



## The Swan Memorial Hall



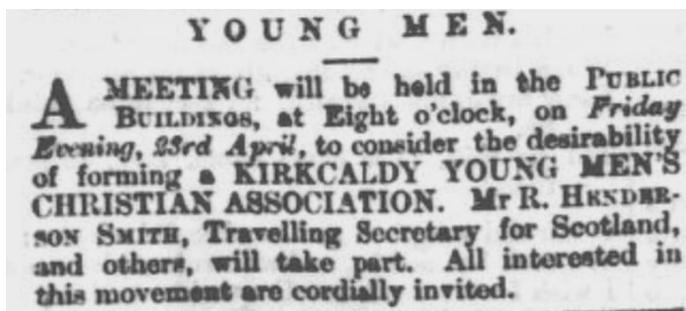
Despite the fact that Kirkcaldy's High Street no longer contains the number of shops and attractions of days gone by, one thing has not changed and that is the fact that the street possess some wonderful architecture. It is all too easy to walk looking only at eye level but an upward glance can be very rewarding, even to the uninitiated. This object looks at two of the iconic buildings which have stood sentinel over the High Street for long over a century. They have been chosen as one has a history which can be traced while the other despite significant amounts of research remains, in many ways, something of a mystery.

The first is the instantly recognisable red sandstone structure which sits at the junction of the High Street and Kirk Wynd. It has served many purposes over the years but was initially intended to be built to house *The Young Men's Christian Association*. The question therefore has to be why is it that the carved name plate reads *The Swan Memorial* and does not mention the *Y.M.C.A.*?

The reason is quite simple, in that, in the nicest possible way, the building was partially hijacked to form the memorial for the long serving Provost Patrick Don Swan who had died in 1889. The story of the larger than life Kirkcaldy benefactor has been told in Object 30. It serves little purpose to go over old ground but, over two terms, Patrick Swan served as the Town's Civic Head for an unrivalled 37 years. The benefits and improvements he bestowed, initiated or organised, made for huge progress in the history of Kirkcaldy. His two major achievements were to drive forward the Lothrie Water Scheme which brought clear running water into Kirkcaldy from the Lomond Hills – the industrial and health benefits which came from this transformed Kirkcaldy. Secondly, he was instrumental in gathering the separate entities of Pathhead, Gallatown, Sinclairtown and the Links, together with Kirkcaldy into one remodelled powerful town – which at the time was the eighth largest in Scotland.

Swan died at his home, St. Brycedale, on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 1889 and was

buried in the graveyard of the Parish Church. Almost immediately there was a public clamour for some form of tangible memorial to the town's greatest benefactor, who in reality, was only overtaken in that position by the combined efforts of the Nairn Family over the coming decades. Kirkcaldy has all too easily forgotten the massive contributions that the Nairn family made to Kirkcaldy's lasting advantage. This family and Patrick Don Swan had one thing in common – they were Kirkcaldy born and bred and proud of the town! A direct comparison can be made with Barry, Ostlere and Shepherd who, despite their success and wealth built on Kirkcaldy's labour – it is nigh on impossible to find anything tangible they have provided for the benefit of the town. James Shepherd can be excused as his money served his native Elgin well and while living in Rossend Castle he made many contributions to benefit Burntisland. None of these three were local men by birth.



The first mention of the Young Men's Christian Association can be traced to advertisements appearing in local newspapers. The one reproduced here came from the *Fifeshire Advertiser* of the 17<sup>th</sup> April 1886. It indicated a meeting was to be held in the Town

Buildings on Friday the 23<sup>rd</sup> April which was to determine if there was an appetite and desire to form a *Kirkcaldy Young Men's Christian Association*. Mr R. Henderson Smith, the Association's Travelling Secretary for Scotland, and others would address the meeting.

The same newspaper in its columns of the 1<sup>st</sup> May gave an account of the meeting where significant numbers had attended which included a large body of the local church ministers. Most who spoke were in favour of forming an Association given that it would be based on non-denominational and non-sectarian lines. “A good many names were enrolled, and a committee was afterwards formed to make the preliminary arrangements”. The committee certainly wasted no time as the advertising pages carried a notice of the first meeting. Again it is reproduced here. The meeting place was the Town Buildings (which stood on the site of the former Marks and Spencer) on the High Street. Meetings



almost invariably were held on Monday evenings.

This and other halls were used as venues but it was always the intention to find premises of their own. It was felt that the Town Buildings, where the majority of the meetings took place, did not create an environment conducive to the work of the Association. Rooms in the buildings were often let out for entertainments, auction sales and gatherings, hence the committee's concern. From the start Provost Patrick Don Swan was elected Honorary President and John Forrester as President. Both held these roles until their deaths in 1889 and 1893 respectively.

**KIRKCALDY Y.M.C.A.—HANDSOME OFFER.—**  
The Y.M.C.A. met on Monday night—Mr John Forrester, president, presiding. After some formal business the Secretary read a letter from Mr Forrester in which that gentleman offered to subscribe a sum of £100 to form a nucleus of a building fund, or for acquiring property suitable for a hall for the Association. After expressing their gratification at this handsome gift, a vote of thanks was given Mr Forrester for his liberality. The letter was afterwards discussed in Committee, when it was resolved to form a building fund, and a number of other subscriptions were promised.

It was the *Fife News* of the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1889 which got the ball rolling in terms of a permanent meeting place. At a meeting of the Y.M.C.A. the previous Monday night the President, John Forrester, had offered by letter the sum of £100 as the nucleus of a building fund. The purpose of the

fund was to secure premises which the Association could call their own. The offer was gratefully accepted and it was resolved to form such a fund. It seems that other unrecorded offers to subscribe were made at this time.

Adjacent to this article, we learn that the minister of the Free Church of Pathhead – the Rev. John Buchan was leaving for pastures new in Glasgow. This meant a goodbye to his son, the great author and politician who became Lord Tweedsmuir. Did he get the idea of the 39 steps for his novel of the same name at Pathhead – we will never know.

*The Dundee Courier* of the 25<sup>th</sup> April subsequently brought news of a generous offer made by Michael B. Nairn. He offered to gift, free of charge, a plot of land as a site on which to erect the

**HANDSOME OFFER TO THE Y.M.C.A.—**At the annual social meeting of Kirkcaldy Y.M.C.A. on Monday evening Mr M. B. Nairn, Kirkcaldy, intimated his willingness to grant a free site for the proposed new buildings for the Association. The offer was heartily received by the audience, and gratefully acknowledged by the President, Mr John Forrester. The site is about 40 feet in

proposed building. The offer was heartily received and gratefully accepted by John Forrester. The plot was some 12 metres by 6 metres and was part of an empty site towards the foot of the east side of Kirk Wynd. It was said that a better or more central site could not be found in the whole extended burgh.

The value of the plot was between £400/£500.

John Forrester is another who deserves a few minutes in the limelight. He was born in the Links in 1836, the son of a baker, who ran his own business. However, John never knew his father who had died before he was born. John was apprenticed to the trade but ill health made him look for work away from manual labour. In all honesty he seems to have been in poor health for most of his life. He secured employment as a clerk with Provost Birrell, then a flourishing flax merchant at Elder's Brae. From there he secured a more senior position with Mr Boswell, a mill-spinner in Leven. Two years later saw him back in the Links with J. & W. Hendry at the West Mills. He remained there until the dissolution of the firm at which time he secured employment with M. Nairn & Co. This appears to be in the period where floorcloth, not linoleum, was the main product. His skills saw him eventually rise to become a partner in that extensive firm.

In his leisure time he was interested in projects aimed at helping the young – most notably the Working Lad's Institute and the Y.M.C.A. He took an interest in the Kirkcaldy Savings Bank and was also a member of the Parochial Board. The purpose of the Board was to provide, where judged appropriate, relief to the poor and to maintain a record of the funds granted. It would seem Forrester believed that, all too often, applicants received what he termed scant justice from the Board. He often attended meetings while in pain and discomfort to provide advocacy for applicants. He would seem to be a thoroughly decent man and there was genuine sorrow when he passed away at the age of 57 on the 14<sup>th</sup> July 1893. The funeral took place at Abbotshall Parish Church on the 18<sup>th</sup> July. We note that the death intimation suggests that at the time of his death he was still with M. Nairn & Co. In fact the 1891 Census shows him as a partner in a floorcloth firm. Not bad

going for a laddie from the Links born into difficult circumstances!

We then immediately stumbled on a tangent and simply had to explore it. In 1896, Mrs Forrester, provided Raith Church with a manse and the sum of £500 as a tangible memorial to her late husband. The handing over of the manse was covered by the *Fife Free Press* in their edition of the 4<sup>th</sup> April 1896. The gift was said to be spontaneous and unsolicited and was very welcome as the Raith



Church had no manse of their own. The Raith Church had been formed as an offshoot of Abbotshall Church although they merged again in 1964. Given this information and the fact Abbotshall has a graveyard probably explains why that church was chosen for the funeral service. It would certainly appear that the Forrester connection was with Raith Church as mention is made, during the opening ceremony, of anonymous donations to the Church funds which, it transpired, were from Mr Forrester. The wider Nairn family were out in force for the ceremony.

Mrs Forrester was presented with a silver key as a reminder of the day. The key was the work of Mr Greig, Jeweller, High Street, Kirkcaldy, and was inscribed with *Presented to Mrs John Forrester, the donor of Raith Manse, by the managers and kirk session of Raith Church, on the occasion of the opening ceremony, 1<sup>st</sup> April 1896.*

An inscription carved above the entrance door reads – *Bless the House of thy Servant that it may continue for ever before Thee.* It was estimated that the cost which included furnishings and laying out the garden was around £1,500. Gillespie & Scott of St. Andrews were the original architects back in 1894 but Kirkcaldy's own J.D. Swanston was involved in alterations in 1928/9. The house was retained as the Abbotshall Manse in 1964 and became a 'C' listed building in February 1997. A tangent yes, but it certainly shows that the Forrester's had the interests of the poor at heart. There was certainly significant poverty in the Links and the £500 could be put to good use there, not to mention that the minister now had a firm base to operate from.

As mentioned previously the idea of a memorial for Provost Swan and a home for the Y.M.C.A. became entwined and probably began with a letter written on Christmas Day 1889 by J. Guthrie Lornie to the *Fife Free Press*. Lornie was a significant figure in Kirkcaldy. He was a son of the linen merchant, Andrew Lornie, and in his younger days was involved in stockbroking and was well known in financial circles throughout Scotland. He had a huge portfolio of properties in Kirkcaldy allowing him to purchase the residential estate of Birnam in Perthshire and also the sporting estate of Pitcastle near Logierait. He was a Justice of the Peace in Perthshire but his death took place in

**PROVOST SWAN MEMORIAL.**

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

SIR,—While the community is deploring the loss of ex-Provost Swan, and while many acts of his generosity and benevolence are still fresh in our minds, it has occurred to me that the time is opportune for the initiation of a movement which would result in the erection of some substantial memorial to his memory.

Rosemount Terrace, Kirkcaldy, on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 1917 aged 74. The Lornie connection with linen went back to his grandfather, John Lornie, who was followed by his son/father Andrew. Andrew Lornie was in at the birth of flax spinning being carried out by machinery. He with a friend started a flax spinning factory in St. Andrews believed, by many, to be one of the first spinning mills in Scotland. These mills spelt the end of spinning being a cottage industry. Despite possessing these estates J. Guthrie Lornie died in Rosemount Terrace in Kirkcaldy – 33 years after his father died in the same property.

The letter was to the point – “Still deploring the loss of Provost Swan and while many acts of his generosity and benevolence are still fresh in our minds, it has occurred to me that the time is appropriate for the initiation of a movement which would result in the erection of some substantial memorial to his memory. For some time there has been a desire for suitable buildings for the accommodation of the Young Men's Christian Association and kindred societies in the district. I have thought that, if such could be erected and bear the name of the late Provost, the memorial would be at once appropriate, and at the same time most helpful, to Associations in which he took a special interest”.

Perhaps others had thought of this idea but Lornie seems to be the first to articulate it publicly. So, by early 1889, we have John Forrester putting £100 towards the building fund and by December, a week after Provost Swan's death, we have Lornie willing to put up another £100 to get his joint proposal underway.

*The Fife Free Press* by the 18<sup>th</sup> January 1890 were reporting that the idea was coming to fruition and that a sum of circa £600/800 would probably be added to the fund. Several gentlemen in the town had made financial contributions to ensure that, following the collapse of his firm, Provost Swan should not suffer any monetary ignominy as a result. The funds held at the time of his death were very probably to be contributed to the building fund.

The same newspaper on the 15<sup>th</sup> February brought some further information. To fill the vacancy left by the death of Ex-Provost Swan, it was Michael B. Nairn who was elected as Honorary President of Kirkcaldy Y.M.C.A. A letter was also read by John Forrester which came from Mr W.R. Spears in relation to the *Provost Swan Fund* mentioned above. At a meeting it had

Kirkcaldy, 7th Feb., 1890.

