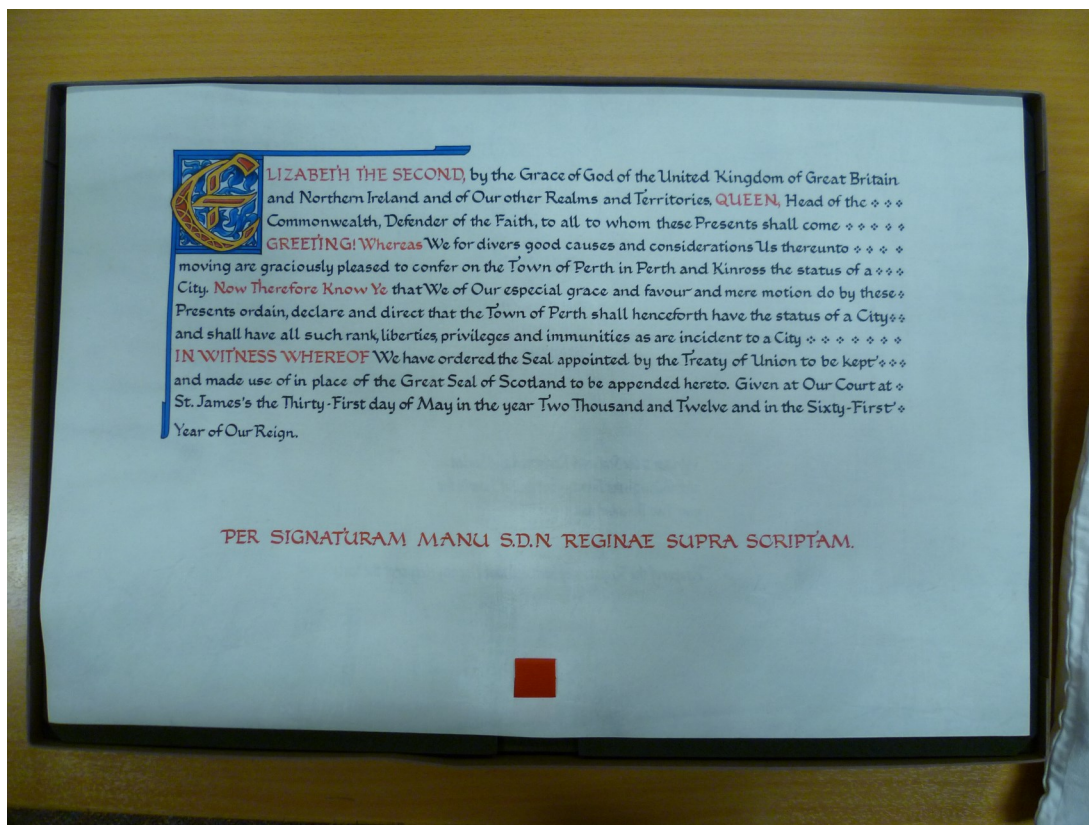


Issue Number

52

Spring 2022

Friends of Perth & Kinross Archive



Royal Charter, Letter Patent of HM Elizabeth II, 2012 (Acc13/69)

Image courtesy of Perth & Kinross Archive

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Notes from our Chairman

For the Friends, recovery from the COVID pandemic has been cautiously slow but is gradual. The 2021-2022 Talks Programme has materialised and once again, volunteers have been welcomed back into the Archive; because of COVID, we have learnt to communicate in other ways.

With the assistance of the Archive team, the Programme for this Session has been delivered by a mixture of zoom (virtual) and zoom/in-person (hybrid) Talks through Eventbrite. The advantage of holding Talks by zoom is that members and their guests are able to access them from their own home, wherever that might be. Thank you to the Archive team for making this a reality.

The majority of committee meetings have been held in-person but once by zoom. A letter was sent on your behalf to support the funding application by PSNS (Perthshire Society of Natural Science) in partnership with HTT (Historic Towns Trust) to develop a historic map of Perth. The funding applications recently supported by the Friends have been successful, both for the Archive's project "In your Own Words" (please see page 4) and to PKHT (Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust) for the City Mills project. We hear more about the latter after the AGM.

Since Autumn 2021, the Committee has taken over responsibility from the Assistant Archivist for two posts: Membership Secretary (Anne Amos) and Events Officer (job-share Margaret Borland-Stroyan and Pat Kerr). The BALH (British Association of Local History) invitations and discount code applicable to the Friends are now being circulated regularly by the Membership Secretary, who has asked that members please check their SPAM boxes for FPKA e-mails. The post of Honorary Secretary remains vacant—nominations very welcome!

In February 2022, volunteering in the Archive was opened up, and the Archive is almost back to its original list of nine volunteers. While we wait for the relaxation of all COVID constraints, we thank you, our members for your continued support.

