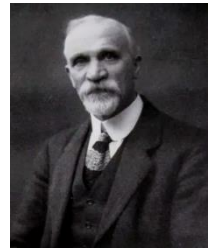
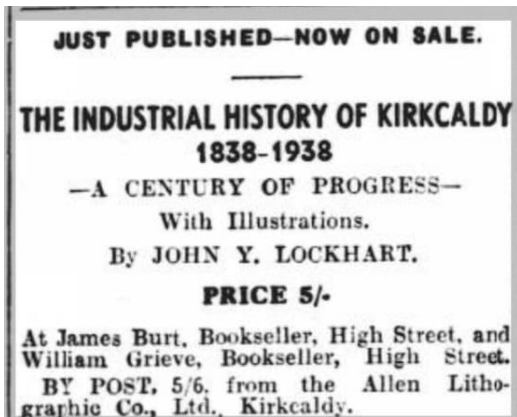


## The Final Story - Part 2



**To recap:-** The first part of this final Object concentrated on the work of Lachlan MacBean and his 1909 publication –*The Kirkcaldy Burgh Records*. As mentioned previously that tome took in a much longer/wider period in the town's history and, in contrast, this Object examines a much narrower time period – a century. John Y. Lockhart's book was titled – *A Century of Progress 1838-1938* and was first published 6 days after the outbreak of the Second World War. The first advertisement we could find was contained in



the *Fife Free Press* of the 9th September 1939. The book was for sale in two Kirkcaldy newsagents – James Burt and William Grieve, both of which were sited on the High Street and at a cost of 5/- (25p). It could also be ordered from the printer – *The Allen Lithographic Company Ltd* at 5/6d – the postage presumably amounting to 6d. The advertisement is attached for interest.

What was very helpful was finding in the same edition a little review of the book and its content which serves to act as a backdrop and introduction to this narrative. The piece followed a headline carrying the book's title and then by the strap-line:-

### An Interesting Book by John Y. Lockhart

“The Progress made in Kirkcaldy between 1838 – 1938 is the theme of an interesting book written by our well known townsman Mr John Y. Lockhart. In this review of the industries carried on during that period, the author had the incalculable advantage of having known some of the early pioneers of industry in Kirkcaldy, particularly in regard to the manufacture of linoleum and this has enabled him to give a more faithful and complete record of these activities that would have been possible had it been left to other hands.

“From a brief history of Kirkcaldy, the writer proceeds to deal with the various industries on which Kirkcaldy's prosperity was founded, viz.:- shipping and shipbuilding, weaving, the linen trade, flax-spinning, bleaching, coal, flour mills and malting, engineering, furniture and the

printing and lithographic trades.

“The chapter devoted to shipping and the shipping trade is of particular interest. Shipping has played a large part in the history of the town, and, indeed, for generations the *Lang Toun's* favourable position as a seaport has played a large part in its prosperity. An interesting historical fact which has just come to light is included in this chapter, and is to the effect that, in 1643, the ship *James* of Kirkcaldy, under Captain Robert Masterton, carried coal to Holland and returned with a full cargo of arms and ammunition for the army at Newcastle. The ship was seized at Tynemouth and taken to London where it was detained for a month before being released. There were at the time another two ships engaged with the *James* in carrying arms to Leith for the use of the Scottish Army in Ireland.

“A little known fact about the linoleum industry is revealed in a later chapter. It has generally been taken for granted that when Mr. Michael Nairn built the new factory at Nether Street in 1847 and thus founded the linoleum industry in the town, this was the first of the firm of M. Nairn & Co. coming into being. The fact is, however, that Mr Michael Nairn founded the firm of M. Nairn & Co as canvas manufacturers in 1828\* in Coal Wynd, and supplied this canvas to John Hare & Co., Bristol, who were the only manufacturers of floorcloth in this country at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was after a visit to Bristol that Mr. Michael Nairn decided to begin the manufacture of the finished article in Kirkcaldy, and from this venture has arisen Kirkcaldy's principal industry”.

\*Certainly it does seem that it was Lockhart who pointed out this early production by Michael Nairn in 1828. Lachlan MacBean makes no mention of it. While the Coal Wynd start of the Nairn empire is well known today – it does appear that it was Lockhart who brought this to the public's knowledge.

“The price cutting *war* which began in 1908, when some of the smaller makers of linoleum in Scotland and England started this practice is dealt with by the author in an informative fashion, while foreign competition and its effects is also analysed in a lucid manner.

“From the industries of the town the author turns to Kirkcaldy's many benefactors, on whom he provides short biographical notes. Succeeding

chapters deal with “Provosts of Kirkcaldy” followed by the Savings Bank etc., which rounds of a volume which cannot fail to interest anyone who has a connection with the “Lang Toun”. It is copiously illustrated and is an excellent record in every way.

“Mr Lockhart is to be congratulated on the way in which he has included so much information in a compact volume, and the community is indebted to him for this faithful recording of Kirkcaldy's industrial history in the period under review”. The article concludes with details of where the book can be purchased and the costs.

To garner information on Lockhart, the starting point will be at the end of his life when his obituary is consulted. *The Fife Free Press* of the 27<sup>th</sup> November 1943 carried details under the headline *Death of an Authority on Lang Toun History*. Mr Lockhart had died at home on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November in his 82<sup>nd</sup> year and his wife Annie Stewart had predeceased him. He was a son of a Cooper, William Lockhart, who had lived in Milton Road. For many years, John, had been a traveller with Barry, Ostlere and Shepherd, Ltd. He had struck out on his own as a Linoleum Merchant in Hunter Street carrying on this business until his retirement in 1937. If he died aged 81 in 1943 he kept working until around the age of 75!



It seems not unreasonable to quote the following from the obituary:- “he took a great interest in antiquities, and was an authority on the history of Kirkcaldy. He wrote two books – one entitled, *Kirkcaldy 1838 – 1938, A Century of Progress*, and the other in the form of a historical survey of Kirkcaldy's harbour and its association with maritime affairs. This later book entailed a great deal of research and Mr Lockhart, in his preparation for it, quoted from records as far back as 1505. He was assisted in this work by the late Thomas Clark and James McNaughton, the latter being responsible for the photographs with which the book was illustrated. These books were presented to the Public Library.

“As a member of the *Scottish Society of Antiquarians*, he was frequently approached by visitors to the town who wished to learn something of its

historical associations. Many years ago when a Japanese professor came to the town, Mr Lockhart spend much time showing him around the town and he later presented him (presumably Lockhart) with a copy of the *Wealth of Nations* in Japanese”.

We learn that he was a keen sportsman in his youth and was one of the founder members of Victoria Bowling Club and was the first secretary. He had a great interest in cricket and followed the fortunes of Kirkcaldy Cricket Club – hardly missing a game if he could avoid it. An accomplished singer in his youth it seems throughout his life he took a keen interest in choral singing. He was a life-long member of Kirkcaldy Naturalists' Society and gave many lectures on famous men and women belonging to, or having associations with, the town and district. In the *Edinburgh Evening News* of the 14<sup>th</sup> December we learn that he had left the sum of £500 to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary in his Will.



**For Fife Hospital**  
Kirkcaldy Hospital has received £6713 as the remainder of the bequest made by the late Mr John Y. Lockhart, merchant, 12 Victoria Gardens, Kirkcaldy. This is in addition to a legacy of £500 previously received.

Moving on to the 9<sup>th</sup> October 1945, again in the *Edinburgh Evening News*, it is reported that £6,713 has been received by the Kirkcaldy Cottage Hospital, again from the Will. However, it would seem that £500 had already been provided – presumably around the time of the gift

to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary.

Now that some background has been provided it is time to move onto the book itself. The Preface is bold enough to suggest that “hitherto, it has been difficult for a student of the rise and progress of Kirkcaldy to find much assistance in his researches; and if he trusts to find it in a *County History of Fife*, such as Sheriff MacKay's, he will find much that is inaccurately written there on the subject of the beginnings of the Floor-Cloth Trade”. Mr Lockhart certainly seems to put a great deal of faith in his knowledge of the subject through the fact he knew many of the early pioneers and “has endeavoured in these pages to place on record his knowledge and recollections of these pioneers and their work”. He certainly could, without any fear or doubt, write in 1938/39, that “the pioneers have all passed away but their monuments remain in the large works now carried on by their successors”. It is certainly a long number of years since that was true – factory after factory has fallen and it is quite astonishing that the town has no dedicated museum to the floorcloth and linoleum industry.

The final paragraph is where the tribute mentioned above is paid to Lachlan MacBean, albeit with his name spelt incorrectly. This is followed by his intentions for the publication which he suggested were that “from that date (1896) there is a much-felt want as progress and expansion during the last 40 years having been greater than at any other time in the Town's history. While regretting the disappearance of many of its former industries and that so few new enterprises have taken their place, we hope that in these pages they are not wanting in some striking evidence of progress”.

The Preface is followed by some brief details of the town's history but they are simply general references and not detailed to any extent. These will be abbreviated here although his take is at times interesting especially when he mentions some historical figure's thoughts on Kirkcaldy.

Lockhart commences with “Kirkcaldy, a Royal Burgh and a seaport with a tolerably good harbour in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, was chosen by King James II as the site for Ravensraig Castle – 1459-63 - because of its natural situation and its proximity to the harbour.

“While Kirkcaldy does not appear to call for much attention as an industrial centre in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, it had attained to considerable importance as a shipping port and by 1691 was reckoned as the fourth port in Scotland in point of Custom's collections. It was solely due to this that it was looked upon early in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century as a most desirable post for Comptrollers and Collectors of Customs and immediately on the Union of 1707 we find the settlement here of Adam Smith W.S., Edinburgh, a native of Aberdeen, as Comptroller, with his cousin, Hercules Smith, also of Aberdeen, as Collector and to this simple fact it is due that Kirkcaldy had the distinction of being the birthplace in 1723 of Adam Smith, L.L.D., the author of the *Wealth of Nations*.

“In the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, prior to the age of steam power, hand-loom weaving gave a means of livelihood to large numbers in all the towns and villages of Fife. Kirkcaldy became a centre where merchants traded in these goods and the Town Council took a keen interest in developing the trade to the extent of allowing yarn to be custom free and a heckler of lint to be established.

“As late as the 18<sup>th</sup> Century the town possessed moors or commonities, beginning at the sea front, where now are Cowan Street, Thistle Street and Volunteers Green and ending near Hayfield farm. The Park or South Commonity marked the west end of the Royal Burgh. It was not until the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century that the last feus of the South Commonity were sold off.

“ The Royal Burgh, 100 years ago, had a population of 4,900 consisting of 1,000 families and had the two neighbouring communities of Pathhead and Linktown been included, the numbers would have trebled. For information as to the industries carried on at that time we are indebted to *Thomson's Directory*, published in 1834, with a second edition being published in 1835 but from both, the neighbouring communities are excluded. *Piggot & Co's Directory of Scotland*, published in London in 1825, also conveys considerable information regarding Kirkcaldy and Dysart.

Lockhart then moves on to some thoughts on the town from the pen of Thomas Carlyle on his reminiscences from the two years he spent in Kirkcaldy. Lockhart claims that there is no finer picture of the people, or the town, than contained in Carlyle's writing. An example of his thoughts on the town is given below:-

- “The beach of Kirkcaldy in Summer twilight, a mile of the smoothest sand, with one long wave coming on gently, steadily and breaking into a gradual explosion, beautifully sounding and advancing, ran from south to north from the West Burn to Kirkcaldy harbour, a favourite scene, still beautiful to me now far away”.

And of the people:-

- “The Kirkcaldy population were a pleasant, honest kind of fellow mortals, something of the quietly fruitful of good old Scotch in their works and Ways”.

Lockhart then turns to Sir Walter Scott's 1817 novel *Rob Roy* where “*Andrew Fairgrieve* boasts about his native town, known as the *Lang Toon*, to all travellers entering by stagecoach at the North end and proceeding to Pettycur harbour via Gallatown, Sinclairtown, Pathhead, Kirkcaldy and Linktown – a three mile stretch with houses all the way. The road crossed

the parishes of Dysart, Kirkcaldy, Abbotshall and finished in the Eastern end of the parish in Kinghorn”. Certainly by 1817 there would be a distinct run of houses from Gallatown towards Kirkcaldy – at that time it was known simply as the Cupar Road.

Finally he turns to - “ an interesting reference to Kirkcaldy was made by the famous Lexicographer of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century – Dr. Johnson, who passed through the town when on his *Journey to the Hebrides* accompanied by James Boswell in 1773. While crossing the Forth they made a landing on Inchkeith and then crossed to Kinghorn. When we landed we found our chaise ready and passed through Kinghorn, Kirkcaldy and Cupar, places not unlike the small or straggling market towns in those parts of England, where commerce and manufacturers have not yet produced opulence. The roads are neither rough nor dirty and it affords a southern stranger a new kind of pleasure to travel so commodiously without the interruption of toll gates. There is no tree for either shelter or timber. The oak and the thorn is equally a stranger and the whole country is extended in uniform nakedness, except that on the road between Kirkcaldy and Cupar I passed for a few yards between two hedges”.

The reference to a lack of toll gates seems strange as, almost from the Act of Union in 1707, legislation started to be passed to bring toll roads to Scotland – question for another day!

As the book now moves into the industries – it is no surprise that given the significance of shipping and shipbuilding in the review that is where the history starts. Lockhart is very quickly into his stride emphasising that the upkeep and repair of the harbour had always been the chief concern of the Town Council. “Storms then as now played havoc with the harbour and it was often beyond the Council's power to re-build it without financial assistance. In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century it was customary to make an appeal to other towns for *ane voluntary contribution*. In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, however, this system had come to an end and when, in 1717, as the Burgh Records tell us, a disaster to the harbour was caused by a *violent storme* whereby the pier was *dung through and through*, the Council took immediate steps to repair it by requesting Lord Sinclair to allow stones to be taken from east of Ravenscraig”. The records do not show how long the repairs took or their cost.

