

339 – 343 High Street Kirkcaldy

Over 400 Years of History.

Foreword

For this month's object, we have worked in tandem with the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust, the owners and custodians of this 'object'. The object is one of the finest surviving 16th century townhouses in Scotland. It took its present form when it belonged to a shipbuilding family called Law. This Category 'A' Listed Building (listed in 1975) is both architecturally and historically important due to the high standard of decoration and features found within its walls. Especially of interest is a 17th century wall painting of a ship which is possibly commemorating the arrival of Anne of Denmark to these shores in 1589. Please join us on our journey of discovery of the 2nd oldest house in the "Lang Toun".





In the Beginning



The earliest extant charter for the Burgh of Kirkcaldy was conferred by Charles the First in 1644. This charter confirms earlier charters of the 14th century, conferred by two of his predecessors, most notably Robert the First and David the Second, granting the town a type of Burgh status, a Burgh of Regality, under the auspices of the Abbey Church of Dunfermline. A charter of 1451, a feu-ferme charter, allowed the burgh to have semi-autonomous power through its magistrates and bailies. After the Reformation and the dissolution of the Abbey, Kirkcaldy was increasingly regarded as a Royal Burgh, in all but name, and participated in the Convention of Royal Burghs of Scotland in the late 1500s. The Charles the First charter of 1644 finally gave Kirkcaldy its “stamp of approval” as a Royal Burgh.

The earliest settlement in the area grew up around the mouth of the East Burn. In time it became a village, the landing place a quay and the rough track which led towards the Tiel Burn gradually saw houses built along its length. By the time the Burgh was formed the settlement stretched between the two burns – a distance of



roughly a mile and a half. However, the Burgh never reached more than a quarter of a mile inland – hence the reason for it being referred to as the “Lang Toun”. The map clearly shows its length and lack of width!

For reasons of defence the Burgh had to be limited in size, and the East Port was situated at the Port Brae, with the western boundary at Louden’s Wynd. The religious centre was on the high ground where the Parish Church now stands. This was approached by what was and still is Kirk Wynd. The Wynd continued through the Town Wall by a third



gate, the Kirk Wynd Port. This gate also led the way to the Town Lands, which were small parcels of land allocated to townsmen for personal

cultivation. These stretched as far as where Victoria Road lies today. Beyond that and reaching as far as Templehall and the Dunnikier policies were the moors. The moors were held by the



townspeople “in common”, meaning that all householders had a right to pasture their cattle there, and to cut peat for fuel. The other common land was the 8.172 acres given to the town in the 1644 charter. This area ran between the High Street and the foreshore, with Louden’s and George Burn Wynds forming the east / west boundary. All that now

remains is the tiny fragment which forms the Volunteers Green. As the story unfolds these lands come to play an important part.

Before we embark on the narrative it is worth mentioning that from the earliest times the Burgh was governed by magistrates, and a council elected by the Burgesses (citizen or freeman of a burgh). Kirkcaldy's burgesses were so honoured by this right, that in 1588, they agreed "never to have a Provost, lest they should be reduced to the servitude suffered by people in other burghs". This was not rescinded until 1685.

The High Street (or King's Gate) had a second street running parallel to it slightly further inland, and on rising ground. This is the Hill Street of today. The Market Cross and the Tolbooth were sited on the High Street, and a plaque marking the site of the cross is fixed into the road close to the former Marks and Spencers.



Kirkcaldy's wealth was mainly based on, and then developed through its harbour. It is little wonder then that the two oldest buildings

in the town lie

within a stone's throw of the harbour. Many merchants made



fortunes from shipping, and their wealth was often displayed by the fine buildings they inhabited, including ornate decoration both inside and out.

However, the industrialists who came to prominence in the 19th century moved inland to the new suburbs. Until the early 1800s, the town had basically retained its original boundaries, but gradually the suburbs extended inland with David Street, George Street, and Whytescauseway being built. As the century unfolded further substantial homes were built in East and West Fergus Place, Swan Road and Beveridge Road. The once prestigious houses of the merchants and ship-owners were gradually either demolished, or altered into tenements and commercial premises. Others were subdivided and let. Much of the early High Street buildings remained, albeit mostly in a decaying and failing state, until many were swept away in the clearances of the 1960 / 70s.

Up until the early 18th century Kirkcaldy was a place of “modest prosperity” built very much on its Burgh status which allowed it to trade. The importance of trade to Kirkcaldy is shown by the composition of the Town Councils of the time. In 1662 for example, of the 21 elected members, three represented the crafts; eight the merchants; and ten were from those with shipping interests. Given Kirkcaldy at this stage of its development had a population of around 3000; it is not surprising that the same families and often the



same men wielded power for lengthy periods. The names of prominent shipping families dominate the Burgh Council records of the time, and some/many of them live on today in street names. These include the Malcolms, Oliphants, Elders and the Laws who all lived in close proximity to the harbour. These properties, and indeed most of the High Street, were originally made from timber which was plastered, or some even constructed from wattle and daub. As the wealth of the shipping and merchant classes increased these were replaced by substantial stone buildings, with plush and well furnished interiors. Behind the houses were long burgage plots. Their prime purpose was cultivation, growing fruit and vegetables for the household. Other uses were in keeping animals, as a midden, workshops and often a well for water. Despite the extensive ground at the rear of the properties, extensions tended to be made at the front, which ultimately led to the narrowing of the High Street. Along the rear of the burgage plots (riggs) ran a lane which in time became Hill Street and Hill Place. From these, ran a number of Wynds to the High Street, with Kirk Wynd being by far the most important.

The Civil War had a major impact on

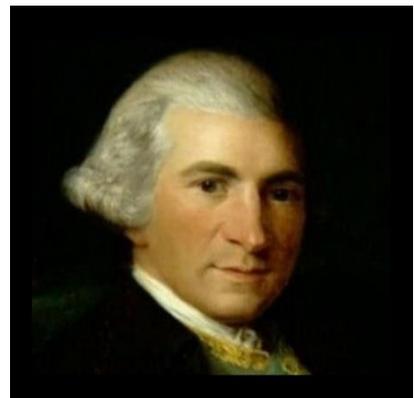


the Town's prosperity, and as the 17th century came to a close the town was reduced to near poverty with matters being exacerbated by the great storm of 1717 which resulted in great damage to the harbour. In the vernacular of the time, it was described as a "violente storme" with the pier "dung through and through." The result of the downturn in fortunes meant parts of the town lands had to be feued to raise revenue, and then almost all that remained had to be sold to meet the cost of the harbour repairs.



In 1714, just a few years before the storm, William Adam, an architect and one of Kirkcaldy's greatest sons established the first Scottish Manufactory of pantiles in Kirkcaldy. He is of course best known as the father of the illustrious

architects who bore his name. Robert Adam is possibly still the best known of all Scottish architects (Charles Rennie Mackintosh would also be a strong contender). It is a tragedy that their Link's birthplace was not preserved. Sadly, men whose style and influence dominated the late Georgian period in Western Europe, North America and Russia are remembered in their hometown only by a street name (and only to one of them at that!).





The Town's fortunes were revived from the close of the 18th century, firstly through linen weaving, and then through floor cloths and linoleum. The eventual part played by Michael Nairn can never be underestimated. These industries rekindled the town's economy, and in no small way

contributed to its involvement in trade both in this country and internationally. In 1831, Kirkcaldy was described as the "most thriving town on the north coast of the Firth of Forth" (Kirkcaldy Burgh Records Report, to accompany submission for Great Reform Act 1832).

Records show that Kirkcaldy had a small but active harbour as far back as 1451, with its dues contributing to the wealth of the town. The present harbour was built in the early 16th century. It is believed to have been built on the site of the earlier port. Kirkcaldy harbour was certainly an important arrival point for shipping as is evidenced by the fact that Scandinavian timber was landed there for use in Falkland Palace.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, Kirkcaldy, being on the east coast, traded with the eastern coast of England, continental Europe and the Baltic States /

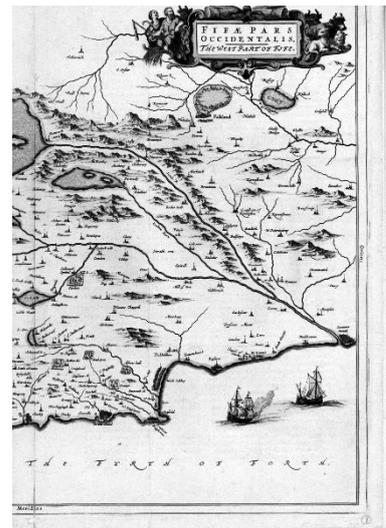


Russia. The Scottish west coast ports tended to trade with the English west coast, Ireland and gradually with America.

