

Issue Number

56

Spring 2024

# Friends of Perth & Kinross Archive



Rhoda Fothergill Launch Event, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023

Image Courtesy of Perth & Kinross Archive

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# Notes from our Chairman

The Launch of the Rhoda Fothergill collection (MS347) was held at the AK Bell Library in Perth on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023, just after the publication of Newsletter 55. The event was much enjoyed and reports of a memorable evening are included in this Newsletter. This was the first initiative by the Rhoda Fothergill Commemoration Group (RFCG) to celebrate Miss Fothergill's life and work; the Fothergill Lecture will become an annual event. Also included is an article by Dr John Hulbert on the Stone of Destiny, which came to Perth for the opening on 30<sup>th</sup> March (Easter Saturday) of Perth Museum, housed in the former City Hall.

Since then, the Committee has met in person on four occasions but without the support of the Assistant Archivist, Sarah Wilcock, who left at the end of January to take up the post of Archivist elsewhere in Scotland. The Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust (PKHT) has thanked the Friends for their support for the Lower City Mills project but advised that the project is no longer being progressed; the Committee completed a Community Archive and Heritage Group (CAHG) survey, which is being used to support and inform the training of volunteers involved in running community archives. In February, approval was given for £950 to be taken from the Robertson Fund for the purchase by the Archive of an antique 'Extensive Manuscript Study of Navigation' (dated c1837), prepared by a student of Perth Academy. In March, Dr Anna Cunningham was co-opted onto the Committee.

Delivery of the Talks' Programme is currently under consideration. The 2023-2024 session was hybrid, delivered by zoom and in-person at the AK Bell Library, all well-attended although mainly in person. Members are being asked to vote on a proposal about delivery at the AGM in May. The 2024-2025 Talks' Programme is being finalised and notice has been given of the Friends' Summer Outing to the Innerpeffray Library, near Crieff, on 12<sup>th</sup> June. The Committee would like to thank Ian and David Robertson for the contribution from the Robertson Fund, Sarah Wilcock for her invaluable help over the last seven years and you for your welcome support to the Friends.

Prue Dowie

# News from the Archive

The highlight of the last six months for Archive staff was undoubtedly the Rhoda Fothergill Reception on 23<sup>rd</sup> November when we, the Friends, Perthshire Society of Natural Science and Perth Civic Trust came together to mark Miss Fothergill's life and the many contributions she made to our local area. The event was well supported by members of each society, as well as a wide range of local people and former pupils who enjoyed reminiscing about their school days under her charge. A report of the day's proceedings appears later in the Newsletter (see page 6).

In December, Project Archivist Hannah Mackay's contract to catalogue the sound archives ended. Hannah has catalogued several hundred recordings covering a wide range of topics on the broad themes of rural life and industry and of social and cultural history. The catalogues will soon be available on the archive on-line catalogue once final editing has been completed. All of the recordings have now been digitised and many of them will also be available to listen to on-line through the catalogue.

At the end of January, we also said goodbye to Sarah Wilcock, our Assistant Archivist, who moved to a new job as Archivist and Records Manager for the knitwear company, Johnston's of Elgin. Sarah joined Perth & Kinross Archive in September 2016 and was involved in all aspects of the Archive's work, with particular responsibility for the public service and the Archive's outreach and education activities. We were very sorry to see her go, but she is enjoying her new role and we wish her well.

In March, I worked with LGBT Youth Scotland and library colleagues to create a small exhibition called (Un)seen (Un)heard which explored the lives of young LGBT+ people living in Perth & Kinross. As part of the project, oral history interviews with several of the young people will be deposited in the Archive. This is a small step towards making the Archive more representative of our wider community and something I hope to build on throughout the year ahead.

Also in March, our oral history volunteers, Linda and Lesley, began recording interviews with people who have worked on the new Perth Museum project. Their first four interviews with tradesmen describe the specialist structural and conservation work involved in transforming the former City Hall into a modern museum, with some lovely insights into the earlier history of the building. Over the next few months, they will also interview Council and Museum staff who have been involved in the project.

Since Hannah and Sarah's departure, there has been less time for outreach and we have been focussing on the Archive's core activities. Senior Archive Assistants, Claire and Lorna, are delivering the public service to their usual high standard, making the Archive collections available to a wide range of researchers in the search room and through our remote enquiry service.

Meanwhile, I am processing new deposits received since 2022 and working with Council staff on a records appraisal project to ensure modern records of historical significance are transferred to the Archive. This is happening in tandem with a council-wide 'space review' which should lead to much-needed expansion storage for the archive collections; fingers crossed there will be more to report on this later in the year.

Ishbel MacKinnon

## **Friends' Summer Outing 2024**

The Summer Outing arranged for 2024 is to Innerpeffray Library, Chapel and Heritage Walk near Crieff on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June. The Library is the oldest public lending library in Scotland, housing books from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, while the Chapel holds pre-Reformation relics and the Heritage Walk follows a route with views of a well-preserved Roman road and site of a fort.