The episode of the *James* was expanded on and we learn that the *James* and the other two ships which were seized had total cargoes of 6,000 muskets, 6,000 bandoliers, 4,000 pikes, 10,000 swords, 10,000 sword belts. The incident would be connected to the *English Civil War* which had started in 1642 with Scotland, through the Covenanters, aligning themselves with the Parliamentarian side.

Lockhart also covers the *Isabel* of Kirkcaldy which in October 1696 operating through *The Company of Scotland* set sail for Africa with a cargo of trading goods which included basins, pewter jugs, coloured beads, copper bars, brass pans, manillas or black arm rings, round bells and open bells.

*The Company of Scotland* had two ships built in Hamburg which were named the *Saint Andrew* and the *Caledonia*. Both ships arrived in Kirkcaldy in December 1697 with the intention that they overwinter in readiness to sail from Leith in July 1698 as part of the *first Darien Fleet*.

The scheme was an unsuccessful attempt funded by the Company to secure both wealth and influence by creating *New Caledonia* on the Isthmus of Darien. The intention was to create an overland route to connect the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. The attempt to settle was a disaster with 80% of the participants dying within a year. There were five ships involved including the two mentioned above and it is suggested that 1,200 individuals made the journey – that is a lot of people dying! For Scotland it was devastating as the Company had been backed using around 20% of the money circulating in Scotland at the time. This outflow, with no subsequent return, had a severe impact on Lowland Scotland. It is suggested that the precarious position the country was left in was, in no small measure, responsible for the 1707 *Acts of Union*. The whole scheme was abandoned in 1700. The *Caledonia* had managed to limp into New York harbour with 250 survivors. That is the first of the team becoming aware that Kirkcaldy had a tenuous connection with the *Darien Scheme* and the question must be did any of the local lairds lose money?

By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Kirkcaldy had 14 vessels involved in the coal trade with Holland and London. Kirkcaldy at this time also traded with North and South America, the Baltic and France, and it was said that only three Scottish ports exceeded Kirkcaldy in Custom's Revenue Collections. Lockhart highlighted some records from 1640 relating to arrivals of

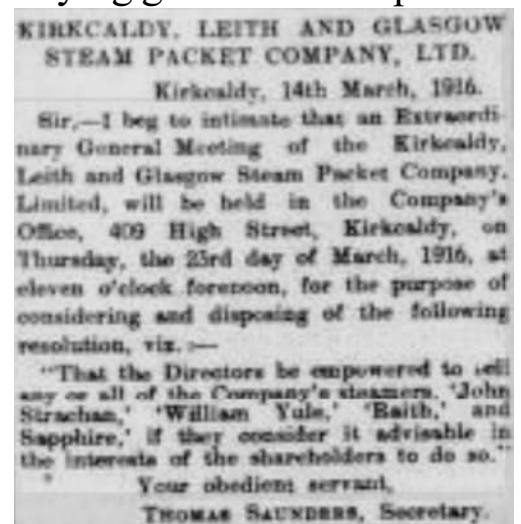


Kirkcaldy ships in Campvere, Holland.

- Captain Herd of Kirkcaldy with coal and goods.
- Captain John White of Kirkcaldy – coal and staple wares.
- Captain William Simpson – coal and staple wares.
- Captain George Gay of Dysart – coal and staple wares.

Moving on to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Lockhart maintains that it is the shipping and whaling industries that Kirkcaldy is dependent on for its prosperity – it would appear that the revenue from the harbour is the town's principal income.

Lockhart initially covers the *Kirkcaldy, Leith and Glasgow Steam Packet Company* which was formed in 1808. The company gave “regular communication by water transport with Leith and also with Glasgow by the Forth and Clyde Canal”. He remarked that “it is satisfactory to see the successor of this company still carrying on in 1938 in the town's motor-carrying industry, the steam pinnaces which the company owned having been disposed of for Government service at the outbreak of the Great War in 1914”. This just had to be investigated and it transpires that the firm was known locally as *The Pinnaces*. A pinnace was a small boat originally powered by sail or oars which was used as a tender carrying goods from ship to shore. In time they became steam driven and it would seem that in this case they would be used for trips over the Forth and possibly to Glasgow via the Forth and Clyde Canal. *The Fifeshire Advertiser* of the 16<sup>th</sup> March carries an article which has a headline – *The Pinnace Company*. In it, we learn that a circular has been issued on the 14<sup>th</sup> March 1916 indicating that a meeting will be held in the company's offices on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March to discuss the following resolution:- *that the Directors be empowered to sell any or all of the company's steamers – John Strachan – William Yule – Raith and Sapphire, if they consider it advisable in the interests of the shareholders to do so.* The circular was signed by Thomas Saunders – the Company Secretary.



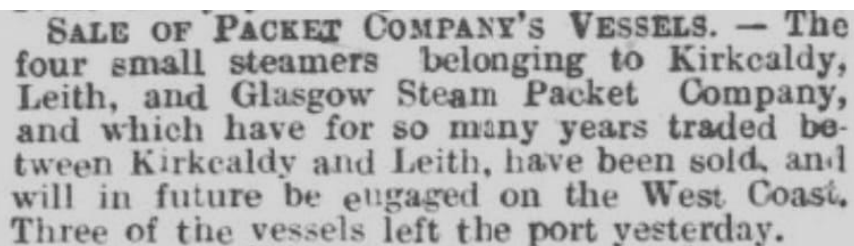
KIRKCALDY, LEITH AND GLASGOW  
STEAM PACKET COMPANY, LTD.  
Kirkcaldy, 14th March, 1916.  
Sir,—I beg to intimate that an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Kirkcaldy, Leith and Glasgow Steam Packet Company, Limited, will be held in the Company's Office, 409 High Street, Kirkcaldy, on Thursday, the 23rd day of March, 1916, at eleven o'clock forenoon, for the purpose of considering and disposing of the following resolution, viz. —  
“That the Directors be empowered to sell any or all of the Company's steamers, 'John Strachan,' 'William Yule,' 'Raith,' and 'Sapphire,' if they consider it advisable in the interests of the shareholders to do so.”  
Your obedient servant,  
THOMAS SAUNDERS, Secretary.

The newspaper had a lot to say on the subject, primarily that it was almost “the last of the companies who had served the towns on the shores of the

Forth for many years and which had been killed off in a war of attrition with the railway companies. From the terms of the above circular it would seem that its turn has come to disappear from the Firth, leaving the whole trading community at the mercy of the North British management”.

The article continued that this was a double blow for the town – “firstly, in terms of the loss of income from the harbour dues and, secondly, it will deprive the traders and manufacturers of a means of transport which is of special value today when the Railway Company is not in a position to fully discharge its function of a public carrier. Goods for and from Kirkcaldy may be consigned to the Railway Company, but traders never know when they will be carried to their destination, if in a week, a month or three months. Plainly this prospective curtailment of carrying facilities is bad for local business”.

The *Dundee Evening Telegraph* of the 24<sup>th</sup> March 1916 confirmed the news that the ships would indeed be exposed for sale. Moving on to the *Fife Free Press* of the 13<sup>th</sup> May we learn that the four small steamers have been sold



SALE OF PACKET COMPANY'S VESSELS. — The four small steamers belonging to Kirkcaldy, Leith, and Glasgow Steam Packet Company, and which have for so many years traded between Kirkcaldy and Leith, have been sold, and will in future be engaged on the West Coast. Three of the vessels left the port yesterday.

and three had left Kirkcaldy harbour the previous day. It was indicated that in future they would be trading on the West Coast of Scotland. The year and the outcome are

obviously at variance with what Lockhart writes but all we can do is evidence the position by reproducing the article here.

What we can say is that the company did have lorry's in 1916 but what powered them is another question! In August 1916 there is a report of a collision between a Wemyss tramcar and a lorry belonging to the company - which was certainly pulled by a horse! An advertisement for the company from the *1924 Kirkcaldy Trade's Directory* shows that the company are now shipping agents, not owners, and are now road carriers. The firm was operating at this time from 23 Dunnikier Road.



KIRKCALDY, LEITH AND GLASGOW  
STEAM PACKET COMPANY, LIMITED

Shipping Agents  
AND  
Cartage Contractors  
Carting Agents for all the  
Local Shipping Companies.

HORSE & MOTOR LORRIES FOR HIRE

REGISTERED OFFICE:—  
23 DUNNIKIER ROAD, KIRKCALDY  
Telegrams:— Telephone:—  
Saunders, Kirkcaldy. 38 Kirkcaldy.

Moving onto the whaling industry Lockhart lists some of the local fleet and

in some instances the owner's names are also recorded:-

- *Hecla* – (owner, Jamieson).
- *Triad* - ( owner D. Dougal)
- *Regalia* - ( owner D. Dougal)
- *Chieftain* – (owner, D. Dougal).
- *Caledonia* – (owner, Bogie).
- *Viewforth* – (owner D. Pratt).

In 1835, *The Viewforth*, under Captain Oliphant, was caught in the ice along with two other ships, one from Aberdeen and another from Hull. They had to spend the winter in the Arctic. As no news of the ships was forthcoming all were feared lost. A national appeal was successful and a rescue ship was dispatched with food and supplies. Only two of the ice-bound ships survived with the *Viewforth* arriving back in Kirkcaldy in March 1836 amid great local rejoicing. To show the widespread interest in the rescue – a snippet

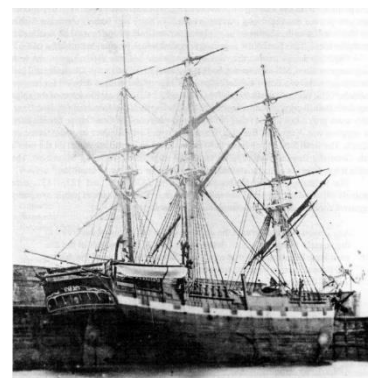
The two remaining ice-bound whalers, the *Viewforth* of Kirkcaldy, and the *Jane* of Hull, have arrived safely at Peterhead. Six of the crew of the former had died from the perils and hardships they had undergone.

from the North Devon Journal of the 17<sup>th</sup> March 1836 highlights the arrival of the two surviving ships in Peterhead.

In fact, in Object 14 on the Elder family, the event was highlighted. William Elder had been involved in this dramatic incident in the winter of 1835/36 while serving on the whaler “*Viewforth*” from Kirkcaldy. A journal of the event was maintained by William in which he makes mention that six of “*Viewforth's*” crew perished. The journal itself was presented to the *Scott Polar Research Institute* by Elder’s great niece, Mrs Anne M. E. Jackson. Despite his experiences, William twice captained another Kirkcaldy whaler “*Regalia*” (Mentioned above).

Worse was to follow in 1862 when three Kirkcaldy whaling ships were lost – *The Abram* – *The Lord Gambier* and the *Chieftain*, but thankfully all the crews were saved.

Lockhart quotes that, in the 1833 season, Kirkcaldy whalers brought home 900 tons of oil and 60 tons of whalebones with a total value of £30,000. Eventually the industry fell on hard times and was given up. “These whalers of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century made for a busy harbour and brought much money to the town; but



The whaler *Lord Gambier* pictured at Kirkcaldy in 1860.  
Source: Courtesy of Kirkcaldy Museum and Art Galleries.

when these vessels were overtaken by a complete cessation of that industry, it was a fortunate turn of events when their vacant berths were occupied by the local flax spinner's ships trading with the Baltic ports”.

At this time, as a reflection on the importance of shipping to the town, Lockhart indicates that there are 15 captains resident in Kirkcaldy with another 14 in Pathhead.

By 1842 the Harbour dues had increased to £1,715 and Provost Swan and the Harbour Commissioners determined that the time was right to extend the harbour and subsequently a new wet dock and outer harbour were constructed. The next extension did not take place until between 1907/1910!

By 1938, while the harbour was now without an export trade in coal, it certainly had considerable exports thanks to its own manufacturers with weekly sailings to London, Hull , Liverpool and Bristol. There were also considerable imports, most notably cork from Spain, Portugal and North Africa which were distributed to the local linoleum factories and also those based in Newburgh and Falkland. Linseed oil was also a significant import. Lockhart very handily provides a table, relating to 1938, of the main classes of cargo both imported and exported

#### Imports in Tons

- Cement ... .. 31,810
- Linseed oil ... .. 9,466
- Cork ... .. 18,077
- Whiting ... .. 10,095
- Chemicals ... .. 6,953
- Wood ... .. 7,100

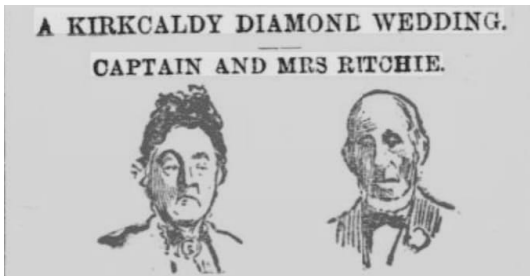
#### Exports in Tons

- Linoleum ... .. 33,959
- Paper ... .. 12,786
- Malt ... .. 3,283
- Potatoes ... .. 1,839

Lockhart emphasises the point made by Lachlan MacBean in regard to the

importance of seafaring men in the Town Council. The system altered in 1830 but, until then, for 160 years a significant number of seats were allotted to representatives with connections to the sea. *Piggot's Directory* of 1825 reflects that there were 8 sailors and 5 merchants. This clearly demonstrates the importance of the harbour and the sea to the town.

Before leaving the harbour, Lockhart suggests that from the 1860s until the 1890s flax spinners ships accounted for substantial landings with *Swan Brothers* (the family firm of Provost Patrick Dom Swan) having four ships engaged in the trade – the *Triad*, the *Falcon*, the *Kobinoor* and an iron brig, *George Ann*. The *United* was similarly employed by another well known Kirkcaldy maritime name – Mr Malcolm (he of the Wynd fame).



A report of the diamond wedding of a Captain Ritchie and his wife which was reported on in the *Fife Free Press* of the 19<sup>th</sup> November 1898 was stumbled upon. The story of Captain Ritchie was fascinating as he had run away to Burntisland as a youngster to join a whaler. During his seafaring

life he worked for both Swan Brothers and Mr Malcolm and he was the longstanding captain of the *Triad* – the largest ship in the port at the time. The drawing of the happy couple just had to be included here.

