed and was well worthy of the town". He also drew attention to the fact that "among the guests were two individuals ex-Provost James Wilson and the former Town Clerk, Mr Hutton, who was now Deputy Chairman of S.W. Scotland Electricity Board. Both took part in the initial steps towards the erection of the new municipal offices in the mid-thirties".

Lord Home, prior to declaring the building open, told Kirkcaldy people; "Do not be afraid of the new Town House, do not be over-awed by it, for after all, you paid for it".

Lord Home described the completion of the first stage of the new building as a reward for dogged persistence for which this country has always been famous and for which, he was sure, it would continue to be famous.

"I must confess" he observed "that some of the files at St. Andrew's House are a bit dog-eared. It was in 1937 that Kirkcaldy Town Council first accepted plans for this building and it was in 1939 that the contracts were placed and it was not until 1949 with,

of course, the war intervening, that the Home Department at St. Andrew's House were able to give the go-ahead on the south wing at the cost of something like £128,000".

He went on to say: "the result, as all of us are able to see, is a fine imposing building worthy of the citizens of Kirkcaldy".

After formally declaring the building open, Lord Home was presented with a beautifully designed and inscribed key by Mr David Carr, of Messrs. Carr & Howard, Edinburgh, the architects, to symbolise the opening.



Bailie A. Fleming, Senior Magistrate, expressed the Council's thanks to Lord Home, before the official party made a tour of the building then assembled for the civic luncheon in the Station Hotel.

Here, the company was addressed by Lord Home and Provost Young while Bailie D. Wright proposed a vote of thanks.

In proposing thanks, Bailie Wright said that the original estimate for the new municipal building was

about £90,000 in 1937. When the building was completed he forecast that it would cost about £250,000.

In all honesty, the team had anticipated that the opening would bring a full and varied programme of events. However, whether because of the recent war or rationing, it was very much low key. There is little to report than the following;

The luncheon was taken up by speeches from Provost Young and Lord Home – and it would appear that the Provost centred on Kirkcaldy with the Minister of State, perhaps not unsurprisingly, looking at the Scotland wide position.

- Provost Young said “Kirkcaldy rather prided itself that, within the last 40 years or so, two former members of the Town Council had occupied the office of Secretary of State for Scotland. He referred to the late Lord Novar and the late Joseph Westwood.

“In addition, the present M.P. for Kirkcaldy Burghs - Mr Tom Hubbard, had received his early tuition and training in the Town Council, so that Kirkcaldy could take pride in its record”.

- “I am sure Ex-Provost Wilson must feel great satisfaction indeed when he looks at the new building and he must be justly proud of the lead he gave to the Town Council in those far-off days”. (Provost Young)



- Lord Home offered his congratulations to Provost Young and those who had the foresight to plan ahead. They had earned the gratitude of the community. Praise was unlikely to give anyone of local or national government a swelled head; both elected representatives and officials learned early in life that they were expected to play the part of whipping boys. Without Provosts, councillors, magistrates and officials to impugn how dull and frustrating life would be for the armchair critic”.

“It was however on occasions such as this that they realised that, behind the banter and sometimes abuse, the people of this country had a real and deep knowledge and appreciation of the system which, however imperfectly, they attempted to run”.

- The speaker continued by saying “that despite all the difficulties, it was still possible to make progress in so many spheres. Kirkcaldy's own housing was proof of this. He had been looking at the figures and last year he found that Kirkcaldy completed a record number of 453 houses. In the current year nearly 200 houses had already been completed”.

It was left to Bailie Wright to provide the vote of thanks and bring down the curtain on what he described as an enjoyable day.

Other little snippets informed readers that “in particular it was believed that the square would not



only be a home for important civic events but would be a meeting place in the everyday life of the community”.

There was a strong feeling that the gathering together under one roof of most of the Corporation's departments would be invaluable in the conduct of municipal affairs.

We also learned that a Council Chamber, even if only of a temporary nature, was now sited on the first floor. No more meetings in the Police Station!