Pat Kerr

# The Perth Nursery and Beyond

Perth and Kinross Archive proved to be an invaluable source of facts, illustrations and inspiration for the recently-published book “The Perth Nursery & Beyond, A Spirit of Enterprise & Improvement”, co-written by Elspeth Bruce and Pat Kerr.

Little was known of this formerly nationally important Nursery, established in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by James Dickson. His notable clientele included HRH The Duke of York, who sourced trees from the Nursery for Windsor Great Park. At its peak, the Nursery had a client base which stretched across many Country Estates in Britain. The first double-flowered Scots roses were cultivated in the Nursery by Messrs Dickson and Brown (later Dickson and Turnbull) of Perth in 1793, leading the way for commercial rose production.

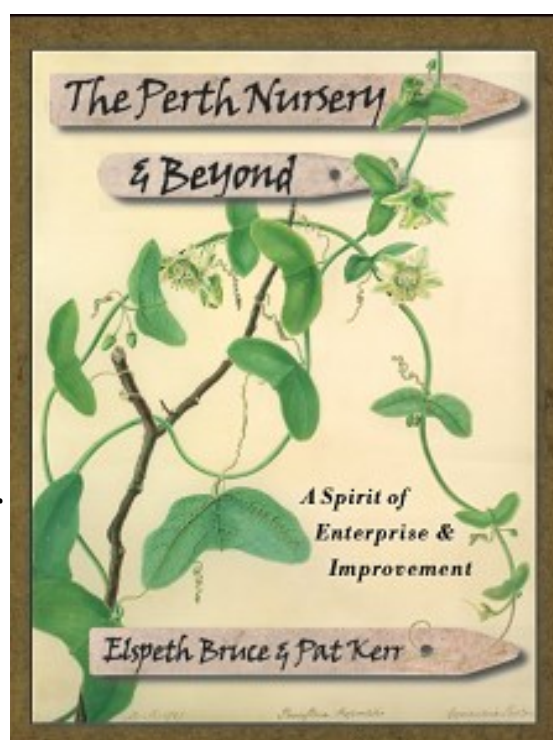
The authors are indebted to the Perth and Kinross Archive and in particular the revelations in the Fingask Papers, which led them to many other subjects contained within this illustrated book. The book tells of travels by intrepid plant hunters, including some lesser known. The book also features artwork by Sir John Everett Millais and explains his links with Kinnoull and Bowerswell.

Elspeth Bruce

The Perth Nursery & Beyond

Image courtesy of Elspeth Bruce

The book is available on-line from Tippermuir Publishing [www.tippermuirpublishing.co.uk](http://www.tippermuirpublishing.co.uk)



## Launch of the Rhoda Fothergill Collection, MS347



Rhoda Fothergill Launch Event, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023

Image Courtesy of Perth & Kinross Archive

*As advised in Newsletter 47, Autumn 2019, Rhoda Fothergill's personal papers were deposited in the Archive (MS347); together with the intellectual rights in her publications, there is a small amount of money held in trust by Culture Perth & Kinross (CPK) for the benefit of the Archive, including the purchase of relevant archive material. A working group from FPKA, PCT (Perth Civic Trust) and PSNS (Perthshire Society of Natural Science) explored ways on how jointly to commemorate her life and work but, interrupted by COVID-19, the first of the Actions only took place in November 2023.*

The Fothergill Collection (MS347) was launched on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023 with a small exhibition in the AK Bell Library showcasing material from the collection. The exhibition also explored the work of local historians and antiquarians in Perth & Kinross through the years drawing on papers from other local historians represented in the Archive, such as Robert Scott Fittis (MS2), James Young (MS3), David Marshall (MS48/6), Reverend Thomas Morris (MS57), JER Macmillan (MS119), Alexander (Sandy) Robertson (MS132), Thomas McLaren (MS146), John Kerr (Atholl Experience, MS249) and also the records of PSNS (MS214).



As there is limited exhibition space available in the library for long-term displays, a 'pop-up' style exhibition in the Archive search room area was created and opened to the public from 2pm – 6pm on the day; some material was also displayed for a further two weeks in the two display cases at the top of the stairs. A reception to launch the collection included speeches from David Bowler, Past President of PSNS, and Steve Connelly, former Archivist, and was followed by the inaugural Fothergill Talk by Paul Philippou, '*Rhoda Fothergill and William Soutar: A Shared Landscape*'. There were 66 people at the reception and 113 at the lecture (95 in person, 18 on-line), including several of Rhoda's former pupils.

Ishbel MacKinnon

*Summaries of the speeches that night are as follows:*

**Rhoda Agnes Fothergill, 01 March 1929 - 17 June 2019**

Rhoda was born in Lewisham, and brought up in Dunfermline and Perth. She taught at Kinnoull Primary from 1953, then at Caledonian Road Primary from 1976 until 1993, inspiring generations of pupils with her energy and enthusiasm. Many of her historical publications began as class projects. Rhoda was Secretary of the PSNS from 1968 until 2015, and Editor of our Journal.