DEAR SIR,—I have the pleasure of informing you that at a recent meeting of the subscribers to the Provost Swan Fund it was resolved to apply the fund in hand, after meeting certain payments, to assist in the erection of a hall, in connection with the Young Men's Christian Association, at or near the foot of the Kirk Wynd, or other suitable place, on condition that the hall be called the Swan Memorial Hall, and that the marble bust of Mr Swan, now in possession of the subscribers, with a suitable inscription, be placed in a conspicuous position of the hall. It is impossible to say what sum will be handed over to your association, but it will not be less than £600.—I am, dear sir, yours truly,

W. R. SPEARS.

John Forrester, Esq.,  
President Y.M.C.A.

been agreed that the net sum remaining would be transferred to the building fund. The offer letter is reproduced here for interest. There were two conditions – firstly, that the building be named the *Swan Memorial Hall*. Secondly, the subscribers asked that a marble bust of Provost Swan, which was currently in their possession, be placed in a conspicuous position in the hall.

An inscription was mentioned but it is unclear if it was to be added or if it was already in place.

The offer was gratefully accepted and an immediate response was sent by James Forrester who was the Secretary of the Organisation. The only observation they had was a wish to add “and Young Men's Christian Association” to the proposed name – thus identifying the building as specially appropriated to Christian objects.

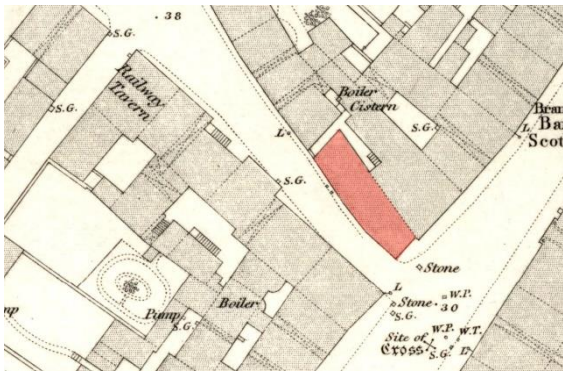
The next step was that the Association's Building Committee engaged with Michael Nairn to discuss the possibility of the

Y.M.C.A.  
Kirkcaldy, 11th Feb., 1890.

DEAR SIR,—Your letter of the 7th inst. addressed to Mr John Forrester, president of the Association intimating that the subscribers to the Provost Swan Fund had resolved to apply the residue of that fund towards assisting the erection of the association's proposed hall and rooms, was laid before a meeting of the Association last night. I was directed, on behalf of the Association, to acknowledge your intimation of the gratifying intelligence, to convey to you, and through you to the subscribers, the Association's most grateful thanks for their handsome donation, and to say how much the Association appreciates it. It has put new life into the movement, and should be the means of bringing it to a successful issue. The memorial is thought to be the most appropriate one to the Association's late and lamented honorary president. There is only one suggestion that the Association has to make, and that is, that in addition to the name, “The Swan Memorial Hall,” there be added, “and Young Men's Christian Association”—thus identifying the building as specially appropriated to Christian objects.—I am, yours faithfully,

JAS. FORRESTER, Secy,  
W. R. SPEARS, Esq.

project taking on an enlarged form. Without hesitation, Mr Nairn offered the whole site at the foot of Kirk Wynd not just the portion originally offered. Due thanks was given to Mr Nairn. The site is shown here with the premises of



Robert Knox still standing. The building was demolished to give a wider access to Kirk Wynd from the High Street and was simply an open space when gifted by Michael Nairn.



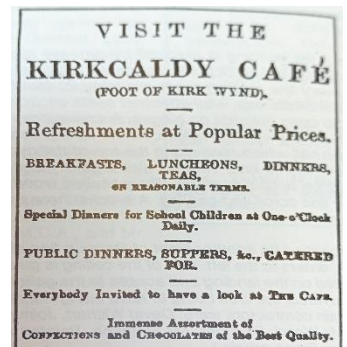
Moving forward to the *Fife Free Press* of the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1890 we find that progress has been made. An article reports that the cost of the building will

be some £3,000 and there is an intention to raise another £1,000 to form an endowment. This was a common practice where a lump sum was invested and the interest used for the maintenance of the building. The article



suggested that around £2,800 remained to be raised. However, on the positive side, the Building Committee had accepted a design for the hall which was the work of the Edinburgh architect, George Washington Browne. A drawing showing the proposed design was included in the text. The entrance would be via a round porch which would lead into a vestibule which in turn led to the entrance hall. A staircase would lead to both the first floor and

the basement. The basement was intended to house the heating plant and the lavatory. On street level there was to be a reading room and a library facing out to Kirk Wynd. The portion on the ground floor facing the High Street was intended for use as a tearoom or coffee shop. This would have its own entrance from the High Street.



On the first floor above the reading room and library would be a large meeting room intended to accommodate 190 persons. Above the shop, with a first class view of the High Street, would be what was termed a conversation room. Also on this first floor would be a committee room. The second floor would provide a house for the caretaker. The article included the comment that “*at once it can be seen that it was a credit to the Association itself and a fitting memorial to the late Provost*”.

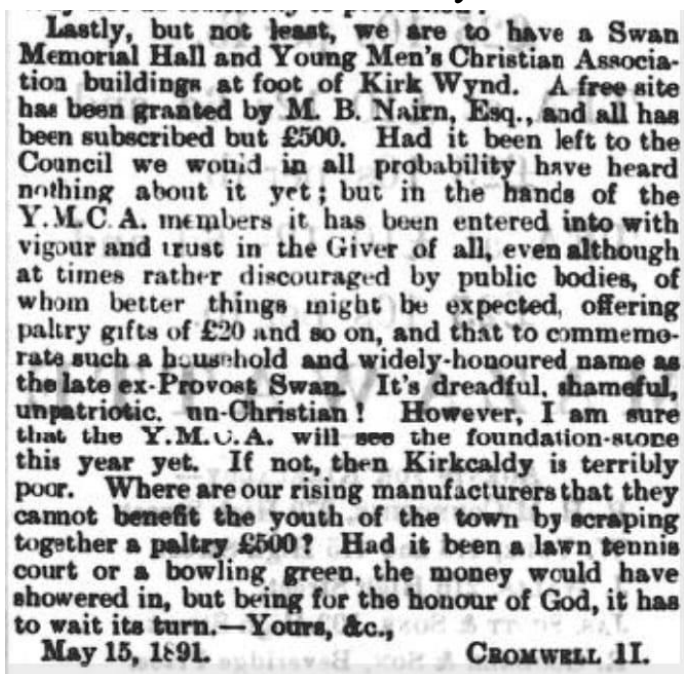
On the 9<sup>th</sup> August 1890 a letter appeared in the Letters Page of the *Fife Free Press*. The writer (“Reader”) was expressing a little concern that matters appeared to be moving slowly by commenting that:- “A community is often slow to recognise its best benefactors, and sometimes they are altogether forgotten; but Kirkcaldy cannot be ungrateful for the lifelong labours on her behalf by Provost Swan, They may, however, be forgotten unless the Swan Memorial Hall becomes a recognised fact. This memorial is just what is needed to keep the memory of Mr Swan green to all succeeding generations, and an appeal for subscriptions only has to be made

when a generous response will be met with. I hope to hear of this memorial being commenced soon, as it is greatly needed as a place for carrying on the work of the Young Men's Christian Association”.

The same newspaper in its edition of Saturday the 25<sup>th</sup> October 1890 was speaking about some of the new buildings which had or would be springing up in the town. A comment on the Swan Memorial Hall perhaps also indicated there had been slow movement:- “The Swan Memorial Hall will prove, *let us hope*, the rallying-ground for many a worthwhile cause”. Not exactly exuding confidence that the project will succeed.

“Kirkcaldy - A Laughing Stock – its Proposals and Failures” was the heading of a letter published by the *Fife Free Press* on the 28<sup>th</sup> May 1891.

The whole page appeared that week to be full of general complaints relating to Kirkcaldy but this particular one, penned by Cromwell II, took the biscuit. It started with a complaint as to how long it was taking to lay out the Beveridge Park, when would the trams run to Gallatown (abandoned scheme), when would a site be decided on for the Adam Smith Halls, why were there no public baths or free library in the town and when was the Pathhead to Kirkcaldy road to be built (Victoria Viaduct)? Finally his ire turned to the Swan



Memorial Hall – all but £500 had been subscribed! If it had been left to the Council then very little would have happened – it seems that £20 had been the Town's contribution to commemorate such a household and widely honoured name as Provost Swan – *it's dreadful, it's shameful, unpatriotic and un-christian! Where are the rising manufacturers when they cannot benefit the youth of the town by scraping together a paltry £500? Had it been for a lawn tennis court or a bowling green, the money would have showered in, but being for the honour of God, it will have to wait its turn.*

On Saturday the 30<sup>th</sup> April 1892 the *Fife Free Press* reported on the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Y.M.C.A. which had been held the previous Monday. There seemed to be a degree of truth in the attack by *Cromwell II*

the previous year. Michael B. Nairn, the Hon. President, presided as John Forrester was not well enough to attend. To warm applause it was stated that Mr Forrester had been feeling better in recent days.

PROPOSED SWAN MEMORIAL HALL  
AND  
Y.M.C. ASSOCIATION BUILDINGS.  
**A GRAND BAZAAR**  
IN AID OF  
THE ERECTION OF THE ABOVE HALL  
WILL BE HELD IN THE  
CORN EXCHANGE, KIRKCALDY,  
ON  
FRIDAY AND SATURDAY,  
24th AND 25th MARCH, 1893.

**PATRONS—**  
The Right Hon. the EARL OF ROSLYN,  
R. C. MINRO FERGUSON, Esq. of Keith and Novar,  
M.P.  
J. T. OSWALD, Esq. of Dunsinkier.

**PATRONESSES—**  
The Countess of ROSLYN, LADY HELEN FERGUSON,  
Miss J. T. OSWALD, Miss M. B. NAIRN.

**RECEIVERS OF WORK.**  
Mrs ANDREW AITKEN, 11 John Street, Kirkcaldy.  
Mrs JOHN BARRON, Scotch Bank, do.  
Mrs MICHAEL BEVERIDGE, Beechwood, do.  
Mrs WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, Whytehouse, do.  
Mrs THOMAS BLACK, Leasing, do.  
Mrs CARROLL, The Manse, do.  
Mrs CHAS. MORTON VILLI, do.  
Mrs ALIX DAVIDSON, West Fergus Place, do.  
Mrs WILLIAM DEAR, Victoria Road, do.  
Mrs DAVID DUNHART, James' Grove, do.  
Mrs ROBERT DOUGLAS, Frankfield, do.  
Mrs HUGH DUNNAN, Townsend Place, do.  
Mrs ELIEN, Adelaide House, do.  
Mrs W. FAIRWEATHER, Dunsinkier F.C. Manse, do.  
Mrs JAMES FORRESTER, Glebe Street, do.  
Mrs JOHN FORRESTER, Whyte's Causeway, do.  
Mrs FERGUSON, Victoria Road, do.  
Mrs JOHN HARLEY, Bicktonny, do.  
Mrs R. S. HODGIE, West End House, do.  
Mrs WILLIAM HODGE, Dun Road, do.  
Miss JENNISON, Beech Craig, East Wemyss  
Mrs M'JARRY, Townsend Crescent, Kirkcaldy.  
Mrs A. H. M'INTOSH, Victoria House, Kirkcaldy.  
Mrs JAM. M'GOWAN, 190 High Street, do.  
Mrs JOHN MACDONALD, Newton, do.  
Mrs MANN, Victoria Gardens, do.  
Mrs MERRISON, West Victoria Road, do.  
Mrs MARY F. DE CHURCH MANSE, Inverhall, do.  
Mrs M.B. NAIRN, St. Mary's, do.  
Mrs JOHN PEARSON, High Street, do.  
Miss RIZ, 3 Kirk Wynd, do.  
Miss RIZ, 187 High Street, do.  
Miss RONALD, Douglasfield, do.  
Miss SANDERS, Bothwellfield Place, do.  
Miss DORIS WILSON, 242 High Street, do.  
Miss FROCK, Osborne House, do.  
Mrs D'YVALER, 5 Caremont Gardens, Glasgow.  
Mrs ALEX. THOMSON, South Fergus Place, Kirkcaldy.  
Mrs WILLIAM WATSON, East Schoolhouse, do.  
Mrs ROBERT WHEATY, James' Grove, do.  
Mrs D.J. WILSON, Bank of Scotland, do.  
Mrs JAMES WHEATY, Strathearn Villa, do.  
Mrs A. R. YOUNG, Abbotsford, do.  
Mrs DAVID YULE, Abbotshall House, do.

Mr James Forrester, the Secretary, gave his report which concluded with an update on the proposed hall. He confirmed that a little over a year ago £500 was indeed the sum which remained outstanding. Only a few small subscriptions had been collected in the interim. There was however a possibility that the Temperance Society might subscribe to the shortfall if certain conditions were met. A meeting was to be arranged to examine the possibilities. The sum of only £500 was required because the true shortfall of £1,000 had seen Michael Nairn offer £500 if the other £500 was raised by the Association.