As the 17th century dawned Kirkcaldy's exports included hides, wool, herring, salmon, coal and salt. It seems that beer was imported from the continent.

The harbour was extended and deepened in the later 18th century.

We read in the 'Caledonian Mercury' of the 7th May 1785 – "that in the night betwixt Saturday and Sunday last, a sloop in Kirkcaldy Harbour took fire. The neighbourhood was instantly alarmed, and the flames were soon got under: unluckily two men who were on board the vessel lost their lives. If the fire had gone on a little longer unperceived, the whole vessels in the harbour would have been burnt down, it being low water".



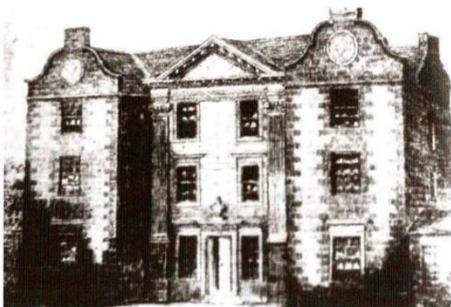
We also learn that in 1796, on the 1st November, the 'Scots Magazine' carried news that – "The passage boat from Leith to Kirkcaldy, in attempting to make Kirkcaldy Harbour, got on the rocks to the eastward, and soon after went to pieces. All on board were saved, but goods to a considerable amount were lost". (The above paragraphs were converted from using 'f' in place of 's' to make for easier reading).

Civil engineer, James Leslie, from Dundee, constructed a new wet dock and pier between 1843 and 1846. This was done to facilitate the growing number of ships arriving with flax, timber and hemp. Turning to exports, it allowed greater volumes of coal and linen to leave the port. The East Pier was also extended at this time. 1906-09 saw further expansions. These consisted of expanding the outer harbour, constructing a new South Pier and another extension to the East Pier. These expansions and extensions were required to accommodate increasing exports of linoleum and coal. Paper, malt, grain and textiles were also exported from Kirkcaldy. During the First World War, the port was taken over at one stage by the American Navy.

On the 21st February 1916 we learn that at Cupar Sheriff Court, one Otto Johannes Egroos, a seaman aboard the steamship 'Fortunatus', being an alien, had landed at Kirkcaldy. This was despite being warned by his captain not to disembark. It appeared that he got hold of a young soldier who was on guard duty, and asked him to go for a drink with him. The accused, a Russian/Finn told the court that he was tempted to go ashore as he had seen a public house sign just opposite the harbour! Result £1 or 10 days. (Fife Free Press).

The Story Unfolds.

Having painted a backdrop designed to demonstrate the importance of the harbour to the town's prosperity, and the wealth of those with shipping interests, it is time to move on to the actual object. Although the property is now recognised as an outstanding example of a 16th century townhouse, which has been tastefully restored to an outstanding level, it was not always such. The recognition and refurbishment are comparatively recent, and the names 'Law's Close' and 'Merchant's House' also fall into the same bracket. Until the renovation and refurbishment the property was simply 339-343 High Street. The house which we see today was built around 1590 for David Law, a wealthy ship-owner and merchant. The two current shop fronts were inserted in the 1920's although both premises were utilised for retail long before that.



Gladney House, demolished 1935

It is true to say that many fine historic buildings sometimes slip into a state of decay and neglect, ultimately leading to their demolition. Kirkcaldy is and has been a major culprit, and the town

has to be thankful that 339-343 High Street did not meet that fate. This was largely thanks to what was then, a recently formed Trust in harness with a number of skilled professionals and artisans.

‘Conserving the Past – Enriching the Future’

The above is the Mission Statement of the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust. In its 35 years history its aim has been to regenerate



historic buildings for the benefit of others. The Trust is a charity which plays a unique and important role in preserving and promoting the nation’s heritage. The Trust collaborates with local communities and others to preserve significant Scottish properties seen to be at risk. The Trust operates through a small team and receives no public funding. In the past 35 years – 30 buildings have been saved /restored through the raising of over 25 million pounds, the team have specialist skills in historic building preservation, event management, expertise in interpretation, delivering educational programmes and fundraising (as demonstrated by the monies raised).

The mission is not just to preserve the buildings. The aim is to create a sustainable future for these historic buildings that

are treasured by, and relevant to, the communities they serve. The desire is to achieve sustainability through providing rentable office/retail space, educational and learning opportunities, wedding and venue hire, and an interesting range of events and performance. All these objectives and projects have to be achieved by grants and philanthropy alone. These are often complex projects which ultimately see the repair of, and the re-use of listed buildings. The buildings restored to date, and this is not an inclusive list, include:-

Hippodrome Cinema, Bo'ness.

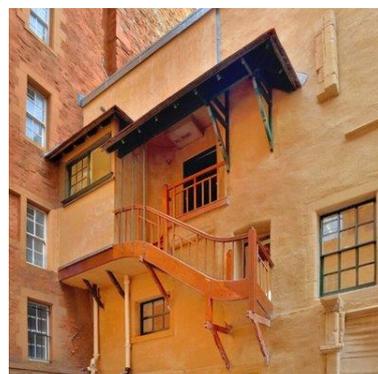


Greenlaw Town Hall. Scottish Borders.

Blackburn House, West Lothian.

Lady Cathcart's House in Ayr.

Riddle's Court, Edinburgh.



Strathleven House, Dumbartonshire.

Strathpeffer Pavilion.

Cromarty Manse.

St Ninian's Manse in Leith.

In the full list of impressive, historic and significant structures sits 339-343 High Street Kirkcaldy. All too often unrecognised as such – this is a building of architectural and historical importance. Kirkcaldy possesses a building which ranks alongside those mentioned above, and was top of the list for restoration when the programme first unfolded. This property and its garden should be recognised and cherished by all in the “Lang Toun”. Whilst it is not in Falkland Palace, a Holyrood Palace or a Hopetoun House – it is of significant importance.

The basic history of both the building and the regeneration are told on the excellent information boards in the back court. However, the team's intention was to uncover what the boards do not disclose - what was the driving force behind the formation of the Trust, and why was 339-343 High Street chosen so early in its existence? In simple terms – why Kirkcaldy and what is so special about this particular property?

For the answers we approached George McNeill, a trustee from day one. George had trained as a civil engineer, but changed tack to become a planner. He rose in time to be

Head of Planning in the West Lothian. George could not have been more helpful, and his responses to our probing are given below.

“SHBT was founded in 1985 by a group of people associated with the Scottish Georgian Society. The Society had promoted the creation of a number of regionally based Building Preservation Trusts, and it was felt that a Trust with a country-wide remit would be useful. I was one of the founding members and remain a Trustee. In part the Trust was formed with a view to “Law's Close” as it became known becoming one of its early projects.

The building (affectionately known then as "Fish Teas House" after the large sign on its facade) was brought to the attention of the Trust by David Walker, the then Chief Building Inspector for Scotland. He drew attention to the age of the building, and that it contained many early features such as ornate plaster ceilings. At one of its early meetings in 1985, the Trust agreed to seek to purchase the top part of the building, which had been made into flats, but were by that time unoccupied. Acquisition Loans were obtained from the Architectural Heritage Fund, and with grants received from the Historic Buildings Council, SHBT was able to carry out initial safeguarding work to make the building wind and watertight, and carried out archaeological investigations to establish the building's origins. These



investigations revealed that the building had even earlier origins, and contained remarkable paint finishes including a painting of a ship on one of the walls.

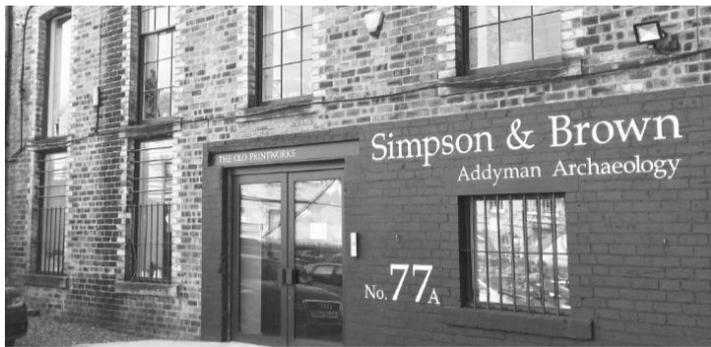
Although the building had been "saved" it still did not have a future, and the Trust only owned part of it. Over time the Trust borrowed more from the Architectural Heritage Fund, and managed to acquire the ground floor former chip shop and post office. Once the property was fully in the Trust's ownership it was in a position to consider a full restoration project. Unfortunately, many years had passed since the Trust embarked on its acquisition of the building, and the timescale for the repayment of the loans had passed. This was a critical time for both the building and the Trust. Happily, the Heritage Lottery Fund had been launched, and Fife Council had established a Townscape Heritage Initiative for Kirkcaldy, and Law's Close was designated a priority building.