Prue Dowie

News from the Archive

Despite being closed for nearly half of the year, the Archive still received 43 new deposits in 2021 which Sarah (Wilcock) and I have spent some time processing during the last few months. These include personal papers of Maurice Fleming, playwright, folk-song collector and editor of *The Scots Magazine*, whose associated collections of local history books and post-cards relating to Blairgowrie and environs have been added to Local & Family History's collections. Other highlights include sound recordings from Margaret Bennet and Perth Theatre, records of Perth Harbour Board, Balnacraig School and a stray cartulary from the Glovers Incorporation of Perth.

In October 2021, we were delighted to welcome Courtney Morrison to the Archive on a six-month trainee post as part of the national "Kickstart Scheme", which was set up to support young people into employment in response to the challenging economic climate created by Covid-19. Courtney has quickly become an invaluable extra pair of hands helping with researchers and enquiries and has also completed several small cataloguing projects. Sadly, her traineeship finishes at the end of April 2022, but she will continue to help out on a casual basis as a member of CPK's 'pool' staff. In January 2022 we were joined by Project Archivist, Hannah Mackay, who is cataloguing our sound collections in a project that was part-funded by the Friends and runs until August 2023. Hannah introduces herself later in the Newsletter (page 4) and will give a talk to the Friends later this year about the collections. To give you a taster, in April we will be launching a small exhibition on the first-floor Gallery Wall showcasing a selection of recordings.

In the New Year we also welcomed volunteers back to the Archive after an absence of nearly two years. As ever, they are working on a variety of interesting projects - Pat, Anne and Marjory are transcribing sound archive recordings, Jackie and Margaret are putting together a small exhibition for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, and Donald is listing historic council records and indexing a WW1 Register of Aliens.

Ishbel MacKinnon

In Our Words



Hannah Mackay

Image courtesy of Culture Perth & Kinross (CPK)

The Perth and Kinross Archive sound collection project “In Our Words” has gotten off to a great start in the last few months. My name is Hannah Mackay and I am the project lead for the next year and a half at CPK.

I am excited to get stuck into wonderful recordings from across the region and hearing a range of Scottish voices and stories. I moved back to Scotland last year after completing my professional training as an archivist at the University of Leiden and working in Amsterdam archives for the last six years. My background is in digital archiving, and I managed a project to have sound collections digitised, described and made available on-line at the International Institute of Social History.

I look forward to bringing that knowledge to the project here. At CPK I have begun to catalogue the oral histories in the Archive and collate the brilliant work that has been done by volunteers from Friends of the Archive over the last years to make it available and accessible to the public.

Hannah Mackay

Mr Alexander Macbreck

A sixteenth-century Provost of Perth



Perth: A place in history (2011), cover page

artist: David Simon © Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust

Image courtesy of PKHT

The article about Archibald Macbreck by Margaret Borland-Stroyan in Newsletter 51 (Autumn 2021) prompted this author to look into the life of his grandfather, Mr Alexander Macbreck, who acted as provost of Perth three times in the sixteenth century. In each instance the circumstances surrounding the choice of Mr Alexander were unusual and each term lasted for only one year.

In 1523, his year in office was sandwiched between four years during which one man held the office of provost consistently. In 1544, he was appointed in mid-term at the behest of the Governor, Arran. His 1552 term coincided with the death of William Lord Ruthven who, by then, dominated the political scene in Perth. This paper will focus on the two latter terms, when the question of religious reform was gathering momentum in Scotland, with a view to seeking any precedents that might have influenced his descendant's religious choices¹.

¹In the sixteenth century Macbreck was spelt variously as McBrek, McBroke, McBreek, Macbrek and others. For continuity, I will use Macbreck as employed by Ms Borland-Stroyan. The title “mr”, usually rendered in lower case, indicates that Macbreck held a Master of Arts degree (I have been unable to discover the granting institution). I will use the lower case “mr”, as was common in the sixteenth century, henceforth in this article.

The year 1543 witnessed the beginning of another long regency in Scotland following the death of King James V. The Governor, James Earl of Arran initially supported a policy of *rapprochement* with England. This included tolerating some reformed religious procedures as were being advanced in England at the time. Then in the Autumn of 1543, Arran reversed his position by choosing to join forces with Cardinal Beaton and his faction which meant eschewing Protestant practices.

This *volte face* was unwelcome in Perth where certain burgesses who favoured reform had briefly enjoyed the liberty to vandalize the Blackfriars friary, challenge the local clergy, disregard some of the traditional religious practices and had taken to reading the scriptures in the vernacular. In order to emphasize his new stance vis-a-vis religion the Governor, along with the Cardinal, decided to make an example of certain citizens of Perth and Dundee. With the stated motive of “punishing certain heretics within said towns”, the two men arrived in Perth in January 1544².