There was also a presentation made to the Council of two Burmese teak seats which had been placed in the forecourt. They were the gift of Harry K. Brown of Townsend Crescent who was the principal of the Ford main dealership of Harry K. Brown

#### **GIFT OF SEATS**

**Two lovely Burmese teak seats have been placed in the forecourt at Kirkcaldy's Town House. The seats, which are eight feet in length and carry the inscription "Elizabeth R., June, 1953," and a crown, are the gift of Mr Harry K. Brown, Townsend Crescent, Kirkcaldy, principal of the well-known local motor engineering firm of Harry K. Brown (Motors) Ltd., Nicol Street.**

(Motors) Ltd., of Nicol Street. For any Markinch readers, ex-Provost Craik's daughter was the wife of the said Mr Brown. The seats were inscribed 'Elizabeth R., June, 1953'. It seems that a crown was also inscribed on the seats. The inscription was a clear reference to the Coronation of Elizabeth II the previous month.

On the same tack the building's letterbox has a

Coronation theme with the State Coach as the central scene. As phase 1 of the building was opened in the



month following the Coronation, again, it has to be assumed that the design of the letterbox was a homage to the young Queen.

## Town House Clock Will Cost £1781

**C**ROWNING glory of Kirkcaldy's Town House, the tower clock, will cost £1781.

The Town Council on Monday approved the provision of a tower clock with electronic hour strike and ting-tang at each quarter hour, at an estimated cost of £1411 and also of mechanism for a carillon at a cost of £370.

Saturday, the 18<sup>th</sup> December 1954, saw the local paper carry a headline - **"Town Hall Clock to Cost £1,781"**.

The subsequent report related that "The Town Council on Monday approved the provision of a tower clock with electronic hour strike and ting-tang at each quarter hour. The estimated cost was £1411 and also mechanism for a carillon at a cost of £370". The clock was to

be installed by a Leicester firm whose works had been visited by a deputation from the Council. It was also noted that the suppliers had a maintenance engineer available in the vicinity to carry out any immediate repairs which might be required to the clock after it was installed.

Fife Council in its guide to *"Kirkcaldy Town House, A Guide to its Special Features"* restricts itself to

"One of the building's most striking attributes is the copper clocktower with its distinctive weathervane".

The construction work was drawing to its conclusion when the *Fife Free Press* of the 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1956 was published. Its leader column reported that the formal opening of stage II would take place the following Wednesday forenoon. Again, it would seem that the ceremony was far lower key than might have been anticipated. The opening ceremony was to be carried out by the current Provost David Wright.



The paper also gave details of the times when the public could take the opportunity to view the building. The allotted hours were; on opening day from 6.00pm until 9.00pm with similar times on the Friday. The weekend saw 2.00pm till 9.00pm on

Saturday with a shorter Sunday opening from 2.00pm until 5.00pm. We could only unearth one advertisement which is shown here but only makes mention of the

CORPORATION OF KIRKCALDY  
**TOWN HOUSE**  
THE TOWN HOUSE will be open for inspection by the Public on the dates undermentioned :—  
**SATURDAY, 11th JULY, 1953,**  
between 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.  
**SUNDAY, 12th JULY, 1953,**  
between 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.

weekend – change of plan?

The feature which attracted a great deal of column

space was the mural which dominated the entrance hall. This was the work of Walter Pritchard whose intention had been to create "a symbolic link with the town's history, growth and development. This theme includes representations of famous figures associated with the town". The artist was paid £875 for his work.

The article moved on to the heavily wrapped figure which was the statue known as "*The Sower*", a figure which represents the spirit of Kirkcaldy. Cast in bronze it was the work of Thomas Whalen. The paper mentioned that it had attracted much attention at the Summer Exhibition of the Royal Scottish Academy.

"The unveiling of the statue forms the central part of Wednesday's ceremony and then the townspeople will be able to inspect this symbolic figure which is full of strength and vigour".

"With the Civic Centre now completed "operation removal" once again comes into force to house the departments, which had remained outwith the administrative headquarters, after completion of stage I. This sees the culmination of the plans to centralise the Corporation departments which, for a number of years prior to the opening of the Town House, were scattered throughout the burgh".

The paper included a photograph, taken that very week, which is reproduced here. The paper remarked that despite a few alterations along the

way – David Carr's "impression of 1938 is indeed the reality of 1956".

The coverage ended on what seemed a consolatory tone with:

"The second stage of the building has now taken place. The clock tower – a modern erection – has risen as a dominant feature of the second stage, the Council chamber proper and other accommodation has been made available, and now the time has been reached when the second stage of the development is to be formally opened.