At SHBT's initiative a meeting was called in the building with representatives of the main stakeholders including Historic Scotland, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Architectural Heritage Fund and Fife Council. The meeting concluded with a joint agreement to push for a full restoration of the building and a range of grants were eventually pieced together that allowed SHBT to proceed.

When the restored property was opened, it was twenty years since the Trust had first acquired parts of the building... a demonstration of the tenacity required to fulfil many restoration projects”.

The above is a fascinating and interesting insight into the highs and lows of the project and its eventual success. We are indebted to George for his contribution.

Hand in hand with the Trust is another organisation who had a major part to play in the restoration, and that is the



Edinburgh architectural practice of Simpson & Brown. Founded in 1977 by James Simpson and Stewart Brown as an architectural practice, it has evolved into a multi-

disciplinary firm which now offers archaeology, architectural history, heritage consultancy and master planning services. Over its 43 years existence the firm has not only been responsible for conserving some of the United Kingdom's most important structures, but has developed a growing reputation for the development of environmentally sound new buildings. James is not only interested in conservation and regeneration in the United Kingdom, as some of his current interests are in India. There he is a consultant to the Punjab Government for projects in Amritsar (to eradicate any confusion – not the Indian restaurant at 274 High Street, Kirkcaldy!), and has advised on the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta.

James Simpson continues to lecture and campaign for heritage causes in Scotland and beyond.

Dr. James Simpson the co-founder of the firm was happy to recollect his, and the firm's involvement with the project. Dr.

Simpson's primary interest was always in historic buildings and he praised the early "Charitable Buildings Preservation Trusts" which were an extremely useful vehicle for rescuing historic buildings.

Dr. Simpson had started the Cockburn Conservation Trust, which was linked to the Cockburn Association, with the intention to undertake restoration projects in Edinburgh. It was then that David Walker alerted Dr. Simpson to 339-343 High Street Kirkcaldy. The result



Dr James Simpson OBE

was as we know the setting up The Scottish Historic Buildings Trust to take it on. Dr Simpson recounts that in the earlier days public funding for important projects was much more easily obtained without the bureaucracy and competitive tendering required today.

In essence, James Simpson, a major player in the formation of the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust saw the whole restoration project through from start to finish. He was also heavily involved in the 'coming together' of the bank of skilled workers who carried out and completed the project – over what was a twenty year period. It would appear that in the conservation world everyone seems to know each other and this is how David Walker came to alert James Simpson / SHBT to 339-343 High Street.

While not directly relating to the story, the root of their connection is well worth a glance. James Simpson started his working life with an architect - Ian Gordon Lindsay –possibly

the most important Scottish conservation architect of his time. The list of restoration projects he was involved with is astonishing, and in Fife includes the restoration of both Ceres and St. Monans Parish Churches.

However, these pale in comparison with the undertaking for the National Trust of Scotland of the restoration of the village of Culross between 1932 and 1966. He was also heavily involved with restoration work for the National Trust in Falkland between 1936



and 1938. It was Lindsay, who just before the war was commissioned by the Marquis of Bute to draw up lists of important buildings in 103 Scottish towns and villages based on an 'Amsterdam' model of three categories (A.B.C.). This work continued after the war, and this basic list was used to introduce statutory protection for listed buildings in 1947, after the whole of Scotland was covered.

David Walker was the employee delegated by Ian Lindsay to visit and categorise the buildings. David Walker and James Simpson therefore knew each other from working with Lindsay, and so explains why David Walker sought out James Simpson to alert him to 339 -343 High Street.

It is a sobering thought that without these links the property might never have been saved or restored, and the treasures inside lost forever.

Dr. Simpson gave us a list of the most important memories he has of the project, and these will be covered later.

However, for now, here is a quote which again cements the importance of the property. “In all the conservation projects I have been involved in, and they number above 1000, Law’s Close is in the top dozen”. This quote is from a man whose body of work included York Minster, St. Giles Cathedral and Westminster Abbey.

The Work Commences – Twenty Years of Endeavour

In the 1970s, 343 High Street was the dominant part of the building which was entered by a passage now named “Law’s Close”. The shop on the east side of the passageway was owned by Mr Lena, the Italian proprietor of the well known fish and chip shop. Many will recollect the large lettering on the face of the shop – proclaiming its purpose to one and all. The shop on the west side of the close was the Harbour Post Office, which also served as a newsagent and tobacconist. It was run by Mr Wallace, and then by Mr and Mrs Heales.

Mr Lena retired in 1980 and the rented shop was renamed “The Jumbo”, selling Chinese and European carry out meals.

Mr Lena must have had an “entertaining” night on the 4th December 1954, when a Glasgow miner was charged with assault, breach of the peace and malicious mischief. “On that Saturday night in the fish and chip restaurant at 341 High Street, Robert Kane, had



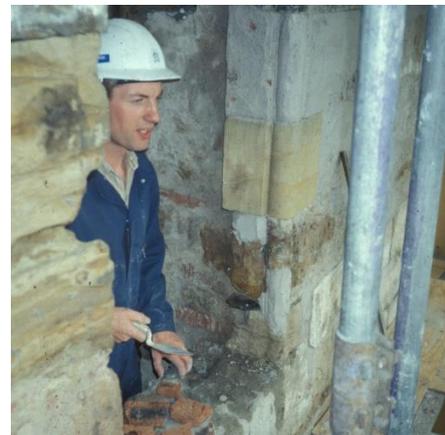
assaulted John Lena by striking him a blow on his left shoulder with his right fist, throwing a bottle of vinegar at him: shouted and bawled and conducted himself in a disorderly manner; and wilfully and maliciously threw a salt cellar (a-salt?) at a wall show case and thereby broke a pane of glass valued at 3/-. Kane who pled guilty was fined £3 with the option of 30 days"! (Fife Free Press)

It was in 1983 that David Walker alerted James Simpson to the fact that John Lena was in hospital leaving the building lying empty and possibly at risk. As described above, this led to the formation of the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust, with the intention of saving / restoring the property.

By 1986 the Trust had secured funding to repair the basic structure of the building, to make it weatherproof, and to restore its external finishes and appearance. Through Simpson and Brown, the appointed architects, contracts were awarded to individual tradesman working under Rory Young - the "conservator in charge". Rory also had a particular task, and that was to repair the front of the building using the lime method which had recently been pioneered on Wells Cathedral and elsewhere. James Simpson highlighted this work as being one of his outstanding memories. In his view, the painstaking skill displayed by Rory Young was of the highest standard and very little of the original stone had to be removed or replaced. Only as a last resort was any non original stone used. Lime mortar was used to point the masonry and then lime putty and lime wash gave the finish we see today. The frontage gives an excellent

first impression and Rory Young's supervision was described as being "one of great care with a spirit of controlled enthusiasm". The 19th century front chimney gable was removed and the roof was strengthened by the efforts of an expert engineer, Ted Ruddock. It was then covered by carmylie stone tiles. Ted Ruddock, who was Head of Architecture at the University of Edinburgh, was an outstanding engineer and everyone the team spoke to commented on his vision, skill and ingenuity in finding a way to stabilise the building.