During their brief stay four men and one woman were condemned to death, while several others known to have engaged in some of the above activities fled the burgh or were deprived of their offices³. The sitting provost was deposed and Mr Alexander Macbreck was appointed in his place. Macbreck had played no part in the administration of the burgh throughout the 1530s. He had served once as a councillor in 1541 and once as a bailie in 1542⁴.

² Treasurers' Accounts, vol viii 252, 258. Note: Years normally began on 25 March in the 16th century hence the record date is January 1543. I have used 1 January as the start of the year throughout this paper.

³ Foxe, Calderwood and those who have relied on their accounts claim that six people were executed. My evidence indicates clearly that five people were put to death in Perth in January 1544. Ms. Perth Museum and Art Gallery. “The Convenor Court Book of Perth. Original Letters and Papers Produced by the Craftsmen of Perth in Defence of their Ancient Rights and Privileges”. Catalogue 2/1: document number 34.

⁴ PKA B59/12/1 fos 49v, 130v, 137v, B59/12/2 fo 2r-v, and he had been provost in 1523.

Macbreck's appointment by the Governor to replace the Protestant-leaning John Charteris of Cuthilgurdy seems to indicate that the authorities thought that mr Alexander could be relied upon to uphold the traditional religious observances in Perth. He retained the office, though not without personal harassment and much civil unrest until Michaelmas 1544, when he stepped down and took his seat on the council as the retiring provost was wont to do⁵. Throughout the remainder of the 1540s mr Alexander intermittently sat on the burgh council while continuing his practice as a legal expert.

1552-53

Although nothing as startling as the executions of 1544 promoted mr Alexander's next term as provost of Perth, two observations may be significant.

In the first place, William Lord Ruthven the provost during the 1551-52 year had twice appointed deputy provosts, though without explanation⁶. That Lord Ruthven died before the end of 1552 indicates that he had become indisposed and was unable to serve. Yet in August of 1552, neither of Ruthven's deputies took over as provost. Rather it was mr Alexander who stepped into the office, again in mid-term⁷.

Subsequently at Michaelmas, Macbreck was chosen as provost and held that office throughout 1552-53. There is no evidence of any outside interference in this election but it is curious that any dates on folios 12 and 13 of the record have been obscured and are illegible⁸. Extant records leave no explanation for his take-over in August 1552 but definitely confirm that Macbreck, and not either of Lord Ruthven's deputies, was holding the provost's post in August 1552 and that further he was duly elected and retained the provost's office until Michaelmas 1553.

⁵ The unrest referred to here had little to do with mr Alexander or religion *per se*. It concerned the feud between the Ruthven and Gray factions for control of the burgh.

⁶ PKA B59/12/3 fo 175r (8 October 1551), B59/12/3 fo 210r (26 July, 1552).

⁷ PKA B59/12/3 fo 212r.

⁸ PKA B59/12/2 fos 12r, 13r.

Secondly the historian of Edinburgh's reformation, Michael Lynch, noticed that there was a significant revival in civic Catholicism in that burgh in the early 1550s⁹. This begs the question "was this true for Perth as well?"

In my research I found that "only one or two meagre examples of continued support for local religious institutions can be gleaned from Perth's [early 1550s] records"¹⁰, suggesting that signs of renewed civic Catholicism in Perth were scarce. State Papers reveal that the Governor frequently stayed in Perth throughout 1552 and 1553 but the possible reasons for this are complex and at face value seem not to be connected with the choice of provost that year. Mr Alexander did not take his seat on the burgh council in 1553. Patrick, third Lord Ruthven, succeeded him as provost.

Conclusion

The death of mr Alexander Macbreck, at least four years before the outbreak of the Reformation means that there is no record as to how he might have reacted in that crisis and its aftermath. The most that can be said is that mr Alexander filled the role as provost for nine months in 1544. He was given charge as a person who could be relied upon to enforce traditional Catholic practices in a town that had harboured a cluster of alleged heretics.

There is some slight suggestion that he may have remained on that side of the religious divide 1552, though less obviously so. The fact that he retired from office immediately rather than taking up his customary seat on the council of 1553, when Patrick Ruthven became provost, could suggest the possibility that he was unwilling to support a more Protestant-leaning administration.

⁹ Michael Lynch, *Edinburgh and the Reformation*, Edinburgh 1981, p 30

¹⁰ Mary Verschuur, *Perth and the Reformation Society and Reform: 1540-1560*, University of Glasgow, PhD Thesis, 1985, p 395.

Mr Alexander died sometime after October 1553 and before January 1555 when his son James was entered as his heir¹¹. His death leaves no clues as to how he might have influenced his heirs, at least one of whom chose to become a “Wilfull heirar of Mess”.

Dr Mary B. Verschuur

¹¹ NRS Protocol Book of Sir Henry Elder , B59/1/1 fo 17r

Author's note.

