

CENTRAL SCOTLAND

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1912 Postcard of the Fountain of Nineveh, Fountain Road, Bridge of Allan

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to anyone who subscribes to the aims of the Society. Current rates are:-

Subscription	Annual	3– Year
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Each paid-up member will receive two issues of the Journal each year. Meetings of the Society in October, November, April and May will be held in Bridge of Allan Parish Church Honeyman Hall at 2pm and December to March will be zoom meetings at 7pm.

Please see local press and the Society website (www.csfhs.org.uk) for details.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

Contributions in the form of articles, news items, reports etc. are invited and should be sent to :

Central Scotland Family History Society
Newsletter, c/o Elsie Fraser, 17 Rylands
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E-mail: newslettercsfhs@yahoo.co.uk

**Copy for the next issue should be
submitted by 14th February 2026.**

HELP WANTED

This feature is designed to offer members the opportunity of assistance from other members of this or other Societies. Please submit any query briefly and clearly. Always quote your name and membership number. Please put names and places in **BLOCK CAPITALS**.

It will be appreciated that the Society cannot undertake to act as intermediary, and all subsequent correspondence must lie between individual members, although the editor will always be pleased to hear of any outcome

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CHAIRMAN'S RAMBLINGS

I hope you have been enjoying this long sunny spell of weather which we are having here in the UK at the moment. At times it has been too and humid, but we should not complain, though those of you with gardens probably are.

We finished last session in May with our AGM, when the committee was re-elected en bloc, but there are a couple of vacancies if anyone would like to be co-opted on. You do not need to live locally as many of our committee meetings are held on zoom. Following the business side of the meeting, we had two short talks by the 'two Sandras'! – myself and Sandra Muir. You will find résumés of these interesting, but very different presentations, within this issue. The afternoon was rounded off with a lovely afternoon tea arranged by our treasurer, Margaret. Thanks to everyone who contributed to this afternoon.

The committee is looking forward to the new session starting in October with our first two talks being held at Bridge of Allan. We thank our secretary Carol for being successful in finding an interesting and varied list of speakers for each of the meetings – not an easy thing to achieve nowadays. You will find your syllabus included with this issue but our first talk is from our very knowledgeable local historian, Ian Scott of Falkirk Local History Society – always a joy to listen to. As a reminder, we will be holding 4 meetings in person and 4 on Zoom. Our meetings in October, November, April and May will be held at Bridge of Allan and the others in between on Zoom. The in-person meetings will begin at 2.00pm while the Zoom meetings are at 7.00pm.

My thanks to Margaret and Elsie for editing yet another journal, and I am sure you will find stories and reports to interest you. We really need members to send us their articles, long or short. Happy researching! Please share any interesting discoveries or raise problems with the other members through this journal. We will always welcome articles, no matter how small.

"We are all the product of things we've never seen and people we've never met. In fact, if just one little detail had been changed in their lives, we may not even exist."

Alexander Nicoll Black and the Forth Shipbuilding and Engineering Company Ltd, Alloa

By Susan Mills (April 2025 talk)

This is the story of Alexander Nicoll Black and the not very well-known Forth Shipbuilding and Engineering Company Limited. It's partly a personal story and also about making connections. I am a Geordie and I was born in Newcastle upon Tyne. I grew up in South Shields and ships and shipbuilding are in my background. My paternal three times great- grandfather was a master mariner based in Cullercoats and he also worked up and down the North Sea coast, living for a while in Aberdeen. As a result of that, later generations of the family were born up here in Scotland in Aberdeen and Dundee but they then settled on the banks of the Tyne. My mother's grandfather is from Belfast and he and my paternal grandfather were iron ship plate riveters. My maternal grandfather's name was Charles Alexander Nicoll and his family came down from Arbroath to work on the Tyne, as did many other Scots who came down to look for work in the shipyards. My grandfather became a foreman marine engine fitter at Wilson & Blains shipyard in South Shields.

So moving on to me coming to Clackmannanshire, which I did at the end of 1999 - a very early donation to the Clackmannanshire Heritage Connect collection was a picture of a ship called the "Portus Herculis" and a photograph of a group of women workers serving in a shipyard in 1917 that was donated while I was the Museum and Heritage Officer. There never seemed to be enough time to investigate either of those items further. Then in the early spring of 2011, a lady contacted me about some material which had belonged to her father and I arranged to go and visit her. Her name was Brenda Wallace and at that time she was living on the south bank of the River Tyne in Northumberland and later on she moved to North Shields as she got older. I arranged to go and visit her when I was down staying with my mum in Newcastle and we both went to see her and spent a pleasant couple of hours with her. She told me about her father and how he had worked for a few years in Alloa and handed over a collection of material which he had kept from his time there.

I took it back to Alloa and the plan was to go through it, but I never quite got round to it. I had to move the Collections out of the Speirs Centre as redevelopment was taking place at the beginning of 2017 and by the autumn of that year I had accepted voluntary redundancy. By 2018 I was still looking after the Heritage Collection (which I still do), but now as a volunteer. In 2018 I was planning the last exhibition for commemorating the centenary of the First World War and something reminded me of all the books that I'd taken from Brenda Wallace and I started looking at them in detail. It became clear how important they were and how interesting and I used the material in the exhibition.