And with the opening ceremony, the municipal centre will now operate as a whole and completed unit. It is an impressive edifice. It plays an important part in the town's life and interests but, to recall the words used by Lord Home in 1953 - "do not be afraid of the new Town House, do not be overawed by it, for after all, remember you paid for it".

Wednesday's opening ceremony will take place before a representative gathering. A luncheon is to be held afterwards in the Station Hotel.

It was on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 1956 that the Fife Free Press carried its report under the headline;

"Kirkcaldy's £322,000 Town House Completed"

Some sections of the article are included below and are taken from both the opening ceremony and the

luncheon that followed.

- “With the unveiling of the bronze statue - “The Sower” - a figure symbolising the town and its people, Provost David Wright formally opened the second stage of Kirkcaldy's new Town House shortly after noon on Wednesday”.
- “The Provost told the representative gathering and members of the public who had assembled in the Town Square for the ceremony that: 'I am egotistical enough to suggest that Kirkcaldy has one of the finest town buildings in the country' ”.
- From the clock tower sounded airs played by A. Morris McMahon, the organist of West End Congregational Church.
- “At a ceremony in the entrance hall, J. Harry Allen, Immediate Past President of Kirkcaldy Rotary Club, formally handed over a notice-board on behalf of that organisation to the Corporation”. The year 1955 had seen the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rotary International and the local club had thought it should make a tangible gift to the town. They had hoped to see the building completed in 1955 but fully understood delays.



- "The Allen Lithographic Co., Kirkcaldy, have presented a handsome illuminated manuscript which bears the name of burgesses of the town from 1841-1946".
- Mr David Carr, on behalf of Messrs Carr and Howard, the architects, presented a clock to Provost Wright. The clock was a token of the architects' appreciation of the assistance of the Provost and by all those who had given assistance in the project. "In expressing his appreciation for the presentation, Provost Wright said he would always appreciate the gift".
- Once again, as with the previous official opening, Ex-Provost Wilson was numbered amongst the guests. "That is an exceptional pleasure as I can recall the days when this project was first mooted and the opposition which was worked up against it. I can also recall the victory of those who were farseeing enough to visualise what could be accomplished. I am sure you will agree with me, Provost Wright, that the inspiration at the time came from our then Provost James Wilson". (Bailie Young at the luncheon)
- There is always local criticism with public authority work, but we have to take into account this is something which will last from generation to generation". (Provost Wright)



- “While it is a big departure from other authorities and their conception of a Town House and municipal chambers, nevertheless we believe we have in this building one of the best in Scotland and further afield”. (Provost Wright)
- He then mentioned that when he had earlier referred to the old Town House - “that three members on the Town Council then were still serving the local authority at present. They were Bailie James Young, Bailie John Cook and himself”. (Provost Young)
- It was Sir Garnet Wilson, Chairman of Glenrothes Development Corporation, who proposed the toast - “The Burgh” - during which he remarked that;-“in a mood of warm congratulations he would say that the burgh had admirably followed the instructions of their escutcheon because he had never seen a more admirable Town Hall and all the praise which the Provost and his colleagues drew to themselves was very, very well, deserved.

“You have joined the aesthetic and the practical together in complete harmony. “It is a monument to the architect and builder and, at the same time, there is a fitness of purpose about the whole building which one can only commend and commend to the highest degree”.

- The team noted and appreciated the only slight criticism made on the day and one we are fully supportive of. This was when Sir Garnet made



mention of the mural; "In that admirable mural you have found room for the erstwhile schoolmaster in Kirkcaldy, Thomas Carlyle, the economist Adam Smith, and the famous architects, the Adam brothers. I should have thought that room would have been found for Michael Nairn, the inventor of 1847. If he has done nothing else, he has provided the burgh with a quite distinctive tang and atmosphere. I am sure he might have been added to that gallery of fame". The Council had already been challenged in Committee as to why Nairn was missing and Carlyle, with his less than massive Kirkcaldy connection, had been included – and yet, it came to pass! Just another example of how the family who, without doubt, have been Kirkcaldy's greatest benefactors – are studiously ignored by Kirkcaldy's civic fathers.