To this end a bazaar was arranged being advertised in the *Fife Free Press* of Saturday the 26<sup>th</sup> November 1892. The advertisement is reproduced here and, to the eagle-eyed, the proposed dates of the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> March 1893 seems a tad distant. On looking at the great and the good listed in the advert it does seem astonishing that they could not produce £500 amongst themselves. Again, it is hard to argue with the 1891 sentiments of Cromwell II.

An advertisement from Saturday the 18<sup>th</sup> March was uncovered in the *Fife Free Press* which indicates that the bazaar will have an opening ceremony on both days not just the 24<sup>th</sup>. The ceremony will be carried out by the Earl of Elgin on the 24<sup>th</sup> and by Sheriff Gillespie on the 25<sup>th</sup>. The good Sheriff would be looking forward to the opening of his new courthouse scheduled for the following year.

Moving on to the 25<sup>th</sup> March 1893 we find both the advertisement for and a short article on the bazaar. The text makes mention that it had indeed been opened on the 24<sup>th</sup> by the Earl of

**SWAN MEMORIAL HALL BAZAAR AT KIRKCALDY.**  
Yesterday a bazaar was opened by the Earl of Elgin in the Corn Exchange, Kirkcaldy, the object of which was to raise £500 to complete the sum of £3000 necessary for the erection of the Swan Memorial Hall. The hall is to be erected on a site granted free by Mr M. B. Nairn at the foot of Kirk Wynd. The Earl of Elgin, in formally opening the bazaar, paid a high tribute to the late Provost Swan, who inaugurated the movement to provide such a hall for Kirkcaldy as was now proposed to be erected, and recommended the object of the bazaar to the support of the people of Kirkcaldy. The Corn Exchange is handsomely decorated up as a Moorish market place, and looks very handsome.

Elgin. The Corn Exchange had been decorated as a Moorish Market for the occasion and we are told that it looked very handsome. Again, there is confirmation that the object is to raise the elusive last £500. The Earl in his address appears to give the credit to Ex-Provost Swan for inaugurating the idea of the hall, which he may well have done, but it still seems that John Forrester had been the main driver. In Provost Swan's straightened circumstances, after his firm collapsed, he probably would not have had the funds to lead by example. As it transpired, Mr Nairn, the Honorary President, was not allowed to attend by his medical man and John Forrester was also laid low. Chairing the opening ceremony was local solicitor, Alexander Thomson, who was then secretary to the Building Committee.

It is only fair to give a brief description of the Moorish Market which was taken from the same edition and covered Friday's event – although no photographs are available it must have been an impressive sight. Make no mistake all the stops were being pulled out to deliver the required funds. It would seem that everybody who was anybody was present. The programme contained a description of the market and some of the details included:- “the body of the hall contained a Moorish Market with houses on either side with the windows and other arrangements showing a different style of architecture in each house. Indeed, uniformity is carefully avoided, even the windows and gay sunblinds in the same houses are in most cases different. The lighting effects are very striking too, a gorgeous golden sunlight falling on the houses on the right, the left being in the shade. The houses are of three storeys, with the ground floor being used as the stalls”. A tropical landscape was also a feature plus a magnificent arch leading to woods, mountains, and a domed mosque with a spire. We can only presume that these last items were large well painted scenes.

On Monday the 27<sup>th</sup> March it was the *Dundee Courier* who first announced that the bazaar had been a success and that the sum of around £600 had been raised. Good news for Michael Nairn – he would now only have to provide £400!

On the 16<sup>th</sup> September 1893 *The Fife Free Press* carried a report on the School Board meeting earlier in the week. It was a clear sign that progress was being made, as proven by a letter from Mr Alexander Thomson to the Board. They were seeking the services of Mr William Clarke, the Clerk of Works to the Board, to assist with the supervision of the construction of the

Swan Memorial Building. A Mr Gourlay took exception to this, maintaining that Clarke's duties should be restricted to those in connection with the schools under their control. Unfortunately for him, Michael Nairn was in the Chair and it was agreed to release Mr Clarke for 2 hours per day at a cost to the Y.M.C.A. of 15/- per week.

Almost immediately the reason for the request came to light. On Wednesday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1893, the *Edinburgh Evening News* was able to report

**KIRCALDY SWAN MEMORIAL HALL.**  
The plans and specifications for the Swan Memorial Hall (in memory of the late Provost Swan) have now been approved of by the Kircaldy Y.M.C.A., and have been lodged with the Dean of Guild Court. On the sanction of the Court being obtained the work will be begun at once, the estimates having been all accepted. Mr

that the Y.M.C.A. Building Committee had approved the plans and that they were being submitted to the Dean of Guild Court. It seems that when the sanction was

given the work would start immediately as the various tenders had been submitted and accepted. This article appears to be the first intimation that it will be built of red stone. That decision we will cover later.

The next step was found in the *St. Andrew's Citizen* of the 21<sup>st</sup> October 1893. This was by way of an explanation from Mr Thomson of the delay in operations commencing. It transpired that they were awaiting a response from the Trustees of Kirkcaldy Savings Bank. A request had been made asking if they could build on the gable of the Savings Bank as this would result in a considerable financial saving. As we know the Bank must have consented given, that even today, the two buildings remain co-joined.

By the 10<sup>th</sup> March 1894 the *Fife Free Press* was able to report that the site was a hive of activity, was fenced off, with men and machinery now starting excavations.

However, by the 29<sup>th</sup> March the *Glasgow Evening Times* reported that there was an issue with the excavations fronting onto the High Street. The gable of the adjoining tenement was showing signs of cracking and Dean of Guild Fraser was asking that the tenement be evacuated meantime. When the *Fife Free Press* was published on the 31<sup>st</sup> it carried far more

**THE SWAN MEMORIAL HALL EXCAVATIONS — UNEXPECTED DIFFICULTY.**—During the past week the gable adjoining the excavations now in course, in connection with the Swan Memorial Hall, at the foot of Kirk Wynd, has attracted no small attention, its condition, in fact, giving rise to a good deal of uneasiness. Every precaution was taken to prop up the gable by means of heavy logs and battens. Large rents were visible in several places, and as the foundation of the gable was resting on sand it was feared that it might give way, as the result of the extensive excavations alongside. As an ext a

detail. Alexander Menzies Jnr., of the building contractors, was seldom away from the scene as efforts were made to ensure that the building did not collapse. Dean of Guild Fraser had suggested, when building approval was initially granted, that this gable should be strengthened or rebuilt as the foundations were built on sand. It was only later that it was revealed just how dangerous the situation was.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> April the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* reported there was still an ongoing situation between the promoters of the hall and the proprietor of the tenement. The Dean of Guild had suggested that the wall be taken down and completely rebuilt. This was a repeat of his earlier suggestion given when planning approval was granted.

**THE SWAN MEMORIAL HALL. — Operations in connection with the Swan Memorial are still suspended, and active negotiations are proceeding with the view to a settlement. Already an estimate has been obtained of the cost of putting up a new gable, and otherwise repairing the damage done to the adjacent building. The claims of the tenants for compensation in having to remove will have to be considered. It is to be hoped that, for the interests of all parties, the matter will be amicably settled without recourse to litigation.**

On the 12<sup>th</sup> May the *Fife Free Press* reported that the work remained suspended and that negotiations were still ongoing. It appears that an estimate had been obtained for the new gable and repairing any other damage which the building

had sustained. The paper mentioned that the question of compensation for the tenants who had to be evacuated remained outstanding. The article hoped that the issue could be solved without litigation. It was only on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> June that the same newspaper was able to report that a settlement had been reached some days previously and that operations would soon be able to restart. The Swan Memorial Committee were to erect the new gable and repair the front and back walls of the damaged property. A three foot foundation was to replace the meagre existing eighteen inch foundation - with all the work to be completed to the Dean of Guild's satisfaction.

By the 28<sup>th</sup> July the *Fife Free Press* was able to report that the foundations having been laid the building was now starting to appear above ground level.

Saturday, the 18<sup>th</sup> May 1895, saw the *Fife Free Press* report on the Y.M.C.A. Annual General Meeting which had been held in the St. Brycedale Church hall the previous Monday. We learn that the new President is ex-Bailie

Barnet. It would seem that for a short time Mr Alexander Thomson had served as President but he did not wish to continue in that post. Thomson had also taken on many of John Forrester's duties while Forrester was incapacitated. At that stage it appears that the new hall would be ready in two months time. Mr Henderson Smith had suggested that a wing of the new building should be named after the late President John Forrester. The message of the night was the huge boost which having their own premises would give to the organisation.

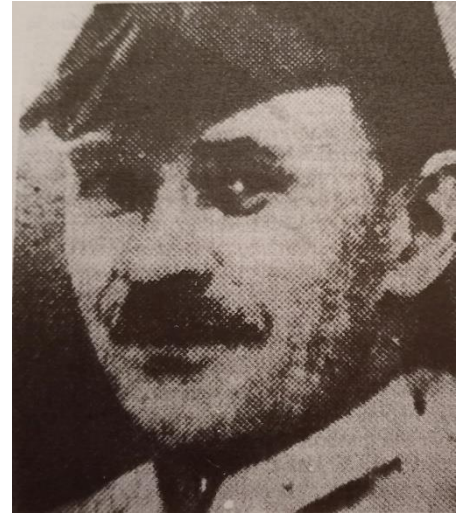
On Saturday, the 29<sup>th</sup> June, the *Fife Free Press* reported on a discussion which had taken place the previous week. The question was whether or not a billiard table should be a feature of the hall. The Committee eventually determined that it should not be permitted.

*The Fife Free Press* was able to report on the 17<sup>th</sup> August about plans for the Association's work in the coming Winter. To this end the Secretary, James Forrester, gave a talk on the history of the Association revealing "that it was formed in 1844 in a little room in St Paul's Churchyard in London by George Williams. The Association developed all over the world from those humble beginnings. He went on to say that the Y.M.C.A.'s main work was of a spiritual kind which included meetings for Christian fellowship and Bible study, and evangelistic work amongst lads and young men. But the Y.M.C.A. recognise that man possesses a mind and a body and, in seeking to provide an all round manhood, provision was made in all well-equipped Associations for intellectual and physical work. The Kirkcaldy Association would enter into work of this kind and it was to be hoped that a literary society would be one of its attractions during the year, while the gymnasium would prove serviceable for rallying young men whose tastes were built on forming a strong physique" (first indication a gymnasium was now included).

James Forrester is an interesting figure. He was no relation to John Forrester but they worked in tandem until John's death in 1893. He was the son of a Ceres grocer and served an apprenticeship to that trade in Cupar. He set up on his own account in Kirkcaldy where he became involved in the infant Y.M.C.A. His premises were at 64 Glebe Park and in April of 1898 the business was transferred to a William Tod. There is also the possibility that he may well have run and disposed of the Victoria Restaurant in Victoria Road. This is supposition as that business also changed hands at the same

time with the Misses Mackie taking over. He left Kirkcaldy to take over the running of a Temperance Hotel in Peebles. It does seem more likely that experience in running a restaurant would serve him well for the hotel business. It proved impossible to find any material relating to his leaving the Kirkcaldy Y.M.C.A. The last instance of any connection was an item in the *Fife Free Press* of the 9<sup>th</sup> April 1898 intimating that he would be addressing an evangelistic meeting the next evening. Possibly we were looking in the wrong place!

He certainly did well for himself and in fact was elected Provost of Peebles in 1916. We suspect that the photograph shown here is possibly taken in his Provost's hat. He was awarded an M.B.E. in 1920 and the *Fife Free Press* made mention of the award in their edition of the 3<sup>rd</sup> April. His award was for services in Peebles during the Great War but the intimation did mention that "he was formerly of Kirkcaldy, where he is so well known and highly respected". He left Peebles for Edinburgh in 1922 where he died in August 1945. His obituary in the *Scotsman* on the 1<sup>st</sup> September mentioned that for many years he had been a director of Edinburgh Y.M.C.A. Make no mistake, throughout his spell he worked energetically for Kirkcaldy Y.M.C.A. - the number of newspaper advertisements for addresses, meetings and committees he was involved in, is ample testament to that.



THE SWAN MEMORIAL BUILDINGS,  
KIRKCALDY.



*The Dundee Courier* of the 20<sup>th</sup> December was a useful find in the sense that it devoted a modest article in advance of the official opening but it also included a sketch which is replicated here. There appears to be an alteration to the internal layout with the suggestion that there are now four rooms for carrying out the Association's work. These are listed as – a splendid gymnasium, a meeting room with gallery which could accommodate 300, a reading room, and what was termed a similar room above. "G. Washington Brown, Edinburgh, has certainly produced a very beautiful and useful suite of buildings". The article indicated that the

opening would be carried out by Lord Overtoun – then the President of the Y.M.C.A. in Scotland. John Campbell White was the 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Overtoun, a Scottish chemical manufacturer, a supporter of religious causes, a philanthropist and a politician. He had been raised to the peerage by William Gladstone in 1893.