To give you a bit of background history, the earliest shipyard in Alloa was the Kellie Bank probably from about the 16th century producing small boats. It was a difficult port because it silted up very quickly in spite of the 6th Earl of Mar's efforts to design quite an effective method of flushing out the salt water out of the harbour. We don't know much about the early yards, so it's really only in 1825 that the Kellie Bank Yard is mentioned and that was set up by Alex Duncanson. Like many other industries at the time, small shipyards were vulnerable and they were going out of business and being started again with new owners. In 1862 it was taken over by Thomas Adamson and then in the same year by Roy and Mitchell and then by Thomson's - all in the one year.

In 1889 they built the "Empress" which was launched by Lady Younger and also built steamers and so on. In the 1890s it went into liquidation and at some point, H McIntyre & Co. owned it and built three vessels and it went into liquidation again in 1913. Mackay owned it, then it went out of business and Fletcher of Montrose acquired and seems to have built just two vessels at that time. Then we come to Jeffreys Yard and 1876 that included the dry dock built by James Allen in 1791 and it had started off as a blacksmith's workshop. Using the dry dock to build ships was the first proper building arrangement. In 1904 it became the Alloa Dry Dock Company. In 1907 the company was reconstituted and then in 1911 David and Bob Jeffrey started building ships there. They'd never done it before so they built them below cost price to establish themselves as shipbuilders. That's how it ended up being called Jeffreys Yard. In 1912 they started building steel ships and steam engines and by 1916 a London financial group owned 50% of the company.



The main person behind that financial group was Sir Basil Zaharoff, who was born in Ottoman Turkey in 1849 and he was an arms dealer. He was often described as "an international man of mystery". He was one of the main financiers and driving forces behind the Caudron Aircraft Company which was also in Alloa during the First World War and the Forth Shipbuilding and Engineering Company launches.

The Forth Shipbuilding and Engineering Company Limited was established in 1916 and it incorporated the three existing yards – Kellie Bank, Jeffrey's Yard and also Forth Bank Yard. Alexander Nicoll Black was born on the 23rd of June 1888 in Park Road, West End, Newcastle upon Tyne. He trained as an engineer and draughtsman and moved to Alloa in 1916 to become the works manager for this new company. When he first arrived, he stayed at the Crown Hotel in Bank Street in Alloa. As the works manager, he held a senior post in a scheduled and reserved occupation but nonetheless he was a member of the 1st Battalion Clackmannanshire Volunteer Regiment. He served from November 1916 to May 1917. On the 7th of May 1917 he was issued with a scheduled occupation certificate.

The great thing about all this material that I acquired from his daughter was that he kept meticulous notes of everything and he made a list of all the machines in the Forth Yard as well as precise plans of all the yards showing the buildings and their measurements. He also put in the sill height of other places as a comparison, such as Leith Imperial Wet Docks, which were much higher than at Alloa. There are seven areas where ships could be built and he also showed the distance between the yards and Alloa Inch, the island directly opposite the yards. They needed to know that because they had to turn the ships at the correct angle when they were launched. He also kept a small notebook which he called Launching Particulars. It gives the full details of each ship built and launched by the company while he worked there. Each ship had a number, then the name and details of the length, breadth and depth of the ship – everything he needed to know for the launch. He also kept ledgers for each of the yards, recording full specifications for every ship built in them.

While this was going on he married his fiancée Helen Agnes Newlands in Newcastle on the 27th of September 1917 and at first the newlyweds lived in the Crown Hotel in Alloa.

Seventeen ships were built at those three yards during the First World War by the company, which was a record not only for Alloa but for the east of Scotland. Several of them were ships built for the Paris Orléans Railway Company. They were all built in Jeffreys Yard with only two large ships built at Forth Bank Yard. Twenty-three other ships, including several oil tankers were made in the yard before its eventual closure. Jeffreys Yard was only taken over in 1918 so at first the ships were built in the Forth Yard which was the biggest one. Fourteen other ships were built in Jeffreys Yard, including several for the Tyne & Wear Shipping Company and they were all registered in Newcastle. The last ship was launched on the 8th of December 1927.

There were seven berths in all, very close together as it was a very compact site. The wet dock was built in 1863 on the site of the original Alloa Harbour. The water from the Brothie Burn ran down from Gartmorn Dam, through the estate to the harbour, where the original sluice system devised by the 6th Earl of Mar was used to flush out the silt into the river. It made sense to build the wet dock on the same site.

Seven new ships were built during the 1st World War. Number 25 was the first ship to be built by the company and it was named the "Countess of Mar". It was built in berth 2, not in a dock but propped up by wooden poles and scaffolding on the ground. In terms of comparison with modern shipbuilding, it looks amazingly rickety, but they built it successfully. The "Countess of Mar" was launched on the 31st of August 1916, so they built it very quickly considering the company was only set up in that year.

Number 26 was originally to be called the "SS Nantes" and the owners were the Paris Orléans Railway Company. However, by the day of the launch it was called the "SS Portis Herculis". It was launched on the 21st of April 1917 and it survived until the 22nd of January 1944 when it was posted missing. All the launches had commemorative brochures produced and there were five in Alec Black's collection. Each of the souvenir programmes followed a similar pattern with lots of photographs.