Returning from that tangent to Lockhart, his last observation goes back to 1741 where he alludes to the Act of Parliament which allowed a duty of two pennies Scots, or one sixth part of a penny sterling, to be levied on every pint of ale or beer brewed in the Burgh. The Act came into force in June 1742. While Lockhart suggests it was required to help repair the cost of the harbour - which had been severely damaged in the 1717 storm – we are not convinced. It is our belief that common land had been feued for this purpose – most notably to Mr Oswald and Dr. Hay. Doubtless they were hard times for Kirkcaldy but our suspicions are that the tax was to raise funds for general expenditure not the repair of the harbour. The same tax had been applied in 1714 and that was before the great storm – in that year it brought in a total of £169 sterling.

## Shipbuilding

It is hard to believe that at one stage this industry was carried on very



successfully in Kirkcaldy. Lockhart covered firstly the firm of *J. Brown & Co.*, who were engineers based in Cowan Street. This firm had two boatbuilding yards – one close to their works and another to the west of the Tiel Burn. From the first mentioned they launched two iron brigs – the *George Ann* for Swan Brothers and also the *Eliza*, in addition an iron yacht named the *Cocked Hat* was built on the same site. From the Tiel Burn yard were launched the *Windhover*, the *Sunbeam* and the small Kirkcaldy/Leith trader the *Tiel*. Lockhart indicates that the shipbuilding side ceased probably due to the unsuitability of the site. It is believed that while there were two boatbuilding yards – they were never operational together with the Tiel yard replacing the original. However the yard still stands to this day as a second hand car outlet. The map shown here reveals how little it has changed from its past use.



Attention was then turned to the new firm *John Key & Sons* of Whitebank Engineering Works in Dunnikier Road. They wisely selected a more sheltered site at Abden, near Kinghorn, with many large vessels being built there with the engines being produced in the Dunnikier Road Works. Unfortunately, financial disaster overtook the firm and it passed into the hands of *J. Scott & Co* – but that enterprise was short lived. The story of *John Key and the Abden Yard* was covered in Object 26.

The obituary of Robert Hope carried in the *Fife Free Press* of 19<sup>th</sup> November 1898 was uncovered and it transpires that he, half a century before, had been the foreman at *J. Brown & Co.* We learn that the yard had been sited on the beach between Charlotte Street and Rose Street. It reveals that, as well as the *George Ann*, the *Isabella Ann* had also been built there for Swan Brothers. The *Sunbeam* was apparently the largest ship ever built in Kirkcaldy and the *Tiel* was still, in 1898, plying its trade between Kirkcaldy and Leith. As well as being an engineer it would seem that Mr Hope was mine host at the *Sample Market Inn* which was opposite the head of Tolbooth Street. His wife had died 24 years previously and it was said he led a lonely life with his time being spent studying the Bible.

The demise of these firms saw the end of shipbuilding in Kirkcaldy – but never forget Kirkcaldy built and launched ocean going steamships!

All through these 50 Objects it is seldom that a tangent is not followed up. Just where was the *Sample Market Inn*? The *Fife Free Press* of the 5<sup>th</sup> February 1898 reveals that a well known baker, James Scott, had retired from the trade and had bought the premises – pulled them down and built a



shop with a house above. He now carried on as a licenced grocer under the trading name of *James Scott and Son*. The site has been located on a map, and it is close to the top of Tolbooth Street. The map is shown here for interest. It does seem however that the shop, allegedly built on the site, is advertising it is operating from 103 High Street. That's a

question for another day!!

The book then moves on to Chapter 3 which is headed *Industries* and the opening lines relate that “The greatest source of employment in the district one hundred years ago was provided by the linen, weaving, flax-spinning and bleaching trades. Lockhart then launches into more detail starting with:-

### **Weaving**

Inside the Royal Burgh itself weavers of hand-loom linen were very scarce – in fact the 1834 *Kirkcaldy Directory* only quoted the name of one such operator. It was in Links, Pathhead, Sinclairtown and Gallatown, where weaving was carried out. The yarn was provided to the weavers by merchants or small manufacturing concerns with warehouses in the Burgh.

In 1838, the wages of weavers were so low that a joint meeting of the weavers and the 'employers' was held in the Town Hall to fix a standard wage. The agreement reached was-

- 9/6 to 10/- a week for men doing heavy work.
- 7/6 per week for women.
- 5/6 per week for boys.

This gives the highest wage at the time being the equivalent of 50p today. Lockhart deplores the fact that, a year later, another meeting resulted in a 10% reduction to these rates!

He then makes mention of a report published in 1778 by the Board of Manufacturers in Edinburgh. Their report covered the textile industry in all the towns and villages in Scotland quoting:-

- “Kirkcaldy - a Royal Burgh and seaport, a tolerable good harbour but shallow water. The people here and in the Links are mostly employed in weaving checks and tykes. They dye all colours well. There are about 240 looms going, some in woollens for home consumption. English wool answers best and generally comes from Yetholm, Kelso and Wooler, at 12/- to 18/- per stone. It was estimated the output of manufactured woollen goods was 1,000 stones per annum. The price of spinning is quoted as 2/- per spindle and weaving 5d to 8d per yard”.
- It was estimated that about 100 men and women were employed in spinning and weaving wool with the principal manufacturers being Andrew Balvaird in Pathhead and Robert Steedman in the Links. The two were also heavily involved as dyers along with James Davidson and Joseph Brown. Lockhart then turned to names still familiar in the town, “John and George Fergus had 40 looms and a large Bleachfield which was used for their own yarns and that of others. They used no home-grown flax – rather relying on that from Riga and St. Petersburg”.
- Turning to Pathhead, the report mentioned it was a large, populous (1,500 individuals) and thriving village all feued to local tradesmen and manufacturers. Mention was made that the manufacture of nails was also extensively carried on. “Andrew and George Balvaird were said to carry on a considerable woollen manufacture and also made cloth from Scotch wool mainly bought from the Edinburgh market. In Pathhead at the time there were 195 looms employed in checks, tykes, napkins and plain linen”.
- Sinclairtown and Dysart followed with Dysart noted as having a good harbour where coal and salt was shipped from. Again, there is a brisk trade in checks, tykes and napkins, but no mention is made of linen. It was estimated that there were 130 looms and 2,900 persons living in the parish and they were described as “active and diligent people”.
- Lockhart argues that while the report gave a clear view of the textile trade in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, had there been one for the 19<sup>th</sup> it would have looked far different. What would have been the major changes to report? The 1738 report concentrated on hand-loom weaving but with the introduction of steam power it brought about the gradual cessation of the hand-looms. Power loom factories circa 1850/60 were erected



in different parts of the town and gave employment to many more workers that had been employed in the days of hand-loom weaving. One of the factors responsible for the eventual decline of the Fifeshire Linen Trade was suggested by the author as “being the ever increasing competition from Belfast. In 1937, Great Britain took 40% of the Irish linen production, and much more goes to the United States. It is also noticeable in the daily press advertisements by retailers that it is always “Irish Linen” they push – never Kirkcaldy or Dunfermline linen”. However it was not all bad news as one local manufacturer was, in 1938, moving with the times and introducing modern electric looms, by which four broad looms were attended by one weaver and other weavers had 8 narrow looms to attend.

## Linen Trade

Lockhart writes that “Kirkcaldy has, since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, maintained a good reputation for its linen ticking, sheeting and towelling but was best known for the shirting, which it turned out in quantity as well as quality. Long before linoleum was heard of, the name and fame of “Kirkcaldy stripes” was known in every town and village in Scotland, the North of England and Ireland. No working man would wear any other kind of shirt, for the Kirkcaldy striped shirting material had the hard wearing quality he most desired. In the early days these famous and most popular Kirkcaldy stripes were all linen, hand-loom woven, and constituted a good portion of *N. Lockhart and Son's* trade, the weavers being women in various parts of Fife”.

The undernoted is a List of some of the Goods  
they make :—

PLAIN DRESS WINCEYS.  
TWILLED SERGE WINCEYS.  
TWEED DRESS WINCEYS.  
CHECK SHIRTING WINCEYS.  
STRIPPED DRUGGETS.  
LINEN TICKS, SHEETINGS,  
DOULASSES,  
**KIRKCALDY SHIRTING STRIPES,**  
TURKEY COTTON AND LINEN CHECKS, &c.

—  
INSPECTION INVITED.  
—

**G. SWAN & CO..**  
*Wholesale and Retail,*  
DRAPERS AND MANUFACTURERS,  
34 HIGH STREET (WEST END),  
KIRKCALDY.

The author recounts the story of one lady who was “long remembered for her stamina and staying power”. She lived in Dunshalt, 14 miles away, and in 1861 walked all the way to the Links with her web on her back and returning with new yarn for another web!

The trade in these goods fell off when cotton imitations by Manchester makers took the place of Kirkcaldy linen.

“Prior to 1860, weaving had been almost wholly by hand loom but in this decade the age of the power loom arrived: new factories were quickly

established in the Links, Pathhead, Sinclairtown and Dysart, with two in the Burgh itself. Large profits were made due to the *American Civil War* rendering cotton dear and difficult to obtain, thereby increasing the demand for linen”.

“During the next thirty years the linen trade may be said to have reached its zenith. From then and now (1938) it has been assailed by on the one hand jute and on the other by competition from cotton. Continuous decline has set in, not so much perhaps in Kirkcaldy and Dysart as in other parts of Fife – where the linen industry in Dunfermline, Kingskettle, Ladybank and Cowdenbeath, has suffered even more”. Could no longer be described as a decline today – it has gone, never to return!

Lockhart then reverts to *Kirkcaldy's Trades Directory* of 1825 giving the following names listed as Linen Manufacturers.

- Ninian Lockhart – Links.
- Michael Nairn – Links.
- Robert Stocks & Co. - Links.
- Robert Pratt & Sons – Links.
- Archibald MacDonald – Newton.

Rather unhelpfully, he mentions that there were another 6 names in the Links, 5 in the High Street, 2 in Rose Street and 1 on the shore. He is at some pains to point out that this was the first mention of Michael Nairn who was aged 21 at the time.

The chapter ends with a 1938 statistic – this is the number of individuals engaged in the trade on the 4<sup>th</sup> October, 1938. They are listed as “On the Register” - presumably working and “Unemployed” - which may be those laid off. Anyway, here is the snapshot of the day produced 86 years ago.

	<u>On the Register</u>	<u>Unemployed</u>
Men	253	23
Women	875	92
Boys	38	1
Girls	<u>500</u>	<u>37</u>
Total	1666	<u>153</u>
Less Unemployed	<u>153</u>	

Very easy to see that even prior to the outbreak of the Second World War the industry was heavily dependent on female labour.

### **Flax Spinning**

Lockhart believes that this important trade had been carried out in the district for more than two centuries prior to the time he was writing. He maintains that by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it gave the greatest employment to the inhabitants, indicating that in 14 mills, 2,000 people were employed earning a cumulative total of £1,000 per week. Provost Swan, while still a young man in his 30s, had founded the firm of Swan Brothers. The firm were flax-spinners also having a bleachfield at Tyrie and built or acquired mills in 1840, 1848, 1850 and 1862. They became the largest employer of labour in the town and district (including a mill in Kinghorn).

However, even the largest of firms can have financial issues and Swan Brothers were no exception. Between 1880 and 1885 there was a widespread depression in both the flax and linen trades which had a dire consequence for Swan Brothers. In 1886 the firm was brought to a standstill with the mills and machinery being sold off. The story of Provost Swan was told in Object 30.

In Object 32, the story of one of Kirkcaldy's greatest benefactors, Robert Philp, was told. Philp made his £70,000 fortune from his small spinning mill at the West Bridge which was devoted to the erection of four schools for the education of poor children. Lockhart takes a firm stance over Philp writing that "he was buried in Kirkcaldy Parish Church burying ground, where, after 100 years (Philp died in 1829), his long forgotten and neglected grave seems to cry aloud in protest. In 1938 Kirkcaldy boys and girls are, or may be, supplied with free clothing from the funds left by him, while not even one pound has been expended on the upkeep of his last resting place – *Sic transit gloria mundi*" – thus passes the glory of the world.

At least in his day Lockhart had the comfort of Philp's statue which adorned the old Philp Hall. Thankfully, he was dead before the hall was demolished and the Council flung Kirkcaldy's only statue to one of their sons onto the coup – almost beyond belief! Only a small statue of Pet Marjorie remains – yes, only one from all of the town's famous sons and daughters! It may be

suggested that Kirkcaldy has long believed that a street name is more than sufficient recognition unless you happen to be Adam Smith.

## Bleaching

To say that there is a paucity of information on this industry would be an exaggeration. Only 5 lines are devoted to the subject before Lockhart throws himself into the tale of the *Last Duel* which was recounted away back in Object 14.

Writing on the matter in hand, Lockhart restricted himself to - “In this trade, in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the merchants in yarn and manufacturers of linen, had seven bleach fields in the district, one of them at Thornton, and having, it is stated, a turnover of £30,000. One of these merchants was concerned in what is known as the Last Duel fought in Scotland”.



He then recounts the story of Morgan and Landale, certainly correct in outline although several of the details are not absolutely factual. He mentions that Landale lived in St. Mary's (see map) and that his office was at 509 High Street. He describes Landale as a Yarn Merchant with a bleach-field at Thornton. Landale died in 1856 and we are told that on his deathbed he was attended by the Rev. James Black of *Dunnikier Free*

*Church*. Never resisting a tangent we can recount that the Revered Black's church is now the car park for the *Path House Medical Practice*. Similarly his manse was what is now the medical practice itself. The church stood on that site from 1763 until 1901 when they moved to what is now *St. Marie's church* on Dunnikier Road.

What was of interest was “A rhyme on the duel which was long remembered”

-

*Between Torbain and Cardenden  
A bloody Duel was fought  
Morgan fell and Landale fled  
From off the bloody spot.*

And that readers was bleaching!