In order to facilitate the flow of this article for the reader, I have limited the number of footnotes. I refer anyone who is interested in further documentation to consult my book, *Politics or Religion? The Reformation in Perth 1540-1560*, Edinburgh, 2006, or my Dissertation (University of Glasgow, 1985) in that University's Library. Of course, the Burgh Records in the Archive provided a major resource that I have drawn upon extensively in the course of my research.

Battle of the Lednock Bridge

The old stone bridge over the River Lednock at Comrie had been built in 1799. It was a substantial structure with three arches but was only 15-feet wide and was set at an angle to the approach roads on either side; moreover, it had steep gradients on either side of its crown and had become a danger to life and limb.

The Lochearnhead, St Fillans & Comrie Railway Act was passed in 1897 and in 1899 the company offered to replace the old bridge with a modern 25-foot wide bowstring bridge which would be both straight and level. The Council were so delighted with this offer that they offered to contribute £300 towards the cost of the bridge if the approaches were also improved.

The railway company's engineers drew up a plan, which was approved by the council's engineer, for the new bridge and its approaches to continue the straight line of Drummond Street eastwards to where it could join the already-straight Crieff road. This meant acquiring a small section of land owned by Colonel Williamson in front of St Serf's Episcopal Church and cutting down the mature lime trees which screened it from the main road.



Drummond Street, Comrie 1904

Photograph W 357 Wood Perth

Image courtesy of Perth Museum & Art Gallery

Unfortunately, the planners had neglected to consult Colonel Williamson before they came to their agreement. When he was shown the plans he almost exploded with rage! The engineers were sent off with the proverbial fleas in their ears and told to come back with a revised plan that would preserve the line of trees. This they did, but the result was an S-bend in the approach roads on both sides of the bridge.

Colonel Williamson was happy with the layout and agreed the revised plan. The railway company's directors, for their part, resolved to send a letter to the District Council saying that the construction of the road bridge would be in accordance with this plan and that it was only on the understanding that it should be adopted that the arrangements should be made with Colonel Williamson for the acquisition of the necessary ground.

It was now the turn of the District Council to explode with rage. They insisted that they had already come to a legally-binding agreement with the railway company that the road and bridge would run in a straight line from Drummond Street. They did not want to perpetuate any bends in the road! Unfortunately for them, the legal agreement had made no reference to exactly how the approach roads should be laid out.

The railway company pointed out that the proposed approach road from Drummond Street would now be much wider at 34-feet whilst the road on the other side of the bridge would be no less than 56-feet wide and be in line with the station approach, making it safer for travellers because a footpath would be built along that side of the bridge.

A meeting between the two sides ended acrimoniously. Colonel Williamson absolutely refused to grant any ground opposite the church or remove any of the trees there. For their part, the District Council not only refused to accept Colonel Williamson's proposed diversion but also threatened to withdraw their offer of a £300 contribution towards the cost of the new bridge and sue for damages.

"In that case", said the Railway Directors, "we will not build you a new road bridge at all". The District Council huffed and puffed for several more weeks. Eventually, after months of acrimony, they reluctantly agreed to accept Colonel Williamson's plan as there was no possibility of obtaining the ground from him for the original agreed plan.

Lime Trees and S Bend

Image courtesy of Bernard Byrom



So ended the Battle of the Lednock Bridge. Colonel Williamson had emerged victorious and the lime trees are still standing proudly in front of St Serf's church to this day!

Bernard Byrom

The (Re)making of a City: The “Tenth Anniversary” of the New City of Perth

This year marks the tenth anniversary of Perth’s City Status being restored when, on 14 March 2012, it became one of three ‘new’ cities to receive the honour as part of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee celebrations. City status had been removed in 1975 as part of local government reorganisation and Perth’s bid focussed on its long history as a City, evidenced through the historical records of Perth Burgh Council and other documentary sources held in the Archive.

The King James VI (1566-1625) ‘Golden Charter to Perth’ of 1600 (B59/23/23), which states that James VI’s ancient predecessors had made Perth “a free city and regal and royal burgh”, was the main star. This document confirmed all previous charters granted in favour of the burgh and the whole rights and privileges of the burgh, which are detailed at length. From this and other early charters in the Archive it is generally understood that Perth was created a royal burgh by David I between 1124 and 1127; however the original charter does not survive. For readers who wish to learn more about this early history, a printed transcript and translation of the 1600 charter is deposited with the reference B59/23/27. There are also three related documents: a precept of sasine, 13 Feb 1601 (B59/23/24) and two illuminated precepts of sasine, 13 Feb 1601 (B59/23/25-26), subscribed by Thomas Farquhar, James Drummond and Henry Elder, notaries public. Other evidence provided by the Archive included various Acts of Parliament referring to the City of Perth and the matriculated coat of arms of the City and Royal Burgh of Perth. Extracts from Sir Walter Scott’s “Fair Maid of Perth” (Edinburgh, 1828) in which he makes numerous references to Perth as the Fair City were also cited in the bid.