The Association were fortunate that this took place in 1895. Keir Hardie, the founder of the Independent Labour Party, took issue with White in 1899 over the conditions which the workers endured in his Rutherglen Chemical Works. Hardie issued a number of pamphlets under the title the *White Slaves Series*. Evidence had been produced showing that shortening the working week and bringing in a three shift working pattern lowered sickness rates in the industry. Overtoun's response was that if he reduced the working hours his men “*would simply spend more time in the pub*”. The typical working week remained with his men working up to 12 hours per day for seven days per week. There were no set meal break so the men ate their food in the chrome dust atmosphere. This somewhat diluted his reputation. However, it did not stop his estate amounting, in today's terms, to a fraction over 76 million pounds.

*The Fife Free Press* published the following day on the 21<sup>st</sup> December had another sketch. The two sketches are broadly similar and clearly show the entrances and windows at the time of the opening. This reader spent some time using the windows on the first floor to locate the site of these entrances. What seems very clear is that the doorway and stair adjacent to what is now Wetherspoon's are a more recent addition. Trying to be as precise as possible we learn that the main entrance is indeed off Kirk Wynd and on entering – to the left and running parallel to the Wynd is the gymnasium. The staircase still leads down to the toilet and heating plant. Climbing to the first floor the main hall runs along the top of the gymnasium and there are two other rooms on this level – a committee room and a reading room. Going upwards is indeed the entrance to the gallery of the main hall – which clearly has to be running parallel to Kirk Wynd. Another room is mentioned as looking over the High Street and enjoying a flood of light from not only the windows but it appears that part of the roof is glass. There is



another lavatory on this floor and a room for storage.

In the main hall will sit the marble bust of Provost Swan. The ground floor section facing the High Street has indeed been set up for an intended restaurant which will be run on temperance principles. The writer of the article concluded - "These beautiful memorial buildings, erected at the foot of Kirk Wynd, have now been completed. As an architectural display they stand out prominently, and will be admired for generations as a land-mark of the Lang Toun".

OPENING OF THE SWAN MEMORIAL HALL  
AND Y.M.C.A. BUILDINGS.

THESE BUILDINGS will be Formally  
OPENED on MONDAY, 23rd December,  
1895, at 3.30 P.M., by the  
RIGHT HON. LORD OVERTOUN of Overtoun,  
AND  
LADY HELEN FERGUSON  
Will Unveil the Bust of Provost Swan.  
Owing to limited accommodation admission to this  
Meeting by Invitation only.

IN CELEBRATION OF THE ABOVE EVENT  
A PUBLIC MEETING  
WILL BE HELD IN THE  
CORN EXCHANGE,  
ON  
MONDAY EVENING, 23rd DECEMBER, 1895.

Chairman—R. C. MURRO FERGUSON, Esq., M.P.  
Speakers—The Right Hon. Lord Overtoun; The  
Rev. James Stalker, D.D.; W. M. Oatts, Esq.,  
Glasgow, and others.

The following Talented Vocalists will Sing during  
the Evening:—Miss Sophia D. Grubb, Gold  
Medalist; Miss Annie Dick, and Mr J. D. Mill.  
Accompanist, Miss BALFOUR.  
Selections by Mr Gulland's Choir.

Doors Open at 7. Chair to be taken at 7.30.  
Admission Free. Collection during the evening.  
All Cordially Invited.

A diligent search at last uncovered an advertisement for the official opening and in the evening there was to be a celebratory public meeting in the Corn Exchange. Admission was free and there was entertainment laid on. The advertisement is reproduced here. The 50 Objects Team love adverts and we noted that a David Shiels of 396 High Street had taken on the lease of the Chapel Lime Works – must try and locate the site of that one. Lime was an important building requirement at the time. A James Bowyer had taken on a shop at the eastern corner of Balsusney Road as a butcher and poulterer. William Yuill who had establishments in Links Street and Mid Street was opening another butchers shop at 66 High Street – the new Whythouse Mansions. On the

1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> January a Great New Year Quoiting Tournament was taking place at Newton Park with a £10 prize pot. The winner received £5 and the 4<sup>th</sup> placed £1.

The formal opening of the hall took place on Monday the 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1895 and the *Fife Free Press* carried a full report in its edition of the 28<sup>th</sup>. A huge amount of newsprint would have been saved if the guest list and apologies had not been carried in full. It would have been far easier to provide a list of those who were not there than those who were. Suffice it to say that the cream of local society and probably every minister in

**KIRKCALDY SWAN MEMORIAL.**

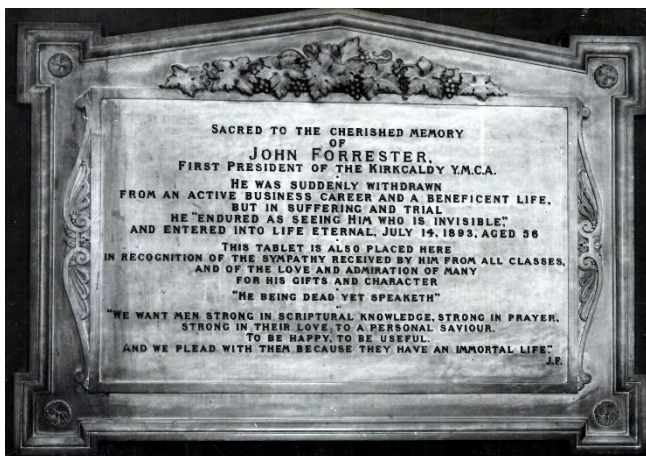
**OPENING CEREMONY.**

On Monday afternoon, Lord Overtoun formally opened the Swan Memorial and Young Men's Christian Association buildings, Kirkcaldy, when the bust of Provost Swan was also unveiled by Lady Helen Ferguson in presence of a large gathering, which quite filled the hall. Mr Alexander Thomson, solicitor, convener of the Building Committee, who presided, was supported right and left by Lord Overtoun; Rev. John Campbell, B.D.; Provost Stocks; Lady Helen Ferguson; Rev. Dr Stalker, Glasgow; Wm. Oatts, Esq., Glasgow Y.M.C.A.,

the vicinity was in attendance, plus numerous Y.M.C.A. officials, along with civic representatives from many of the surrounding towns. If the main hall could accommodate 300 – it quite simply had to be packed.

The ceremony itself was carried out, as mentioned earlier, by Lord Overtoun while the meeting was chaired by Alexander Thomson. It transpired from his address that Thomson had deputised almost continuously for John Forrester during the three years prior to his death in 1893. He had also been, at various times, the Convenor, Secretary and Honorary Law Agent, of the Building Committee. Thomson was certainly the appropriate man for the job.

His introduction ran through the history of the Association in Kirkcaldy and the building of the hall itself. It was satisfying to note that our research had not resulted in anything of significance being missed. What became obvious was that a potential disaster had been avoided which was being put down to divine intervention. This related to the cracking of the gable at the commencement of the excavations. The owner of the tenement, which was damaged, had made a trip to the site and noticed nothing untoward. However, when passing again some 15 minutes later, he saw the cracks, raised the alarm, and steps were immediately taken to prevent any potential disaster. “One cannot contemplate but with horror what the consequences would have been, had the discovery not been made in time of the position of the gable: and had it come crashing down through the adjoining property, burying the workmen and the tenants in its ruins”. It was admitted that the incident had caused a “very great amount of trouble, months of delay and a very considerable financial loss”.



Not unexpectedly, Thomson spent a great deal of time covering Provost Swan, Michael Nairn and John Forrester. At this point he made mention of “the exquisite and beautiful tablet which Mrs Forrester had presented to her husband's memory. The tablet which is reproduced here had been affixed in the entrance hall the previous month. It seems that a portrait of her late husband was also gifted. He spoke eloquently of James Forrester suggesting that he was “the point of

cohesion in the Association". Forrester's efforts had seemingly never diminished, even after his marriage, and his tenure as the first secretary covered 12 years from 1886 until 1898. He does seem to have been the cement during the formative years.

He then covered the layout of building itself and once again there is confirmation that the idea of a caretaker's accommodation had been abandoned. On a similar point there does seem to be no mention of a library – perhaps it is the room of the second floor to which no purpose had been assigned.

Having paid tribute to those on the Building Committee and to the architect, mention was made of the contractors who had carried out the work. They were, we assume, all local men bar Mr Graham:-

Mr Alex. Fraser - Builder.

Mr David Wishart – Joiner.

George Scott – Plasterer.

James Wood & Son – Plumber.

Mr Graham, Edinburgh – Slater

Mr A. Simpson – Painter.

These appear to be the main contractors although the installer of the heating system does not appear to merit a mention. Also we know that Barnet and Morton manufactured the metal gates to protect the entrance doors when the hall was closed.

The Trustees of the late George Elder of Adelaide House had presented a beautiful case of stuffed birds (very popular in Victorian times) and Dr. Stalker, a portrait in oils, of Provost Swan. These items were housed in the Reading Room and with that Mr Thomson introduced Lord Overtoun.

Lord Overtoun spoke well in particular regarding the speed with which such a young organisation had managed to fund and build a home of their own. He had listened to the history and he too thought it was divine intervention which had played a part in the gable episode. That said, he felt that some adversity always brought out character so perhaps the problem was no bad thing. That possibly explains his alleged attitude to his workers! He used the analogy of the building being a newly launched ship adapted for the

intended purpose. He saw it as having to be well run for the safety of the crew and passengers while at the same time acting as a lifeboat – unless the lifeboat could save as many of those who were drifting away and drowning, one of the great aims and objects it sought to accomplish would have been lost. His Lordship was presented with a golden key, which is reproduced here, as a reminder of the occasion. Unusually any inscription on the key or the name of the jeweller was not mentioned.



After Lord Overtoun, amid great applause, declared the hall open, Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson unveiled the bust of Provost Swan. Mr Brodie R.S.A. was named as the sculptor. The Rev. Stalker who had been the first minister of St. Brycedale's and had known Provost Swan for many years made a few closing remarks in relation to the man and his interest in the Y.M.C.A.

The event concluded with votes of thanks for the principal figures and there was some entertainment by way of songs from “Miss Chrissie Grubb, in her usual accomplished way, with Miss Balfour presiding at the piano”.



What is noticeable is that the carved external plaque, shown here, simply reads *Swan Memorial* and makes no mention of the Y.M.C.A. We believe that this fact gives credence to our earlier suggestion that the project was hijacked in the nicest possible way. In fairness, eventually the Y.M.C.A. lettering was added around some of the

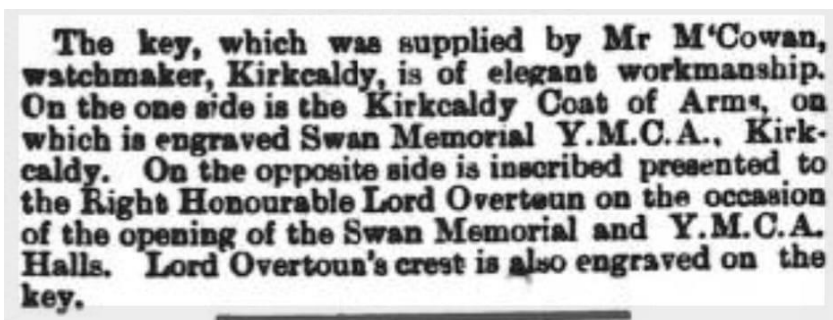
windows and above the main door.

As previously mentioned a public meeting was held in the evening in the Corn Exchange. From the content of the *Fife Free Press* we note that it was a free event (albeit there was a collection) with the evening consisting of speeches along with musical offerings from a choir, as well as soloists, which punctuated the programme from time to time. Once again,

**CORN EXCHANGE MEETING.**  
In celebration of the opening ceremony a public meeting was held in the Corn Exchange. The hall was comfortably filled. Mr R. C. Munro Ferguson, M.P., presided, and was accompanied to the platform by Lord Overtoun of Overtoun, Rev. James Stalker, D.D., Glasgow; Mr Wm. Oatts, general secretary Y.M.C.A., Glasgow; Mr M. B. Nairn, hon. president Kirkcaldy Y.M.C.A.; Rev. Dr Baxter,

there was a good attendance with the Provost, Ronald C. Munro – Ferguson presiding. He was joined at the top table by Lord Overtoun and Dr Stalker. In the audience were the Kirkcaldy Y.M.C.A. Secretary, James Forrester, the Treasurer, Robert Main, and Mr R. Henderson-Smith who also attended both functions. He was another who had been present at the inaugural meeting to form the Association and was there again to see the opening of the hall. Once again, the majority of the major speakers, Ferguson, Overtoun and Stalker, had Provost Swan as their overriding subject. It was left to Mr Oatts, the General Secretary of Glasgow Y.M.C.A., to champion the Y.M.C.A. cause.

It had fallen to Bailie Peebles to spell out the history of the local association (once again) and it was from his comments than some useful information was gleaned. We learn that at one point the Committee felt that they had sufficient funds to “increase the outside adornment” and had altered the stone to red at a cost of £140. Of course, no sooner had the work started than the costly issue of the gable sprung up – it was at this point we learn that the rebuilding works and compensation paid had amounted to £500!