Also in his collection were the passes for when he had to visit other shipbuilders on the River Tyne, such as Palmers shipyard in Jarrow. It was founded by Charles Mark Palmer in 1852 and it built hundreds of ships including the original Queen Mary in 1912 but it collapsed in 1933 and it was taken over by Armstrong Whitworth which was a big much better-known company.

The "SS Bordeaux" was built in berth 4 and was launched on the 30th of October 1917, so they really were working hard on building these boats. Next to launch was the "SS Orléans" in February 1918, followed by the "Royal Pibroch". This was the first British government standard ship to be built in Alloa and was a quarterdeck cargo steamer, launched on the 27th of April 1918. It was renamed in 1919 by the second owner, the French National Maritime Society and it lasted until it was broken up in November 1959. Around 4000 people attended the launch, including the Earl and Countess of Mar, Thomas Pearson and his wife, and Sir George and Lady Younger, who performed the launching ceremony. The brochure also mentions "Mr Black, our energetic works manager".

The "Royal Clarion" was launched on 29th of June 1918 and Sir Basil Zacharoff attended the ceremony. The final ship launched at Alloa during the war was the "War Cherry", launched on the 4th of November 1918. The interesting thing about it was that it was launched by a woman worker. They chose Christina Ferguson and they didn't allow her to dress up. The photos show her in her working outfit. The shipyard only had 50 employees in 1916, but by 1918 there were 700 people including fifty women working there. Shipbuilding continued on a smaller scale after the war. As the fortunes of the company dwindled, Alec Black returned with

his family to the northeast of England about 1923 to 1924, taking all his notebooks and memoranda with him.

He and his wife had three children. Maria was born in 1921 and she died in 2014 and had "Flower of Scotland" played at her funeral. Doris Jean was born in 1923 and died in 1978 and Brenda was born on the 12th of December 1929. She was the only one not to have been born in Alloa. Brenda thought that her father had worked at the Palmer shipyard then another yard in Hebburn. Alec Black was clearly a very dedicated, conscientious and very well-respected member of staff in the Forth Shipbuilding & Engineering Company. He died in 1976.

The company went into voluntary liquidation by the end of 1927 and all three yards closed shortly afterwards, but some people still remember McLeod's shipyard continuing there. It closed in the mid-1950s.

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Demolishing a Brick Wall

By Sandra Muir (Member No. 882)

You may (or may not!) remember a couple of years ago we had a zoom brick wall session where I was looking for help with my great grandfather, Henry Martin, who had been born in "Russia" (present day Latvia). Another member very kindly found a record of his brother's birth in Libeu. In January 2024 I eventually decided to take out an Ancestry subscription (and do a DNA test!!). One of my first searches was for "Martin" in the Latvian records and I trawled through 59 pages of results. I found the birth and death of three other children, including twin boys who died shortly after birth.

The baptismal certificate for the little girl was particularly interesting– it gave the name of the person she was called after (the manager's wife whose maiden name was Crichton) ; the manager was called Eberhard which was the middle name of a son. Present at the baptism was the consul, called Karl– their youngest son was also Karl. I also found the death record of Henry's father in 1855 and the Certificate of Confirmation for John Martin showing that he had "expertise in reading, catechism and Holy Scripture". These documents are all in the Evangelical Lutheran Church records. Thankfully, they are not written in the Cyrillic alphabet but in German. Thanks to my Higher German, I could understand most of them! I think I've already had value for my subscription.

James Scott Stewart – Artist

His Sixty Year Career in Glasgow

Craig Adam (Member No. 802)

Falkirk-born artist James Scott Stewart (JSS) had forged his early career as a painter and photographer, both in his home town and briefly in Belfast, before moving to Glasgow at the age of 31 in 1862. A full account of this first part of his life has been published in the Spring 2025 CSFHS journal, Issue 69. This present article will explore his subsequent career of almost sixty years while based in Glasgow, once again largely using the extensive contemporary newspaper reports of his activities during this time.

Initially living in Dalhousie Street, in the city-centre, and working with James Robertson in his photography/ artist's business in Sauchiehall Street, JSS soon moved away from photography and back to painting portraits and other works to meet a demand for such art in the city. Indeed, once established in Glasgow, his status as an artist was acknowledged by being admitted as an Associate of the West of Scotland Academy (WSA), an organization established around 1839 in the city as a focus for artists and which organised exhibitions in the Dilettanti Rooms at 49-53 Buchanan Street. As announced in the Stirling Observer in 1864:

'Honour to a Falkirk Man

We are happy to learn that at a meeting of the members of the West of Scotland Academy, held in Glasgow on Monday, Mr James S Stewart, formerly of Falkirk and a native of the town, was elected as associate of the Academy. He will therefore now be entitled to write the letters A.W.S.A after his name and we feel sure that he has well merited the honour conferred upon him.' (Stirling Observer 28 April 1864)