She was a keen gardener, botanist and photographer. She taught Scottish Country Dancing and a photograph of her students had pride of place in her room. She was a popular speaker on Old Perth and Greyfriars Burial Ground and led guided walks, often connected with the Civic Trust.

She was a fixture in the Library and Archives, and also joined the Council Engineers exploring the Lade vaults under Mill Street, Canal Street and Methven Street. These adventures became a favourite reminiscence in later years.

Public recognition culminated in 2014, with the award of the British Empire Medal for her contribution to the history and preservation of Perth and Perthshire. She left an indelible impression on all of us who knew her.

David Bowler, Past President, Perthshire Society of Natural Science

## **Rhoda Fothergill in the Archive**

I first encountered Rhoda shortly after taking up the post of archivist in 1978. Her research interests were varied, although predominantly related to the city of Perth and its immediate environs. She loved to winkle out information about its people and places. She wasn't just interested in the architects of Perth's buildings, but also the contractors and tradesmen involved. She had a very good relationship with the staff in local studies and archives and was very appreciative of our help.

Rhoda was one of the original members of the Friends of the Archive and one of the most popular speakers, always drawing a large and enthusiastic audience. Local people really loved her talks and it was on their initiative that Rhoda was given a British Empire Medal in 2014. One thing that would have really pleased her was the re-purposing of the City Hall. Rhoda thought it was the finest surviving example of Edwardian architecture in Perth.

She was a remarkable woman and we may never see her like again. It seems fitting that we should honour her memory as she did with so many of Perth's citizens of the past.

Steve Connelly, FPKCA Former Archivist

Inaugural Lecture  
Hands up for Rhoda

Image courtesy of  
Perth & Kinross Archive





## **‘Rhoda’ Agnes Hay Sommerville Fothergill & William Soutar**

### ***A Shared Landscape***

The decision to choose Rhoda Fothergill’s interactions and linkages to William Soutar as the theme of the first Rhoda Fothergill Lecture was influenced by three factors:

- The first, that Rhoda was, I had been informed, a fan of the work of William Soutar (she gave, for example, the Soutar Birthday lecture in May 2013 – ‘Perth in Soutar’s Time’ – an illustrated talk about the city both he and Rhoda loved);
- The second, that 2024 will see the publication of the first two volumes of the *Collected Works of William Soutar* – ‘The Complete Poetry of William Soutar’, and so the lecture’s theme had a temporal resonance;
- And, lastly, because Rhoda Fothergill and William Soutar produced a body of work, in the main, influenced by and painted across a *shared landscape*, Perth and its county.

After his death, William Soutar’s parents lovingly curated their son’s substantial archive – correspondence, dream books, day books, receipts, essays, poems and more and deposited them in the National Library of Scotland (NLS); described by a former NLS archivist as ‘the perfect writer’s archive’. Without that archive, the *Collected Works of William Soutar* could not have come to be.

Rhoda too donated her research papers to an archive, the Perth & Kinross Archive. In preparing for the talk, I worked through the substantial ‘The Fothergill Collection’: ‘Personal papers including lecture and research notes, recordings and photographs relating to Perth and Perthshire’. That archive, MS347, was central to the talk.

Dr Paul S Philippou

# Glover Incorporation of Perth



Glover Stained-Glass Window

Image courtesy of the Glover Incorporation of Perth

There are indications that Glovers in Perth were organised as far back as the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, however there is little documented evidence. In the early period, the Glovers would be strongly linked with the Skinners; much of the Incorporation's early documentation relates to Skinners as much as Glovers. Even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century key members of the Glovers were involved in the Tanning Industry.

The first regulation comes with the issue of a Royal Charter granted by King William the Lion in 1210 though again no mention of the Glovers. Such charters devolved the legal powers of trade to Associations/Guildry and controlled the production and sale of items within the town and surrounding area.

Trade in gloves within the municipality of Perth was effectively a closed-shop monopoly. Crafts probably began as informal associations which developed into incorporations through the grant of a seal of cause by the burgh magistrates. The Trades formed part of the town's administration and body politic. The Deacon (Chairman) would also be a member of the Town Council.

Trade Incorporations controlled not only the commerce but the very lives of those involved in the trade. There is evidence, within the records of meetings of the Glover Incorporation, of judgements and penalties being handed down by the leadership to Apprentices and Members. These could be for infringements such as dishonesty, gambling, drunkenness, disrespect, and poor church attendance! Penalties could be in the form of fines, imprisonment, or whipping!