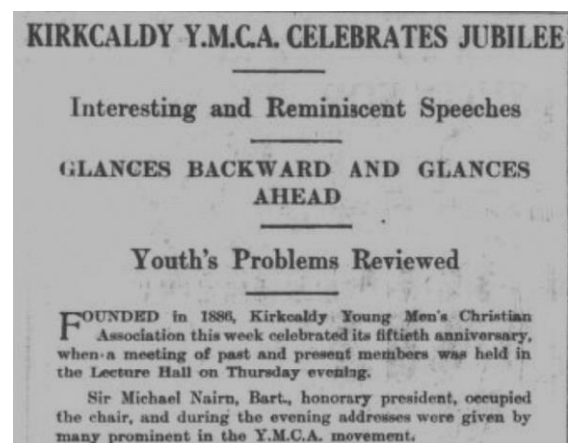


The key, which was supplied by Mr M'cowan, watchmaker, Kirkcaldy, is of elegant workmanship. On the one side is the Kirkcaldy Coat of Arms, on which is engraved Swan Memorial Y.M.C.A., Kirkcaldy. On the opposite side is inscribed presented to the Right Honourable Lord Overtoun on the occasion of the opening of the Swan Memorial and Y.M.C.A. Halls. Lord Overtoun's crest is also engraved on the key.

The final item we unearthed was almost hidden from sight but the mystery of the key was solved. It had been produced by local watchmaker and jeweller

– Mr McCowan. It carried the coat of arms of Kirkcaldy surrounded by “*Swan Memorial Y.M.C.A. Kirkcaldy*” – this can be seen on the aforementioned sketch. The crest of Lord Overtoun was also included with the wording - “*Presented to the Right Honourable Lord Overtoun on the occasion of the opening of the Swan Memorial and Y.M.C.A. Halls*”. Not being able to resist a tangent' research was carried out on the watchmaker. Not only was he a watchmaker and Jeweller but he was also an optician. He operated from 66 High Street Kirkcaldy.

*The Fife Free Press* was able to report that the jubilee of Kirkcaldy Y.M.C.A. was celebrated in its main hall on Thursday the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1936.



KIRKCALDY Y.M.C.A. CELEBRATES JUBILEE

Interesting and Reminiscent Speeches

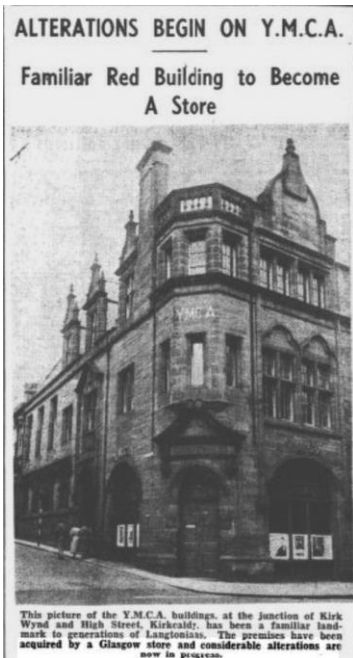
GLANCES BACKWARD AND GLANCES AHEAD

Youth's Problems Reviewed

FOUNDED in 1886, Kirkcaldy Young Men's Christian Association this week celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, when a meeting of past and present members was held in the Lecture Hall on Thursday evening.

Sir Michael Nairn, Bart., honorary president, occupied the chair, and during the evening addresses were given by many prominent in the Y.M.C.A. movement.

While Mr R. Henderson-Smith was still alive and living in Edinburgh his health did not let him attend. However, amongst those attending and speaking was no less a person than the very first Secretary – James Forrester. He was also living in Edinburgh but was able to undertake the journey. The headline from the newspaper is included for interest.



Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup> August 1954 saw the *Fife Free Press* feature the news that the Swan Memorial Hall – the home of Kirkcaldy Y.M.C.A. for close on 58 years - was being sold to Alexander's Stores Ltd – a Glasgow firm specialising in the sale of china, hardware and furnishings. The Association had been for some time attempting to sell their home and these attempts had come to fruition.

The building was to be gutted internally and a considerable number of external alterations were to take place. The proposal to remove the internal staircase, to be replaced by a lift, was a major undertaking on its own. The windows in particular would be altered. The Kirk Wynd side would have 3 windows measuring 18

feet by 9 feet and the High Street was to have a single window measuring 19 feet by 13 feet. Ultimately the windows were even larger than these proposed dimensions. The whole building would be set-off by neon signage carrying the Alexander's name.

A photograph which accompanied the article showed how it looked as its time as the Young Men's Christian Association came to an end. It is useful to compare the photograph with that taken/sketched a year later showing its new appearance after the refurbishment by Alexander's. Stairs had been added to a new entrance formed where the Hall and the Savings Bank shared a gable. It is safe to assume that the cladding was probably added when the building became the home of the Halifax Building Society – to significantly reduce the size of the windows would seem the most likely reason.



The Association strongly denied that this was the end of the organisation in

the town. In fact, the plan was that they would be moving to a more populous area of Kirkcaldy. They firmly believed that with the shifting population the

**At a recent meeting of Kirkcaldy Town Council it was intimated that a feu on Hendry Crescent was being reserved for the erection of a hall and club premises by the Kirkcaldy Y.M.C.A.**

site was no longer the best place to make contact with the youth of Kirkcaldy. The intention was to follow the population and take the Y.M.C.A. into their midst. To this end, Kirkcaldy Town Council had

agreed to set aside ground in Hendry Crescent for the erection of a hall and club premises for the organisation – where they remain to this day. The original home may have gone but shown here is the tablet which takes pride of place in the entrance hall of the current premises – the past is not forgotten and 138 years later the Y.M.C.A. is still involved with the youth of Kirkcaldy.



Although the thrust of the research was in relation to the history of the building, the volume of work undertaken on behalf of the young by Kirkcaldy Y.M.C.A. is awe-inspiring. Appearing week after week, month

after month, year after year and decade after decade are advertisements for meetings, literary groups, sporting events and all other manner of activities aimed at the young. These did not happen by themselves and a huge amount of credit must go to those who gave their time and effort for this purpose – and still do!

#### Y.M.C.A. NOTES

(CONTRIBUTED)

At the moment Kirkcaldy Y.M.C.A. is living mostly in the future. Plans have now been prepared for an attractive new building at the corner of Hendry Crescent and Valley Gardens but, so far, this fine new amenity exists only on paper. It is hoped that the residents in our great housing area will not have to wait too long before they see our venture translated into actuality.

Our aim is to provide a cheerful and happy club which will be a centre for spiritual, cultural and athletic activities for men of all ages, and if other plans come to fruition to provide in addition an afternoon centre of activities for the womenfolk, in collaboration with the Y.W.C.A. But of all this, more anon.

In the meantime life still pulsates in the Kirk Wynd premises, although with nothing like the vigour of the years gone by. Boys still use the vaulting horse and springboard, the billiard players still occasionally wield their cues, the table tennis team still continue on their winning way and the barriers still turn out for their training. But we would like more members in all sections; we would also like men who intend to join us later to come in now and discuss the activities they would like to see started in Valley Gardens.

To conclude, we came upon a contributed piece which appeared in the *Fife Free Press* of the 13<sup>th</sup> February 1954. It was written prior to the sale of the hall but it gave a comparison of the then current position and the optimism of the future in the new premises. It seems to form a fitting end.



## *207 – 217 High Street Kirkcaldy*



We move little more than a stone's throw from the Swan Memorial Hall to reach the next building to be featured. This is one of the most unusual and ornate buildings on the High Street and is currently the home of the Cupcake Coffee Box and takes in the range of numbers from 207-217. The individual members of the 50 Objects team have spent, on and off, around 10 years trying to get to the bottom of this building and it has to be said – for all the information which has been uncovered – it is still something of a mystery. The hope for this object is that, as well as providing information, perhaps a reader has knowledge which may help solve the mystery.

It is generally accepted that the core building 215-217 High Street was constructed in 1859. This section is protected by a Category B listing from Historic Environment Scotland. A study of the building above ground level reveals ornate carvings and monograms which all add to the intrigue. Historic Environment Scotland make mention of several prominent features which we presume give rise to their listing.

These include the fact that “the building exhibits elaborate High Renaissance and High Jacobean arcading adorned with floreate and scroll details. The polished ashlar facade features a ground floor cornice”. Not for a second do we pretend to understand this – the information is given to try and underline the fact that the decoration is both important and impressive. The notes go on to say that:-

“The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor features a cill course with nail-head eaves, cornice and balustrade, plus round-headed windows, rusticated voussoirs, impost band, hood-moulds, keystones and strap-work carving. On the 1<sup>st</sup> floor there are 3 decorative astragalled, arcaded round-headed windows with decorated jambs and voussoirs, carved detail to spandrels below 2<sup>nd</sup> cill course. There are initials and dates flanking 6 arcaded round-headed windows with chamfered and pilastered jambs, decorative arches and keystones, pierced balustrade with decorated dies above”.

In fact, Glen L. Pride, the renowned and respected Fife architect and architectural historian, wrote in his book, *The Kingdom of Fife: an*

*illustrated architectural guide* – ‘Numbers 215-217 High Street, 1859, - may just as well be on the Grand Canal – arched windows in a Venetian facade; perforated parapet above a dog toothed cornice’. All the foregoing supports the impression of a striking, handsome and important building. The detailed photograph displayed here surely supports that supposition. There are only a limited range of shops in the photograph but it certainly illustrates the fact that this building stands out amongst its more standard/bland and more functional neighbours.

This all reads and sounds very impressive so, the first questions are, why is there such elaborate stonework and decoration on this particular building and who put it there? What was the thinking in having such detailed and intricate work on a property which in essence was simply a shop – even if it were a large shop?



The first clue we have are two sets of initials carved into the stonework at first floor level. These are marked 3 and 4 on the photograph shown above. The first to be displayed, despite being quite complex in its formation,



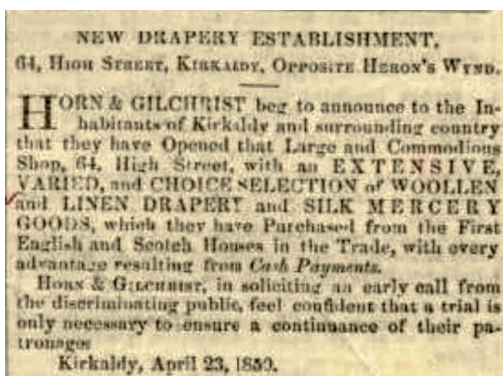
without question is H.H. Without any shadow of doubt these are the initials of Henry Horn. For the time being let us leave the other set simply as being identifiable as E.H. The surname has to be Horn but there are questions as to the identity of the owner of the E.



For the moment let us look at Henry Horn alone. He was a local man born in Dysart in 1815. He married an Elizabeth Mitchell who also came from Dysart. They were married there on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 1838. Here are the details of their family:-

- Janet - born 17<sup>th</sup> November 1839.
- Ebenezer – born 6<sup>th</sup> June 1841.
- Magnus – born 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1843.
- Jane - born 17<sup>th</sup> January 1847.
- Elizabeth – born 19<sup>th</sup> August 1849.
- Henry – born 19<sup>th</sup> September 1852.
- Magnus – born in 1855.
- Catherine – born 1857.
- Isabella – born 1859.

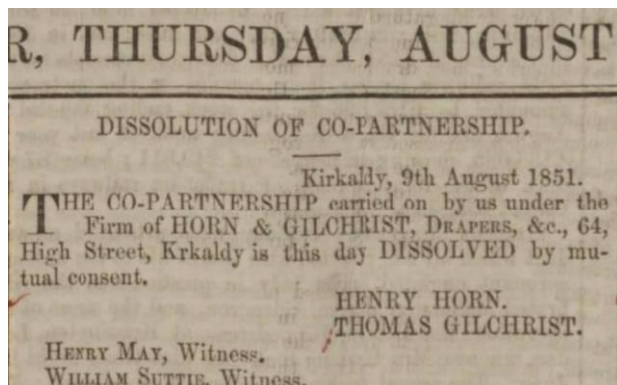
There is nothing unusual in the name Magnus appearing twice. This was very common in Victorian times – if a child died, then it was often the case that a subsequent child would be given the same Christian name. The practice was all part of the Scottish naming tradition - first son named after father's father. First daughter was named after mother's mother. The second son was named after the mother's father and we are spot on with Magnus Mitchell Horn – his grandfather was indeed one Magnus Mitchell.