- It would be wrong not to list the consultants and contractors who produced the fine building. Rather than type out the names we reproduce the list furnished in the Fife Free Press in their report on proceedings. Unfortunately, the location of the firms is not shown but there are a significant number of local names included although many are now but a memory.

The principal contractors involved were:—Mason and Brickwork, Thaw & Campbell, Ltd.; Carpenter and Joiner Work, Bogie & Nicol; Plasterer J. R. & A. Adam; Roofing, F. McNeill; Steel Work, Redpath Brown & Co. Ltd.; Glazier, John Haxton & Co., Reinforced Concrete, Alex. Fraser Ltd.; Painter, Neil Nicholson Ltd.; Plumber, Matthew Hall & Co. Ltd.; Heating, Matthew Hall & Co. Ltd.; Electrical, Wm. Allan Smith & Co. Ltd.; Ventilation Mackenzie and Moncur Ltd.; Acoustical, William Beardmore & Co. Ltd.; Special lighting, Allom Bros.; Windows, Crittal Manufacturing Co. Ltd.; Wrought Iron & Bronze, Charles Henshaw & Sons Ltd.; Wrought Iron & Weathervane, Thomas Hadden; Copper on canopy, Wm. Barton & Sons Ltd.; Copper on Tower, Fredk. Braby & Co. Ltd.; Street Lamps, Mackenzie & Moncur Ltd.; Panelling, Council furniture and curtains, Matthew Spears & Co. Ltd.; Special dais furniture and fittings, Scott Morton Ltd.; Chairs and office furniture, Allan Lithographic Co. Ltd.; Kirkcaldy Co-operative Society Ltd., Morris of Glasgow, Henry Carmichael, Findlater Smith Ltd.; Carpets, Findlater Smith Ltd.; Carillon and Clocks, Gent & Co. Ltd.; Lift, Waygood Otis; Telephones, G.P.O. and Reliance Telephone Co. Ltd.; Blinds, Douglas and Bryden.

The paper gave space to what it termed "**The Symbolical Works**".

### *The Sower*

"The sculptor interprets it as symbolic of the town and its people. The idea of the figure has its foundations in the many peculiarities of the town, a town in its early times run by its guilds and crafts. A hard-working early growth – enterprising and industrious – like a plant. Even in this day and age the town has industries peculiar to itself – textiles, roperies, linoleum etc., many derived from the flax plant. Indeed, it may be said that the town depends on sowing. The Sower was always there with its motto possibly being the old Bible Text - "as ye sow so shall ye reap". The earth is good. The people vigorous and since the Sower mounts the corbel of New Town Hall where within Civil Administration and Justice is sown, a figure of the Sower is most appropriate". (Fife Free Press 10/11/56)

Note – The team covered this in some detail in Object 4 – "The Man 'n the Rock". There had been a suggestion to have brushers, at the Frances Colliery, remove "the Man" and place him on the plinth. A reproduction was also suggested, but £1,800 was spent on the Sower instead. There was also the ill judged remark that "It would in time symbolise Kirkcaldy and have even more significance than the 'Man 'n the Rock'!

# Mural Painting

The following description of the mural painting above the main staircase in the Town House has been provided by the artist, Mr Walter Pritchard:-  
"Kirkcaldy has been conceived as an architectural structure, housing the history, trades, and daily life of the community.



"Beginning at the foot of the mural painting, one sees the sea-god Neptune, carrying a river figure on his back, bringing goods and trade to the port. The rough textured part of the harbour wall dates from 1600, whilst the smooth textured part depicts the original wall as having been rebuilt in 1784 after a severe storm.

"Within the arches immediately above are depicted the ancient trades of the town:- iron-founding, tanning, weaving and coal mining. Here the central arch embodies the newer industry of linoleum making.