Being elected to the WSA brought JSS into close contact with other artists working in the city, including those with established reputations, such as Norman Macbeth, Daniel Macnee, sculptor John Mossman and the landscape painter John Milne Donald, all of whom, with the exception of Macbeth, were founder members of the WSA. In fact, in this same year, JSS painted a portrait of Milne Donald; this is one of his few works now in public galleries and research suggests that there are, in fact, two versions of this portrait. The current Glasgow Museums catalogue lists an oval portrait of Milne Donald by James Stewart as a gift from the artist in 1908 and this was exhibited the following year at the Royal Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts exhibition as exhibit 451 by James S Stewart 'lent by the Corporation of Glasgow'. Additionally, in 1910, within an article on new acquisitions by the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, The Scotsman states that:

'Three portraits of artists have also been acquired ... and that of J Milne Donald, the well-known West of Scotland landscape painter, was painted by James Stewart in 1864.' (The Scotsman 24 Aug 1910)

In a later article in the following year, this acquisition is listed as 'by purchase' but does not say from whom. Consulting the National Galleries online catalogue confirms that they purchased this painting in 1910, though they wrongly attribute it to James Stewart, the engraver (1791-1863) who had lived in South Africa since 1833 and was dead by 1864. As its dimensions are significantly larger than those for the Glasgow Museums' painting, there are undoubtedly two versions of this work and indeed close inspection of the images online^(1,2) indicates small differences in the pose. Sadly, John Milne Donald died in 1866, age 46, following a period of severe mental illness.

The WSA was eventually superseded by the 'Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts' (GIFA) - later the 'Royal Glasgow Institute' - which was formed in 1861. Its annual exhibitions from 1862 were held in the Glasgow Corporation (later named the McLellan) galleries in Sauchiehall Street and JSS exhibited one or more paintings there on most years from 1863 until 1919⁽³⁾. The WSA was finally wound-up in 1885 when there were seven members still living, including JSS; the history of the WSA is summarised in an article in the Glasgow Herald of 28 May 1886. In 1870 JSS was elected a member of the Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts.

Despite now living in Glasgow, JSS maintained links with Falkirk throughout the rest of his life, across a wide spectrum of business, social and other activities. For example, he had joined the Falkirk Rifle Volunteers (formally the 3rd Company Stirlingshire Rifle Volunteers) as a founding member when it was set up in 1860 by Provost Thomas Kier and others. He took part in the 30th anniversary - 're-union' - celebrations in 1890 which are described in the Falkirk Herald (FH) issue of 2nd July and this also includes a long list of the 74 founding members of the Volunteers, their occupations and current residences, including 'Private ... James S Stewart, artist, Glasgow'. In 1895, JSS was commissioned to paint a portrait of Charles Stewart Gauld, lately agent at the Commercial Bank in Falkirk, which was presented to him in acknowledgement of 35 years' service as treasurer to the Volunteers.

He continued to do business in Falkirk; for example, the Falkirk Herald in 1864 reports:

'The Town Council of 1863-64

We had the pleasure the other day of inspecting a photograph of the Town Council of 1863-64 in the studio of Mr James S. Stewart, artist. The group which was taken by Mr John Gartshore of the firm of Messrs. Joseph Gartshore and Sons, grain merchants who is a careful and clever photographer. ... The copy of the work which we saw had been truthfully and carefully coloured by Mr James S. Stewart, a process which not only improved its appearance but considerably enhanced its value. The colouring is warm, rich and life-like and the manipulation has evidently been most delicate and skilful.' (FH 24 Nov 1864)

In the following year, JSS painted portraits of twenty local shopkeepers and tradesmen that were presented by the artist at a celebratory supper at the Bluebell

Hotel, fully reported on in the Falkirk Herald of 10th August, 1865. He returned to this venue in December to celebrate the annual patron saint's anniversary of the Falkirk Masonic Lodge St John No 16 of which he was a Junior Deacon. Also in 1865, JSS attended the annual dinner of the Falkirk Bowling Club held at the Red Lion Hotel. At the Comely Park Green in June, JSS had recently donated a pair of bowls to the winner of a competition. Such events, attended by many local men from across the social spectrum, helped JSS spread his reputation and garner patronage both by word of mouth and through direct commissions. As late as 1908, then age 77, JSS returned to Falkirk to act as one of eight pall-bearers at the funeral of Peter McLaren, a retired chemical manufacturer and vice-president of the Falkirk Unionist Club, who had been a fellow, founder member of the Falkirk Rifle Volunteers and friend from earlier years.

In his early years in Glasgow, he lived in lodgings in the city centre, moving frequently, as indicated in his addresses given in the annual RGIFA exhibition catalogues⁽³⁾. Where he exhibited a portrait, the sitter is usually named so giving an indication of the social and commercial market he worked for. For example, in 1872 he painted Alexander Duff Robertson (1807-86) who was a professor of drawing at Anderson's University in the city and taught drawing at the School of Design, Ingram Street, then at the Mechanics Institute. Interestingly, Robertson also had drawn a portrait of John Milne Donald, in chalk on paper, that is now held by the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. A later portrait, from 1884, was of John Stuart (1831-1907) who had just completed ten years as provost of Helensburgh and who was a pioneer of photography with businesses in both Glasgow and Helensburgh.