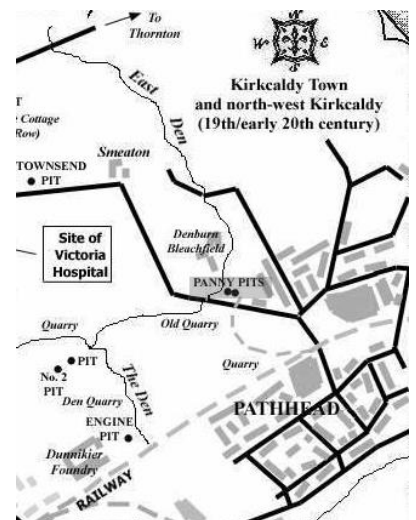
## Coal

The author commences this chapter by going back to 1840 when he states “that there was only one pit in the parish\*” – 46 fathoms deep with the seam being 5 feet thick. This gave employment to 40 miners, besides a few men and boys to draw the coal up to the surface. The exact location of this particular pit is now (1938) unknown but it is believed that at one time there were a few others, with one being close to the site of the engineering firm of *Douglas and Grant*. Lockhart mentions that there was one in the vicinity of, not surprisingly, Coal Wynd and another at the foot of Townsend Crescent”.

\*this is rather difficult to accept – might make more sense and be more accurate to say only one company with a number of pits – those of Oswald of Dunnikier.

“In 1731 the magistrates passed a law reducing the cartage cost of coal from 3d to 2d per load. The minute recorded “3d for the coal load is extravagant considering that the coal heugh is so very near the town and the way so good and easy. In 1847 coal was priced at 8/6d per ton delivered free from Dunnikier Colliery”.

“Coal mining was carried on from the “Pannie” Pit by *Walter Herd & Son* for many years. This pit worked at a depth of 1,400 feet, with branches going as far as March Street. Abundant supplies of coal were provided to local industries from this source from the 1870s to the 1890s. This firm sold out to the *Fife Coal Co., Ltd.*, who carried it on for some more years before it finally closed in 1929”. In fairness Lockhart would not have access to works such as the *Fife Miners Memorial Book* – a modern encyclopedia of the county's mining history.



“Coal mining has been developed to a very great extent in the immediate district on the Rosslyn and Wemyss Estates and large new towns have arisen during recent years at East Wemyss, Buckhaven and Methil, with its large exporting dock supporting a population of more than thirty thousand people within seven miles of Kirkcaldy”.

## Flour Mills and Maltings

This is another short chapter which can be quoted verbatim. “There are extensive mills carried on by R. Hutchison & Co., Ltd., at Eastburn Mills which have been in existence for several generations. Messrs. Hutchison are the owners of the separate concern called *Youma Ltd.*, making baking flour with a malt flavour, much used by bakers in all parts of Scotland and England. The Malt Barns are on the foreshore site, with a branch at Victoria Road and another at Musselburgh.



“John Hogarth carried on a flour mill at West Mills, Linktown, for many years in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century his son, James Hogarth, erected a modern mill opposite Kirkcaldy Goods Station where a large amount of business is done”.

Stumbling on an archive – [www.millsarchive.org](http://www.millsarchive.org) we found considerable details on both mills. We discovered that the West Bridge Mill had been started by John Hogarth in 1854 using water as the power source. It was his son, James Hogarth, who in 1893 had the Central Mills built close to Kirkcaldy Station and having four floors. The archive reveals that the power source was a *Lancashire boiler* built by Kirkcaldy's own *Douglas and Grant*.

Turning to Messrs. Hutchison the archive pays great tribute to 1897 conversions and alterations carried out by the then head of the firm – Alexander Hutchison – who was also Kirkcaldy's Provost at the time. The archive even brings the company fully up to date stating that - “The site was given a new lease of life in recent years when a significant investment by Carr’s enabled the neglected harbour to be reopened. This enabled the construction of Carr’s new mill, the first to be built in Scotland for 30 years. It was commissioned in 2012 and completed in 2013, fitted out with the latest Buhler roller mill plant”.

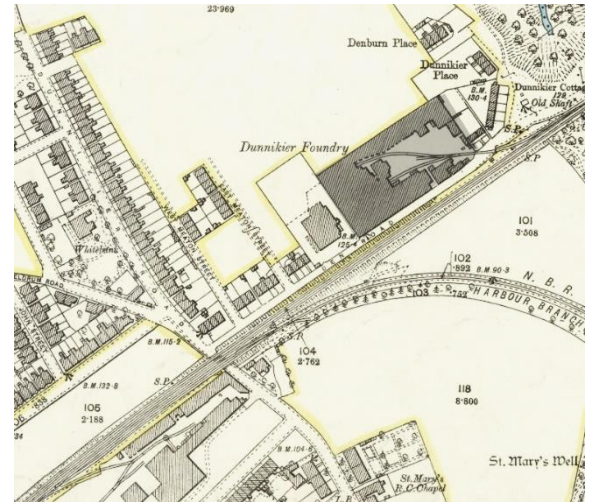
A little research unearthed the founding of the joint stock company *Youma Ltd.*, in the *Dundee Courier* of the 11<sup>th</sup> September 1920. The name, for more years than this writer cares to remember, was emblazoned on the roof of the



grandstand at Stark's Park, adjacent to the Air Raid Siren. We can not help but ponder if the advert appeared as soon as the Grandstand was completed and opened. While fading, it can not be that long ago that it vanished for ever – but time plays tricks.

## Engineering – Steam Engines and Machinery

“By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century this industry had been well established, 200 men being employed, at an average wage of 15/- (75p) per week. One of the earliest was *Brown's* in Thistle Street, where the *Scotsman* newspaper and the *Fifeshire Advertiser* printing machines were made in 1838. Another firm, at a later date, achieved great success with their engines and rice mill machinery, viz., *Douglas & Grant*, with a reputation for good work in India, Burma and



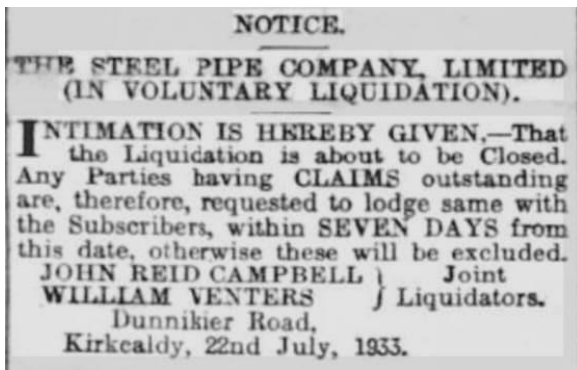
China etc. They sent their engineers to fit up mills in the East and some of their men remained at these places and took charge.

This enterprise attracted young men from all parts of the world to be trained as engineers. They carried on business during the 1914-18 War period and their men were in much demand at Rosyth Dockyard for navy repairs. Soon thereafter, the firm encountered serious financial difficulty and closed down. It is now carried on by Mr Lewis C. Grant in Dysart in a smaller way”.

Thomas Dale, John Key & Sons and Messrs. Landale were also mentioned as being involved in engineering but “now in 1938, there are only two engineering firms, *Messrs. William Philp & Son* and *The Melville Brodie Engineering Co., Ltd.*, who specialise in printing machines and general linoleum engineering”.

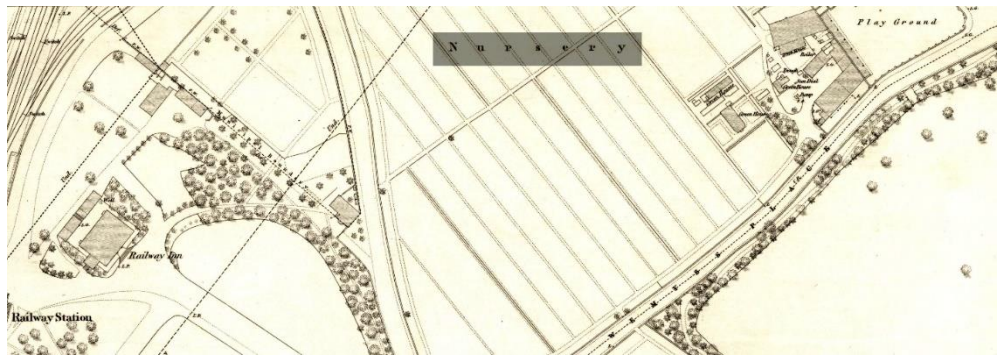
“Boiler making has been successfully carried on for four generations at Dunnikier Road by *Messrs. A. Bryce & Son, The Fife Forge & Co., Ltd.*, at Sinclairtown Station was established in 1873 and gives employment for skilled labour in making heavy steel shafts for ocean liners. The long and heavy motor lorries, now on the road transport service, carry these steel shafts from the works to the ship side. *The Fife Forge* is now one of the few forges working in Scotland. A new industry was established by the *Steel*

*Pipe Co.*, about 1900 and for some years was a flourishing business in the manufacture of steel tubes or pipes. They carried on for some years in the premises once occupied by *Dale's Engineering Works*, now covered by the Fire Station in Dunnikier Road. Unfortunately, this trade is now lost to the town with the firm going into voluntary liquidation in July 1933 Among the smaller industries of the early days of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were *Russell's Foundry* in



Kirk Wynd but the firm failed in 1850 and the ground and buildings were purchased by Provost Swan”.

“Sang's Nurseries were then situated between the High School and the Station Road. There were also Sir John Oswald's salt pans at the foot of Coal Wynd and Dowie's



coach-building works in Oswald's Wynd. Tobacco manufacturing was carried on by four firms, circa 1860, who supplied both the town and country requirements and pushed their sales into Perthshire plus as far west as Oban. One by one these have all disappeared.

One hundred years of growth in the population witnessed the expansion of its chief industry but that period also covers the decline and even the disappearance of several of the industries on which the town's prosperity had been built up”.

## Furniture

Furniture is the next stop and Lockhart sets the scene with “This important trade supplied the increasing domestic needs and by 1870 that had been met by three firms, one at Charlotte Street, one at Glasswork Street and one at Rose Street, while there was a large workshop at Linktown carried on by Bailie Barnet.

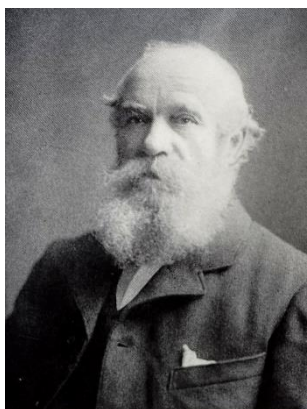
“In 1879 Mr A.H. McIntosh's trade at Rose Street had expanded and he



resolved to erect a new factory at Victoria Road, then almost unbuilt on. He acquired the open space between the road and the railway, with a siding giving easy access for receiving heavy timber. He also acquired the adjoining vacant premises formerly occupied by the engineering firm *John Key & Sons*. In the 80s there came a trade boom in the erection of new and larger hotels and hydros in all parts of Scotland and England, which gave an impetus to the trades in furniture and linoleum. The Victoria Road Works executed many large contracts and very soon an extensive addition had to be made to the works and showrooms.

“In a few short years the manufacture of fine furniture gave employment to 800 men and the fame of Kirkcaldy furniture was known all over the land. Eventually, in 1897, a strike developed in these works and the men were idle for several weeks. The strike caused Mr McIntosh great grief. The men, however, got tired of being unemployed and quietly walked back to work. Their first act on resumption was to present their employer with a silver salver to show their esteem for him.\*

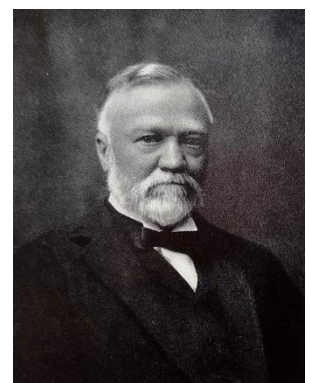
“A marked change came over the trade after the opening years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and this became even more marked in the years following the war of 1914-18. For the next 20 years large houses ceased to be built, houses of the bungalow type and housing schemes for the working classes did not require large or expensive furniture, so that a decline in the Kirkcaldy high quality product set in and the result has been that employment has fallen to less than half of what it was formerly”.



Mr A. H. McINTOSH

\*The story of A.H McIntosh was told in Object 23 and that included the episode of the silver salver. It would seem pointless to repeat it here. Lockhart also made mention of the schoolboy friendship of A.H. McIntosh and Andrew Carnegie in the years prior to 1848 when the Carnegie's emigrated. Object 23 also recounts their meeting again in 1897 when the friendship was restored for the rest of their lives. Again while it is pointless to relate that full anecdote here, Lockhart did add something

new and amusing:- it would appear that when Andrew was 12 years old he kept a rabbit hutch with several rabbits. He advised young McIntosh that, if he were to gather dandelions each Saturday, when the first baby rabbits were born, he would call



ANDREW CARNEGIE

the first one “McIntosh”.

## The Printing and Lithographic Trades

If this seems familiar it almost certainly is. As recently as Object 47 the story of the *Allen Lithographic Company* was recounted. On that basis only a little of Lockhart's chapter is included and in bullet point fashion.

- In 1867, Archibald Beveridge commenced business in the town as a printer, calling his business *The Kirkcaldy Steam Printing Works*.
- A few years afterwards he added lithography for the production of items such as posters and labels.
- Beveridge discovered that linoleum designs could be produced on paper thereby allowing the production of pattern books for the trade. This greatly enhanced the scope of lithography in Kirkcaldy.
- On Beveridge's death in 1892 the business was purchased by *Cooper & Allen*.
- A disastrous fire, in 1900, made reorganisation necessary with Cooper leaving the partnership and Mr J.H. Allen forming the *Allen Lithographic Company*.
- It is believed to be the largest lithographic company in Scotland and, depending on the season, employs between 250 and 300 workers.

As mentioned above, Object 47, carries full details of one of Kirkcaldy's iconic companies.

### Some Statistics

Lockhart leaves industries behind with an interesting chapter on statistics. For some reason he compares the population shift between 1851 and 1861 presumably taken from the Censuses.

Parish	1851	1861
Kirkcaldy Parish Population	5,714	6,131
Abbotshall “ “	5,030	5,196
Dysart “ “	8,727	8,794

The Town Council of Kirkcaldy in 1840 consisted of a Provost, two Bailies, sixteen Councillors and one Dean of Guild.