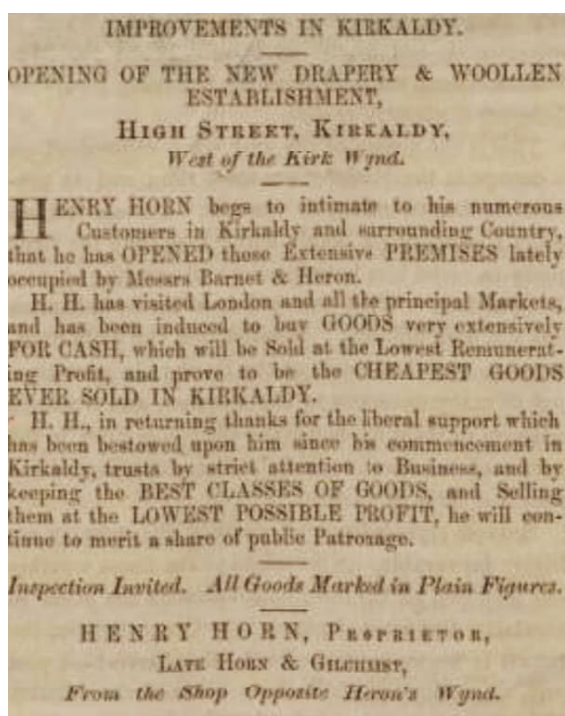
Henry Horn was a draper to trade and he commenced in business in Kirkcaldy in 1838. In 1850 he entered into a partnership with another draper, Thomas Gilchrist. The firm traded as *Horn and Gilchrist* operating from 64 High Street. An advertisement was located in the *Fife Herald* of the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1850. The advertisement is shown here and it seems that 64 was a large and

commodious building with an extensive and varied selection of woollen, linen and silk drapery.

It was certainly not a partnership made in heaven as by August of 1851 we find that the partnership is being dissolved. The notification which was carried by the *Fife Herald* on the 14<sup>th</sup> August 1851 is again included for interest. However, below the notice there is some further information revealing that Thomas Gilchrist is remaining in the premises, albeit now under his own name.



Henry Horn found new premises at 142 High Street – even if he only had access to the ground floor of the building. John Barnet of *Barnet and Morton* fame had formed a brief partnership with Gilbert Heron but that hit the rocks in July 1851. When Gilchrist and Horn went their separate ways leasing 142 offered Horn an opportunity to rebuild.



It has to be kept in mind that until 1871 there was no Fife Free Press so many advertisements appeared in the *Fife Herald* as a useful vehicle in which to advertise locally. It was in that paper's edition of the 18<sup>th</sup> September 1851 that Horn first advertised his new fledgling business. Mr Horn had been active in visiting London and other markets to garner his stock which, presumably, was primarily involved with drapery and wool. The advert, shown here, suggested that goods would be sold at a low profit margin and went as far as claiming they would be “the cheapest goods ever sold in Kirkcaldy”. It would seem that the identifying numbers of

premises were seldom used. In this instance the shop is said to be “west of Kirk Wynd and opposite Heron's Wynd”. Would a number not be simpler?

An interesting relic of times gone by was uncovered in the *Fife Herald* of the 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1852. Many Kirkcaldy businesses and shops had joined

together to set a date for the New Year holiday of 1853. This normally happened when the 1<sup>st</sup> January fell on a Sunday – not usually a working day. Therefore, an alternative day had to be set to give the workers a holiday. This year it was decided that the holiday would be taken on the first Monday in January. This was known as Hansel Monday but its celebration has all but died out even at that time.

In some parts of Scotland, Hansel Monday, was celebrated on the first Monday after the 11<sup>th</sup> January. This goes back to the outrage felt in some areas of the country when the Julian Calendar was replaced by the Gregorian Calendar. The result was that people went to sleep on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1752 and, the next morning, woke on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Many saw this as a theft of 11 days. The point about the notice is that well established names had signed the notice including Thomas Gilchrist and Henry Horn.

Horn certainly appears to have stayed at 142 for a considerable period but, in addition, we find him in Cupar when we consult the *Fife Herald* of Thursday the 17<sup>th</sup> September 1857. It transpired that he had purchased the complete stock of a bankrupt Cupar draper – William Reid. He was selling the stock from Reid's shop in St. Catherine Street and appears to have been doing this since July. What is different about this advertisement is that in addition to this bankrupt stock he had “taken delivery of a number of lots which were very much under the cost price”. Horn was offering “the new opportunity of securing decided bargains”. Part of the lengthy advertisement is replicated here and it can be seen that he is still operating under his own name. The hours of business were from 9.00am until 8.00pm with an hour's closing at 4.00pm.

PUBLIC ATTENTION REQUESTED.

HENRY HORN,

IN again inviting the attention of the Public of Cupar and surrounding Districts to the continuance of his CHEAP SALE of DRAPERY GOODS, in that Shop lately occupied by William Reid, St Catherine Street, Cupar, begs to announce that he has just received from Glasgow several large Lots of Goods, bought very much under the regular cost, which he is determined to offer, together with the remaining portion of his Cupar stock, without reserve, thereby affording a new opportunity to all for securing decided bargains.

The following is a list of prices:—

GENTLEMEN'S DEPARTMENT.

BROAD BLACK CLOTH, from 4s. a-yd.  
TWEEDS and DOESKINS, from 1s. 11d. a-yd.  
PLAIN and FANCY VESTINGS, from 6d. each.  
CORDS and MOLESKINS, from 6d. a-yd.  
WOOL SHIRTS, from 3s. 11d. each.  
DRESS SHIRTS, from 1s. 10½d. each.  
LINEN COLLARS, from 4½d. each.  
SILK TIES, from 8d. each.  
ELASTIC BRACES, from 6½d. a-Pair.  
CLOTH CAPS, from 8d. each.  
ALPACA HATS, at 11½d. each.  
SATIN HATS, from 1s 7½d. each.

THE NEW PREMISES,  
213, 215, AND 217, HIGH STREET,  
KIRKCALDY,  
WILL BE OPENED  
On SATURDAY, 22<sup>d</sup> SEPTEMBER,  
AS A  
GENERAL DRAPERY, MEN'S MERCERY,  
AND  
HOUSE FURNISHING WAREHOUSE,  
BY  
HENRY HORN,  
WITH AN  
ENTIRE NEW STOCK, the whole of  
which has been personally selected,  
with great care, in the LONDON, BRAD-  
FORD, LEEDS, MANCHESTER, HALI-  
FAX, ROCHDALE, GLASGOW, & PAIS-  
LEY MARKETS, where all the different  
Classes of Goods are Manufactured or Im-  
ported.

The NEW STOCK has been Purchased  
at the LOWEST CASH PRICES, and will  
be found, on examination, to surpass in  
Variety and Cheapness anything hitherto  
offered to the Public.

INSPECTION RESPECTFULLY INVITED.

In the 1851 Census the family were traced to what is now Commercial Street and consisted of the parents, four children and a servant. We are also aware that the business is running from what we believe to be a leased shop on the High Street. It is also a fact that the business was in the sole name of Henry Horn. It is therefore something of a surprise that the *Fifeshire Advertiser* of the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1860 reveals that Horn has opened new

premises at 213-217 High Street.



This appears to be a remarkable transformation in fortune to be able to take on these premises and given his initials appear on the building surely it is Horn who has had it built. This view is supported by the date-stone, marked 5 and 6 in the photograph, which is revealed as 1859. It seems unlikely anyone else occupied the



premises prior to Horn. However, we also show three photographs numbered 7, 8 and 9 of carvings, very ornate ones at that, of a rose, a thistle and a shamrock. What is their purpose and significance?



numbered 7, 8 and 9 of carvings, very ornate ones at that, of a rose, a thistle and a shamrock. What is their purpose and significance?



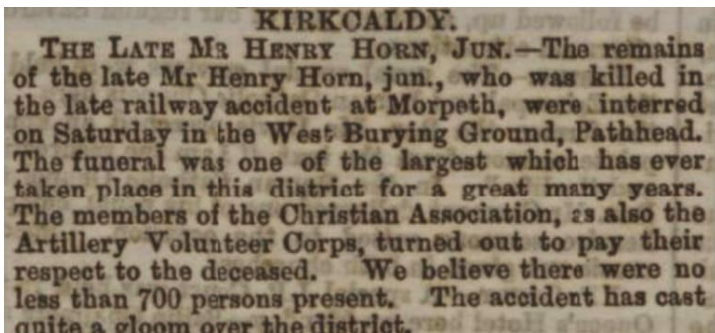
That said, the biggest mystery of all are the carved initials at the top of the building, shown as 1 and 2. Are these of the builder or do they serve some other purpose? They are certainly above those of Horn.



By the appearance of the 1861 Census, Horn and the extended family are now in 51 Townsend Place in Kirkcaldy. While not doubting that Mr Horn was a hard working and industrious individual it seems hard to believe that these changes could take place without an intermediate step, especially in relation to the business premises. We have to assume, perhaps wrongly, that there had been a cash injection from some source. It seems to be a jump of exceptional proportions.

The firm traded from these premises from 1860 until 1881 They were certainly successful as the shop continued to expand until it ran from 207 to 217 High Street. At some as yet still unidentified point the name altered to

*Henry Horn, Son & Co.*, which seems to suggest that the son would be Ebenezer Horn. That would make him the owner of the £ # initials on the building. In this story nothing is ever obvious and we move on to a tragedy which took place in 1877 on the 24<sup>th</sup> March. This was the death of Henry Horn Jr., in a railway crash at Morpeth. Five individuals were killed when the express train from Scotland to London apparently took a curve at possibly too great a speed and derailed. A significant number of passengers were seriously injured.



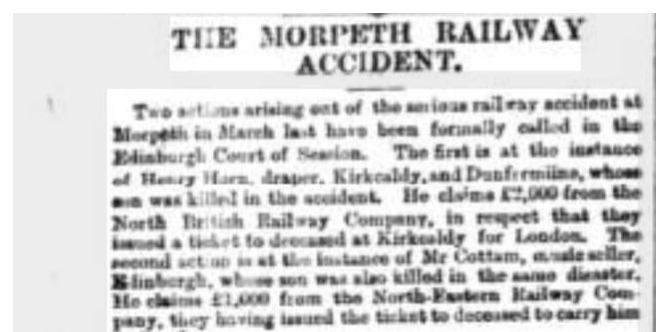
**KIRKCALDY.**  
THE LATE MR HENRY HORN, JUN.—The remains of the late Mr Henry Horn, jun., who was killed in the late railway accident at Morpeth, were interred on Saturday in the West Burying Ground, Pathhead. The funeral was one of the largest which has ever taken place in this district for a great many years. The members of the Christian Association, as also the Artillery Volunteer Corps, turned out to pay their respect to the deceased. We believe there were no less than 700 persons present. The accident has cast quite a gloom over the district.

The *Dundee Courier* of the 4<sup>th</sup> April covered the funeral which took place at the West Burying Ground at Pathhead Cemetery. It was said that there were over 700 people in attendance. The members of the Christian Association and the Artillery

Volunteer Corps turned out to pay their respects. Prior to that the *Fife Free Press* had carried an article on the deceased in their edition of the 31<sup>st</sup> March. They made mention that the body had been recovered from a ruinous heap of timber and metal in a shockingly mutilated condition. Mr Horn had left Kirkcaldy the previous Saturday with the intention of making spring purchases for the business from the London fashion houses. He was a member of Kirkcaldy Free Church Young Men's Fellowship Association and he was also a Sunday school teacher. In fact he seems to have been very highly regarded as a person and a businessman.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> April 1877 the *York Herald* reported on the inquest held into the accident. It transpires that the engine was running some 20 minutes late but there was no suggestion that excessive speed was the cause – the Jury found that the likely cause was a fishplate coming loose on the track (a metal connecting plate to bolt two rails into one continuous track).

In the *Newcastle Journal* of Friday the 26<sup>th</sup> October 1877 we learn that two actions arising out of the Morpeth tragedy are to be held in the Court of Session in Edinburgh. The first is at the instance of Henry Horn against the North British Railway. His claim was for £2,000 and was made against



**THE MORPETH RAILWAY ACCIDENT.**  
Two actions arising out of the serious railway accident at Morpeth in March last have been formally called in the Edinburgh Court of Session. The first is at the instance of Henry Horn, draper, Kirkcaldy, and Dunfermline, whose son was killed in the accident. He claims £2,000 from the North British Railway Company, in respect that they issued a ticket to deceased at Kirkcaldy for London. The second action is at the instance of Mr Cottam, music-seller, Edinburgh, whose son was also killed in the same disaster. He claims £1,000 from the North-Eastern Railway Company, they having issued the ticket to deceased to carry him

the North British as they had issued the ticket at Kirkcaldy. We also learn for the first time that Mr Horn Snr., was classed as not only a draper in Kirkcaldy but also Dunfermline. A Mr Cottam, who was a music seller from Edinburgh, was also claiming against the North British Railway for £1,000 in respect of the loss of his son in the same accident.

The railway company had lodged a defence that, as the accident had happened on the tracks of the North Eastern Railway Company and Morpeth, the outcome should be determined by the law of England not Scotland. They also claimed that by selling the ticket they were merely acting as the agents of the North Eastern Railway. There was a significant amount of debate, over several months, on that point and it was not until *The Fifeshire Advertiser* was published on the 30<sup>th</sup> March 1878 that we learn the case had been heard, starting on Monday the 25<sup>th</sup> March. This seems a tad unsympathetic as the accident and death had taken place the previous year on the 24<sup>th</sup>!