We tracked down Rory Young to his native Cirencester and sought to learn about some of his memories. As mentioned earlier, in conservation work everyone seems to know everyone else. This was the case with James Simpson and Rory Young. They had both attended an annual 'Scottish

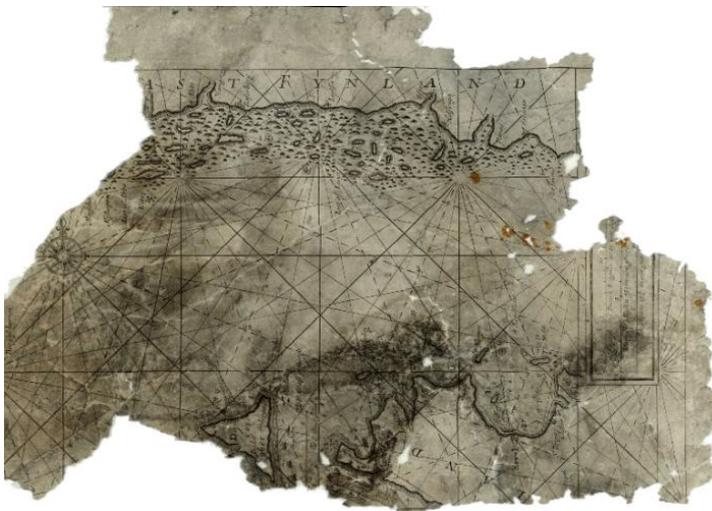


Limes Forum', which had been held at Culzean Castle, and had struck up a friendship. Rory had a skills set involving the use of lime in various guises. When the frontage required repair James Simpson turned to Rory. He in turn was delighted as this was his first sortie into Scotland to carry out conservation work. His small team of four set about making the building safe through strengthening by building, packing and pinning. Rory explained the use of lime putty, lime mortar, lime plaster and lime washing in giving the building its restored look. The putty was mixed with modern brick particles to give it strength, and through its use only 5% of the original stone frontage had to be replaced. It appears that in much stone conservation repairs the loss can be as

high as 50%. Lime compounds allow buildings to breathe, and are not rigid, so move with the building. Cement finishes hold any water which gets behind it and are quite rigid and therefore liable to cracking from any movement. Working in lime rather than cement is more labour intensive and takes more time to set.

The corbelled part of the front wall was also restored using lime putty and shows no deterioration since the restoration was completed.

Internally wallpaper, hardboard and modern floorboards were carefully stripped back and these revealed substantial areas of fabric and finishes both behind and beneath. It was at this point that one of the most important finds came to light and this was James Simpson's outstanding memory. It



was only thanks to the 'sensitivity and vigilance' of Rory Young that this artefact came to light. Rory noticed what appeared to be a crumpled black rag when he removed a shovelful of rubble

from between the joists. On examination it turned out to be a 1660 chart of the Gulf of Finland – a piece of primary historical importance. It offered irrefutable evidence that Kirkcaldy in the 17th century was trading with the Baltic States and Russia. The map was presented to Kirkcaldy Museum by the Trust. Rory had used his experience of

previous works to know to expect finds below floorboards, especially in gaps between floors and ceilings. Often these gaps were filled with ash to act as primitive soundproofing / insulation. When Rory saw it was a map, he contacted James Simpson who in turn called in the Scottish Maritime Museum. That same day a representative came to Kirkcaldy to see the discovery.

It was also from the ash being carefully examined before going into a skip that more finds came to light. These were Hanseatic trading tokens – further evidence of Kirkcaldy's trading with the Baltic area.

Rory spent a total of 12 months spread over two years working on the property. His abiding memory is of the discovery of the map, but he also took great pride and pleasure from the work he and his team carried out in stabilising the building. When he first saw 339-343 it was in a sorry state and covered in scaffolding. The cement finish which had been placed on top of the harling had at least been removed but a lot of work lay ahead of the team. He never doubted that despite its perilous condition it could be saved. His working lifetime had seen similar challenges being faced and he was confident of the team's ability. His confidence was not misplaced.



Under Rory's supervision the windows were replaced to the pattern of those surviving from the late 17th century sashes. It was interesting to learn

that the rafters were from Baltic pine, another clear piece of evidence of Kirkcaldy's trading partners at the time. Another question we had was "are the small dormer windows original or added at a later date?" Original, or reasonably soon after was the response- the evidence being that the carpenter in Rory's team had found grooves in the rafters which had held the window supports. So – dormers are not new – they go back possibly 400 years!

Rory advised us that he had kept a "Day Book" of his work on the site – highlighting each day's work and each day's finds. He also prepared a synopsis of this work over the 12 month period, and we are hopeful that in time we might have some of the contents scanned and added to this narrative.

This brought the first part of the project to a conclusion and there followed a lengthy period of inactivity as the Trust attempted to raise funds to see the project through to completion. The building lying empty meant that it could not be used as planned and intended. It had not reached the stage of providing retail and office space to allow it to earn its keep. There was a brief flurry of activity in 1998 when Gordon Ewart of Kirkdale Archaeology excavated part of the garden and also the ground floor and undertook a programme of recording. We hope through time to make contact with Gordon, and try and establish his recollections and results, especially in the garden.

Archaeological excavations and building analysis done at the time revealed that 339-343 High Street had developed from a much earlier building, possibly stretching back to the earlier

part of the 16th century. It is believed that some of the stone from the earlier building is incorporated into the rear of the present building. Excavations in 1997/1998 revealed the 'footing' of the original frontage of the building. This was some 2.4 metres further back than today's frontage. The original building line can be seen further to the east and west, where the buildings sit back by the aforementioned 2.4 metres. The excavations also revealed possible fire damage to the original frontage, and this could well have been a contributing factor in the decision to rebuild the property in 1590.

What could be derived from the surveys was that in all probability the original building was of two storeys, but little could be said of the internal arrangements, as there was little archaeological evidence or source material. It was impossible to establish if the earlier building was entirely residential or if the ground floor was used for commercial purposes.

In 1590 David Law carried out both rebuilding and extending the premises. A second floor was added under a new roof structure. The current frontage was added at this time, taking the building the 2.4 metres further into the street. The addition of a stone turnpike stair to the upper floors was also carried out at this time.

Without any tenants, and the building lying empty for a lengthy period, it had started to look a sorry sight. However in 2003 a funding package was finally put together and work recommenced. For this second stage W.B.S. Keillor of Dundee acted as the main contractor, with Ian Hay of that firm

appointed as site foreman. James Simpson again had overall charge of the project on behalf of the Trust.

Tom Addyman of Addyman Associates undertook further archaeological recording before work commenced. Plumbing, heating, electrics, as well as computer cabling were installed. Interior works and decoration were all completed, and work was then put in hand to revive and restore some of the outstanding finds.

The lime putty from the first phase had raised issues in some areas of the frontage. Using lime putty was in its infancy when it was first used on this building. It transpired that some of the modern brick flakes mixed in with the putty contained sulphur, and in some places it had reacted and “blown” the lime coating. Alex Hyndlands and Derek Gordon reinstated the lime plaster.

The Principal Significances of the Building

The significance of Law’s Close derives from the fact that, despite its long history, its core structure remains largely unchanged. The shape of the site, with a narrow street frontage is typical of a Scottish rigg plot, except that this building’s width in comparison to its neighbour’s marks it out as a high status dwelling.

Inside, the existence of a decorated plaster ceiling and two stretches of flamboyant painted panelling, both from the late 1600s, result in an interior whose rarity is of international importance. These are preserved throughout the interior at ground and the first two floors, although often covered by later linings and over paintings.

Stemming from the late 16th century, probably around the time of the 1590s major rebuilding, much hand painting decoration has been discovered in many areas. Elements of these works are hidden behind 17th century decoration and so are not accessible.

Paintings have been discovered on the wall plaster at ground and second floor levels. These include the Burgh of Kirkcaldy Coat of Arms at ground floor level. This striking find can be viewed on a visit to the ‘Merchants House Coffee Shop’, when cafes etc. are once again allowed to open to the public. A vine scroll motif, incorporating the head of a lion and the ship are also a feature of the walls. The entire first floor ceiling was also painted in a manner typical of the period. These were “vigorously painted geometrical designs, arabesques in clusters of fruit, all designed to create extraordinarily rich interiors.



At the end of the 17th century further remodelling of the interior took place. Contemporary panelled interiors were installed on the first and second floors, each with ornate plastered ceilings. The ceiling of the eastern first floor room is of particular importance with its decoration cast from moulds which have been seen on other 17th century ceilings. The corner of this room revealed evidence of a possible tapestry hanging. The panelling in each of the six principal rooms were over painted to represent marble and other exotic stones and a variety of equally exotic woods. In two of the rooms the wooden finishes were over painted with

striking geometric designs. These were hailed as potentially significant by James Simpson, as this style was typical of Russian decorating style of the time.

In the 18th century the building continued to be of high status. A crimson flock wallpaper of mid 18th century design superseded the tapestry showing the change to what was a fashionable redecoration, therefore suggesting a continued taste for opulent interiors.

These are some of the features which make the house what it was and is. Words cannot describe the vibrancy of the finishings – they have to be seen. Doors Open Day offers that opportunity, and whether it is by visiting in person, or viewing via zoom if that is still the situation – the team would commend taking the opportunity.

As part of our discussions with the Trust, we learned that a 15 minute film/documentary of the property is in production and should be available for release in the summer of 2021.

Given that the property is let out as offices and retail space to earn its keep – it can only be accessible at limited times. Every opportunity should be taken to make the most of each and every opportunity.