Perth’s campaign to restore its city status had begun some years earlier when in 2005 a meeting of the Council called by Provost Bob Scott and held in the old City Chambers reasserted its belief that Perth was still a city; the 1600 charter and various other persuasive items from the Archive were displayed for the elected members and invited media to consider.

Royal Charter
Letter Patent of HM Elizabeth II
2012 (Acc13/69)

Image courtesy of
Perth & Kinross Archive



The cause was taken up by his successor, Provost John Hulbert, who recognised that the Queen's Diamond Jubilee presented the ideal opportunity to take the claim further. He used the occasion of the Perth 800 Conference in 2010 "*Perth: a Place in History*", to build wider public interest and very quickly it attracted attention and support from the local press, the Lord Lieutenant, parliamentary representatives and local citizens.

Records relating to the bid for City Status are deposited in the Archive, including a copy of the final application and pledges of support from local citizens, officials and MSPs (Acc12/49 and Acc17/29). The Archive also holds the Royal Charter: Letters Patent of HM Queen Elizabeth II granting city status to the town of Perth with great seal appended, 31 May 2012 (Acc13/69).

This year the Queen is celebrating her Platinum Jubilee and to mark the occasion the Archive is hosting a small exhibition looking back at her connection with Perth & Kinross since her Coronation. The exhibition will launch in late May and will run over the summer, coinciding with a special Jubilee fete which will be held at AK Bell Library on Friday 3rd June (12 noon-4pm) to which all Friends are warmly invited to attend; there will be a rare opportunity to view the new City Charter along with related material and some of the earlier charters. Further information will be circulated soon.

Ishbel MacKinnon

The early use of the Holy Lamb as a Symbol in Perth



Extract of Perth Coat of Arms from Burgess Ticket, 1777 (MS14/53)

Image courtesy of Perth & Kinross Archive

As discussed in a previous issue of the Newsletter (no. 47 Autumn 2019), the Agnus Dei, or Holy Lamb, is a symbol associated with St John the Baptist. Although not specific to Perth in Scotland, the use of this symbol by the city over the centuries has been recorded in many ways since its early presence on the burgh seal in 1296 and another sealed document of 1445. The present article draws on the personal contribution to that Newsletter and expands on this multiple usage of the symbol to underline a few salient points.

Capacity measures

In February 1551/2, Andrew Taylor, customs officer ('customer'), granted receipt from bailie Alexander Ray of four 'firlotts' (four measures each containing the fourth part of a boll) with an iron handle and similarly four 'pekks' (four measures each containing a quarter of a firloft) 'new[ly] maid' after the standard of Linlithgow 'brynt wt ye haly lamb thriss on ilk bodum' [burnt with the Holy Lamb thrice on each bottom]. These were to be kept and forthcoming to the town's use. Taylor had purchased them, presumably in another Scottish burgh, for 47s 8d (about £2.35).

There was clearly a need on the part of the authorities to stamp its own standards. With the nonconformity of units then in existence in Scotland, this allowed merchants and customers to identify which standards they used. The Linlithgow measure was widely used in Scotland. Stamping this statutory unit meant that parties could quickly settle disputes in local business transactions. Additionally, the town authorities and Crown officials could inspect the local weights and measures and punish those who employed different gauges failing these set standards.

A rare instance of a craftswoman

Unlike nowadays when women have access to all professions and jobs, the job market in early-modern Scotland was heavily regulated. As a general rule, married women were barred from holding any professional activities in the trades and crafts industries. However, they did exercise a few professions, such as innkeepers, wine sellers, or candle-makers. Also, in the absence of their husbands (elsewhere in the country or abroad), married women could manage the business on their behalf.

Given this state of affairs, the following case is very interesting in casting light on male bodies, both professional and civic, having to adapt on (rare) occasions through force majeure.

In early February 1626, the Town Council wanted to regulate the selling of wine and ale. It passed a by-law banning sellers from using any ‘stoupis [drinking vessels, tankards]’ other than those that conformed to the gauge. It instructed all sellers to bring these vessels to the pewterer before the following Easter to have them ‘stampit wt ye lamb Imediatlie aboue ye plonk [a small lump of metal inside the drum that indicates the level of the true capacity]’. Any offenders would have their vessels confiscated and pay a 40s fine (£2).

A week later, the Council directed Janet Kinpont to present her surety to them in a week's time. This was to ensure that 'scho [she] sall conforme all stoupis to be maid or castin be hir' in the future with the gauge and that these 'sall be stampit wt ye lamb'. So, a week later, on 20th February, presumably Janet failed to present her guarantor, which forced the magistrates to issue the exact same directive to her once again. Except this time, it carried an extra piece of information and an additional threat. It revealed that Janet was actually married to an unnamed pewterer of Edinburgh. The Council made it clear to her that in case she did not bring her surety, it would deprive her 'fra any working or casting heirefter in respect scho is cled [provided] wt ane husband'.