Although he never had any children, James Stewart did marry - at the age of 46 - in 1877; this was shortly after the death of his mother in Falkirk in late 1875. His wife was Agnes Clow, daughter of a land steward who had worked at the Dalhousie Castle Estate, near Cockpen, when Agnes was born around 1836 but who died around ten years later. The family then moved to Glasgow where Agnes, her mother and her two sisters were seamstresses while the two elder brothers married and moved away. In 1871, Agnes and her sister (Mary) Ann were living with their aunt, Isabella Clow Hamilton in Pollockshaws Road then, after Isabella died in 1873, they were living nearby in 5 Albert Drive, Crosshill. With this background information it is hard to understand how James and Agnes met, as he was living in the city centre while she was south of the river and there appears to be no professional or social interaction. In any case, the marriage took place at 5 Albert Drive in August 1877 with Ann Clow and John Rutherford as witnesses. The latter was a photographer who had a business at 346 Sauchiehall Street, so likely a professional friend of JSS. The minister was James Douglas from St Stephens Church on Bath Street, close to 215 Sauchiehall Street where JSS was living at that time. The couple continued to live in various addresses along Sauchiehall Street, before finally settling at 375 in 1895. The 1901 census tells us that this flat had 6 rooms with windows so quite spacious for an elderly couple.

Over much of this time, JSS was in demand for civic portraits - often of provosts – a good commercial market for him as the occupants of such offices changed regularly. Exhibition records and newspaper reports show that he completed portraits of four provosts of Falkirk: Thomas Kier (1858-1867), John Russel (1867-1879), Borthwick Watson (1889-1892) and John Weir (1895-1905). He also painted Hugh MacPherson, provost of Grangemouth, in 1887 and James Downie of Kirkintilloch in 1884. Most notably, two paintings from his later years (1893, 1898) and of local interest, are now in the care of Falkirk Council Museums. His full-length portrait of Robert Barr, the soft-drinks manufacturer, dressed formally and entirely in black and, secondly, a view of Falkirk High Street looking towards the steeple with the figures of Barr and his wife towards the foreground, are available through the Falkirk Collections web-site^(4,5). The painting of the High Street is reproduced by courtesy of Falkirk Council.



'Falkirk High Street' by James Scott Stewart (1893)

JSS continued to exhibit at the annual RGIFA exhibitions throughout his later years and examination of the catalogues shows his range of portraits of named and unnamed individuals together with set pieces which he felt would be attractive to the late Victorian and Edwardian purchaser. Although almost all of these are now lost to the public view, contemporary reviews from the newspapers enable us to sense the spirit of some of these paintings. For example, from the 1889 exhibition, a picture titled 'An Orange Feast' was reported by a critic as follows:

'In 'An Orange Feast' by James S. Stewart, a boy, to whom oranges are not everyday events, though his healthy rubicund look bespeaks quite a large capacity for enjoying them, is peeling an example of the delicious fruit with the eager look of anticipated enjoyment. Another orange peeks from one of his pockets. Attitude and expression are caught with truly reticent art - a conception that might border on the puerile being kept within due bounds. As a study of colour and texture rendering, the picture is excellent.'

(North British Daily Mail 4 March 1889)

Into the 20th century, his interests seemed to favour landscapes, set both in Scotland and Ireland; for example, with titles such as 'On the River Carron', 'The Shore, Lough Swilly', and 'In Donegal'. This may reflect both his travels during this time and changes in public demand. This broader scope to his work is reflected in his occupation being given on his death certificate in 1920 as 'portrait and landscape artist (retired)'. During the Great War he continued exhibiting; the 1917 RGIFA exhibition featuring a work entitled 'To Keep the Home Fires Burning' and he contributed to a sale for Scottish Red Cross Funds in 1915 by donating 'an old painting, Senator's Head', according to a report in the Falkirk Herald of 7th August.

James Scott Stewart died of age-related disease and after suffering from a broken leg, presumably following a fall at his home, 375 Sauchiehall Street, on 9th March 1920, aged 88 years. His death must have been unexpected as the death certificate has a corrected entry statement from the Procurator Fiscal confirming the cause of death. Outliving most of his contemporaries and working latterly in a style that was then seen as sentimental and old-fashioned and for a market that had almost disappeared, it is not surprising that his obituaries were brief, though that in the Falkirk Herald provides a good summary of his life and career:

'DEATH OF A WELL-KNOWN ARTIST

Many of our older readers will learn with regret of the death which took place on Monday of Mr James Scott Stewart, the doyen of the Glasgow artists. Mr Stewart who was a native of Falkirk where he was born in 1831 was the last remaining link between the art of today and that of the older school. Beginning the study of art as a photographic colourist, Mr Stewart when a young man went to Glasgow where he painted with considerable success portraits, figure subjects and landscapes. For many years he had been the sole survivor of the West of Scotland Academy which ceased to exist when the Glasgow Institute (now the Royal Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts) came

into being. Of this body Mr Stewart was an original member and a most regular exhibitor. An example of his work was shown at the exhibition last autumn. In earlier years Mr Stewart was a not-infrequent visitor to his native town and at different times he painted the portraits of prominent public men including the late ex-provost John Russel, the late ex-provost Thomas Keir and ex-provost Weir.' (FH 13 March 1920)

His wife, Agnes, outlived him by almost seven years; she died in a nursing home in Strathaven, aged 90, in February 1927.