In 1840 there were 250 voters for both the Municipal and Parliamentary elections.

The streets were lit by gas and were kept clean. Water was provided by street wells and brought from a distance in pipes.

A corn market was held on Saturdays in the Corn Exchange which was built in 1860 to provide better facilities for the Corn Market. For the next 39 years, until the opening of the Adam Smith Halls, it was the only entertainment and concert hall in the town.

Finally, Lockhart provides some statistics on employment in the linoleum trade. He compares December 1927 with October 1938. The latter is understandable as that was when his book was written. Perhaps 1927 provided the only comparative figures available to him but, however it is measured, it certainly illustrates why this was the town's principal industry.

<b>December 1927</b>	The linoleum Trade employees	4,102
	“ “ “ canvas weavers	200
	“ “ “ female employees	<u>58</u>
	Total	<u>4360</u>

<b>4<sup>th</sup> October, 1938</b>	Linoleum Workers employed – Men	2,339
	“ “ “ Women	566
	“ “ 14/17 year old boys	125
	“ “ 14/17 year old girls	<u>149</u>
	Total	<u>3,179</u>

No details were given as to the source of the figures so they have to be taken at face value.

## Linktown

The book then moves on to Linktown which became part of a greater Kirkcaldy in 1876. Lockhart admits that “Kirkcaldy as a manufacturing town is intimately connected with the busy hive of industry lying

immediately on its western boundary”. Lockhart made reference to the “short sighted 1504 policy where Kirkcaldy's burgesses would lose their rights if they went to live in the Links or Pathhead”. He appears to imply that many Kirkcaldy burgesses, who had lost their rights, had become successful in the Links and the benefit was not enjoyed by Kirkcaldy until the amalgamation.

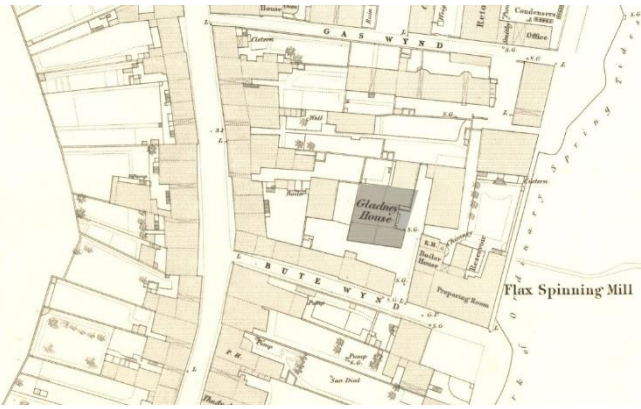
“Linktown, like the Burgh, had its one irregular street and a long sea front with the bulk of the population residing in that main thoroughfare between Bridgeton and the foot of Milton Road. It was the adoption and adaption of steam which, shortly before 1860, made great progress and much more so than the Burgh and Pathhead”. Lockhart proves his point by listing the businesses in the Links which were contained in the *Fife Directory* of 1862:-

- 4 spinning mills
- 10 Linen and sacking warehouses
- 4 Rope & Twine works
- 4 engineer's shops
- 3 dye works
- 1 calender
- 3 cabinet maker's workshops
- 1 corn mill
- 1 Bleach field
- 1 Ship building yard
- The gas works
- 1 pottery and brick field
- 2 linen factories.

“Such a long list of industries shows how very important was the contribution of the Links to the growth and development of Kirkcaldy. Now, in 1938, there are left two linen factories, one girth web factory, the gas works and one new industry and Alexander's large garages for their bus fleet. In 1937, the Town Council decided to erect a new and larger gasometer on the edge of Links Street and despite protest meetings from ratepayers, it was completed in 1938, no other suitable site being available.

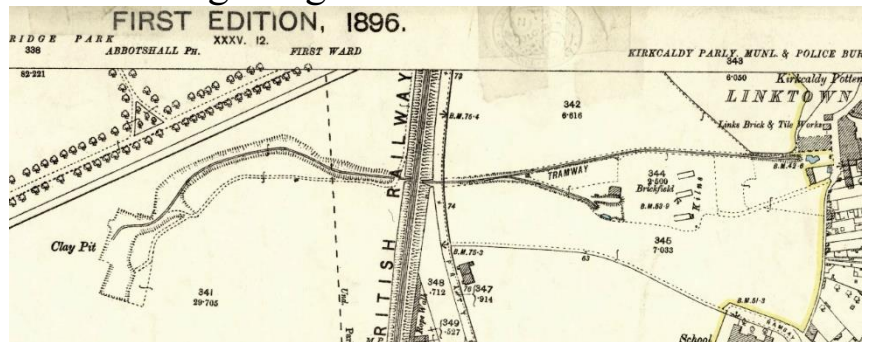
During the twelve years before 1938 the face of Links Street was greatly altered by the removal of many old and condemned houses, the tenants finding accommodation at the new houses in Inveriel and Ramsay Roads.

The chapter on the Linktown is rounded off with a mention of *Gladney House*, a 17<sup>th</sup> century mansion which stood in its own grounds, facing the sea front, towards the foot of Bute Wynd. For many a long year it had been the most important building in the area and had historic interest – but in 1930 it was swept away to make room for a housing scheme and not a trace of it remains. Gladney House is of historical interest



as, in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, it was the residence of the Robertson family of Gladney in Ceres. It was here that William Adam of Maryburgh, the King's architect, married Mary Robertson. The story does not end there:-

William Adam was one of the busiest men in Scotland at the time having contracts to build mansion houses in all parts of the country. Even Dundee Town Hall was an Adam build. “Adam required bricks and he entered into a partnership with John Robertson in the year 1714 and began making bricks at the Links. In that year they succeeded in getting a Charter from the Laird of Raith, giving them the “right to dig clay in any part of the Raith Estate as long as water rins and grass grows”. This Charter became the property of the succeeding proprietors of the pottery, the Methvens, and afterwards Mr A.R. Young. When, in 1880, the Kirkcaldy Town Council bought 200 acres of Raith land to form a public park at £200 per acre, the now late Mr Young claimed compensation, not from the Laird of Raith, but from the town, in respect of his Charter rights and he was paid £2,000 out of the Beveridge Bequest”.



“At Gladney House were born four sons to William and Mary, of whom two were destined to become famous architects – Robert, born in 1728 and James who was born in 1730. They became the creators of what has since been known as the *Adam Style* in architecture, decoration and furniture. The more famous was Robert who was baptised in Abbotshall Parish Church and he subsequently attended the Burgh School before his father moved to Edinburgh. He became an M.P. for Kinross-shire and on his death was



accorded a national funeral and buried in Westminster Abbey in 1792”.



The house which for 50 years had fallen into disrepair was being used as a model lodging house being demolished in 1930. A photograph taken from the *Fife Free Press* of the 7<sup>th</sup> June is shown here. Another example of the town's willingness to demolish anything of historical importance which is still carried on to this day with the way going of every brick, stone and wall of Peter Greig & Son. Even Adam Smith's home was not treated as sacred – the list is endless.

*The Dundee Courier and Advertiser* of May 10<sup>th</sup>

1930 carried a note of the town's Sanitary Inspector's report which mentioned *Gladney House* as one of the 6 model lodging houses in Kirkcaldy. This report disclosed that it was believed that there was a cannonball buried in one of the walls which had been fired from a ship in the Firth of Forth! In the same article we learn that Kirkcaldy had 34.5 miles of streets that were regularly swept and this, plus the cost of the weekly refuse collection, came to £10,418 which apparently equated to 5/10d per head of population. Even more bizarre was learning that in the past year 9,551 animals had been despatched at the slaughterhouse of which 4,567 were sheep and 1,533 were pigs.

## **Pathhead, Sinclairtown, Gallatown and Dysart**

Next on the agenda was the above and Dysart could now be included as, at the start of the decade (1930s), it had also become part of greater Kirkcaldy having resisted such a move back in 1876.

Lockhart starts by indicating that “the history of Pathhead in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had been written by Robert Brodie – the Clerk to the Feuers. At that time hand-loom weaving was the principal employment. The trade of nail making had been introduced in 1636 and this continued until around 1800. These nail makers had a monopoly of the trade with Edinburgh, Glasgow and the North of Scotland. Scrap iron was brought cheaply from the Continent and of course coal was at the door”.

“In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, money was so scarce that the men carried nails to barter

with at the bakers or the alehouses. When a member of the craft died the sexton rang a handbell while going through the streets as a warning to be ready for the *Nailer's Box*, then the men appeared marching in nightcaps and leather aprons.

“Other industries, besides the power loom linen factories, some seven in all, were Lornie's spinning mill, where in 1864, 140 workers with a total wage bill totalling £50 per week were employed. There was also a rope works and a bleach field.

“Gallatown Potteries, three in number, carried on until early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the teapot trade fell on evil times after the coming of the aluminium tea pot. This was a serious loss to employment and the only two new enterprises created since 1937/38 are two new cinemas and the large Ice Rink erected at a cost of £40,000”.

“A son of Gallatown who has achieved distinction and brought honour to his native place is Sir John Wallace. A liberal in politics, he was twice elected M.P. for Dunfermline Burghs but lost his seat to the present Socialist member in 1935. He is a Director of M. Nairn & Co. Ltd., as well as Secretary of M. Nairn & Greenwich Ltd”.

Moving on to a heading Dysart for Coal and Salt, Lockhart points out that for many generations, from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century onwards, these two chief exports continued for such a lengthy period that Dysart earned for itself the nickname of *Little Holland* – Campvere in Holland being its most important market for coal. In this connection it is on record that Bailie David Symson of Dysart, in 1645, sent to T. Cunningham, Agent for the Scottish Government at Campvere, an account of the battle of Philiphaugh which was fought in September of 1645. (The Royalist Army of the Marquis of Montrose was routed by the Covenanter Army of Sir David Leslie).

“Hand loom weaving was carried on and flax-spinning by *Smith's Mill* and *Normand's Mill*: later came the steam loom factories of *James Normand & Son's* plus *J. & A. Terrace*. Wooden shipbuilding by Mr John Watt was carried on at the harbour, on the Patent Slip there and by his successors, *Foster Brothers* from 1888 but this trade has dwindled away”.

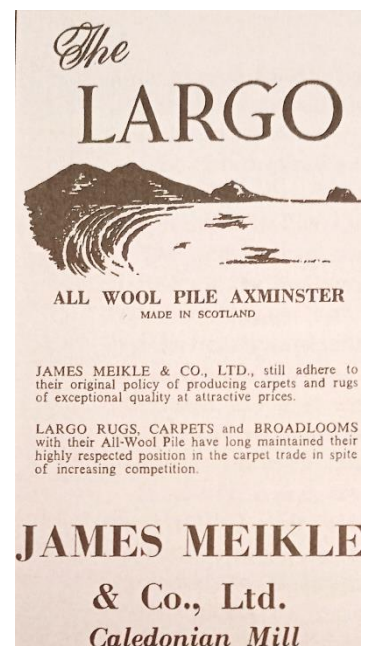
“Bad times overtook all the industries that had kept Dysart prosperous and,

one by one, they all closed down with the workers having to find employment in Kirkcaldy.

Fortunately, a new industry was begun by James Meikle & Co., in the derelict factory, formerly Normand's, in 1921 and in a few years they were employing over 400 women and girls making Axminster rugs. In 1936 they began the manufacture of carpets and were busily employed in the Scottish, English and Colonial markets. They had previously made wool and jute rugs at a factory in Alexander Street from 1921” – although in the copy being used it is seen that date has been altered to 1919.

This called for some research and James Meikle came to Dysart from Lanark in 1919. He set up a factory in the former *Harrow's Linen Works* where the looms were altered to deal with carpets – which we assume were initially wool and jute based. Axminster rugs were added to the equation which in turn were followed by Axminster carpets. It is thought that the carpet manufacture only came into effect when the former *Normand* site was taken over in the 1930s. Of course in 1956 Meikle took over some for the former *Caledonian Mills* in Prime Gilt Box Street to again achieve further expansion. In the 1960s the firm expanded once again but this time out of Fife by taking over a business in Tillicoultry. The boom continued and soon Meikle's were spinning and dyeing their own yarn in Dysart. However by 1976 the first redundancies came to pass and subsequently the business was passed as a going concern to the *Scottish Development Agency*. Their money saw another two years of life but the Receivers took over in 1980 and that was the end! Hard to believe that the doors closed over 40 years ago. Three of the daughters of James Meikle, Janet, Isobel and Margaret joined the firm and they were well known figures in the area. The fourth daughter Agnes took a different career path in nursing.

We love a tangent and here is one which sprung from *Meikle's research*. The *Fife Free Press* carried an article in their 15<sup>th</sup> January 1982 edition on the death of Adam Arnott the previous year. Arnott had worked on the design staff of *James Meikle & Sons*. He had only retired in 1980 so he did not enjoy a long retiral. A talented local artist specialising in ships his friends organised, as a tribute, a retrospective of his work in Kirkcaldy's Art Gallery. The painting shown here, which was part of those on display, is quite





magnificent.

## The Development of the Floorcloth Trade

This chapter presented something of a problem as in Object 24, Gavin Grant, had written an authoritative piece on floor-cloth. It seemed pointless to cover old ground and therefore this chapter will be much restricted but hopefully giving a flavour of the content.

Lockhart started with a short history of the product which was first produced in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by an English firm *John Hare & Co.*, of Bristol. “The cloth was made from heavy canvas 8 yards wide by 25 yards in length and was trowelled with paint, having two coats on the back and three or four coats on the face, which after hardening was printed with colour laid on with small patterned blocks, pressed or stamped by hand mallets. The drying process occupied twelve months by natural air through the open windows”.