The case is mentioned here primarily as the evidence gives a clearer picture of the firm and its principals. The case was heard before Lord Gifford and a jury in the Second Division of the Court of Session. There was a significant volume of technical detail involved with once again the suggestion of speed being an issue. The fireman on the engine, Thomas Wylie, deponed that he no longer worked on express trains but on goods trains. He had said shortly after the accident that it was a surprise it had not happened before at that particular spot.

Mr MAGNUS HORN deponed.—I am a brother of the deceased Henry Horn, who was 24 years of age at the time of his death. My father is a draper in Kirkcaldy. At one time he had branch shops in Leith and Dunfermline. My brother served his apprenticeship of 4 years in Kirkcaldy. During that period however, he went to take charge of the branch shop at Leith. After superintending that shop some time he went to London for a brief period, and returned to Kirkcaldy where he remained until the time of his death. Two years before my brother's death my father opened a branch business at Dunfermline. Mr brother Henry took charge of the Kirkcaldy business—engaged and discharged assistants &c.

The first witness to be called was Magnus Horn and it is his evidence which helps clarify the position. He was the brother of the deceased who was 24 years of age at the time of his death. Magnus was mainly concerned with the bookkeeping aspects. He confirmed that his father was a draper in Kirkcaldy but also mentioned that at one time there were branches in Leith and Dunfermline.

His brother had served his apprenticeship in Kirkcaldy but for a spell had taken charge of the Leith shop. After that he had a brief spell in London before returning to Kirkcaldy where he remained until his death.

We learn that the Dunfermline shop had been opened in 1875 and was managed by Henry Horn Snr., with Henry Jnr., taking overall responsibility for the Kirkcaldy outlet. He had the authority to engage and discharge assistants in the shop and also managed his father's property. Magnus added that his brother was to be married in the Spring/Summer and that a Partnership Agreement was in the course of being prepared between father and son. The partnership was to run for an initial 10 years term. We noted that one of the injured was a Katy Taylor who hailed from Edinburgh. It was mentioned at one time she worked with Henry Horn, Son & Co. Although nothing specific is mentioned there must be the possibility that Katy was Henry Jnr's. intended.

Henry had left for London on the 24<sup>th</sup> March and Magnus learned of the accident at 8.00pm on the Sunday evening from the Kirkcaldy Stationmaster. At that point his father, mother and a sister, were in Dunfermline, along with his minister, a Mr Landels. Interestingly, a Mr Ireland was mentioned as being in their company – more on this gentleman later. Magnus immediately left for Dunfermline arriving at around 10.00pm and it was Rev. Landels who broke the news to his father.

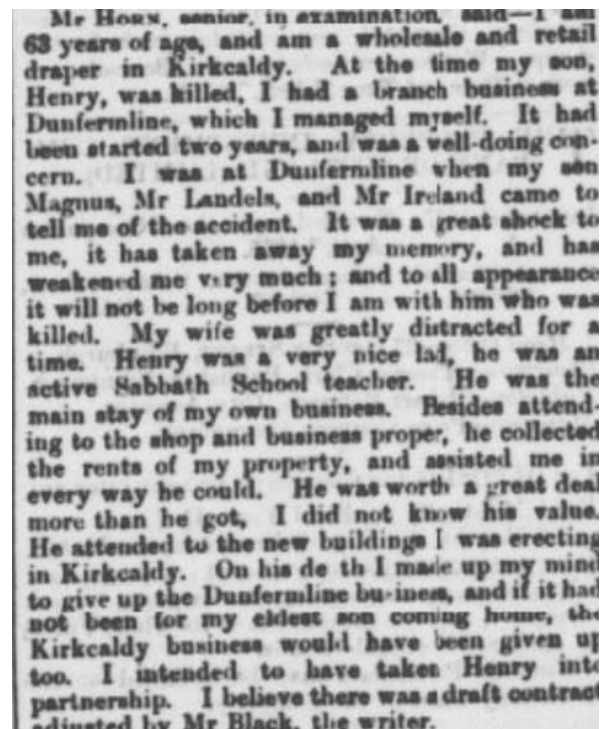
On the Monday, Magnus left for Morpeth to identify the body and presumably bring it home. His final testimony was that as a consequence the Dunfermline shop was given up in the September as his father had to return to the Kirkcaldy shop initially to replace Henry Jnr. Finally, he provided details of the sums his brother received and the financial relationship between his father and brother. He also mentioned in his testimony that his father “had never been the same since, his memory is failing his every day”.

One point in his evidence which was of great interest, in terms of our research on the building, was that the *Son* in *H Horn, Son & Co.* was Henry Jnr., and not the eldest son – Ebenezer. So, on the face of it, this seems to discount the  $\text{£} \#$  monogram belonging to the eldest son.

It was then Henry Horn himself who gave evidence and was then cross-examined. He indicated that he was aged 63, a wholesale and retail draper, with a branch in Kirkcaldy and another in Dunfermline which he had managed himself. He indicated that the crash “was a great shock to me, it

has taken away my memory, and has weakened me very much; and to all appearance it will not be long before I am with him who was killed”.

This was of course a case for compensation due to the death of his son and the effect on his business. From his own words we learn that Henry Jnr., “was the mainstay of my own business and besides attending to the shop and business proper, he collected the rents of my property and assisted me in every way he could. He attended to the new building I was erecting in Kirkcaldy”. This all gets more and more mysterious from a draper leasing a shop and living in Commercial Street – we now have this massive and ornate building – a house in Townend Place – rents being collected and a new building being erected – with what means or with whose support?



Mr Horn, senior, in examination, said—I am 63 years of age, and am a wholesale and retail draper in Kirkcaldy. At the time my son, Henry, was killed, I had a branch business at Dunfermline, which I managed myself. It had been started two years, and was a well-doing concern. I was at Dunfermline when my son Magnus, Mr Landels, and Mr Ireland came to tell me of the accident. It was a great shock to me, it has taken away my memory, and has weakened me very much; and to all appearance it will not be long before I am with him who was killed. My wife was greatly distracted for a time. Henry was a very nice lad, he was an active Sabbath School teacher. He was the main stay of my own business. Besides attending to the shop and business proper, he collected the rents of my property, and assisted me in every way he could. He was worth a great deal more than he got, I did not know his value. He attended to the new buildings I was erecting in Kirkcaldy. On his death I made up my mind to give up the Dunfermline business, and if it had not been for my eldest son coming home, the Kirkcaldy business would have been given up too. I intended to have taken Henry into partnership. I believe there was a draft contract adjusted by Mr Black, the writer.

The final point of interest is that it is disclosed that the eldest son, Ebenezer, is now managing the Kirkcaldy business. We learn that he had set sail from America on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 1877 to return to this country. How long he was in America for was not disclosed. T

The jury found for Mr Horn but he was not paid the £2,000 he was seeking. The level of compensation was set at £700. Of that sum £550 was for pecuniary loss with a further £150 for solatium (consolation). This is why the case was heard in Scotland. It seems solatium was not available in England.

To recap is always worthwhile. The core shop is now expanding and the variety of goods being sold also continues to increase. We also are now aware that Henry Horn Jnr., is the son in the firm's trading name. Ebenezer is managing the premises in conjunction with his father who is still active in the business. Magnus is still employed in the business but he seems to be more on the administrative side. The Dunfermline shop has gone.

The next significant step takes place in June 1880 when a new partnership is formed *Horn & Gillespie*. The new business continued trading from the

same premises but, as with the previous Horn/Gilchrist partnership, it was not destined to last long. In fact it was dissolved by March of 1881. A notice to that effect was included in the *Dunfermline Journal* of the 4<sup>th</sup> June 1881

### NOTICE.

**A**LL DEBTS due to the late Firm of HORN & GILLESPIE, Drapers, High Street, Kirkcaldy, can only be paid to HENRY HORN, Draper, at his BUSINESS PREMISES, 215 High Street, Kirkcaldy, or to Parties specially authorised by him to collect the same. No Person unconnected with the Warehouse has any right or authority to uplift these Debts, and to which Intimation the particular attention of his Customers is directed.

and is shown here. Nothing could be clearer than this notice clearly showing that Henry Horn was still the main individual in the firm. It seems that Gillespie continued to trade from 207-209 after the dissolution using the name of

*George Gillespie*. The remainder of the premises reverted to the trading name *Henry Horn, Son & Co*. In time Gillespie also operated from 271 High Street before changing to his whole business operating from that address.

Why was this fresh partnership required? After significant research the answer was discovered in the *Fifeshire Advertiser* of the 11<sup>th</sup> September 1880. Mr & Mrs Ebenezer Horn were opening a business with the name of The Emporium of Fashions at 188/190 High Street. The advertisement shown here indicates that staff are also being taken from the existing business. We have no idea if this was as the result of a fall out or an amicable agreement but it must have added to Henry Horn's worries.

**INTIMATION.**  
**MR & MRS E. HORN**  
HAVE much pleasure in intimating to their numerous friends and the general public that they have been fortunate in securing a Lease of these Handsome and Commodious Premises,  
**188 AND 190 HIGH STREET,**  
*Lately Occupied by Messrs R. BROWNIE & SONS,*  
WHICH THEY INTEND  
Opening on **SATURDAY, 25th September,**  
AN AT  
**EMPORIUM OF FASHIONS**  
FOR  
MILLINERY, MANTLES, COSTUMES, DRESS GOODS, HOSIERY,  
GLOVES, SMALLWARES, AND TRIMMINGS.

The Premises are now undergoing such Alterations and Improvements as will be necessary for the carrying on of these important Departments, which will fill up a long felt want in the district, where Ladies may with confidence give their Orders and have them executed with Care, Good Taste, Moderate Charges, and Prompt to the time specified.

We have been fortunate in securing the services of Miss MAXWELL, for several years Principal Dressmaker to the late Firm of H. HORN, SON, & CO., also a number of the Principal Assistants in the other Branches, who were under our charge here for the past three years, so that we have every confidence in soliciting Orders, as our whole energies and that of our assistants will be to make shopping a pleasure to Ladies visiting the

**Emporium of Fashions,**  
**188 AND 190 HIGH STREET, KIRKCALDY.**

**DEATH OF MR HENRY HORN, KIRKCALDY.—** Early on Thursday morning there passed from our midst, after a short illness, a citizen whose form has been long familiar to us, Mr Henry Horn. On Friday evening last week, when returning from his business in the evening, Mr Horn felt unwell, and, gradually becoming worse, he expired, as above stated, on Thursday evening, heart-disease, we believe, being assigned as the cause of his somewhat sudden death. Deceased had been engaged in business in Kirkcaldy for the long period, we believe, of nearly forty years.

Henry Horn Senior died on the 9th June 1881 at his home 51 Townsend Place. His obituary makes mention of a short illness believed to be heart disease. He had returned home from work the previous Friday complaining of feeling unwell. He died the following Thursday. *The Fife Free Press* obituary of the 11<sup>th</sup> June disclosed very little. He was strongly

connected with Whytescauseway Baptist Church, where he was a Deacon, for a long number of years. No mention was made of family etc., the article simply directed people to the obituary columns. There was not a jot about

his business life other than the mention he had been trading in Kirkcaldy for a period of 40 years.

What is surprising is the front page of *The Kirkcaldy Times* of the 8<sup>th</sup> June 1881. The advertisement for 213-217 has been altered to show the name as *Horn, Son & Co* – remember Henry Horn Snr., has only taken ill in that week – he died the following week. The advertisement mentioned a Grand Show of New Millinery – nothing to suggest the end was nigh. In less than three months Henry has seen the Horn/Gillespie partnership dissolved and now the firm's name has been changed.

**EXTRAORDINARY INDUCEMENTS.**  
**GRAND SHOW**  
 OF  
**NEW MILLINERY**  
 FOR THIS MONTH.  
**HORN, SON, & Co.**  
 WILL OFFER a Large Lot of ENGLISH and FRENCH MILLINERY, HATS, and BONNETS—the prettiest Styles they have ever shown.  
 STRAW HATS, all this Season's shapes, 4d, 6d, 8d, 10d, 1s, 1s 3d, 1s 6d, 1s 9d, to 5s 6d each.  
 RIBBONS, FLOWERS, FEATHERS, and LACES, in great variety.  
 SEE OUR WINDOWS.  
**HORN, SON, & CO.,**  
 213 to 217 HIGH STREET,  
 KIRKCALDY.

No wonder there was a clear-out sale and P Wills, Son & Co had the opportunity to take over. Henry was dead, Magnus did not have the experience, and Ebenezer had set up a new business with his wife.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29, 1881.      PRICE

**CLEARING-OUT SALE.**  
 213, 215, 217 HIGH STREET.  
**NOW GOING ON.**

The Trustees of the late Mr HENRY HORN have resolved to CLEAR OUT the WHOLE STOCK of FIRST-CLASS DRAPEY GOODS in a limited time.

To ensure a quick clearance of this Valuable Stock of GENERAL DRAPEY GOODS (well-known to be one of the Largest and Best Stocks in Fife) every article will be gone carefully over and REDUCED to such Prices as cannot fail to effect a thorough clearance.