It became clear that by the end of the 18th century the building had been tenanted out. This is reflected by the decline in the quality of the later finishes, and the increasing subdivision of the interiors. Quite simply the merchant class were leaving the more crowded and unhealthy parts of the town for the suburbs or countryside. This led to the once opulent properties no longer being fashionable. The early

19th century saw the last major remodelling with the stair tower to the rear being erected. The original turnpike stairs were removed. New rooms with fireplaces were inserted in its place the flues rising to the new gable above the street frontage.

The building continued to decline as time marched on. It appears to have become even more subdivided and many alterations were made in the back court – including the installation of a bakery – the oven of which can still be seen today.

The glories of the interior were in time covered over and all but forgotten, until David Walker fortunately spoke to James Simpson.



Owen Davidson and Sally Cheyne of the 'Conservation Studio' restored the painted ceiling and the ship. Again the team were very fortunate to be able to track down and approach Owen Davidson. Owen proved to be approachable and was delighted to recount his experiences of the work the 'Conservation Studio' carried out. Owen carried out the work with his wife and business partner Sally Cheyne. Sadly, we learned that Sally had died some years ago at a very young age. Owen's background was in the study of fine art and paint conservation. It almost goes without saying that they were known to James Simpson – and it was James who recommended them to the Trust to carry out the restoration of the two items. As with all the people we have approached,

this building remains one of their favourite projects, and Owen was no different. He still likes to keep up to date with the area and knew that Gordon Brown had recently officially opened the two retail shops which form part of the complex.



On seeing the ship and ceiling for the first time, Owen admitted to a “wow factor” – although faced with an unexpected problem. The electricians, who were cabling the premises, had cut a ragging channel horizontally through

the painting. The channel was six inches wide! No blame was attached to anyone, as the painting was obscured by dust and dirt as the building had lain empty for so long. The channel went straight through the mast and sails, just above the deck. Owen set to work on filling the “trench”, with Sally stabilising the edges of the painting. Then came the fine brushwork needed to replace the lost paintwork and restore the painting to its complete form. Owen did concede that this was possibly made easier by the fact that the painting was not “over complex, but consisted of relatively simple lines”.

The other task was the restoration of the ceiling painting. Owen recollected that the room was what he called “decorated in ice cream colours – pink and pistachio and rather tacky, but they made me smile”. The ceiling decoration, where still in existence, required to be conserved and cleaned, with the missing decoration having to be

replaced. Fortunately, the basic pattern was compact and constantly repeated. It consisted mainly of roses, fruit and grapes. The conservation was done by building up layer upon layer over the original work using gelatine glue applied through tissue paper. Owen suggested and championed the use of monochrome on the replaced areas, leaving the original portions in colour. Owen made the monochrome paint himself, using glue and pigment.

Owen tells a story showing that mistakes were also made centuries ago. He observed that when originally painted, at least two painters were involved, and it was obvious that they had started at different sides of the room. Rather like starting a tunnel from both ends – it is vital that they meet exactly. Here the painters ended up not matching exactly – with the final patterns out of kilter!

Owen felt he obtained greater satisfaction from the work on the ceiling, as it took him out of his comfort zone, and he has fond memories of his time at 339-343.

Mike Prior and Mark Nevin restored the 17th century decoration on the first floor panelling. We were fortunate to be able to speak to John Nevin who had also worked on the contract. We learned that Mike Prior had died some years ago and had been an employee of John Nevin. At the time of working on the Merchant's House, Mark was serving his apprenticeship.



John Nevin

In 1977 at the age of 20, John Nevin had completed his apprenticeship as a painter and decorator. He had determined very early that the way forward was to start his own business, and this he did, operating from one of the rooms in his mother's house. Very quickly he realised that larger

premises were required, and after an intermediate move they started trading from Swanfield in Leith, from where the firm still operates from today.

In the relatively short period from their founding they have won a raft of prizes, including numerous 'UK Painter of the Year' awards along with a raft of 'Scottish Decorators Federation' awards. The company have also won international awards. John's son Mark was apprenticed to the firm in 2003,



Mark Nevin

and the list of awards and prizes he has won are eye watering and speaks for his ability as a craftsman. The firm have carried out work on many of the most prestigious buildings in the country and include, Mount Stewart, Kenwood House, Hopetoun House, Traquair House, Dumfries House and the Royal Palace of Stirling.

The Specialist Division carries out in-house pigment analysis and stereo microscopy for cross section paint analysis. John Nevin can and does manufacture historical paints on site suitable for the National Trust and Historic Environment

Scotland's specific requirements. The firm have also advised the Forensic Laboratory of the then Lothian and Borders Police on paint sample analysis.

The purpose of the above is once again to demonstrate the quality and calibre of the people involved in the restoration. There can be little doubt that some of the best craftsmen available were employed on the project.

John recollected that the firm were involved in the project for around six months. John indicated that the areas he was involved in at 339-343 had been the work of provincial artists and was more medieval in design and workmanship than paintings from the renaissance period carried out by French or Italian craftsmen. It is however competent work carried out by local/national artisans, as opposed to international tradesmen.

As with Owen Davidson, John indicated that the designs were neither complex or elaborate and relatively easy to complete. The time needed was far greater than the necessary ability.

Owen worked alongside the Nevins at both Dumfries House and The Royal Palace of Stirling.

William Kay investigated, recorded and restored the panelling on the floor above. As



yet we have failed to track down William for his recollections.

With that the twenty year programme of repair and restoration planned by the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust was complete.

A Double Rigg Offering Tranquillity and Relaxation

When approaching the garden, via the flight of steps for the first time, many people are taken by surprise by the sheer size of the area, as well as its neat and attractive layout. By walking to the top of the garden the rising ground makes it possible to see that this rigg is significantly wider than its neighbours. It is difficult to argue other than that is a double plot, which in turn would suggest that the original 16th century building may have been of higher status than those adjoining it.

It is unsurprising given the condition of the property when it was acquired by the Trust that the garden was in no better shape but funds were secured and the garden was transformed into the oasis it is today. At one stage the Merchant's House garden was part of the Kirkcaldy Riggs Garden Project led by Fife Historic Buildings Trust. The project also encompassed Fish Wynd, Oliphant's Garden and Malcolm's Wynd. In time John Richards Landscape Architects, were appointed by the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust to work in collaboration with artists Tracy MacKenna

and Edwin Janssen to produce a concept for the design of the garden. The challenge was developing a modern garden which would relate to the history of the house. This was very successfully achieved by emphasising the productive nature by introducing vegetable plots with the aim to plant and produce leeks, peas, beetroot, lettuces and cabbages. These circular plots would be hedged by rosemary plants. An avenue of fruit trees was also planted consisting of apple, cherry, plum and pear. The intention here was again to emphasise the link to the garden's original use.

To help pay for its upkeep the idea was to use the garden's fine setting for performance events. To this end a performance area, benches and a community table have been introduced into the garden. The benches and table were commissioned in Scottish green oak and the construction carried out by Scottish craftsmen. An indication of age is added by a number of original bee boles set into the garden walls and there was also a sun dial mounted on the front wall, but sadly this is no longer there.

A pathway meanders through the grass meadow joining up all the elements. The meadow was planted in snowdrops, crocuses, daffodils and bluebells. The old original stone walls add to the atmosphere as does the bird song.

When approached, John Richards added some snippets of additional information. The original rosemary hedges were fairly quickly replaced by lavender bushes, but they are now

nearing the end of their useful life. The fruit trees came from Holland and all still survive. The circular plots were the idea of Tracy and Edwin and are of Scandinavian origin. Their intention was to avoid the traditional rectangular plots and this circular style is pleasing on the eye. The wooden furniture was constructed in the borders at a “wood school”. This was where we had a disappointment. It had been suggested that the “wood school” founded by Tim Stead had manufactured the furniture. Tim was a British sculptor and furniture maker who worked primarily in wood. His most famous commission came in 1982, when he designed and constructed the Papal Chair used at Murrayfield when Pope John Paul 11 celebrated mass. Even as we write we learned that Tim Stead’s House in the borders has been saved for the nation after significant fundraising by the Tim Stead Trust. It would have been another nice touch if we could have linked the garden to this famed wood sculptor. Sadly, we had confirmation from Tim’s widow that it was not his work. There are another two such schools in the borders and the belief is that they were manufactured there. Neither are now in operation, so we could not take that question forward.

The garden is tranquillity itself and the building seems to act as a screen to the High Street noises and is well worth a visit. You are standing in history in a spot which will hardly have changed throughout its history.