As the years moved on, the Glover Incorporation became wealthier and began to invest in property and land in the town and surrounding area. One such property (ownership confirmed in 1629 by the Hospital of Perth) was a house in what is now North Port. This house owned by the Glovers was made famous in Sir Walter Scott's famous romantic novel "The Fair Maid of Perth". The characters in the novel are fictional but the house does exist. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century meetings of the Incorporation were held, certainly in September 1622, in what is now known as the Fair Maid's House. Meetings were held regularly in this location until the Glovers moved to their existing premises in George Street in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

During this period the Glover Incorporation became a very affluent association, owning many tracts of real estate and buildings in Perth. Indeed, it was the Glover Incorporation who sold the land to the Scottish Central Railway to build their Railway Terminus in Perth. There has always been a paternalistic element to the Incorporation and, in 1828, it was agreed that a Pension Annuity Scheme fund would be set up to support Elderly Members and Members' Widows. Payment of £12 per year were allocated to qualifying individuals. This annuity scheme continues to this day with £54 paid annually.

The Industrial Revolution had a dramatic effect on small trades and craftsmen and the trade itself entered a period of decline. Today there are no members actively involved in the trade. However, there are still around 50 members of the Glover Incorporation of Perth. Each member is directly descended from one of the Perth Tradesmen. The Incorporation meets twice a year in the Glovers' Hall in George Street to discuss "business". The primary business of the current membership is to preserve the living link with the historical past of Perth.

Several historical artifacts owned by the Incorporation have been donated to the museum in Perth and the preservation of these has also been funded by the Incorporation. These articles form part of an exhibit in the new Perth Museum building that opened in March 2024. The Incorporation also supported the local Perth Foodbank during the recent cost-of-living crisis.

No longer a large, dynamic, wealthy institution, it continues to seek to retain the historical memory and ethos of the original Incorporation in modern-day Perth.

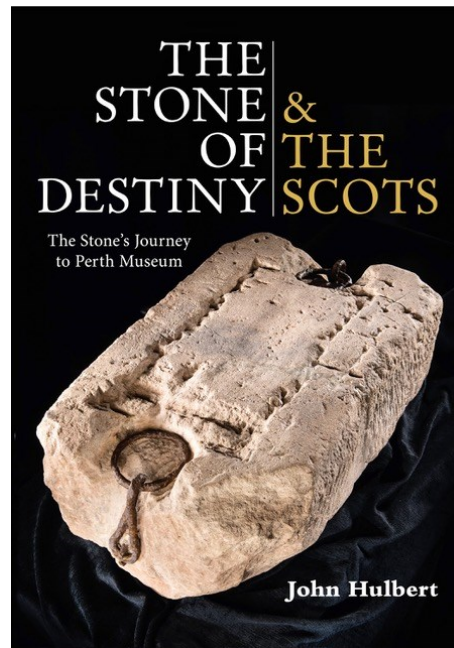
George Blair, Perth Glover



Glover Coat-of-Arms

Image courtesy of the Glover Incorporation of Perth

# The Stone of Destiny and The Scots



The Stone of Destiny & The Scots, Book Cover 2024

Image courtesy of John Hulbert ©

No historical conundrum has separated Scotland's academic hierarchy from public opinion more completely than the mystery of the origin of the Stone of Destiny. In this book, John Hulbert, sheds new light on the subject.

Firstly, the Stone, although hugely important, has been ignored by our institutions of learning. Where are the books, the PhD theses and learned articles about the Stone? Secondly, two major academic works that have been published recently<sup>1</sup> both dismiss as “nothing but myth and fantasy” the accounts in the Declaration of Arbroath and the ancient Scottish chronicles, which allege that The Scots journeyed from Scythia (north of the Black Sea) to Spain and brought the Stone to Ireland and then to Argyll.

Recent archaeological finds have reinforced DNA evidence that during the Bronze Age there was a huge migration from Scythia to western Europe. This is supported by linguistic evidence showing connections between Scots and Irish Gaelic and some North African languages, suggesting that The Scots spent many generations in Africa during the migration.

<sup>1</sup> *Scotland's Stone of Destiny* by Nick Aitchison, The History Press, 2009, and *The Stone of Destiny* by R. Wellender, D. Breeze and T. O. Clancy, The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2003.



The Scots were a small but distinct fragment of this migration and their journey was very slow, taking perhaps 2,000 years. Eventually they settled in the area of Spain now called Galicia, where they developed their own art, music, language and sport which they brought with them to Ireland and Scotland. Moreover, in Galicia they developed the custom of using a Royal Stone for civic and judicial purposes.

The few descriptions of this Stone and evidence from a study of the seals of the mediaeval Scottish Kings indicate that it was larger and a different shape from the Stone now in Perth. This was the Stone that The Scots brought to Ireland in about 500 BC and then to Argyll a thousand years later, where it was used to inaugurate their kings until that of Kenneth MacAlpin in 842 AD.