References

- (1) <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/j-milne-donald-18191866-86156>
- (2) <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/john-milne-donald-18191866-artist-213237>
- (3) The Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts 1861-1989: a dictionary of exhibitors at the Annual Exhibitions of the Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts; Vol 4 Q-Z, compiled by Roger Billcliffe, Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts; 1990, Glasgow, Woodend Press ISBN: w9343612
- (4) <https://collections.falkirk.gov.uk/objects/100395/painting-robert-barr>
- (5) <https://collections.falkirk.gov.uk/objects/100393/painting-falkirk-high-street>

All newspaper resources available at Find My Past:

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/home>

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Members' Interests

SURNAME	PARISH	PLACE (if not a Parish)	COUNTY	COUNTRY	PERIOD FROM	PERIOD TO	MEM NO.
DAWSON	STIRLING		STG	SCT	1775	1850	1236
DRUMMOND	STIRLING		STG	SCT	1700	1800	1236
GLEN	CLACKMANNAN		CLK	SCT	1700	1850	1236
GLEN	STIRLING	CAMBUSKEN- NETH	STG	SCT	1700	1850	1236
SHEARER	DUNBLANE		PER	SCT	1700	1850	1236
SHEARER	STIRLING		STG	SCT	1700	1850	1236
THOMSON	STIRLING		STG	SCT	1775	1855	1236

DOWN ON THE FARM

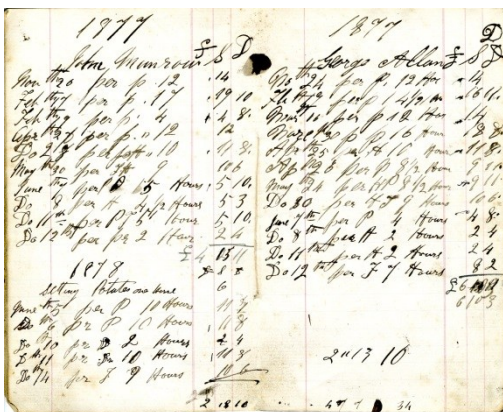
Sandra M Reid (May AGM Talk)

This is a résumé of the short talk I gave at the AGM in May. As it was an illustrated Powerpoint presentation, I hope you will be able to appreciate some of the things I am explaining without seeing the photos.



On my father's side, I am from a farming family who tenanted and eventually owned the same farm in the Parish of Boharm in Upper Banffshire for 144 years from 1863 – 2007. These boring looking notebooks (on the left) were the farm records kept by my great grandfather, Alexander Brown, and cover a period from 1873 – 1894, when he was aged 22 to 43.

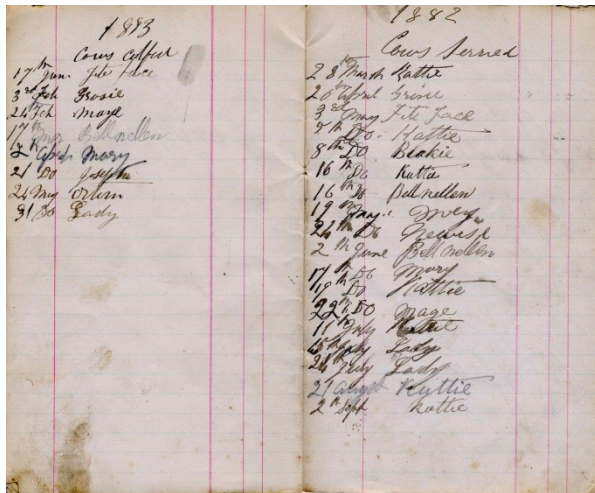
The farm had 122 acres divided up into 10 fields, and was a mixed arable farm. However it is the contents of these books which are fascinating. I'm not sure how common a practice this was of keeping notes in notebooks like these. The two photos here show the sort of detail which Alexander kept in these books. The writing and spelling are poor, which I find strange for a man who was also a church elder, parish councillor, director of the local cattle mart, and seemingly well respected throughout the community.



There are a lot of pages detailing the wages for casual farm workers, who were obviously hired in addition to the two or three farm servants who lived and

worked on the farm. One servant, George Allan, appears in all the books, so he was obviously a dependable worker. It doesn't say what they were being paid for, just for the number of hours they worked. Interestingly, over a period of 5 years, the wages don't seem to increase! It was 14 shillings for 12 hours in 1877 and again in 1882.

Other regular pages detail the timeline for sowing and harvesting the crops – corn, turnips, potatoes; there is an added note in 1881 - '*potatoes a good crop*'. Some pages list the price he was paid for selling his corn.



There are pages giving dates when the cows were served by the bull, then calved - interesting to read the names of the cows. There was *Fite face* (ie. white face); *Maye*; *Bellnellan*, *Joseph* (yes!!), *Kattie*, *Blakie* (ie, Blackie), *Orton*, *Lady*. There are also pages listing the neighbours who must have brought their cows to him to be served by his bull – could be an interesting exercise to put farm names to these neighbours.