The cost of restoring and developing the garden is put at £80,000 by the Trust. The extensive area is looked after by one volunteer for whom it is a labour of love. If any reader would like to help, Stewart would be delighted if he were approached. It is a huge amount of work for any one man and Stewart is quite confident that it could be enhanced with the aid of a little more manpower.

Could you help – will you help?

When the restored property was opened by the then Chancellor Gordon Brown, it was twenty years since the Trust had first acquired parts of the building....a demonstration of the tenacity required to fulfil many restoration projects.



In total, the project cost £1.03 million. Funders included:

Historic Scotland, Heritage Lottery Fund, Scottish Enterprise Fife, Fife Environment Trust, European Regional Development Fund, Fife Council, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, the Russell Trust, Architectural Heritage Fund and the Dunard Trust.

Upon completion of the project, the building was renamed Law's Close, a slightly more memorable and characterful title

than 339-343 High Street and one that reflected its newly discovered origins.

Life Goes On – Much Then as Now

We cannot look at the buildings and gardens in isolation. They were homes and workplaces for many centuries and their footprints are a significant part of the history. From hearing of the Union of the Crowns, seeing John Paul Jones sail up the Forth, to Trafalgar, to Waterloo, to World War 1 and also World War 11 – this building has seen them all. If only buildings could talk – but not every story would be of national or international significance.

Acknowledgements

Dr. James Simpson OBE

George McNeill

John Richards

Rory Young

Owen Davidson

John Nevin

Staff of Scottish Historic Building Trust

Tom Reid

Stuart Biggar

Chip Shop Assaults

Local Labourer Jailed

Following an unprovoked assault on an innocent bystander and on the proprietor in a **Kirkcaldy** fish restaurant on Saturday night, a **Kirkcaldy** labourer appeared at Cupar Sheriff Court on Monday.

He was Frank Dougan Ross, c/o Gordon, 59 Pentland Place, and he admitted that in the fish restaurant at 343 High Street, occupied by **John Lena**, restaurateur, he assaulted **John Fenton Fairweather**, labourer, Nairn's Hostel, The Path, **Kirkcaldy**, struck him a blow on the face with his fist and kicked him on the face with his boot; assaulted **John Lena** and struck him a blow on the face with his fist, conducted himself in a disorderly manner and committed a breach of the peace.

Mr C. B. Allan, Depute Procurator Fiscal, said Ross began to curse and swear at Lena and other customers in the shop.

He then came up to the counter and asked for more chips. Lena refused to serve him and this seemed to annoy him very much indeed. He continued shouting and swearing, and when Lena said he would send for the police Ross tried to come round behind the counter.

The man Fairweather was standing at the counter eating a supper and taking no part in the matter. But he was in Ross' way as he tried to get behind the counter and for some reason suffered the brunt of Ross' bad temper. Fairweather was thrown to the ground and was kicked on the face.

The proprietor then came round to pull Ross away from Fairweather and he was punched in the face.

Mr R. Denholm, for accused, said Ross was aged 27 and the only excuse he had to offer was that he had been drinking.

Sheriff J. W. More: "I am going to treat these charges—especially the first one—as very serious. You may have inflicted grave injury to this man. There is too much of this sort of thing going on."

Sheriff More jailed Ross for 30 days.

WHY Should you Waste? If you have any Cast-Off Wearing Apparel, Boots, Furniture, Old Plate, Artificial Teeth, Tools, dispose of them, and get ready cash from a buyer who will give you the highest possible price. Write or call; distance no object. Manuel's Sale Rooms, Links Street, **Kirkcaldy**.

LOST, on Sunday, 14th October, Gold Pendant Brooch; reward. Page, **Harbour** Post Office.

LOST, on Sunday 21st, Gold Spray Brooch; reward. Page, **Harbour** Post Office.

WANTED, capable Typist, good salary. Address, No. 888 Free Press Office.

WANTED, Young Girl for Office. Apply St. Clairtown Laundry, Church Street.

WANTED, Message Girl or Boy (all day) Thos. Saunders, Draper, 147 High St.

WANTED, Man, at once, for Station Work only. Apply Kininmonth, Sang Road.

WANTED, all kinds of Plain Sewing; good work guaranteed. Mrs Finlay, 11 Gow Crescent.

NOTICE.

PARTIES may have the Drainage and Sanitary Appliances of their Properties Examined and Tested by the Patent Smoke Test, by applying to

JAMES WOOD,

PLUMBER AND GASFITTER,

243 HIGH STREET, KIRKCALDY.

At 343 High Street, Kirkcaldy, on the 10th inst. Robert, youngest son of James Seath, baker, aged 2 years 1 month—much and deeply mourned.

Employment by the day to wash or clean
Apply J. M. Fulton, Fruiterer.

TAILORS.—Wanted, at once, Good General Hand, also Good Coat Hand. Apply William Johnston, jun., Tailor and Clothier, 339 High Street, Kirkcaldy.

WAR CHARITIES ENTERTAINMENTS COMMITTEE
GRAND CHARITY BALL
(In aid of Parcels for Local Boys in the Services) in the
RIALTO TEA ROOMS
on
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1940
from 8 p.m. till 2 a.m.
TICKETS (including Ranning Buffet) 4/6 each
obtainable from RIALTO TEA ROOMS, FORRESTER, High Street
and members of the Committee. **LICENSED BAR**

NOTICE TO ANGLERS.

TROUT Fishing Opens on 1st March, and in preparation we have just received a Large and Well-Selected Stock of all kinds of Fishing Tackle from best makers, and are offering same at low prices. We make and repair Rods on the Premises, and mount Casts to suit the different waters.

INSPECTION INVITED.

A. & J. MILL,

FISHING TACKLE MAKERS AND
GENERAL IRONMONGERS,

339 HIGH STREET, KIRKCALDY.

Devon, on 29th October, 1948, the result of a flying accident. Pilot William B. McGregor (R.A.F.), aged 22 years, second son of Mr and Mrs J. McGregor, 32 Park Road, Kirkcaldy.

MERCER.—At Forth Park, on 30th October, 1948, Margaret, beloved wife of John Mercer, aged 31 years. Sadly missed.

NAPIER.—Suddenly, at E.R.I., on 30th Oct., 1948, Barbara Napier, wife of Thomas Napier, 12 Doctor's Row, Gallatown. Deeply mourned. Canadian papers please copy.

OSWALD.—At 15 Links St., Kirkcaldy on 2nd Nov., 1948, Jane Reid, beloved wife of the late Wm. Oswald.

PAGE.—On 2nd Nov., 1948, May Kirk Page, 16 Douglas St., Kirkcaldy, eldest daughter of the late Mr and Mrs Alexander Page, and sister of Lizzie R. Page, late postmistress, Harbor Post Office, Kirkcaldy.

PYE.—At 11 Gibson Place, St Clair Street, Kirkcaldy, Isabella Scott Pye, aged 73 years, second daughter of the late Alexander Pye, Pathhead. At rest.

SINCLAIR.—At 49 Meldrum Road, Kirkcaldy, on 2nd Nov., 1948, Albert Sinclair, aged 69 years, beloved husband of Annie Storey.

THOMSON.—Suddenly, at 79 Chestnut Avenue, Kirkcaldy, on 29th Oct., 1948, Jane Jaap, wife of the late John Scott and the late Robert Thomson.

WALKER.—At Hunter Hospital, on 30th Oct., 1948, Christina Walker, aged 76 years, youngest daughter of the late Thomas and Euphemia Walker, 4 Station Road, Dysart. At rest.

Smith, 9 Rosebery Terrace, Kelvinside, Glasgow.

At Winnipeg, Man., on 1st January, by the Rev. W. A. Maclean, St Giles Presbyterian Church, Wm. Lindsay, eldest son of Laurence S. Little, C.E., Winnipeg, and grandson of the late Wm. Little, architect, Kirkcaldy to Catherine (Kate) Brown, third daughter of the late Wm. Brown, plumber, Links Street, Kirkcaldy.

DEATHS.

At 341 High Street, Kirkcaldy, on the 12th inst., James Seath, baker, in his 59th year.

At 16 Oswald's Wynd, Kirkcaldy, on the 14th inst., John, second son of John Turpie, coal agent, aged 25 years—deeply regretted. Funeral private.

At Fever Hospital, Kirkcaldy, on the 13th inst., Wee David, youngest son of Michael and Janet Page, aged 20 months.

At 361 High Street, Kirkcaldy, on the 8th inst., Mary Jackson, widow of the late Joseph Hutton.

Suddenly, at 13 Maryhall Street, Kirkcaldy, on the 10th inst., at the residence of his grandfather, Alexander Ewan, David Edward, only and dearly beloved son of David and Helen Bain, 16 Glebe Park, Kirkcaldy, aged 9 months. Sadly missed.