What happened to the Stone after this? It is known that the Stone, seized by King Edward I in 1296, came from a quarry near Scone and cannot possibly be the one brought from Ireland. The questions are: When did the change occur? And who did it? There are two theories:

The first, supported by most academics is that Kenneth MacAlpin, after defeating the Picts in 843 AD, discarded the Irish Stone and adopted a Pictish Stone in subsequent inaugurations to appease the wounded sentiments of the defeated Picts. This is the Stone now in Perth Museum.

This book supports the alternative theory that the Irish Stone continued to be used for Kenneth MacAlpin's successors, until the canons of Scone Abbey heard that Edward's soldiers were approaching and exchanged it for the Stone that we have today, rough and undecorated, and unlike any other Pictish stone.

It is time now to accept that Scotland has had two Stones of Destiny, and the one in Perth is the second. Nevertheless, like its predecessor it represents the continuity and history of the Scottish nation and deserves recognition in its own right.

John Hulbert

## Scotland's Stone of Destiny Described

“The STONE OF DESTINY is an unprepossessing object for an item of such historic and cultural importance. It is a rough block of pinkish sandstone measuring 670 mm by 420 mm by 265 mm and weighing 152 kg. It is roughly dressed, the top and sides finished to a higher standard than the bottom and end faces.

The top face of the Stone of Destiny has been dressed quite smoothly.<sup>1</sup> However, hollows have been dug out of its surface to enable iron rings and their attached figure of eight links to be countersunk in to the stone, and present a flat surface. A rectangular groove has been cut around the top surface impinging on the pits for the rings, and there is an additional groove cut at one end. On the top surface of the stone, between the groove and the stone's edge, experts have identified what looks like two rough crosses. A very faint saltire—shaped cross can be made out close to the right-hand lower corner and in the centre of the lower border there is a more definite cross, with its long axis in-line with the stone. It is difficult to believe that such crude representations could have been executed for any religious or civic purpose.....

.....X-ray fluorescence analysis was also undertaken to determine the elemental composition of the Stone. This confirmed its source from the quarries at Kincarrathie.”.....

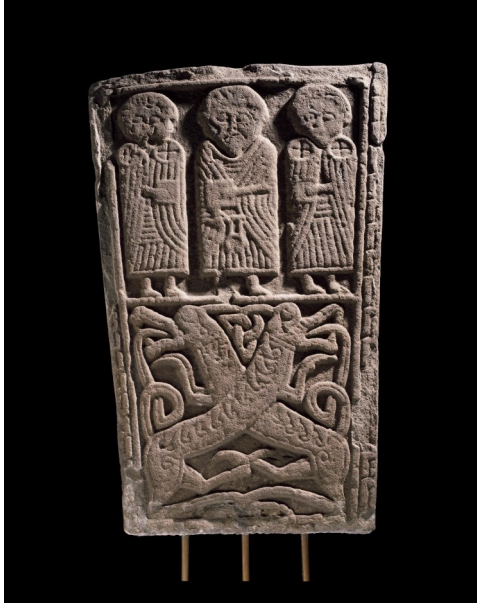
John Hulbert ©

***The Stone of Destiny & The Scots by John Hulbert*** is published by Tippermuir Books.

*The book is on sale at the new Perth Museum in the museum shop. The book is also for sale at £10.99 from Waterstones and in the VisitScotland information shop on the High Street, Perth, or at £9.99 post free from the publisher, Tippermuir Books ([tippermuirbooks.co.uk](http://tippermuirbooks.co.uk)).*

<sup>1</sup> “Top”, “bottom”, “front”, “back”, “left”, and “right” all refer to the faces of the Stone of Destiny as seen when it was housed in the throne (*coronation chair*) in Westminster Abbey.

## Ancient Aspects of the Carse of Gowrie



The Stone found at Dargie Kirk



Scandinavian on his Horse– Valhalla Stone

Images courtesy of Donald Abbott

The claimed oldest ecclesiastical site north of the Tay, dating from 431 AD, is located at Dargie, Invergowrie.

Until just after the War years, a stone was wedged in a window of the 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century Dargie Kirk ruin, a one-time chapel of Scone Abbey dedicated to St Peter. It is considered that the dress of the three seeming clerics is likely Scandinavian; the stone rests today in the National Museum in Edinburgh to ensure preservation.

The Scandinavian indication is furthered by another stone found at Invergowrie's west-end in 1934 when a slip road was constructed. Today, that road is found to the rear of the Scottish Water Offices at Bullion House. It was lying flat when found with no inhumation beneath it and depicts a warrior on his horse with no weapon, holding a shield and drinking from a horn as his horse climbs to Valhalla. The "Danes" did not adopt Christianity until the 9<sup>th</sup> century so this stone seems likely to be of early date. I understand that smaller stones were found in profusion in the 19<sup>th</sup> century near the Landmark Hotel just over the way from the Valhalla stone.

When one reflects also on Roman marching or temporary camps at Bullionfield or Catermilley, Invergowrie; Snabs, Longforan; and St Madoes, the influx of nationalities to the Carse of Gowrie, from time to time, must have been amazing.