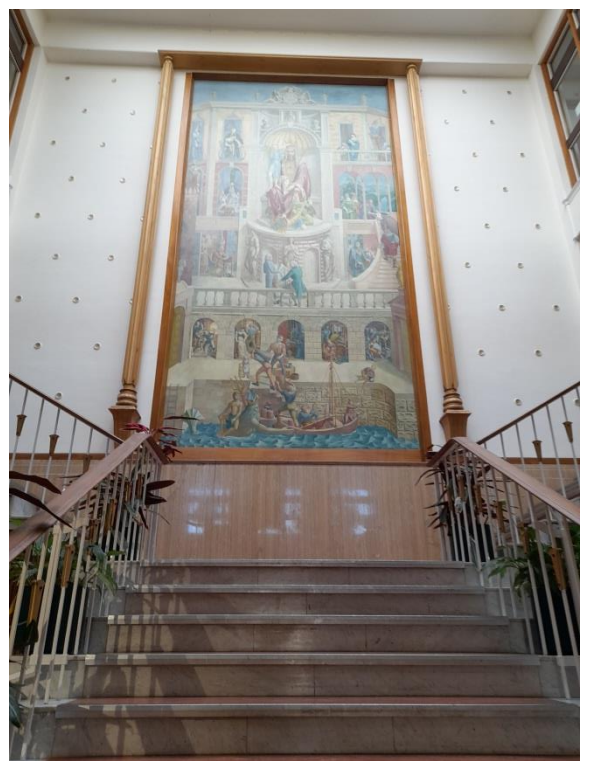
"The figures on the balustrade above are the Adam Brothers, the world famous architects of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, who were natives of Kirkcaldy and on whose style of building the architectural details of this building are largely based.

“On the left, as one looks at the mural painting, is an interior showing another famous Kirkcaldy man – Adam Smith, author of 'The Wealth of Nations', who is seen at his desk, while on the right, Thomas Carlyle, at one time a schoolteacher in the town, is seen surrounded by the children.

“Centred above in an alcove is the figure of Good Government, clothed in robes derived from those of a judge and holding a sceptre and scroll. The figure of Solomon, as a wise ruler, was used as a model or basis. He is being crowned by Peace, while Plenty sits at his side.

“There are three sculptured figures supporting this group. They represent Truth, Justice and Learning, and with them are associated in the alcoves above, portraits of Plato, Aquinas and Aristotle.

“The crowning section of the painting shows the day-by-day life of the community. On the left hand side again, as one looks at the painting, a tower is occupied by a young man wooing his lady. She looks down from a curtained window. The upper balcony shows a newly married couple; below the family is gathered at the table. On the right, on the upper level, is a young mother,



and on the extreme right an old woman seating knitting. A figure on a ladder is tending plants – symbolical of growth and renewing.

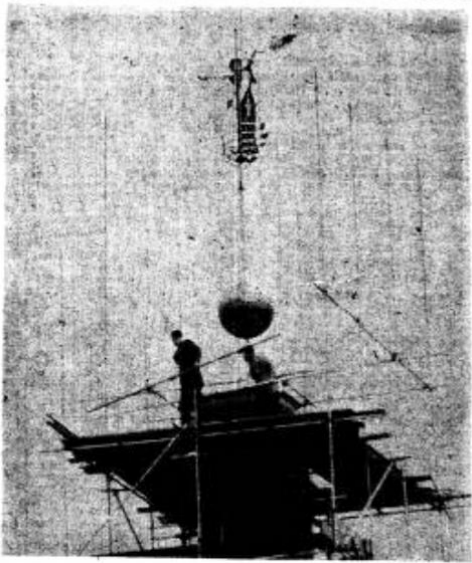
“Finally, below and on the staircase leading down from the balustrade level, is shown the granting of the Royal Charter to the town in 1644, in the reign of Charles I, when it was made a free port. The kilted figure is dressed in the St. Clair tartan of the period. The figures shown in attendance on the right hand of the person receiving the Charter represent a body of officials which one would expect to find at such a function.

“As to the technique used in executing the painting, the ground is a fine quality canvas and the medium is old paint mixed with a preparation made from a recipe which is supposed to derive from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It is anticipated that the surface should last for several hundred years”. (Fife Free Press 10/11/56)

## The Weathervane and Clock Tower

One of the building's most striking features is the copper clocktower with the distinctive weathervane. The vane is on a 20 foot mast at the top of the tower and consists of a 7 foot 6 inch figure weighing 140 lbs, depicting St. Bryce standing beside the symbol of a tree. The tree appeared on the coat of arms of the former Burgh of Dysart which amalgamated with Kirkcaldy in 1930.