At 11 East Smeaton Street, Kirkcaldy, on the 10th inst. (after a long and lingering illness), Agnes Wilson, aged 56 years, wife of Andrew Dryburgh, and eldest surviving daughter of the late Robert Wilson, joiner, Dairsie.

Suddenly, at 16 High Street, Kirkcaldy, on the 11th inst., James Taylor, beloved husband of Mrs. Wilson, late of Kirkcaldy, aged 60 years.

FOR SALE, Out Chaff. Apply Alex. Cairns, Oswald Road, Gallatown, Kirkcaldy.

FOR SALE, Bicycle, Gent. s, free wheel, in good condition. Apply 19 East Smeaton Street.

FOR SALE, Cottage, No. 16 Viewforth St., of 3 Apartments, Scullery, Bath, and w.c., (h. and c. throughout). Apply John Masterton, Builder.

FOR SALE, 2-Wheeled Baker's Barrow, and Oak Inlaid Corner Cupboard. Apply Geo. Nelson, 122 Links Street.

FOR SALE, Cottages at Cloandon Place, with one 4 Apartments, and one with 3 Apartments, Bath, and h. and c. throughout. Apply Menzies Bros., Cloandon Place.

FOR SALE, Handsome Walnut Bedroom Suite, almost new; greatly reduced; leaving the town. Apply 5 Falloden Crescent.

FOR SALE, Kitchen Range, tiled back, almost new; bargain. Apply 54 Alexandra Street.

FOR SALE, Baker's Biscuit Machine, in good working order. Apply, James Seath, Baker, 343 High Street, Kirkcaldy.

FOR SALE, Chip Potato Utensils; owner no further use, everything complete, will be sold cheap. Apply 113 Links Street.

AMERICAN Organs. - Several for Sale previous to Removal, 10, 11, and 14 Stops; cheap for Cash, or Payments arranged. Mellor, Sinclairtown.

CABBAGE PLANTS, very fine Stocks warranted. Lates or Drumheads 1,3 1000; 9/- 10,000; £45/- 100,000. Prepaid. All other sorts sold out. Ample Excess count given. All bags free. £100 in prizes. Gillies, Northfield, Prestonpans, largest plant grower in Britain.

EGGs, for Setting, Ancona, Buff Orpington; from the Challenge Laying Strains in England, 3s per dozen; Black Rosecomb, Bantams, 2s per doz. Coachman, Chapel House.

THE FIFE FREE PRESS, SAT

LOST, on Thursday Night, between Dundee and Kirkcaldy, Milk Pitcher. Reward at Mr Seath's Baker, 341 High Street, Kirkcaldy.

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Births, Marriages, and Deaths.

BIRTHS.

At 54 High Street, **Kirkcaldy**, on the 1st inst., the wife of Charles Hume Marshall, coachman, of a daughter.

At 81 Victoria Road, **Kirkcaldy**, on the 22d ult., the wife of David Methven, joiner, of a daughter.

At 17 Hill Place, **Kirkcaldy**, on the 1st inst., the wife of John Wellock, of a son.

At 453 High Street, **Kirkcaldy**, on the 28th ult., the wife of John Brooks, carter, of a daughter.

At 9 Coal Wynd, **Kirkcaldy**, on the 1st inst., Mrs R. O. Chadwick, of a daughter.

At 24 Herriot Street, Pathhead, on the 29th ult., the wife of Arthur Scott, labourer of a son.

At 15 Nether Street, Dysart, on the 27th ult., the wife of Andrew Greig, boiler-maker, of a daughter.

MARRIAGES.

At Masonic Hall, **Kirkcaldy**, on the 4th inst., by the Rev. William Fairweather, William Bain, to Euphemia Roger, youngest daughter of David Bonnellie, **Kirkcaldy**.

At 208 Links Street, **Kirkcaldy**, on the 4th inst., by the Rev. David Paterson John Cowan Hodge, to Margaret Gordon, both of Buckhaven.

At 57 Victoria Road, **Kirkcaldy**, on the 4th inst., by the Rev. W. J. M'Donald, M.A., St Brycedale, David Crichton, electric engineer, Gosford House, son of the late Robert Crichton, Pathhead, to Mary, eldest daughter of the late James M'Gill.

At the Manse, Dysart, on the 30th ult., by the Rev. J. W. Gibson, James Davidson, eldest son of Robert Davidson, Foodieash, to Agnes Braid Bell, eldest daughter of Robert Bell, Rosslyn Street, Gallatoun.

Laurence Key, son of Robert Wyllie, Balsusney Road, **Kirkcaldy**, to Jeanie Couper, only daughter of John A. R. Finlay, clothier, Cowdenbeath.

At the Windsor Hotel, Glasgow, on the 11th inst., by the Rev. Malcolm Forbes, M.A., Robert Hutchison Wilson, youngest son of the late George Wilson, Rosebery Terrace, **Kirkcaldy**, and of Mrs Wilson, 17 Melrose Gardens, Glasgow, to Mabel, youngest daughter of Montague Smith, 9 Rosebery Terrace, Kelvinside, Glasgow.

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Suddenly, at 13 Marshall Street, **Kirkcaldy**, on the 10th inst., at the residence of his grandfather, Alexander Ewan, David Edward, only and dearly beloved son of David and Helen Bain, 16 Glebe Park, **Kirkcaldy**, aged 9 months. Sadly missed.

At 11 East Smeaton Street, **Kirkcaldy**, on the 10th inst. (after a long and lingering illness), Agnes Wilson, aged 56 years, wife of Andrew Dryburgh, and eldest surviving daughter of the late Robert Wilson, joiner, Dairsie.

Suddenly, at 16 High Street, Lochgelly, on the 11th inst., James Taylor, beloved husband of Hay Wilson, late of **Kirkcaldy**, aged 69 years.

At 4 Glaswork Street, **Kirkcaldy** (suddenly), on the 9th inst., Emma, eldest daughter of the late Thomas Wood, foreman decorator, **Kirkcaldy** pottery, and dearly beloved wife of Alex-

cultry, Mr T. Fairless, Uddingston. B n Section — Game, Mr Wm. Cou rfar; All other Classes, Mr Wm. Morg indygates. Pigeon Section—L.R. T ers, Mr Wm. Irving, Fauldhou rietty Pigeons, Mr A. Anderson, E rgh; Working Homers, Mr Wm. L y, Auchengray. Rabbit Section—Mr line, Dundee.

The following were the principal p nners:—

EXHIBITION POULTRY.

White & Fernie, Bolnblae, Falkla
Neilson, 14 High Street, Leslie;
der, 34 Glebe Park, East Wemyss; J. 2
l, Chapel; H. Birrell, South Street, F
nk; P. Bonthrone, 24 Arthur St., C
nbroath; Wm. Donaldson, 22 Burns
apar; Neil C. Lyle, Teasses Gard
wer Largo; W. Binrie, Garth Hou
enny; D. & A. Lumsden, Freuchie;
lson, Boglily Road, **Kirkcaldy**; A.
drymple, Meadowview, Leslie; M. I
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Brown, Oldhamstocks, Cockburnsp
C. Watt, 54 High Street, Prestonpa
Borthwick, 25 Octavia Street, **Kirkcal**
Walker Moss View Bridge Str

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Wright and Menzies addressed the children, congratulating them on the steady increase that was being made in the percentage of attendance, and urging upon them still greater efforts. They also expressed their sympathy with those, who, through illness or other unavoidable cause, were just out of the prize-list. Votes of thanks were given to the two gentlemen, as representing the School Board, and for their kindness in attending, and mutual good wishes for a happy Christmas and prosperous New Year were exchanged. The school re-opens on 10th January.

BIRTHS.

At 1c2 Ronald Street, Coatbridge, on the 14th inst., to Mr and Mrs Carnichael, a son.

At Victoria Mansions, **Kirkcaldy**, on the 13th inst., to Mr and Mrs R. S. Young, a daughter.

At 541 High Street, **Kirkcaldy**, on the 15th inst., the wife of G. M. Brown, cabinetmaker, of a daughter.

MARRIAGES.

At the Lesser Hall, Pathhead, on the 24th inst., by the Rev. J. Y. Walker, Adam Taylor, to Christina Graham, third daughter of George Graham, Den Road, **Kirkcaldy**.

At Windyedge, Bedford, Carmyllie, Arbroath, on the 15th inst., by the Rev. Mr Lyon, William Duncan, printer, **Kirkcaldy**, to Margaret, second daughter of James Anderson, Carmyllie.