Several years ago and when Chairman, I met with David Strachan of the Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust and he kindly gave me a drawing of his research of what remained of the Bullionfield or Catermilley site. Additionally my friend and former colleague in Dundee local government, the late Gordon W H Mechan, referred me to his paper contained in an Abertay Historical Society Publication "Aspects of Antiquity" dated 1966. This paper is well detailed with his personal findings and includes a description of the Catermilley marching camp as discovered then described by William Maitland in 1757.

That description is set out in our Friends' 2018 publication, Curiosities of the Carse of Gowrie: "On the left, there sits the Bullionfield filling station on the very edge of a possible Roman camp of Cater Milley. Early records state that *"about half a mile benorth the estuary of Tay, is a Roman camp about two hundred yards square, fortified with a high rampart and a spacious ditch; but as the southern side appears to have been fenced in with triple ramparts and ditches, these I take to have been northern fortifications of the praetorium, the other sides having been demolished by the plow, the vestigia appear but plainly. However, they are sufficient to show that this fortress was of a parallelogram form, about a quarter of a mile in length, which, from its vicinity to the Firth of Tay, I take to have been one of the camps which occasionally contained both land and sea forces"*\*.

The Carse with its ease of access via the River Tay was obviously of easy access to these shores for early peoples.

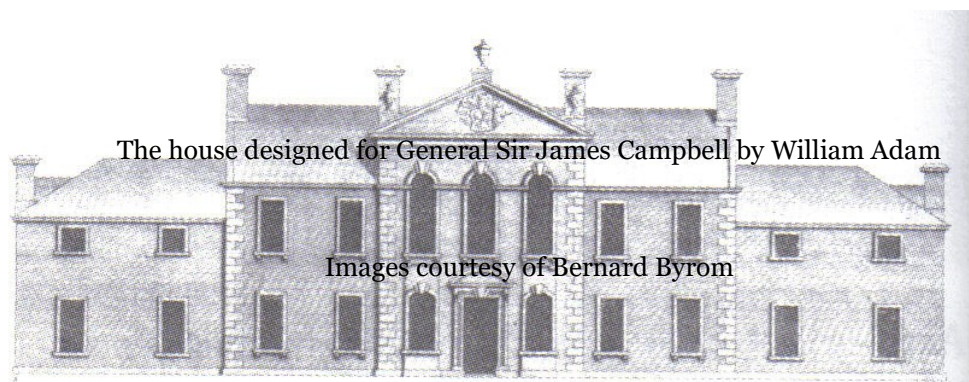
Donald Abbott, F S A Scot.

\* Editorial note: Quotation in *The Parish of Longforan* (p.25) Revd. Adam Philip 1895, attributed to *History and Antiquities of Scotland* (vol 1, p.215) Maitland. The Historic Environment Record of Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust note the presence of this and another camp behind Errol Road, Invergowrie, with indications too of native settlements.

# The Metamorphosis of Lawers House

In 1646 the Royalist army of King Charles I, led by the Marquis of Montrose, swept along the north side of Loch Tay laying waste to the countryside. Sir John Campbell's presbyterian family, whose estate was at Lawers, fled southward over the hills and down Glen Lednock to the estate they owned at Fordie in Strathearn, about two miles east of Comrie. They settled here and renamed the estate 'Lawers', in memory of their former home.

A house already existed here, probably built around 1620, and this sufficed them for nearly 80 years until Sir John's grandson, Lieutenant-General Sir James Campbell commissioned the most famous architect of the day, William Adam, to remodel the house. The original house had consisted of a two-storey gabled rectangular block with a north wing and lower symmetrical wings that were known as pavilions. Adam began work in 1724 by reconstructing the centre of the south-facing main block to provide a central 'great room' at first floor level with a raised pedimented frontispiece that was three windows wide. This was the most prominent feature of his design, which had flanking sections and wings. The main entrance to the house was approached by a magnificent broad tree-lined avenue, almost a mile long, which ran right down to the River Earn.