Janet was thus working as a pewterer in Perth, away from her husband who lived in Edinburgh. The couple showed a shrewd commercial acumen in that the husband operated his business in Edinburgh but by the same token, by having Janet in Perth, they had cornered part of the Perth market. The Council's decision underlined the fact that Janet's work as a pewterer in town was only at the magistrates' discretion or toleration.

From the evidence provided by records in other Scottish burghs, professional or trading allowance tended to occur when the local council had little alternative or that it was in the interest of the common good. One reading of these entries can be that Janet was allowed to work as a pewterer not because the town lacked such a craftsman (as the law had called for local vessels to be stamped by the pewterer, but note the singular) but rather because there was not enough of them to meet the local demand. Certainly, an earlier document in the Archive also points to that trade's flimsy establishment in town. In 1587, pewterer Christopher Lufrend, whose location is left blank, had to lease specified 'warklowmes [tools]' pertaining to his craft from a Glasgow armourer for seven years. For Janet, one can suggest she would have learned the art of the trade through her husband or perhaps her own family, if she was the daughter of a pewterer. As a married woman and living away from her husband, she would certainly have come under the watchful scrutiny of the kirk.

Branding

When it comes to branding, the norm, in terms of its recording, was usually a rather terse affair with the original document only noting the burning – or branding, that is to burn with a hot iron on the flesh – usually on the cheek or the shoulder. Again this judicial practice was not limited to Perth but rather common as seen elsewhere in other Scottish burgh records. The sentence was applied broadly to numerous crimes such as theft, receiving stolen items, and against repeat offenders, prostitutes or vagrants, or in conjunction with another sentence such as banishment. For instance, in February 1602, Perth Town Council instructed all so-called idle beggars whose names were not enrolled within the register to leave town. Those in breach of that by-law faced the penalty of ‘burning of yame wt ye burn Iron on the Cheik’. As with other sentences, branding was frequently used by town magistrates across the country as a threat as opposed to being actually carried out.

Yet it did occur. In January 1616, Perth Council sentenced James Niven (‘neving’) to be scourged and branded because ‘he failzeit him self to be crepill of his feit this ten zeir’ (‘he falsified himself to be cripple of his feet these last ten years’). This permanent inscription on the body and physical stigmatization made it difficult for the offenders to fully re-enter the social space of the local community and might entail a loss of social status.

In September 1619, trial by a jury found unanimously (‘all in ane voce’) ‘James andersone borne in brechin’ to be a common thief and ‘daylie pykar [petty thief/pilferer]’ as he confessed himself. The court sentenced Anderson ‘to be Scougit [scourged] about ye toun nakit aboue the wyst [waist] wpwart Thaireftir to be brunt on ye richt schowlder wt ye lamb of ye said burch [burgh]’ and if Anderson ever be found in the burgh or suburbs in the future, then he is to be arrested and ‘to suffer the death but Dome or law [i.e. without proper trial and sentence]’.

This entry is interesting as very rarely do the records go into details of the actual branding.

Having been scourged through the town, Anderson was to be burnt on the right shoulder ‘wt ye lamb of ye said burch’. We thus learn that when Perth branded criminals, it used a metal rod at the end of which featured the design of a Holy Lamb, as found in the Perth coat of arms (officially registered in 1673), the image of which would forever remain imprinted on the individual’s skin.

These two brandings (on the cheek and on the shoulder) also raise the question as to whether the part of the body being burnt varied depending on the nature of the crime. Actually, a chance discovery of a similar entry in the Rutherglen burgh records would indicate that this might have been the case. In 1637, a thief there was also sentenced to be scourged from one end of the town to the other and burnt on the right shoulder with the town’s seal, in effect a hot iron cast of that seal.

Here we have the branding of thieves on the right shoulder in two Scottish burghs, which might have been indicative of a sentencing practice found across Scotland or at least in other Scottish burghs. Even more intriguingly, the use of the town’s symbol of the Holy Lamb (and Rutherglen’s own undisclosed symbol) meant that criminals could be identified as such within their burghs but also when they relocated elsewhere. The stigma also denoted their community of origin. Yet the Holy Lamb becomes much more ambiguous for Perth criminals living locally, as neighbours viewing that symbol associated it with the Others, that is social outcasts, whilst looking at part of their own identity, the lamb of Perth.

The town’s old colours

Having appointed the next wappenshaw, or muster of men under arms, to be on 28th December 1625, Perth Council set about organizing it. On 6th December, it ordered its treasurer to buy ‘als meikill taiffetie cord of quhyte and reid as will be tua new ansenzeis [as much taffeta of white and red colours to make two new ensigns/banners] and to caus mak yame of aucht breidis [breadths] and putt ye halie lamb in ye middis yairof to be ready for that muster.