Then there are pages listing the cost of buying and selling cattle and horses eg.

Sold brown horse *Dick* for £37.10/-

Bought a mare for £9

Sold a 2 years old filly for £43

Bought a 3 years old filly for £32

Sold a 3 years old filly for £33

Names of horses in 1883 were *Nelly*, *Battie*, *Meg*, *Jane*, and *Fanny*. Also, he always seemed to have one called *Dick*.

But the notebooks also held a few other surprises. One page listed the addresses for 2 of his sisters, which I had already, but those for other relatives on the list were news to me, so it was good to have these leads. Then there was the poetry!

In particular, a love poem to an unknown Helen or HKT, as well as hymns copied out: eg. '*Hail to the Lord's Anointed*'.

There is also an interesting puzzle (*answer below*):

1/4 of Live;

1/2 of On;

1/2 Ten;

1/5 Eight

There is a lot of detail in the notebooks which I should really transcribe someday. I feel very fortunate to have inherited these books along with a wide range of miscellaneous farm documents and photographs covering most of the 144 years the farm was in my family. The whole archive certainly portrays a fascinating insight into the life of farming in the rural north-east of Scotland from the mid-19th century right into the beginning of the 21st.

Answer to puzzle - LOVE

oo oo oo oo oo oo oo oo oo oo

The People's Dispensary Website

The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh has recently launched a new website, The People's Dispensary. This is a digitised and transcribed collection of 18th century case notes of the Edinburgh Public Dispensary from it's foundation in 1776. For full details about this resource and what it contains see <https://www.rcpe.ac.uk/news/college-launches-peoples-dispensary-website>

The records can be searched at <https://www.rcpe.ac.uk/peoplesdispensary>

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New Members

1235	Rita Fox	Robbinsdale, Minnesota, USA
1236	Carole Graham	Simi Valley, California, USA

A Link to a Famous Person

By Sandra Muir (Member No. 882)

(May AGM talk)

Since taking a DNA test, I have found some really interesting distant cousins, ranging from the grandson of a farm servant, who became head of the Malaysian civil service and was mentioned in the Queen's birthday honours list to the young lad who was caught breaking into a house and was sentenced to seven years transportation to Tasmania – at the age of 13! However, I was really excited when I found a link through marriage to someone famous.

One of my matches, Laura, has no public tree on Ancestry, so I could not see how we were connected. Ancestry said our common ancestors were Donald Dow, a shoemaker in Dunkeld, and his wife Margaret Livingstone. These hints from Ancestry are a bit of a hit or a miss – sometimes they are really useful, other times they are a work of fiction! My ancestor was Donald's son, John Dow, who moved to Dundee; subsequent generations remained in Dundee until I moved to Stirling. Other members of the family moved elsewhere in Scotland – one even ended up in Alloa! John's sister, Janet (or Jessie) went to Edinburgh but I don't know why – I suspect she was probably a domestic servant. When she married William Burnet, a brass finisher, there was no occupation noted for her on the certificate. Their eldest daughter, Margaret Livingstone Burnet, married John Aitken, a gas inspector with Edinburgh City Council.

Their only son, Robert, was educated at Daniel Stewart's College and then studied medicine at Edinburgh University. The eldest daughter married a ship's captain and had no family that I can find; the second daughter died in infancy. The third daughter, Margaret, married John Wright in 1922 and they left immediately for China where he was to be a medical missionary; sadly, he died of typhoid a few years later and Margaret brought their two sons back to Edinburgh. Their younger son, Stephen, is the father of Laura, my DNA match. I had found the connection! There was only one member of the family still to find and that's when it really got interesting! The youngest daughter Maria was a music teacher and she also married a medical missionary, Robert Victor Liddell; one of the witnesses to the marriage was the groom's younger brother, Eric Liddell.

Eric Henry Liddell was born in China to missionary parents; he and his brothers were educated at Eltham College in London, a school for the sons of

missionaries. He and his brother Robert continued their education at Edinburgh University. As well as being a gifted scholar, he also excelled at sport, playing rugby for Scotland on a few occasions. He gave up rugby in favour of running and was selected for the Paris Olympics in 1924, where he was to run in the 100 metres. He refused to run in the heats as they were to take place on a Sunday. Instead, he ran in the 400 metres and won gold. His story is portrayed in the film "Chariots of Fire". After university he returned to China as a missionary. Just prior to the Japanese invasion, he relieved his brother at the hospital in Tientsin, as Robert was overdue for furlough back home. Eric refused to leave, although he sent his pregnant wife and two daughters to Canada. He was interned and died of a brain tumour in a prisoner of war camp in 1945.

My link to a famous person is: my granny's second cousin was married to Eric Liddell's brother!

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Snippets

The website www.scan.org.uk of The Scottish Archive Network was decommissioned on January 9th 2025

All its content, apart from Highlands and Islands Emigration Records, will be available via the National Records of Scotland Web Archive. The Highland and Island Emigration records database is already available on the Scotlandspeople website and can be searched for free. Researchers need to register for a free account to access it.