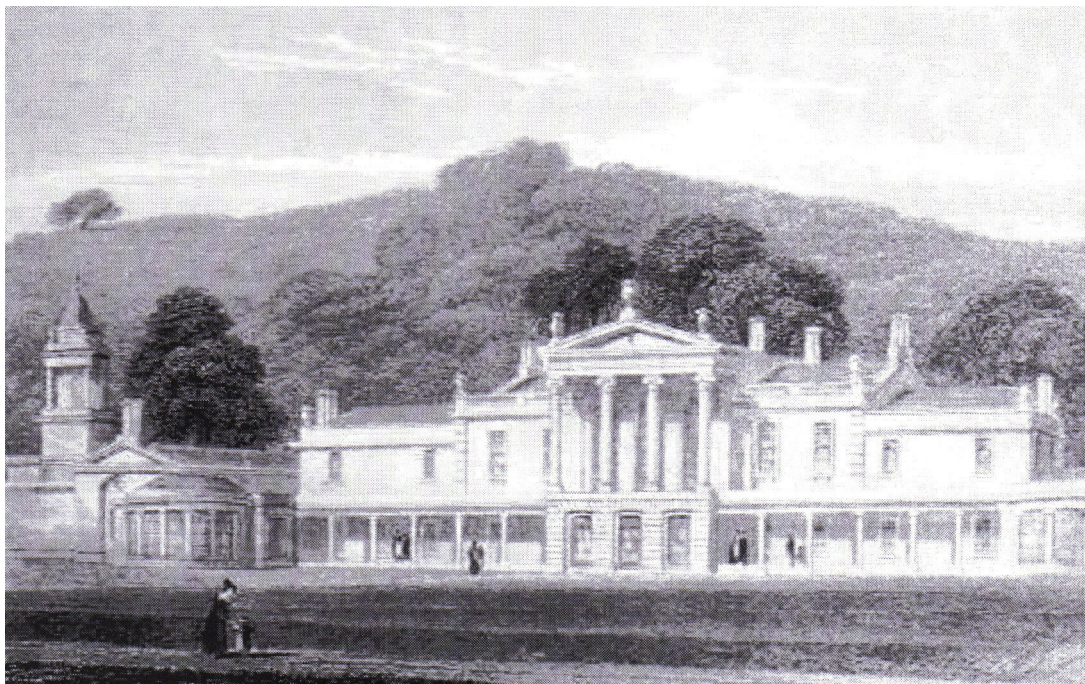
The house designed for General Sir James Campbell by William Adam

Images courtesy of Bernard Byrom



In 1784 the estate was purchased by Lieutenant-General Archibald Robertson and in due course was inherited by his niece, William (sic) Robertson, who in 1814 married David Williamson, an Edinburgh lawyer, who as Lord Balgray became a Senator of the College of Justice. They lost no time in engaging the architect Richard Crichton and commissioned him to enlarge the house to look like part of the Palace of Versailles.

William Adam had built the south-facing entrance front of the house five-bays wide with an advanced pediment in the centre and with lower two-bay wings. Crichton left the central pediment untouched but added new single-storey wings that were linked to it across the front of the other bays by a long colonnade across the garden front. This is the view of the house that the traveller now sees from the A85 road. But, this is actually the back of the house because Crichton turned it round!



The view in 1830 after Crichton's rebuilding of Adam's house.

Crichton moved the main entrance to the north side of the house and gave it a tetrastyle single-storey Roman Doric portico. A magnificent stable block with a clock tower over the entrance was built on its western side and linked to it by an unbroken screen wall.



Crichton's new front of the house and the stable block.

Note the avenue of trees stretching down to the river; only a few trees remain today.

He constructed a crescent-shaped driveway which extended from the front of the house down to east and west lodges, the distance to the west lodge being considerably longer than to the east. Immediately in front of the south side of the house he built a terrace with steps that had balustrades at their foot. In the final part of the rebuilding, around 1850, what had been the two outer wings of Adam's house were raised to the height of the main block and a unifying balustrade added across the south front. Internally, the saloon was converted into the ballroom and extended into the portico, fortunately without destroying Adam's coved and plastered ceiling.

Bernard Byrom

The final version of the south front,  
as seen today.





# Steam Fever and Madness

Perth District Asylum (PDA), described by the Murthly history group as the village's 'state-of-the-art' institute for lunatics, had its beginnings in the passing of the 1857 Lunacy Reform (Scotland) Act.<sup>1</sup> The title of this article is influenced by the village's history blog in which Murthly is described as being 'born of steam fever and madness', capturing the spirit of an age characterised by both ambitious social reforms and the 'rush to connect everywhere by rail'.

Over the first week of April 1864, one hundred and three pauper patients were transferred from a variety of residences across Scotland to the newly-built asylum adjacent to Murthly village; just under a half coming from James Murray's Royal Asylum in Perth, finally achieving the directors' goal of rendering the Murray's a pauper-free institution, the first in Scotland.

Index No	Parish	First Name	1st Name (other)	Last Name	Last Name (Other)	Admission /
001	Madderty	Catherine	nil	Anderson	nil	01/04/1864
002	Fowlis_Wester	Janet	nil	McTavish	nil	01/04/1864
003	Fowlis_Wester	Charles	nil	Malcolm	nil	01/04/1864
004	Monzievaird	Christian	Christina	Sharp	Sharpe	01/04/1864
005	Crieff	Andrew	nil	Adie	Eadie / Eddie	01/04/1864
006	Crieff	Joan	John	Turnbull	Perret or Perrot	01/04/1864
007	Crieff	Margaret	Margt	Crozie	McOrmiston or McOrmister	01/04/1864
008	Crieff	Helen	nil	Sharp	nil	01/04/1864
009	Kenmore	Mary	nil	Fisher	nil	01/04/1864
010	Kenmore	Catherine	nil	McLean	nil	01/04/1864

First 10 admissions to PDA

Image courtesy of Ron Johansen

My research is attempting to answer the question, was the arrival of Perthshire's new pauper asylum an act of social cleansing or a triumph of civil society (in this case lunacy reform)? Admittedly the question is an oversimplification of a complex situation, but it allows great scope for discussion!