However, trouble was brewing and the issue brought division among the magistrates. The Council was united and five days prior to the muster it concluded ‘all in ane voice [unanimously]’ and promised ‘to stand & kepe yair auld colloris of yair ansenzeis of quhyte & raid [red] as they ar p[rese]ntlie maid and nawayis to alter the same at the p[ro]uestis desire Bot to keipe yame of quhyte & reid according to wse & wount [tradition]’. So set against that unanimous front of the Council was the lonely voice of the then provost, David Viscount of Stormont Lord Scone.

Unfortunately, the register does not expand on Scone’s alternative new design for the town’s banner. On that very day, the Council wanted to make sure that Scone understood that the whole town was wholeheartedly committed to its old colours of white and red. It appointed the local Minister, Mr John Robertson, alongside bailie Andrew Wilson and a few others to hold a discussion with the Provost and notify him that ‘the com[m]ounes & haill toun [the common people/citizens and whole town] will have yair ansenzeis of na wther culloris bot of quhyte & reid according to wse & wount’.

These few entries show that the town’s old colours were white and red with the figure of the Holy Lamb set in the middle until at least 1625 and, in all likelihood, later, if the Provost did not have his way in the matter.

Conclusion

There are a few key points and pointers to be drawn and underlined from this evidence. The first one concerns the universality of the symbol, being found across the many layers of Perth’s community and the functions to which it applied, be it commercial (as capacity measure), judicial/criminal (branding), and military (town’s colours), among others. This visual token pervaded the daily lives of the people of Perth and its visitors, given that these representations were all within the public sphere.

Finally, the symbol of the Holy Lamb acted like a visual grammar that was much more present in society and that would have been more broadly understood in the local community than can be assumed at first, including to the many inhabitants who could not read or write.

This made it a very potent symbol indeed, much more so than text. It helped shape local identity around a common and powerful image, though at times in an ambiguous fashion as seen in the case of branding.

Dr Thomas Brochard

Perth & Kinross Fabian Society

Perth and Kinross Fabian Society was established when a number of individuals from the county came together while attending the Scottish Council of Fabian Societies' AGM at Aberfoyle in November 1966. These week-end schools allowed Fabians from all over Scotland to meet year-upon-year to discuss news and views but the Perthshire contingent, who had never attended such an event, thought the delegates reserved and elite. The Secretary, Miss Jenny Auld, assured us that she would be delighted to have a local society started in the Perth area as we would be heralded as what was probably the only rural society of its kind in the U.K.

Consequently at a meeting convened by Mr John McEwen at Rosemount, Blairgowrie, attended by an encouraging number of people on 26th February 1967, it was decided to form Perth and Kinross Fabians and the officials were elected: Mr A C Cairns (Chair); Mr J F Gathercole (Secretary); Mr H Rodger (Treasurer); Mr J McEwen (Membership) with Prof Ken Alexander and Mr H G Mooney (Vice Chairs). A programme was proposed with Tam Dalyell MP speaking on Defence, Prof Ken Alexander on Fairfields Shipyard, Mr C M Parnell on Planning in the Community and a visit to Craigvinean Forest, Dunkeld, was planned for October.

John McEwen 1983 MS 164/58

Image courtesy of Jim Ferguson



A list of speakers involved in Education, Industry in Perth, Agriculture, Rural Depopulation and slots had been reserved for: Gavin Strang MP; A Altschut, Dept of Nursing, Edinburgh University; Councillor John Stewart on Children's Panels; Prof Miller Dept of Geography, Glasgow University; Councillor David White on Housing; Jim Ferguson on Land Ownership; Mr A Steven on Scottish Writers; Mr J D Burrowes on Social Work; Mr A McRobbie on Agricultural Contractors. At Aberfoyle several individuals from Perth were introduced to officials representing Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Cumbernauld and Dundee, who advised on procedure with Bob Farnborough advising on the do's and don't's when tackling research projects.

In Perth at that point in time political discussion was centred round established political parties and independent points-of-view were discouraged. So at the second meeting held in the Royal George Hotel on Sunday March 12th 1967, it was agreed that a member after hearing a speaker could hold an independent point of view and given five minutes to try to convince the meeting of the validity of their reasoning. It was agreed that speakers would be invited from all disciplines including local and national government and even those with a totally independent viewpoint. It was agreed that sub-groups would be formed within the Society to pursue individual projects, resulting in a pamphlet or an article in the Fabian News. To fast forward the activities of the Society would require many pages but the impact that was enjoyed by the members and the influence that the Society retained in some quarters was notable.