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Ancestry website now has information from Fasti

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www.silvercityvault.org.uk Aberdeen local studies archive

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Grave seen recently in the British Cemetery, Funchal, Madeira

In loving memory of WILLIAM DAVIDSON DICKIE

Born Alloa, Scotland, 28 January 1895

Died Funchal, Madeira 27 January 1973

In this island he knew and loved so well

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Edinburgh City Archives will be closed until early 2026 to allow staff to relocate 6.5km of records to new sites.

Help Wanted

If you have any information that may help, please e-mail censcotfhs@gmail.com and we will put you in contact with the person making the request.

Spear/Spears/Speirs/Spiers family Falkirk

I am researching the above family who lived in the Falkirk area circa mid 1700s. The family members in question being Alexander Spear born 1704 in Cumbernauld, but lived in the Slamannan and Falkirk area for most of his life. Alexander was married to Jean Grindlay. He had a son, William Spears, born in Slamannan in 1732.

I believe Alexander may have been a farmer in the Falkirk area. I have researched ScotlandsPeople Church Registers as well as monumental inscriptions for the Falkirk area at the Scottish Genealogy Society. Apart from baptism and marriage details found in the Church Registers, I have very little information on Alexander and his son William. William emigrated to North Carolina at some point before his death there in 1803.

My question is, would any members be able to assist me in my research into Alexander and William Spear/Spears/Speirs/Spiers?

Researching McLaren brothers, left Larbert 1851

I am in Brisbane, Australia and am contacting you to see if there is a person who may have a research interest in families emigrating from Larbert/Falkirk in 1851. Alexander is my 3X grandfather and I am researching to find his parents in Stirlingshire. There is no mention of them on his marriage or death records here in Australia.

Cowan heritage

I am doing research into my family ancestry and have found that my family came from this area and was wondering if I can get some help with the following names and dates:-

3X great grandfather Robert Hiram Cowan 1782-1872 born Falkirk

4X great grandfather Alexander Cowan born about 1748 same location

5X great grandfather Adam Cowan born about 1720 same location

6X great grandfather William Cowan

Exchange Journals Received: List 70 – Aug 2025

Most of the journals are now available in electronic format as e-journals and the intention is to have these available to view on our website. In the meantime, if you wish to request a copy, please contact centscotfhs@gmail.com.

Society	Issue	Format
Aberdeen & North East FHS	173 Feb 25, 174 May 25, 175 Aug 25	e-journal
Caithness FHS	No. 78 Mar 25	e-journal
Dumfries & Galloway FHS	No. 111 Mar 25	e-journal
Glasgow FHS	No. 131 Oct 24, No. 132 Mar 25	e-journal
Highland FHS	Vol 43 Iss 2 Feb 25	e-journal
Lanarkshire FHS	No. 84 Feb 24, No. 85 Jun 24, No. 86 Oct 24, No. 87 Feb 25, No. 89 Jul 25	e-journal
Lothians FHS	Mar 25	e-journal
Orkney FHS	112 Winter 24, 113 Spring 25, 114 Summer 25	Hard copy
Renfrew FHS	53 Feb 25	e-journal
Shetland FHS	No. 133 Voar 25, No. 134 Summer 25	e-journal
Tay Valley FHS	130 Feb 25	e-journal
Troon@Ayrshire FHS	104 Spring 25, 105 Summer 25	e-journal
West Lothian FHS	64 Nov 25	e-journal
Genealogist Magazine	Vol 35 No. 1 Mar 25	e-journal
Berkshire FHS	48 Mar 25, 48 Jun 25	e-journal
The Manchester Genealogist	Vol 59 No. 3 2023, Vol 59 No.4 2023, Vol 60 No. 2 2024, Vol 61 No. 1 2025	e-journal
Alberta FHS	Vol 7-2 Feb 25, Vol 7-3 Mar 25, Vol 7-4– April 25, Vol 7-5 May 25, Vol 7-6 Jun 25	e-journal
The Heraldry & Genealogy Society of Canberra	Vol 48 No. 1 Mar 25, Vol 48 No. 2 Jun 25	e-journal
Liverpool Gen Soc	No. 139 Feb 25, No 140 Jun 25	Hard copy
Journal of Shoalhaven FHS inc Australia	137 Apr 25, 138 Aug 25	e-journal
Journal of the Western Australian Gen Soc	Vol 16 No. 1 Mar 25	e-journal
Family History Society of New Zealand	Apr 25, Mary 25, Jun 25	e-journal

Cover Photos

The front cover is an old black and white postcard from 1912 of the Fountain of Nineveh, located in Fountain Road, Bridge of Allan, just round the corner from where we hold our meetings.

The Fountain of Nineveh was erected in 1853 by the Laird of Westerton, Major Henderson. In 1895, the heron on top was added by James Drysdale, the Chief Magistrate.



Major Alexander Henderson drew up plans of how he wanted the village to be laid out in 1850, envisaging spacious streets with pleasure grounds in the woods. He also erected a fountain in Market Street. It was at this time that many stone villas were built on the wide thoroughfares, with many of the houses becoming lodging houses as Bridge of Allan became a renowned spa town.

The back cover show the current view of the Fountain.



Present day view of the Fountain of Nineveh