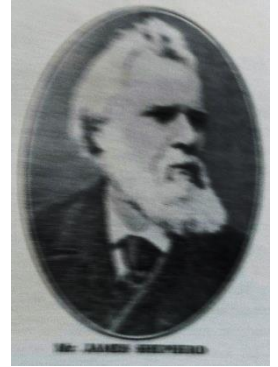
Michael Nairn was, quite correctly, given pride of place as being first mentioned. He was born in 1804 and founded the firm of **M. Nairn & Co.**, as canvas manufacturers in 1828. He constructed a small handloom factory, in Coal Wynd, for the manufacture of heavy canvas with John Hare being one of his customers. After a visit to Bristol, Michael Nairn resolved to begin the manufacture of the finished article in Kirkcaldy and so, in 1847, he built a new factory on Nether

Street to where he moved his large handlooms. “Thus was laid the foundations of what was to become the chief industry of Kirkcaldy, by the ingenuity and enterprise of this one man.

“From what little that is known of his personality we are indebted to *Thomson's Directory* for 1835. He was a public spirited man who took an active interest in matters pertaining to the welfare of the town as; a Director of the Chamber of Commerce, a Manager of the Savings Bank, a member of the committee of the Subscription Library and a Deputy Master of the St. Brice Lodge of Free Masons. He was admitted as a Burgess of the town in 1828. Michael Nairn died in 1858 leaving his widow and three young sons Robert Nairn, Michael B. Nairn and John Nairn, to run and enhance the business. All three sons served apprenticeships in the business while the Managing Clerk was James Shepherd. The appointment of John Wright as

the Manager was an inspired choice. Wright had “a wonderful aptitude for mechanics. To him was given the problem of finding an improved drying process and he solved it by new stoves and the making of rails to run the heavy web from the printing to the drying room where hot air was let in. The cloth, by this simple invention, was finished off and despatched in less than three months”.

**Shepherd and Beveridge.** “It was in 1864 that the first break-away from Messrs, Nairn's took place, no doubt as a result of the newly perfected system of drying described above. Mr James Shepherd, a native of Elgin, decided to build a factory beside the railway, for the manufacture of 8 yards wide Floorcloth, his partner being Mr. M. Beveridge, who had been in a London Insurance Office”. The factory had six 8 yard tables but after three years it was destroyed by fire with the disastrous result of two men being killed. The factory was rebuilt and according to Lockhart had been actively at work for 70 years except during a stoppage caused by a second fire.



When the *Lothrie Water Scheme* came to pass it brought huge benefits to the industries in Kirkcaldy as well as Pathhead and Linktown. The impact was soon felt with the erection of new floorcloth factories over the next few years.

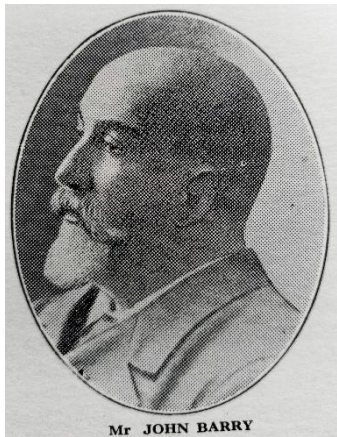
Another firm to enter the field in this period was **Hendry, Whyte and Strachan** at the *National Works* with a capacity of ten 8 yard tables. Daniel Hendry had been connected with the flax industry and George Whyte and John Strachan were merchants. None of them had a practical knowledge of the trade. “Despite this, the firm was quite a success. After some eighteen years in business they sold out to *John Barry, Ostlere & Co.*, in 1888.

In 1872/73 it was the turn of the **North British Floor Cloth Co.**, who commenced production in Sinclairtown. This was under the management of John P. Aytoun who had been a flax spinner but had no experience of this trade. The firm were perhaps over ambitious and “made the mistake of erecting a factory, with a capacity for 32 printing tables, under the idea that if they began big enough it would save them building future extensions; but they were never able to utilise half of their capacity, only eight 8 yard tables being employed”. A spell of poor trade in the mid to late 1880's affected all the factories with the result that in 1889 *John Barry, Ostlere & Co.*, stepped

in and bought the works.

Tait, Chorley & Co's., **Caledonian Works** was sited close to Kirkcaldy Railway Station. The founder had no practical experience but he did acquire a working knowledge by renting a small disused building on the River Leven at Leslie where, for two years, he made Floor-cloth two yards wide. He then succeeded in 1874 to form a company to erect and equip the Caledonia Works. They, in 1884, then began manufacturing cloth in four yard widths but this was not a success and they also sold out to *John Barry, Ostlere & Co., Ltd* in 1887.

Another of these new factories was that of the **Patent Floor-cloth Co.**, with works at Kirkcaldy Railway Station. The leading light here was the John Wright previously mentioned in connection with M. Nairn & Co. Wright brought out a new process of trowelling wide cloth by machinery but it was not a success. The works suffered from a disastrous fire in 1880 and this forced the firm to close. Robert Douglas, of the engineering firm of *Douglas and Grant* and a syndicate of Ayrshire shipowners were involved in this venture.



Lockhart then moves on to one of the names synonymous with Kirkcaldy – John Barry. In Object 16, the story of John Barry was recounted. “Barry had experience as a salesman with the *Kirkcaldy Linoleum Co., Ltd.*, where Edward Ostlere, a Yorkshireman, had been the Commercial Manager. Both were therefore well equipped to found a new firm and bring some new ideas into the business. Barry and Ostlere took over the derelict factory of the *Patent Floor-cloth Company* and the new company commenced in 1882 as **John Barry, Ostlere & Co., Ltd.**, with six 8 yard tables; but, ere this, linoleum had been introduced and they installed a Calender soon after”.

“Events soon began to happen and there followed in 1887, 1888 and 1899 the amalgamations of the three firms already mentioned. The final 1899 amalgamation with *Shepherd & Beveridge/The Kirkcaldy Linoleum Company*\* saw the formation of **Barry, Ostlere & Shepherd Ltd.**

\**Shepherd and Beveridge* formed a new company under this name in 1877 to carry out the manufacture of Linoleum. They began operations at the

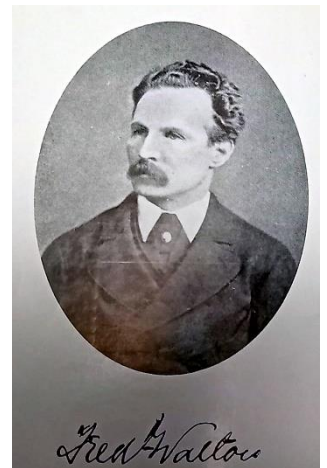
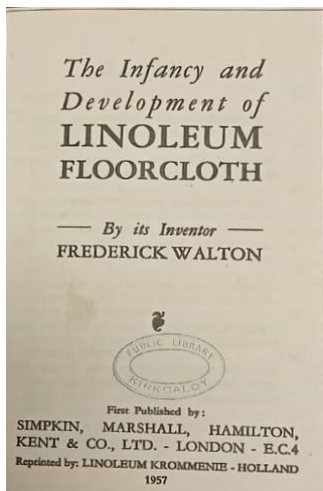
*Rosslyn Works* and within a few years had added *The Lorne* and *Elgin Works*.

The 8 yards wide trade dragged slowly on to the year 1915, when the manufacturers met and finally decided to make no more. Thus, 68 years after Kirkcaldy began the original manufacture of Floor-cloth, on which the town's prosperity was founded, its day was past and Linoleum, Inlaid Linoleum and cheap machine made floor cloths took its place.

## Linoleum

As with the previous chapter, Gavin Grant, had produced a superb history of linoleum in Object 31. Therefore, once again, this chapter will only offer an outline of Lockhart's story. Floor-Cloth was eventually overtaken by Linoleum. This was a product invented by a Yorkshireman – Frederick Walton. Walton founded the *Linoleum Manufacturing Co.*, at Staines in Middlesex in 1862 with capital of £25,000. Lockhart advises that Walton told the story of his life in a small book published in 1925 - when he was 90! He further noted that

Kirkcaldy Library held a copy and here is a photograph of Walton and the book's frontispiece taken from the very book.



In the beginning linoleum was only made one yard wide whereas Floor-Cloth in its 8 yard width made for faster fitting and fewer joins. Consequently, many believed it would never replace Floor-Cloth. In naming his new product Walton neglected to register the name and, when his patent expired in 1876, the name was adopted by English and Scottish competitors. Walton immediately raised an action of interdict against *M. Nairn & Co.*, but lost the case. In essence, it was his omission which allowed others to use the name. It is considered the first product to become a generic term.

“*M. Nairn & Co.*, were the first to adopt it after the expiry of the patent rights. They erected for this purpose a complete range of the necessary buildings between Nairn Street and the railway and in 1877 they marketed their first production of linoleum”.

*Shepherd & Beveridge* then built the *Rosslyn Works* at Sinclairtown Station

for the same purpose. Their site was formerly that of *Johnston's Linen Factory*. They subsequently added the *Lorne* and *Elgin* Works.

*Hendry, White & Strachan* also added linoleum machinery, quickly followed by John Barry, Ostlere & Co., around 1883. This gave five companies manufacturing the product in Kirkcaldy. That soon became six when John Guthrie Lornie founded the *Fife Linoleum Company* which carried on until 1935 when it was absorbed into *M. Nairn & Co., Ltd.* “Kirkcaldy had firmly established itself as the seat of the linoleum trade in Britain, as Dundee is associated with Jute, Dunfermline with damask, Paisley with thread and Perth with dyeing”.

Initially linoleum was only made in heavy quality and in 2 yard widths. However within a few years it was also being made in lower quality material to reach a wider clientele, thereby increasing its popularity. There was still a strong demand for cheaper grades and these soon arrived. Of course, all the printing was still being done by hand. Machine printing made it possible to begin to compete with the severe competition which the famous Lancaster firm of James Williamson & Son., provided. They did not look kindly at this Scottish invasion and resorted to price cutting. In the space of 8 days – three times Williamson's reduced their prices with the Kirkcaldy manufacturers following suit twice - but not a third time! As long as Lord Ashton (James Williamson) lived his prices were always kept a little below those of his competitors in Scotland. It seemed to do no harm as, when he died in 1930, he had a £10,000,000 fortune.

“In terms of canvas weaving which Michael Nairn began in 1828 it has always given constant employment for many years to a considerable number of women weavers at good wages, as many as 203 being employed in 1928. Messrs M. Nairn & Co are the only linoleum manufacturers in the world to make their own canvas”.

Lockhart completed the chapter by mentioning *Foreign Extensions between 1886 and 1930*. These were primarily to overcome foreign and colonial tariffs. In particular, *Michael Nairn & Co.*, were active in that field. They built factories in America in 1886, France in 1888, Germany in 1898 and Canada in 1918. In 1930 the firm purchased a factory in Sydney, Australia.

The amalgamation of the original firm in the linoleum trade – *The Linoleum*



*Manufacturing Company of Staines with Barry Ostlere & Shepherd Ltd.*, took place in 1929 under the name of *Barry & Staines Ltd.*, with a capital of £2,100,100. In 1937, as Lockhart was researching and writing his book, the firm's profit was £213,399.

What would John Y. Lockhart have made of the article in the *Scotsman* of the 4<sup>th</sup> June 1963 when the Chairman of *Barry & Staines Linoleum*, Edward Barran, announced that “it is a tragedy but it was inevitable” that the Kirkcaldy operation would close with the loss of 750 jobs. Possibly worse still, Barran had to suffer the indignity of his plush headquarter offices at the Old Bailey also having to be disposed off along with the London Warehouse.

The contraction of the linoleum industry is perhaps best shown in a list of companies which operated prior to 1900 and another showing those who survived into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

#### **Prior to 1900**

- Michael Nairn & Co Ltd.
- Shepherd & Beveridge.
- Hendry, Whyte & Strachan.
- North British Floorcloth.
- John Barry, Ostlere & Co. - after 1889 Barry, Ostlere & Shepherd Ltd.
- Tait, Cairns & Co.
- Kirkcaldy Linoleum Company.
- Tayside Floorcloth Company.
- Dundee Floor-Cloth Co., Ltd.
- Jackson of Falkland.
- Stirling Floor-cloth Ltd.
- Fife Linoleum Company.

#### **Post 1900**

- Michael Nairn & Co Ltd.
- Barry, Ostlere & Shepherd Ltd.
- Tayside Floorcloth Company.
- Dundee Floor-Cloth Co., Ltd.
- North British Linoleum Co.
- Scottish Co-operative Socy., Ltd. - formerly Jackson of Falkland.

## Personalities of the Linoleum Trade

Once again the majority of the personalities have been dealt with previously most notably by Gavin Grant in Object 31. This chapter must and will be stripped back to the basics and will take the form of bullet points.

### John Wright – A Notable Inventor

- 1860, appointed Manager at Michael Nairn's Nether Street factory.
- Developed a new system for the drying of Floor-cloth which revolutionised the time taken.
- Invented the hand press for printing blocks to replace the old hand mallets used until then.
- In all John Wright registered 13 patents between 1849 and 1910.
- “Though some of his inventions did not prove successful, there stands to his credit a lot of useful work well done”.
- He died in 1916 at the great age of 93.

### James Shepherd

- Born 1830 in Elgin.
- Came to *Michael Nairn & Co.*, as a clerk but rose to be Commercial Manager and also received a partnership.
- In 1864, along with Michael Beveridge, formed *Shepherd & Beveridge*.
- In 1877 formed with Beveridge, *The Kirkcaldy Linoleum Co., Ltd.*
- In 1899, after the death of Michael Beveridge in 1890, his firms amalgamated to form *Barry, Ostlere & Shepherd*.
- In his later years he resided in Rossend Castle, Burntisland.
- He donated £10,000 to his native city of Elgin for use in the hospital there.
- He died at Rossend Castle in September, 1906. His son, Ernest, was a director of *Barry, Ostlere & Shepherd* prior to his own death in 1933.

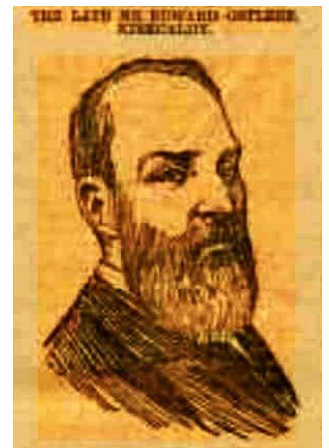
### John Barry

- Born 1845 in County Wexford, Ireland.
- His first steps in employment were as a salesman.
- While working as a carpet salesman in Newcastle he was “spotted” by James Shepherd. He was engaged as a traveller with *Shepherd & Beveridge*.