The largest reaction was from the Scottish Landowners' Federation, when we sought to establish the exact size and areas of their estates and how they used their land. With the assistance of the Macaulay Institute of Soil Research and Millman's maps, we proved that the land was not being used for the benefit of the community and was in some cases a playground for the very rich. Our pamphlet "The Aristocracy of Perthshire, Who Owns our Land" was criticised by the national Labour Party and Keir Hardie House as being controversial. The reaction was swift and a number of landowners explained that the land was managed to the best of their ability and if others thought differently they should explain themselves. This indeed happened and, with assistance from the Scottish Government, a number of communities became self-sufficient.

Over the years P&K Fabians became well known and attracted speakers on a wide range of subjects. John McEwen wrote a book entitled "Who Owns Scotland" which generated interest in the media. Unfortunately, when John died at the ripe old age of 104 and with the membership ageing, the Society closed.

Jim Ferguson

UPDATE: The Tower on Binn Hill

In Newsletter 51 (page 17), I reported that "...when the Kinfauns estate was divided up on the death of the last Earl of Moray, a large part was bought by the Forestry Commission. The house plus the immediate surrounds plus the tower was bought by the Cooperative Holidays Association; they subsequently sold the tower to the city of Perth". I was soon informed that this was not so. The brother of one of the members of the Friends was most interested to read the article as he was the owner of the latter some 40 years ago. The Cooperative Holidays Association had sold the Binn Tower to him!

Stewart Brown writes this is how it came about: "I am an architect by profession and founded the Edinburgh-based architectural and archaeological firm of Simpson & Brown in 1977. In 1982, I was asked by the Countrywide Holidays Association (renamed from the Cooperative Holidays Association in 1964) to inspect the roofs of Kinfauns Castle, which were leaking.

This I did and advised the secretary that major work was indeed needed. I was asked to go to Manchester to present my findings to the Trustees.

During my time looking at the Castle, I went for a walk around the grounds and the adjacent hills. I was captivated by the ruined tower on the hill to the East. I gave my presentation to the Trustees in Manchester and in conversation after the formal meeting casually asked about the tower. The secretary confirmed that they owned it, said it was a liability and that they wished that they could get rid of it. With no real thought to what I was doing, I casually said I would take it off their hands for “a nominal sum”. “What do you mean by a ‘nominal sum’?”; I hazarded £100. “Done”, said the secretary, and so I became the slightly worried owner of Binn Tower, or Binnhill Tower. I surveyed the tower and drew up crazy plans to convert it into a two-bedroom holiday house for my developing family.

After a lot of discussion and persuasion I obtained Planning Permission from the Council and Listed Building Consent from Historic Scotland for my plans. I then started negotiations with The Forestry Commission who owned the surrounding forest to allow me a right-of-way for bringing in services (water and electricity) and a right-of-way for personal and construction traffic; they were not at all helpful and the project stalled. At about the same time, vandalism took on a sinister nature and, reluctantly, we decided to try to sell. This we did through an agency called “Pavilions of Splendour”. As far as I know it has never been owned by the Council.”

The person who bought it, died some six-seven years ago; he bought it as he was apparently intrigued that the price for sale was in guineas. In 2015, the B-listed tower was put up for sale (apparently with a guide price of £50,000) as it was constantly being vandalised. The vandals thought that the owner was English and wrote “Go Home” slogans; he was Scottish, born and brought up in Perthshire. This Spring we learn that the tower is once again on the market (Dundee Courier, 31st March 2022) for offers over £80,000.

Prue Dowie

Friends' Talks 2021-2022 session

This Session, the talks programme will be delivered by a mixture of zoom (virtual)
or zoom/in-person (hybrid) in the Soutar Theatre at the AK Bell Library, Perth.

Please note the varied times. Evening talks are at 6.30pm.

All are welcome to attend the talks, which are free to members (non-members £5.00 in person or £2.00 by zoom)

Pre-booking is essential, processed by Eventbrite.

Please visit www.culturepk.org.uk/whats-on to register your place/obtain the zoom link. If you are having difficulty with the booking, please call 01738 477060 and a member of staff will try to assist you.

Date	Time	Talks
2021		
Thursday 28 th October	2 pm	J P Reid (HYBRID) Ancient Roots: creating a new museum at Perth City Hall
Thursday 25 th November	6.30 pm	Hazel de Vere (VIRTUAL) Archive Conservation at the National Records of Scotland
2022		
Thursday 17 th February	6.30 pm	Lara Haggerty (VIRTUAL) Innerpeffray—A Living Library
Thursday 24 th March	6.30 pm	Nicola Small & Syd House (HYBRID) “Oh, what a parish!”: Stories in Song from Perthshire’ historic parishes
Thursday 21 st April	6.30 pm	Steve Connelly (HYBRID) George Miller, 1688-1763: The Life and Interesting Times of Perth’s Town Clerk
Thursday 26 th May	6 pm 6.30 pm	AGM (HYBRID) David Strachan The Work of Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust and the Lower City Mills, Perth

Friends of Perth & Kinross Archive

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