Operation Weathervane at Town House



St Bryce looks out over Kirkcaldy as he turns in the wind or breeze. He has the world at his feet in the shape of a copper ball which measures three feet in diameter. The vane is of worked iron and was produced by Messrs. Thomas Hadden of Edinburgh to the design of the architects at a cost of £184.10.0. including the mast.

As always, as they have been throughout the story, the *Fife Free Press* were there to record the workmen installing the vane. The photograph which the Press published on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1955 is reproduced here.

When we went to take a current photograph to show alongside the one from 67 years ago – it was nowhere to be seen. Perhaps it is beside the Town Clock!

The Town House welcomed its most important visitor on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 1958 when Royalty, in the shape of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, paid a visit which included



luncheon in the Council Chambers. The catering was carried out by the well-known Anthony's Hotel in West Albert Road, now long since gone.

During the morning the Royal couple had visited Rothes Colliery and had gone 1,600 feet below the surface to meet men at the coal face. It was the first time that a reigning monarch had been down a pit/mine since King George V in 1912.

There are a number of iconic photographs of the Queen dressed in a white, zippered boiler suit with a white headscarf below a white helmet. Black rubber gumboots were useful to navigate the many puddles encountered. So, even then water was an issue.

At the end of her visit, the Queen was presented with a small model of a miner's lamp made by 78 year old Alex Moyes who had worked in the pits for 60 years.



A short trip by car brought the couple to the Town House where they were greeted by Provost Gourlay. The afternoon

was taken up by a visit to the new Kirkcaldy High School. By any measurement it was a full day and we are fortunate to have some photographs of the Town House event. When the Queen appeared on the balcony she



was greeted by the cheers of thousands.

It was a strange feeling researching and writing this part of the story in the month when the Queen's long reign came to an end.

The Town House which may have been controversial at the time, especially in terms of the cost, along with the demolition of several opulent mansions which had years of life left in them.

It could be argued that the new building was too large and spacious for the requirements of the time, but credit has to be given where credit is due. With the passing, by central government, of new laws and regulations, local authorities had many new responsibilities thrust upon them, which by definition, meant more staff being required.

It can be argued therefore that the staff expanded to fill the space. So, whether by luck or good judgement the building was capable of housing almost the entire Town Council staff until its abolition in 1976.

There can be no doubt that the design has stood the test of time and it remains an imposing building enhanced by its Square. The entrance hall is very impressive with its sweeping staircase and the mural certainly catching the eye.

Thoughts for the future might be to remember the late Queen Elizabeth and her visit to Kirkcaldy. Given



that, very possibly, there will be another coronation next year- perhaps the two teak benches could have the name of Charles III added and the letter box with the Coronation Coach restored. These simple suggestions may be perceived as a nice touch, connecting directly with the opening ceremony 70 years previously.

Finally – can someone tell us the fate of the Town Clock? It seems to have disappeared off the face of the earth.

The best and warmest part of this story comes as the conclusion. Not only did the town have a new House – so did Mrs. Janet Aird and Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Paterson. These three residents of the Links had a combined age of 255 and in November 1954 they became neighbours in Barnet Crescent. This was a result of the “Kirkcaldy Old People's Cottage Scheme”. They were the first tenants of the initial two properties provided under the scheme.

Mrs. Aird, a widow, was 84 years old and lived in a tenement at 3 Heggie's Wynd. She had been in ill health recently but still rose every morning at 5.00am and went to the “store” at 6.30am for her milk and rolls. She had lived in the Links all her life and when she moved to her new house she discovered electricity – yes, until then she had cooked on the open fire and had never had light other than from a paraffin lamp!

Mr. & Mrs. Paterson lived at 165 Links Street and

Mrs. Paterson was an invalid. The stairs leading to the house had become almost impossible for them. Mr. Paterson described his new home as a "bonny wee hoose". Almost unbelievably when tenants moved into new houses, they often had visits from the Electricity Company to show them how to work electrical appliances.

The condition of many of the houses in the area meant that 520 families required to be rehoused and Bailie Kay had remarked that "The Sanitary Inspector's report on these houses had read like a story from the Middle Ages".

To many of the readers cooking on an open fire and trimming a paraffin wick must be almost impossible to believe – but it happened. We are pleased to feature two of the photographs from the *Fife Free Press* of the event and perhaps they too could also finally say - "there's no place like home".