- John Barry was the first man to become a Member of Parliament and be a Commercial Traveller at the same time. He stood for the *Irish National Party* from 1880 until 1894.
- A speech denouncing the Government was reported on by the *Scotsman*. Shepherd took issue with this as he felt it could have an effect on the business. When told that it must end – Barry left! Shepherd tried to get Barry to withdraw his resignation to no effect.
- However, in the interim he and Edward Ostlere had decided to try and purchase the ruined works of the *Patent Floor-cloth Company*. He was able to raise £10,000 in Newcastle for that purpose and was able to engage John Wright as Manager. The new company *John Barry, Ostlere & Co., Ltd* was floated with a capital of £25,000.
- Barry only came to live in Kirkcaldy from Newcastle when the company was formed.
- He died in 1921 at the age of 75 when the trade lost one of its most outstanding personalities.

### Edward Ostlere

- Ostlere was a native of Howden in Yorkshire.
- “Came to Kirkcaldy from the *Esher Linoleum Co.*, to be the Manager of the *Kirkcaldy Linoleum Company*. At the time men with the necessary knowledge could only be found in England”.
- When 34 years of age he formed, along with John Barry, the firm of *John Barry, Ostlere & Co., Ltd*.
- His business activities in Kirkcaldy only lasted 21 years but in that time he carried through the three amalgamations which reduced competition.
- “Took the initiative in installing the first rotary printing machine in the *Abbotshall Works* which, at one bound, broke the traditions of the past and paved the way for further developments”.
- “Showed initiative and enterprise in securing the sole rights for Scotland of Frederick Walton's new patent *Inlaid Machine*”.



It seems strange that Lockhart makes no mention of the fact that Ostlere lived at Chapel House (now the Dean Park Hotel) and died by his own hand in 1902. He had been suffering for some time with severe stomach maladies, the nature of which were not disclosed in the newspapers. Some research is



needed into the family of Edward Ostlere.

In the short time available research disclosed that it was Herbert Ostlere who continued to live in Chapel House with his widowed mother. They left for *Arkleby Hall, Cumberland*, in May 1911 but on his death in March 1936 – his Will left £2,000 to Kirkcaldy Cottage Hospital. Another son, Harold, certainly worked with the firm and rose to become a director. He lived at *Marchmont* in Bennoch Road, having one son named Edward. Edward served in the *Royal Air Force* in the Second World War, dying in service in 1941. At the time he lived at 41 Abbotshall Road and his estate amounted to £53,876. Young Edward, when a student, had the misfortune to be fined 10/- for the careless parking of his car at the roadside when attending Balcormo races!

### **Timothy Healy M.P. - Governor General Ireland**

- “It is not generally known that Mr T.M. Healy who has rendered important and valuable service to the trade was at one time on the staff of *Shepherd & Beveridge* and the *Kirkcaldy Linoleum Company.*, in their London Warehouse”.
- “In later days Mr James Shepherd, who had a great affection for hm, used to boast of having had him on their staff”.
- Healy was employed by the *North Eastern Railway Company* in Newcastle but was taken by his relative, John Barry, to be an office boy in the London Warehouse. Eventually he left the linoleum trade to become Private Secretary to C.S.Parnell, M.P.
- Lockhart claims that after Healy had become an M.P. and left the industry “he retained a keen interest in it and that he enjoyed nothing more than discussing the expansions, the difficulties and the personalities of the business”.
- “It is some boast for the industry that this office boy rose by the force of his own efforts, ability and character, to become a great barrister, one of the most conspicuous figures in public life and his Excellency the Governor General of Ireland”.

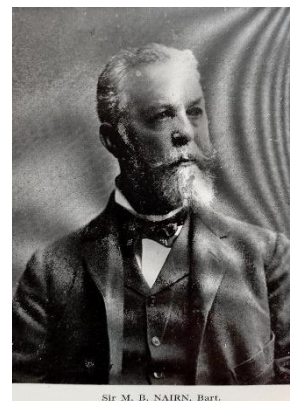
There is a Wikipedia page on Healy and a substantial one at that. Despite the above, the word linoleum is not mentioned!

## Kirkcaldy's Benefactors

Having been heavily involved in the trade, which included having his own Linoleum/carpet retail shop, John Y. Lockhart, probably quite naturally highlighted/majored on benefactors from the linoleum industry. Over the course of these Objects, the bulk of the figures have already been mentioned in some detail, so much of what was written will be abbreviated.

### Sir Michael Barker Nairn - 1<sup>st</sup> Baronet

“Michael's first day at the Burgh School was an interesting one. It was the day that the scholars met for the last time in the old school in Hill Street before being marched to the new school for the opening ceremony. Nairn never lost his love for his first school and in later life became *Chairman of the School Board*. In 1894 he generously provided funds to enlarge the school and it became a two-storey building. He also purchased the adjoining land and presented it to the school for future extensions. On this site the then new Technical School was erected in 1930.

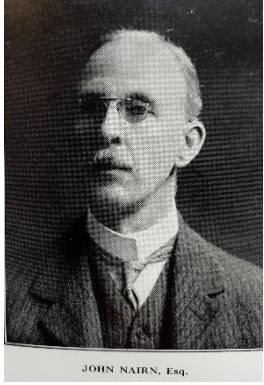


SIR M. B. NAIRN, BART.

“Another great benefit was his building of a cottage hospital in 1890 which contained 10 beds. Later on, from time to time, extensions were added and by 1938 there were 70 beds. The income of the hospital was mainly derived from endowments, local subscribers and the annual efforts of the Pageant Committee – the last named raised £2,500 in 1938.

“He purchased the Earl of Rosslyn's Estate although he also owned Rankeilour Estate and for 34 years that was his summer residence.

“For nearly 60 years he was the head of this rapidly expanding business and had seen Floorcloth gradually die out to be replaced by linoleum. Michael Nairn kept working until the last – dying at age 78 when being driven from Rankeilour to a business meeting connected with an extension to the hospital”.



## **John Nairn - Born 1853 - Died 1928**

“For the greater part of Sir M.B. Nairn's life his younger brother, John, was actively associated with him in the management and direction of the business. He resided at Forth Park and became the owner of a country estate – *Derculich*, near Aberfeldy.

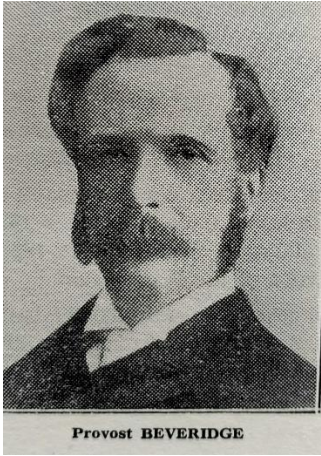
“A man of artistic taste he possessed a notable collection of pictures at Forth Park and several of these he gifted in 1925 to the Kirkcaldy Art Gallery. This fine building he erected in 1922-1924 and it opened in 1925 as a backdrop to the War Memorial. Two years later he generously extended the building to contain a new Public Library, Reference Department, Reading Room, Children's Library Room and a photographic section. The whole scheme was said to have cost £100,000”.

“His later years were saddened by the prolonged illness of Mrs. Nairn and the death in the Great War of his only son, Ian. From this great blow he never fully recovered and he passed away in March 1928 (the year the new library was opened). His daughter, Mrs Wemyss Honeyman, of Derculich, very generously gifted the mansion and grounds of Forth Park to the Town Council in 1934, to be used as a Maternity Hospital for patients from both town and country districts”.

The fact that John Nairn's name is not connected with our Library, Museum and Art Gallery is both a disgrace and a blot on our local authority's thinking. How 12 miles along the road, Dunfermline can have the *Dunfermline Carnegie Library and Galleries* – yet, the same local authority, refuses to acknowledge the name of John Nairn in Kirkcaldy. The Museum and Art Gallery along with the War Memorial reach their centenary in June 2025. Is that not an ideal chance to correct this wrong?

## **Provost Michael Beveridge – Died 1890**

“Another of the pioneers of the Floor-cloth trade, who became one of the town's great benefactors, was Michael Beveridge, a partner in the firm of *Shepherd & Beveridge*. As a young man of 25 years he had been engaged in the insurance line in London but, in 1864, he agreed to join with Mr James Shepherd in starting a new floorcloth factory. Success attended their efforts



and 12 years later they adopted “linoleum” and formed a new company – *The Kirkcaldy Linoleum Company Ltd.*

“Michael Beveridge, although said to be shy and retiring, became involved in public work by entering the Town Council and, in 1886, rose to become Provost. He held the office until his death in 1890 and, having no children, £50,000 from his estate was bequeathed to Kirkcaldy for a public park, a hall and a library. The library formed part of the *Adam Smith Halls* and served the town until 1928 when it was

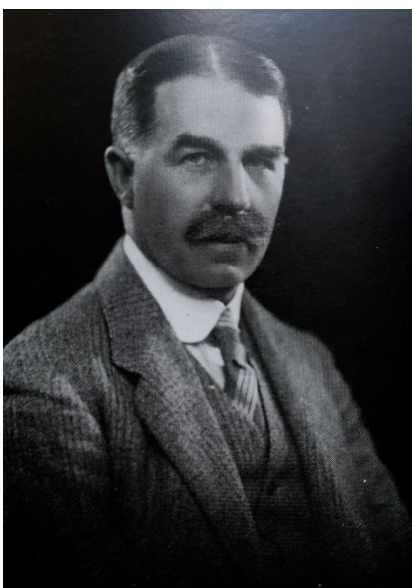
merged into John Nairn's magnificent gift”.

“It was on his initiative that the idea of building a large public hall as a memorial to Kirkcaldy's greatest son was begun; and a few years after Provost Beveridge's death, this was successfully carried through, so the *Adam Smith Hall* also stands as a memorial to his wise foresight”.

Beveridge lived in *Beechwood* on Bennoch Road and his widow continued to live there until her own death in December 1938. It was Mrs Beveridge who gifted the fine fountain which remains to this day a feature in the park provided by and named after her husband.

### **Mr Michael Nairn - 2<sup>nd</sup> Baronet**

“The next of our great benefactors to gain the hearts and the gratitude of the people, especially those in the Third Ward and Dysart was Sir Michael, the second Baronet.



Sir MICHAEL NAIRN (2nd Baronet)  
Chairman of Michael Nairn & Co., Ltd.

“He had his residence in Dysart House but, when he acquired Elie House as a residence in 1929, he generously and magnanimously decided to present the Dysart House policies, now called *Ravenscraig Park*, with their ancient and historic Royal castle to the Town Council, thus conferring on his native town another priceless boon.

“Sir Michael in doing so maintained the tradition of the Nairn family for acts of generosity. In 1925 he made an offer to Kirkcaldy Town Council to erect and furnish an

extension for the suitable accommodation of the hospital staff. That offer was gratefully accepted and the building was duly erected, the whole scheme costing the donor upwards of £20,000.

“From the foregoing we have seen how great have been the benefactions which have been showered on the community by four men connected with the linoleum industry.

### **Mr John Hunter**

“Notice has already been taken of Bailie Philp's gift for education but there are others still. One of these was from the joinery trade, by the late John Hunter, which took the form of the gifting of *St. Brycedale House* and grounds as a hospital for the benefit of the aged and infirm men and women who have not been in receipt of Parish Council relief. Mr Hunter richly endowed the hospital so that none of the expenses falls on the rates”. Lockhart did not mention the gift of the *Hunter Hall* in Kirk Wynd but it feels only correct to add it here.

### **Mr Charles Maxton**

“The next was from the linen trade, by the late Mr Charles Maxton, proprietor of the linen firm of *John Jeffrey & Co* and the owner of *Balsusney House* (now demolished and replaced by the Museum and Library). Mr Maxton was a native of Crieff and left a legacy, to become effective in 1941, for the benefit of Kirkcaldy and Crieff lads to enable them to take higher education or university”. This legacy still lives on although is now merged with other bursary funds catering for the eastern portion of Fife.

### **Major Harris L. Stocks**

“The last was from the shipping trade of the town and was a bequest by the late Major Harris L. Stocks, who was the owner of the *Kirkcaldy & London Shipping Company*.

“When war broke out in 1914, Mr Stocks joined the *15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Royal Scots*, and held the rank of Major. He was killed at the *Battle of the Somme* on the 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1916. For some years previously he had taken a leading part in the Boy's Brigade movement and was Captain of the 4<sup>th</sup>



Kirkcaldy Company, in whose service he had spent much of his time and means, as well as providing it with a suite of rooms called the Victoria Halls.

“He bequeathed these halls and £25,000 to be used in all time for the benefit of the 4<sup>th</sup> Company and he also made provision for the older boys. This great bequest yields an annual income of £1,000. There are nearly 900 boys, between the ages of 9 and 18, enjoying the benefits each year. This will go onto future generations of Kirkcaldy boys, so that the influence of Major Stocks will continue to live on and be a blessing to youth for all time”. Not quite how it has turned out!



Major HARRIS L. STOCKS.

Harris Stocks had lived at St. Katherine's, 16 Townsend Crescent, Kirkcaldy. In 1899, he married a minister's daughter, Annie Frances Balfour. A daughter Annie Balfour Stocks was born in 1906. Sadly, Mrs Stocks passed away, after what was described as a short illness, on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 1906. On the 28<sup>th</sup>,

the *Fife Free Press* reported that representatives of both the Boy's Brigade and the Kirkcaldy battalion of the *Royal Garrison of Artillery Volunteers* were in attendance at the funeral.

Worse was to follow when, on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 1907, young Annie, passed away at the age of 11 months. It perhaps explains why Harris Stocks threw himself so energetically into the Boy's Brigade activities.