<sup>1</sup> I would like to acknowledge Paul McLennan, archivist at Murthly Castle for inspiring the opening text of my dissertation title: 'Steam Fever & Madness - the arrival of Perthshire's Pauper Asylum (1855-1871), discrimination or a triumph of civil society?' and signpost readers to the Murthly History Group blog: <http://www.murthly.scot/> with a summary of the history of Murthly, village and parish.

The building of Murthly was the outcome of a two-year Royal Inquiry (1855-57) into the provision of care for lunatics in Scotland. It involved the inspection of asylums, private mad-houses, poor-houses as well as 'lunatics' boarded out with family, friends or strangers.

The findings of the inquiry shocked both citizens and parliamentarians and led to the rapid passing of the 1857 Lunacy (Scotland) Act from which Perth District Asylum emerged. The journey from Inquiry to laying foundations is littered with questions around whose decision it was to build Murthly and fulfil the directors' ambitions; it is an interesting and possibly controversial decision as the provisions within the 1857 Act precluded the building of a new pauper asylum in the same district as a Royal Asylum.

It also raises issues around the balance of power between the state and local bodies at a time when central government in Westminster was increasingly extending its purview into the management of social problems. The Poor Law (Scotland) Act had been passed less than twelve years prior to the 1857 Act, increasing fears of more interference in local matters amongst the great and good of Perthshire, including Sir Arthur, the 10<sup>th</sup> Lord Kinnaird. For a short time, the members of the newly-appointed Perthshire District Lunacy Board (PDLB) suspended planning of the new asylum at the behest of Sir Arthur.

It can be understood as an assertion of local autonomy in the face of a government testing the boundary of its legitimacy, and a step towards re-balancing the relationship between the state and civil society. The reality being, that without the cooperation of emerging local authorities and voluntary societies in the mid-nineteenth century, the state would struggle to implement the necessary services promulgated in the new lunacy legislation.

But what of the 103 patients admitted to Murthly in its opening days? Was it a triumph for them? That has still to be decided.

Information from the PDLB minute book, the PDA register of admissions from the Perth & Kinross Archive, Murthly's First Annual Report housed in Dundee University Archive, linked with entries from the 1871 Census "Enumerator's Book for Little Dunkeld", combined with extracts from the Scottish Lunacy Commissioners bi-annual inspections of Murthly, will help me form an opinion. So, watch this space!

Ron Johansen

## **Talks 2024-2025**

Friends' Talks are usually held on the second last Thursday of a month

### 2024

19 <sup>th</sup> September	6.30pm	
		David Robertson, The Story of Perthshire Postcards
24 <sup>th</sup> October	2.00pm	
November	date and time to be arranged by PSNS	
		Rhoda Fothergill Annual Lecture

### 2025

20 <sup>th</sup> February	2.00pm	
20 <sup>th</sup> March	2.00pm	
17 <sup>th</sup> April	6.30pm	
22 <sup>nd</sup> May	6.30pm	(after AGM 2025 at 6.00pm)

## **FPKA Membership**

Numbers: 2 Honorary Presidents, 74 ordinary members and  
24 life members (including one of the two Honorary Presidents)

Thank you for your continued support



# Friends' Talks 2023-2024 Session

This session, the Talks programme are mainly hybrid, delivered by zoom and in person  
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.**

Date	Time	Talks
2023		
Thursday 21 <sup>st</sup> September	6.30 pm	<b>Professor David Parkinson</b> The Muses Threnodie and Perth's Lade: Crosscurrents Between Text and Burgh
Friday 27 <sup>th</sup> October (moved)	2 pm	<b>Steve Connelly</b> David Gorrie & Son, Engineers, Perth: The Largest Manufacturers of Laundry Equipment in the World
Thursday 23 <sup>rd</sup> November	2 pm	<b>Paul Philippou</b> Rhoda Fothergill and William Soutar: A Shared Landscape
2024		
Thursday 22 <sup>nd</sup> February	2 pm	<b>Rob Hands</b> Battle of three Muirs
Thursday 21 <sup>th</sup> March	2 pm	<b>Ella Paul</b> Assessment of Seal Matrices to be found in Scotland
Thursday 18 <sup>th</sup> April	6.30 pm	<b>Craig Statham</b> Read all about it: Perth & Kinross' historical newspaper collection
Thursday 23 <sup>rd</sup> May	6 pm 6.30 pm	<b>AGM</b> <b>Stuart Letford</b> The Toun Pipers of Perth

Friends of Perth & Kinross Archive

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