**CLEARING-OUT SALE.**  
 213, 215, 217 HIGH STREET.  
**NOW GOING ON.**  
 Hours of Sale from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and from 6 to 8 p.m.

No time was wasted with a clear-out sale being advertised in the *Kirkcaldy Times* of the 29<sup>th</sup> June 1881. The advertisement is reproduced here – take note that now only 213-217 remains in the firm's hands – clearly George Gillespie had secured the western part of the building via the terms of the partnership dissolution. It all feels a bit unseemly and you have to wonder if the death of Henry Horn Jr., was the first and inevitable step in the firm's decline. What is certain is that a business and a

good one at that built up over a 40 year period collapsed almost in the blink of an eye.

What is certain is that the Edinburgh firm of *P Wills, Son & Co* took over the business in August 1881 and an advertisement confirming this appeared in the Fife Free Press of the 27<sup>th</sup> August.

**P. WILLS, SON, & Co.,**  
 EDINBURGH.  
 PREPARED  
 FOR THE  
**GREAT REALISING SALE**  
 OF THE  
*Stock of the late Henry Horn, Son, & Co.,*  
 AT  
**STARTLING PRICES.**

We now look at Ebenezer in more detail. Magnus had said, in his testimony,

he was also a draper. A possible solution for the source of the funds employed in Horn's advancement may have come from the successful firm of *Ireland & Wishart* whose linen factory stood in what is now Rutherford Court. Ireland & Wishart were a father-in-law/son-in-law partnership. David Ireland was the older being born in 1812 and dying in 1889. James Wishart was born in 1845 and died in 1917. We learn from Wishart's obituary that he was born in Abernethy and was apprenticed to a draper in Newburgh. From there he went to Falkland and worked for a draper named Henry Horn! Yes, it would seem that at one stage Horn had an outlet in Falkland and we strongly suspect that it was Ebenezer who ran it. From there, Wishart moves to the Kirkcaldy shop and he meets David Ireland. They form a partnership and take over Horn's Falkland shop staying there from 1863-68. They add weaving to their business and in 1868 they move into weaving on an industrial scale in Kirkcaldy and Abernethy. The draper's business is given up.

However, there is now proof positive that they were well acquainted with the Horn family. Keep in mind that when Henry was made aware of his son's death in the train crash – a Mr Ireland was in his company – same man? One thing is certain and that is David Ireland would not be working in a Falkland drapers between 1863 and 1868 – it would seem more likely he was setting James Wishart up in business.

With the disposal of the Falkland shop we suspect Ebenezer went on to the run the Leith Branch – albeit seemingly in his own name. He moved to Glasgow where he married in 1868. There were five daughters:-

Agnes Elizabeth 1868.

Mary Ann 1870.

Jessie Barbara 1871.

Jemima Loch 1873.

Ebenetta 1878.

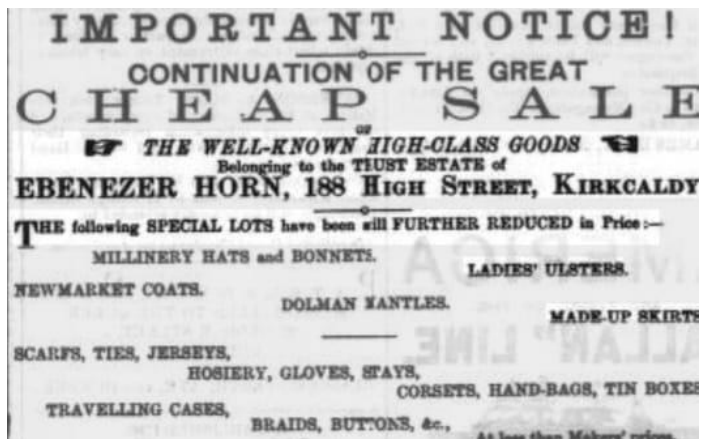


We learn from the *Glasgow Herald* on the 26<sup>th</sup> October 1878 that the firm of *Ebenezer*

*Horn & Co* plus Ebenezer Horn, as an individual, have been sequestrated. He was a sole trader with a business at 16 St. Vincent Street, Glasgow, which was described as a 'Merchant & Commission Agents'. The article mentioned

he was now in Kirkcaldy.

When he set up at 188/190 High Street he fared little better with the *Fifeshire Advertiser* reporting that a Trust Deed had been signed in its edition of the 24<sup>th</sup> November 1883. The notification was in what was termed an *Important Notice* which indicated there was a continuation of a “Great Cheap Sale” of the “well known high class goods belonging to the Trust Estate of Ebenezer Horn of 188 High Street Kirkcaldy. The advertisement included all the fixtures and fittings.



On the 16<sup>th</sup> July 1884 the *Kirkcaldy Times* reports that Ebenetta Horn has died aged 6 at 411 High Street, Kirkcaldy, although Horn's address is given as 62 Buchanan Street, Glasgow. Worse was to follow when, on the 15<sup>th</sup> November 1890, the *Fife Free Press* reported that his daughter Jessie Barbara had died at 411 High Street aged 19.

It is perhaps no little surprise to learn that the 1891 Census reveals him to be in Stratheden Rest Home being treated for alcohol related issues. It would not help his recovery when another daughter Jemima Loch Watson Horn died in Partick in 1893. He was in Stratheden for a considerable period before being released.

You can have nothing but pity – three daughters dead over a 9 year period and a Sequestration and a Trust Deed within 5 years. Ebenezer Horn died in Falkland in 1908 – did he go back to where it all began?

There is now a need to pull all the strands together to try and understand the timeline. Another surprise came from the *Fifeshire Advertiser* of the 13<sup>th</sup> January 1883 discovering that *P. Wills, Son & Co* were pulling out of Kirkcaldy. If that was a surprise what was an even bigger one was that their lease had expired - they had not bought the building – merely leased it – but from who? Did the Horn family own the building or did they also lease it?

This advertisement of the 13<sup>th</sup> January indicated that a huge sale was about to start. Part of the advertisement is shown but it is too lengthy to include it in full. The headings were :-

- Dress stuff.
- Jackets and Ulsters.
- Millinery.
- Black and Coloured Silk and satins.
- Underclothes.
- Ladies silk scarfs.
- Heavies.
- Cottons.
- Hosiery and gloves.
- Smallwares.
- Boy's clothing.
- Odd lots.

**SALE OF STOCK.**  
 RETIRING FROM BUSINESS IN KIRKCALDY.  
**P. WILLS, SONS, & CO.,**  
 HAVING disposed of the Lease of their Premises, and in order to make room for the New Tenants, they have commenced a  
**GRAND CLEARING SALE FOR THIRTY DAYS**  
 of the WHOLE STOCK of DRAPERY and MILLINERY GOODS, at such SWEEPING REDUCTIONS that cannot but effect a Speedy Clearance. The Stock must be sold, as the Premises have to be empty in February, hence TREMENDOUS BARGAINS may be looked for. We are fully aware that it means to clear out so large a Stock in such a short time, and we are fully determined to place these the Public Goods at such prices that will effect our purpose. We, on Opening, had one of the GREATEST SALES EVER HEARD OF in Kirkcaldy; we will leave nothing undone to make this a Great Success, and leave behind us the good wishes of our numerous Customers.

An examination of the *Leith Burgh's Pilot* shows that *P. Wills & Son* also had a very short existence in Edinburgh. They seem to appear in the early 1880s buying the stock of *Edwards & Co* who operated from 65 Kirkgate in Leith. Both the Edinburgh outlet as well as Kirkcaldy closed in 1883.

**"THE GRANITE HOUSE."**—It will be seen from advertisement that Messrs Meikle & Sutherland are to open on Saturday next the premises in High Street lately occupied by Messrs P. Wills, Son, & Co. as a drapery establishment. The interior of the building has undergone a complete renovation, having been repainted in a most tasteful manner, while various other improvements have been made in the arrangement of the place for the purpose of suiting the convenience of customers. The establishment will henceforth be known as "The Granite House," and, we believe, will shortly be painted outside in imitation of granite, which will certainly add variety to the High Street.

*The Fifeshire Advertiser* of the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1883 carried an article to say that *Messrs Meikle and Sutherland* were to commence business as drapers from 213-217 but that it would now be known as the *Granite House*. "The interior of the building has undergone a complete renovation, having been repainted in a most tasteful manner". The next line suggested that "we believe will shortly be painted outside, in an imitation of granite

which will certainly add variety to the High Street". Who knows if this ever happened.

What is certain is that the Horn connection with Kirkcaldy High Street had gone. Mrs Horn died in 1894 in her home at 51 Townend Place. Magnus left

for South Africa, marrying a 24 year old lady when he was 39. However, what remains is an intriguing building whose ornate carvings remain as fresh today as they did in 1860. If nothing else take the time to ponder on and admire this exquisite building.

The quest to learn more remains outstanding and in particular:-

Whose initials are at the very top of the building?

Who built 215 – 217 High Street, Kirkcaldy, and is it their initials at the top?

How was Henry Horn able to afford the cost of the building if indeed he did build it?

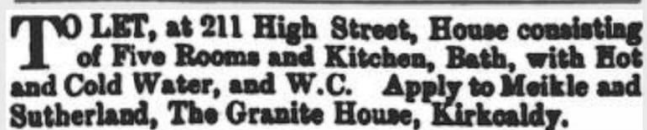
Who was the *E H* whose initials are on the building? Despite other possibilities we believe it to be Elizabeth Horn – especially as it was pointed out that there appears to be a carving of a heart under both monograms. Is it nothing more than husband and wife?

Why was it the most ornate and decoratively outstanding shop on the High Street – what was the purpose of all the ornamentation? What is the significance of the rose – the thistle and the shamrock?

Was Horn bankrolled by David Ireland or are we wide of the mark with that suggestion? We put credence in the fact that Ireland and Horn were close in ages and the belief that Ireland was an acquaintance/friend.

Hopefully, one day we will get the answers. Access to the Title Deeds would certainly reveal a lot more.

STOP PRESS!!



**TO LET, at 211 High Street, House consisting of Five Rooms and Kitchen, Bath, with Hot and Cold Water, and W.C. Apply to Meikle and Sutherland, The Granite House, Kirkcaldy.**

However there is a final twist to this story which really has to be included. The first item is an advertisement in the *Fife Free Press* of May the 9th 1885.

*Meikle and Sutherland* are advertising 211 High Street Kirkcaldy to be let as a house. The advertisement is shown here for interest.

Hot on the heels of the above comes another advertisement - again in the *Fife Free Press* but on the 10th July 1886. This time the advert, which is shown here, is placed by the well known local solicitor, Michael Nicol, who operated from Kirk Wynd. It would seem that *Messrs. Meikle and Sutherland* are about to vacate the business premises.

**LARGE BUSINESS PREMISES IN KIRK-CALDY TO LET.**

**T**O LET, for such time as may be agreed upon, those large and commodious **BUSINESS PREMISES** in **HIGH STREET**, presently occupied by Messrs Meikle & Sutherland, Drapers, &c., there. The Premises are finely situated, and are well adapted for carrying on a large business. For particulars apply to **MICHAEL NICOL, Writer, Kirkcaldy.**

Finally and to the important part where we look at a very busy couple of days in Kirkcaldy. This is Kirkcaldy's *Annual Valuation Appeal Court* whose arguments and decisions were reported on in the *Fife Free Press* of the 17th September 1887.

In March the same newspaper had reported on an auction of *Meikle and Sutherland's* furniture and fittings. They had ceased trading.

**Mr Nicol, solicitor, in answer to Mr Thomson, said he was factor for that shop known as the "Granite Warehouses." These had been standing empty from April of this year. He advertised the place to let. He had no applicants. There was one inquiry, but it could not be called an application. The former tenants, Messrs Meikle & Sutherland, paid £220 for the shop and business premises above. He believed the reason why it could not be let was because of its size.**

**Councillor Tait—Is it the case that you refused £180 from the former tenants?**

**Mr Nicol—Messrs Meikle & Sutherland were in correspondence with Mr Horn himself, and I can't say. Personally, however, he knew that they had offered £140.**

In the September article it is indicated by Mr Nicol that *Messrs. Meikle and Sutherland* had been in touch with Mr Horn. The snippet is included here. This would suggest that the lease had been given to them by Mr Horn. Therefore there must be a presumption it is a Horn property. Again we ask - just whose initials are at the very top of the building and did the Horn family

have an extraordinary long lease on the building or, did they own the property? The answer remains as elusive as ever. The answer must lie in those top initials.

## **Acknowledgements for Swan Memorial Section**

This story has been produced almost exclusively through researching newspapers. All the individual newspapers used for articles, sketches and advertisements are credited in the text. All the newspaper information was obtained from *Find my past Newspaper Archive* in partnership with the *British Library*.

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We are grateful to both *Alan Westwater and Kirkcaldy Y.M.C.A.* for allowing us access to the items.

## **Acknowledgements for 207 – 217 High Street.**

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The photographs on pages 1 – 3 and 6 were taken and provided by *Alan Westwater*.

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