Again a little research was carried out into the legacy itself and some light was shone by a report in *the Scotsman* of the 14<sup>th</sup> March, 1919. The Will was certainly not one drawn up in wartime – it had been in existence since 1909. The £25,000 was to be under the control of two Trustees appointed by the Church Session along with two

**BEQUEST TO KIRKCALDY BOYS' BRIGADE.**  
The late Major Harris L. Stocks, of the Royal Scots, who was for many years Captain of the 4th Kirkcaldy Company of the Boys' Brigade, by his will, dated 14th July 1909, bequeathed to four trustees, two of whom were to be appointed by the kirk-session of St Brycedale Church, and the remaining two by the officers of the 4th Kirkcaldy Company, a legacy of £25,000, free of Government duty. The legacy has now been paid by his executors to the agents for the trustees, who are Messrs William Black, linoleum manufacturer, and William Young, pottery manufacturer, appointed by the Session; and Messrs P. K. Livingstone, yarn bleacher, and R. W. Shortreed, dental-surgeon, appointed by the officers. The trustees have invested the £25,000 in 5 per Cent. National War Bonds (4th Series), 1929. Major Stocks also directed that Victoria Halls, and the fittings and furniture therein, should be made over to the trustees for the Company.

appointed by the officers of the 4<sup>th</sup> Company of the Boy's Brigade. William Black, a director of *Michael Nairn & Co.*, along with William Young of pottery fame were the church appointees. It was P.K. Livingstone and R.W. Shortreed, a dentist, who were selected by the Brigade. They wisely made an investment of the £25,000 into 5% *National War Bonds* which were to



mature in 1929, The hall had been in the name of the Major and he had directed that it be transferred into the name of the Boy's Brigade. Given in 1938 the income was £1,000 then the return achieved following the 1929 maturity was less having dropped from 5% to 4%.

The sharp eyed will note that John Barry, Edward Ostlere and James Shepherd are mentioned as benefactors to Kirkcaldy.

## **The Savings Bank**

“The surest indication of the prosperity of a town is to be seen in the gradual increase of the number of depositors and savings accumulated year by year”. The Bank was opened on the 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1839 in a small room rented at £6:10/- per annum and the cost of the furnishings was £4:9/-. By the end of the first year the bank had attracted 468 depositors with the total value of deposits standing at £5,190. Lockhart then produced a table showing the progress made over a 78 year period:-

			£
• 1859	Depositors numbered	2,130	with deposits 24,892
• 1879	“ “	3,395	“ “ 75,623
• 1899	“ “	7,634	“ “ 183,509
• 1919	“ “	14,725	“ “ 592,086
• 1937	“ “	23,036	“ “ 2,286,279

The enormous increase is partly accounted for by the expansion policy adopted by the Bank in opening branches at Links, Sinclairtown, Thornton, Burntisland, Leven, Methil, Buckhaven and Kinross.

Lockhart calculates “that, when the Bank opened, a weaver's wage was 9/6d per week and for females 7/-. He states that at the time of writing, wages had advanced to around 50/- per week. He also mentions that the bank was not the only home for savings but there were also the Post Office Savings Bank, Government Stock, Building Societies – and other societies, all encouragements to exercise thrift. But thrift means more than saving money: it means wise spending with value for money. In the 100 years that have passed we have seen how the standard of living has been raised, children are now better clothed, better fed and better educated, than were their grandparents”.

“In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century there were few facilities for spending money: wages were small, holidays were few and these were usually three days in summer, three days at New Year and two Fast days. Entertainments were scarce. Until 1899, the one hall available for these in Kirkcaldy was the Corn Exchange where the only New Year entertainment for the people in the '70s and '80s was a one-day show of poultry”!

The above was contrasted with the entertainments now available with 8 cinemas in the town. Professional football was attracting crowds of 9,000/10,000 spectators and the new Ice Rink could draw 4,500 for hockey matches. Curling and skating were also available. Dog Racing Tracks, a sport favoured by miners, came into being at Kirkcaldy and Thornton. These are a few of the forms by which people are indulging in an orgy of spending and they illustrate the enormous difference between the conditions of the present time and those of 40 years ago”.

Lockhart's point was that in these first four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century circumstances had altered vastly – wages had risen, working hours shortened and spending power had increased beyond all comparison with the conditions at the start of the century. “All this enabled all classes to devote to recreation much of their spare time and money”.

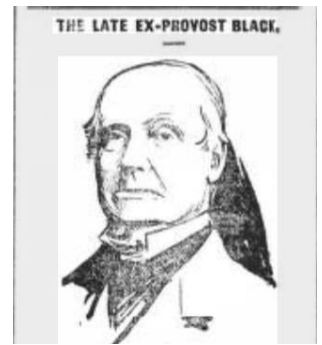
## **The Provosts**

The final chapter was devoted to the Provosts who had been in office during the 100 years which Lockhart had covered. Again, in all fairness, most if not all had appeared in previous objects so these notes will in reality be little more than a pen picture.

The first Provost was of course **Patrick Don Swan** who was the subject of Object 30 and is probably the individual most mentioned in this project – nothing more requires to be said.

**Michael Beveridge** who served from 1886 until his death in 1890 is another who has featured regularly and the Beveridge Park and Adam Smith Halls are his lasting legacy.

**Thomas Black** served from 1890 until 1892. He was a watchmaker who was in partnership with his brother, James, firstly in Tolbooth Street and then on the High Street. Originally trained as an engineer he eventually joined his father's watchmaking business. His crowning moment as Provost may well have been the opening of the Beveridge Park in September 1892. He died in 1902 aged 81.



**John Tait** had two terms - 1892-1893 then served a second term from 1902 until the following year. He had been involved in linoleum, as mentioned previously, but on his retirement he became a member of the Council. He had been a Bailie before taking the post of Chief Magistrate. In his second term the construction of the Victoria Viaduct began. He was well known and admired for sticking to his guns in 1898 when Chairman of the Health Committee. Despite intense opposition he fought for and secured the building of the Fever Hospital in Dunnikier Road at a cost of £13,700. The hospital opened on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1899.

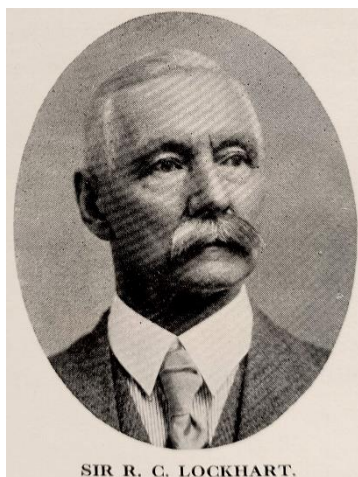
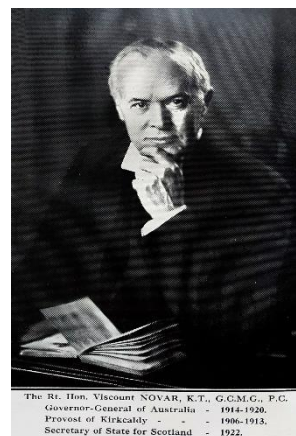
**John T. Stocks** was Provost from 1893-1896 and again the Stock's family has frequently featured in this project. Stocks had two businesses – Linen and steamships. One son, Robert, inherited the linen works in the Links and Harris Stocks the steamship business. Robert always claimed that his brother got the best of the bargain.

**Alexander Hutchison** of flour-milling and maltster fame served as Provost between 1896 and 1902. The main happenings in his term of office were the birth of the tramway and the coming of electricity – he was there at the dawn! Over and above it was Provost Hutchison who presided over the opening of the Adam Smith and Beveridge Halls where, as a side issue, he granted the *Freedom of the Burgh* to Andrew Carnegie.

**Henry Morton Barnet** – he of the ironmongery business has also featured in a number of Objects – most notably number 20. During his term of 1903-1906 he saw the tramway running all the way from Gallatown to the West Bridge. He was also heavily involved in Object 35 – *The Trams that Never Were*.

**R.C. Munro-Ferguson of Raith and Novar** served as Provost between 1906 and 1913. His term was productive with a harbour extension

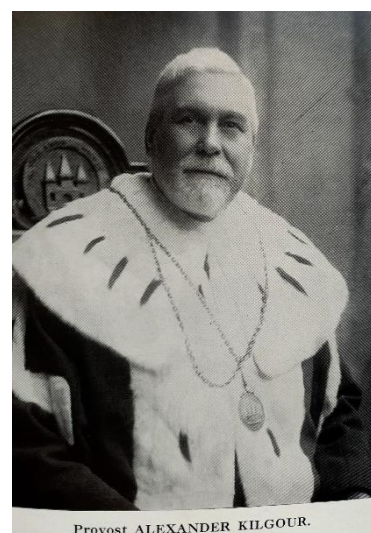
commencing in 1907 and opened on the 18<sup>th</sup> September 1909 by Lord Elgin. The cost was £100,000. In 1908 the tramway from Leven to Gallatown was opened and in 1911 the Kirkcaldy tramway was extended to Dysart. Munro-Ferguson had also served as the M.P. for *Leith Burghs* and in 1914 was appointed *Governor General of Australia* – a position he held until 1920.



SIR R. C. LOCKHART.

**Sir Robert C. Lockhart** was Provost from 1913-1919. A member of the linen family he had the difficult task of leading the town through the First World War. Lockhart and his wife, Lady Lockhart, flung themselves into the war effort and were involved in countless charities from Flag Days to arranging a rented house in Glasgow for Belgian refugees. They even formed a Mother's Group to render assistance to the mothers of serving men. John Y Lockhart states that the couple raised some £11,791 for their charities and 2,900 articles were sent to soldiers and sailors during the conflict. Lockhart, despite all these efforts, failed in his attempts to win the town's parliamentary seat. He died in 1943. Again, Lockhart makes no mention in the chapter that the Provost's own son fell in the conflict.

**Alexander Kilgour** was without question one of the outstanding figures in Kirkcaldy's municipal history joining the Council in 1898 and retiring in 1934. He was the Provost of Kirkcaldy from 1919 until 1934. Kilgour was a true self made man who rose from the poverty of being a *Philp Scholar* and he was intensely proud of that beginning. Starting as an office boy with *Ireland and Wishart* he rose through the ranks to become a director. His first official duty as Provost was the unveiling of the plaque to Adam Smith in 1919. Highlights of his terms are the construction of the sea wall, the unveiling of the war memorial, the extension of the Arnott Reservoir which increased Kirkcaldy's water supply by a third, bringing Dysart into a greater Kirkcaldy and following the passing of the *Local Government Act (Scotland) 1929* merging the *Parish Council* and the *Water Commissioners* with the Town



Provost ALEXANDER KILGOUR.

Council. These are only a fraction of his work.

**James Wilson** came to Kirkcaldy from Ayrshire in 1909. A solicitor by profession, he joined Dow & Son. In time, following amalgamations, he rose to become the Senior Partner in *Gibson, Spears, Dow & Son*. Joining the Council in 1933 he became Provost, a year later, after an acrimonious meeting following the retirement of Alexander Kilgour. A moderate, he beat the Labour Party nominee, Joseph Westwood, by 16 votes to 12. It was under his Provostship that the decision to build a new Town House was taken at an estimated cost of £84,000. The Second World War saw an end to that estimate and Wilson served as Provost throughout the conflict. He had the unique feature of being the Provost of Kirkcaldy as well as Town Clerk of Kinghorn at the same time!! At the time of writing his book Lockhart would be aware of the building of the new Fire Station and the conversion of Forth Park into a Maternity Hospital – both of which took place during Wilson's period in office.



### Epilogue

It is probably only right and proper to end this examination of John Y. Lockhart's work by quoting some of his own words, taken from the book's epilogue and his thoughts on what he achieved:-

“It tells of decay, of development, of the colossal expansion of things and people of whom the existing generation knows little and whose names they may only have heard; but, to those of an older time there may arise from a reading of this story, old familiar faces, personalities, old-fashioned manners, methods, customs and places which were dear to them in youth.

“A recollection of the advance in the conditions of livelihood, of the gradual improvements of the working life of the community, the narrowing of the range of want, the improvement of social conditions can bring nothing but satisfaction and pleasure. The recording of all this development undertaken in my seventy-seventh year while living under a severe physical disability has been to me a labour of love”.

It is very difficult to argue with his words and they probably still hold good

almost ninety years after they were written. John Y. Lockhart was probably one of the first to write a comprehensive, interesting and easily read history of Kirkcaldy. He was a pioneer in his field and paved the way for those who followed – P.K. Livingstone, Duncan Glen, Carol McNeill and Andrew Bell amongst others. Kirkcaldy's long and illustrious history must never be forgotten and John Lockhart laid down a significant marker.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Acknowledgements

This story has been produced primarily through researching the publication *1838-1938 – A Century of Progress* by John Y. Lockhart.

All the individual newspapers and publications used to supplement the narrative in the form of 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*. This also applies to the sketch of Thomas Black on page 49 which appeared in the *Fife Free Press* of 1<sup>st</sup> March 1902. The sketch of Edward Ostlere on page 41 was sourced in the same manner being originally published in the *Edinburgh Evening News* of the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1902.

Mapping – The maps used throughout are reproduced with the kind permission of the *National Library of Scotland*, with one exception. The Map on page 21 is used with the kind permission of *Chris Sparling* and is taken from *The Fife Miners Memorial Book*.

The photograph of the *Lord Gambier* is reproduced with the kind permission of *On-Fife Cultural Trust*.

The following were sourced from John Y. Lockhart's book *1838-1938 – A Century of Progress*.

- Page 1 – photograph of John Y. Lockhart.
- Page 26 – photographs of Andrew Carnegie & A.H. McIntosh.
- Page 33 – Michael Nairn
- Page 34 – James Shepherd



- Page 36 – John Barry
- Page 43 – Michael B. Nairn
- Page 44 – John Nairn
- Page 45 – Michael Beveridge
- Page 46 – Sir Michael Nairn
- Page 47 – Harris L. Stocks.
- Page 51 – Provost Robert Kilgour
- Page 52 - Provost James Wilson.
- The advertisement on page 32 was taken from *Dysart a Royal Burgh-*  
A superb publication by the *late Jim Swan* and *the late Carol*  
*McNeill*.

As always and in particular with this story we are indebted for the help from the staff of *Kirkcaldy Local Studies Team*. Given the book could not be borrowed Helen Stevenson and her team offered us every assistance in the preparation of this final object.