At 22 Wellington Street, Edinburgh, on the 22nd inst., by the Rev. R. Johnstone, M.A., B.D., Murrayfield, Albert E Weber, to Elizabeth Crooks, daughter of the late Alexander Routar, engineer, **Kirkcaldy**.

At 104 Rosslyn Street, **Kirkcaldy**, on the 17th inst., by the Rev. H. Menzies, B.D., Robert Law, eldest son of William Peggie, to Cecilia, third daughter of the late Robert Johnston, Rowland.

Kirkcaldy Woman Fined £150 PAYMENT FOR SERVICES RENDERED

Fines totalling £150 were imposed at Sheriff Court yesterday on Miss Anna Facci, 34 High Street, Kirkcaldy, who pleaded guilty through an agent to five charges of illegally sending money to Italy by means of postal packets, the amount involved being £46.

Accused pleaded guilty to having without permission, granted by or on behalf of the Treasury, sent out of the United Kingdom bank notes in postal packets, addressed to Miss Anna Facci, Fiume—Chiavari, Province di Lucca, Toscana, Italia, (1) by posting on 9th August 1947, at the General Post Office, Edinburgh, or elsewhere in the burgh, an envelope containing five Bank of England one pound notes; (2) by posting on 11th August, at the Head Post Office, Glasgow, or elsewhere in the city, an envelope containing five Bank of England one pound notes; and (3) by posting on 14th August, at the General Post Office, Edinburgh, or elsewhere in the city, a parcel consisting of two envelopes, one of which contained five Bank of England one pound notes had been interleave between sealed pages.

At the outset of the proceedings the Sheriff Clerk pointed out that two additional charges against accused for sending letters containing money out of the country without permission had been received that morning, and he asked if the Court would deal with them. This was agreed to.

The charges, to which accused also pleaded guilty, referred to the posting of letters to General Post Office, Edinburgh, on 21st and 25th August, each letter containing five Bank of England one pound notes. These letters were despatched to the same address in Italy.

Hon. Sheriff-Substitute James Wilson presided.

Accused was represented by Mr. Johnston Black, advocate, who tendered a plea of guilty on her behalf to all five charges, which all arose under the Defence (Finance) Regulations, 1939.

Mr Black said this story began in 1938. The accused had an invalid daughter named Wanda who, owing to ill-health, was sent to Italy in 1938. She resided with the Misses Fieri from 1938 to September, 1940, when she returned to this country. She had been prevented, of course, from returning earlier owing to the war years. From 1938 until Italy's entry into the war in June, 1940, Mrs. Mariani, with the consent of the authorities, had sent regular payments for her daughter's maintenance to the Misses Fieri. In fact, a money order for £10, which she sent in May, 1940, and which was confiscated on Italy's entry into the war, was returned to her only four months ago.

Hon. Sheriff Wilson—It was quite proper procedure to send money prior to the war.

Mr Black—Yes. These previous payments were known to the authorities. I wish to emphasise the fact that these payments were made prior to the Defence Regulations coming into force. During the war years, from 1940 to September, 1940, these two Italian ladies received no payment for keeping this child and feeding this extra mouth. And most mother naturally feels that when anyone does her child a good turn she wants to recompense them in some way. Mrs. Mariani was indebted to the two sisters and attempted in the manner libelled in the complaint to repay these friends by sending them the Bank of England notes. She knew she was acting contrary to the law, but she made the honest endeavour to repay her friends. This is not a case of trying to play ducks and drakes with the country's currency or trying to get behind the regulations for her own benefit. She never sent any money when we were

at war with Italy. The accused is a British subject, who has lived in the town for a long number of years. She is well known and highly respected and has no previous case whatever. She is, of course, sorry she acted so foolishly, but I humbly suggest to your Lordship that in view of the whole circumstance a somewhat lenient view might be taken here.

Hon. Sheriff Wilson—Have you any explanation of the interleave of the notes in the magazines?

Mr Black—She was simply trying to get the money past the customs. She knew, as I have admitted, that it was wrong to send this money, but she was simply trying to repay her friends.

Mr W. W. Allan, procurator fiscal, said Mrs. Mariani was 20 years of age, born in Glasgow of Italian parents. Her husband was in business in Glasgow and he owned property in Scotland. Both were British subjects although born of Italian parents. By the marriage there was one daughter, Wanda, who was 15 years of age. Wanda was not a very strong girl and she had been taken by her mother to these two lady friends of theirs in Italy in September, 1938, and had remained there until September, 1940, when she returned to this country. There was no trace of any payment until a few days before Italy declared war, and that was the £10 already referred to.

Mr Black pointed out that this £10 had been returned because it was intercepted after Italy had entered the war.

Hon. Sheriff Wilson—There was no reason to investigate it before that.

Mr Allan said the child was brought back in September, 1940, by one of the two maiden ladies from Italy who were supposed to have been getting payment for keeping the girl. This lady had since lived with Mrs. Mariani all that year, and he might add that the whole Mariani family, plus this lady, had arranged to leave for Italy tomorrow (Saturday).

Dealing with the charges, Mr Allan made special mention of the fact that when the magazines were examined, it was found that in four instances two pages had been pasted together, and inserted between these pages were 26 Bank of England notes. He had brought the second complaint, with two additional charges, as these had just come to the notice of the Treasury. This brought the total to £46, contained in four letters and the parcel of magazines. The latest two envelopes were numbered 9 and 10, so it could be reasonably assumed that ten envelopes had been sent in all.

Mr Allan later stated that accused had written a letter giving instructions about the magazines with the notes, and also stating how the money could be transferred to Italian currency. It was quite clear that this woman had been sending currency illegally, knowing full well that she was contravening the finance regulations. The Treasury took a very serious view of this kind of thing, as it was desired to keep money in the country at the present time. He was asked by the Treasury to seek a fine which would be a lesson to accused and also a deterrent to others.

Mr Black said the accused was leaving on Monday for Italy for a fortnight or three weeks.

Mr Allan immediately raised the question of payment of the fine in view of accused's impending departure.

After consultation with his client, Mr Black, who had previously asked for time to pay, assured the Court that the fine would be paid to-day (Saturday).

On this understanding, the Hon. Sheriff allowed 24 hours for payment of the fine.

DOUBLE Windowed **SHOP** and **HOUSE** above for Sale in main thoroughfare. Immediate occupation. Apply Mariani, 34 High Street, Kirkcaldy.

FOR SALE by Private Bargain. Upper Flat **DWELLINGHOUSE**. No. 53 Sutherland Street, Kirkcaldy, containing two rooms, e.l. Rent £10. Feuduty 5/2. For further particulars apply **JAMES THOMSON & SON**, Solicitors, Kirkcaldy.

LOST, on Sunday, 14th October, Gold Pendant Brooch; reward. Page, Harbour Post Office.

LOST, on Sunday 21st, Gold Spray Brooch; reward. Page, Harbour Post Office.

WANTED, capable Typist, good salary. Address, No. 888 Free Press Office.

WANTED, Young Girl for Office. Apply St Clairtown Laundry, Church Street.

WANTED, Message Girl or Boy (all day)

PAGE.—On 2nd Nov. 1948, May Kirk Page, 16 Douglas St., Kirkcaldy, eldest daughter of the late Mr and Mrs Alexander Page, and sister of Lizzie B. Page, late postmistress, Harbour Post Office, Kirkcaldy.

PYE.—At 11 Gibson Place, St Clair Street, Kirkcaldy, Isabella Scott Pye, aged 73 years, second daughter of the late Alexander Pye, Pathhead. At rest.

SINCLAIR.—At 49 Meldrum Road.

FOR SALE, Baker's Oven, very cheap; best offer. Apply Da. Prato, 34 High Street, Kirkcaldy.

FOR SALE, Overmantel, Dressing Chest, Carpet Square, Pictures, and Kitchen Kerb. Apply 676 Press Office.

FOR SALE, 5 feet Jacobean Oak Sideboard. Can be seen between 3 and 4 p.m., Saturdays, 14th and 21st March, at 15 Munro Street.

FOR SALE, all kinds of New and Second-hand Furniture at Sale-room prices.

At 34 High Street, Kirkcaldy, on the 12th inst., James Seath, baker, in his 59th year.

At 16 Oswald's Wynd, Kirkcaldy, on the 14th inst., John, second son of John Turpie, coal agent, aged 25 years—deeply regretted. Funeral private.

At Fever Hospital, Kirkcaldy, on the 13th inst., Wee David, youngest son of Michael and Janet Page, aged 20 months.

At 361 High Street, Kirkcaldy, on the 8th inst., Mary Jackson, widow of the late Joseph