
THE FAMILY HISTORY

a genealogy

Edited by
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*They grew in beauty side by side
They filled a home with glee
Their graves are severed far and wide
By mount and stream and sea...*

INTRODUCTION

A history of any family is by its nature egocentric – that is, it starts with the present and moves back from an individual or family. It is an attempt to track one's ancestry and connections. Hopefully, this particular history is more than a series of dates. Where possible and where information can be found some idea of the lives of individuals and their times has been provided.

The first individuals officially recorded in this genealogy are William Bell (c. 1630 - ?) and Eupham Orrock (c.1630 - ?). Their marriage is recorded on 3 June 1652 in the parish St Andrew's, Fife, Scotland. From here over a thousand people are connected through birth and marriage. At times, cousins have married or different branches reunited through marriage after several generations. For many the only record of an individual life is now a series of notations in dusty parish registers or upon fading grave stones. Fortunately, others through their associations, deeds and endeavours have left a small mark and elements of their lives can be found in obscure and forgotten records. Hopefully as a result, the reader can develop some understanding of the lives of ancestors – their personalities, their successes and their failures.

In the following pages the information comes from a range of sources – not all of which have been fully cited. It is however, in the vast majority of cases verified by several references that supports family stories and traditions. Approximately two thirds of the dates and information come from official sources, including Old Parochial Registers and Burgh Registers. Monumental inscriptions have provided a significant amount of information as well as confirming family relationships that were otherwise inferred. The use of several internet and other online sources have been accessed. Some of which obviously have incorrect information; consequentially that information has been ignored. The spelling of various surnames vary throughout generations and between documents, and as a result the most common or more contemporary version is adopted.

The use of several wills and testaments give an insight into the character and personality of individuals who wrote them – and they are referred to where appropriate. The unpublished reminisces of William Williamson (1804 – 1888) and *The Hutchisons of Kirkcaldy, a history of the family and the firm* provide further descriptions of individuals and characters of the extended family and other inhabitants of Kirkcaldy of whom the members of the family interacted with on a daily basis. Hopefully it provides some indication of their daily lives.

The Scottish tradition of naming children in a particular order has assisted discovering each generation:

First son	-	given the paternal grandfather's Christian name
Second son	-	given the maternal grandfather's Christian name
Third son	-	given the father's Christian name
Fourth son	-	given the father's eldest brother's Christian name
Fifth son	-	given the father's 2 nd eldest brother's Christian name or the mother's eldest brother's Christian name.
First daughter	-	given the maternal grandmother's Christian name
Second daughter	-	given the paternal grandmother's Christian name
Third daughter	-	given the mother's Christian name
Fourth daughter	-	given the mother's eldest sister's Christian name
Fifth daughter	-	given the mother's 2 nd eldest sister's Christian name or the father's eldest sister's Christian name.

Beyond this there appears to be a strong sense of tradition throughout the generations beyond following the Scottish naming traditions. Many surnames become Christian names in later generations. In other cases full names become Christian names of children and grandchildren. This has assisted in tracing members of the various branches of the family.

There is scarcely a part of the world where members of the family have not ventured or settled. It includes whaling expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic; most of the major continents including North and Central America, Africa, Asia, Russia, Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

Members of the family have taken part in some of the major conflicts of the western world – including the Scottish Jacobite uprising, the Battle of Trafalgar, both World Wars and the Iraq conflict serving in the armies, navies and air forces of Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand.

Hopefully, a family history does not stop – it up to others to continue and add to the history of the family. As each generation marries there are entire new genealogies to discover and add to the story.

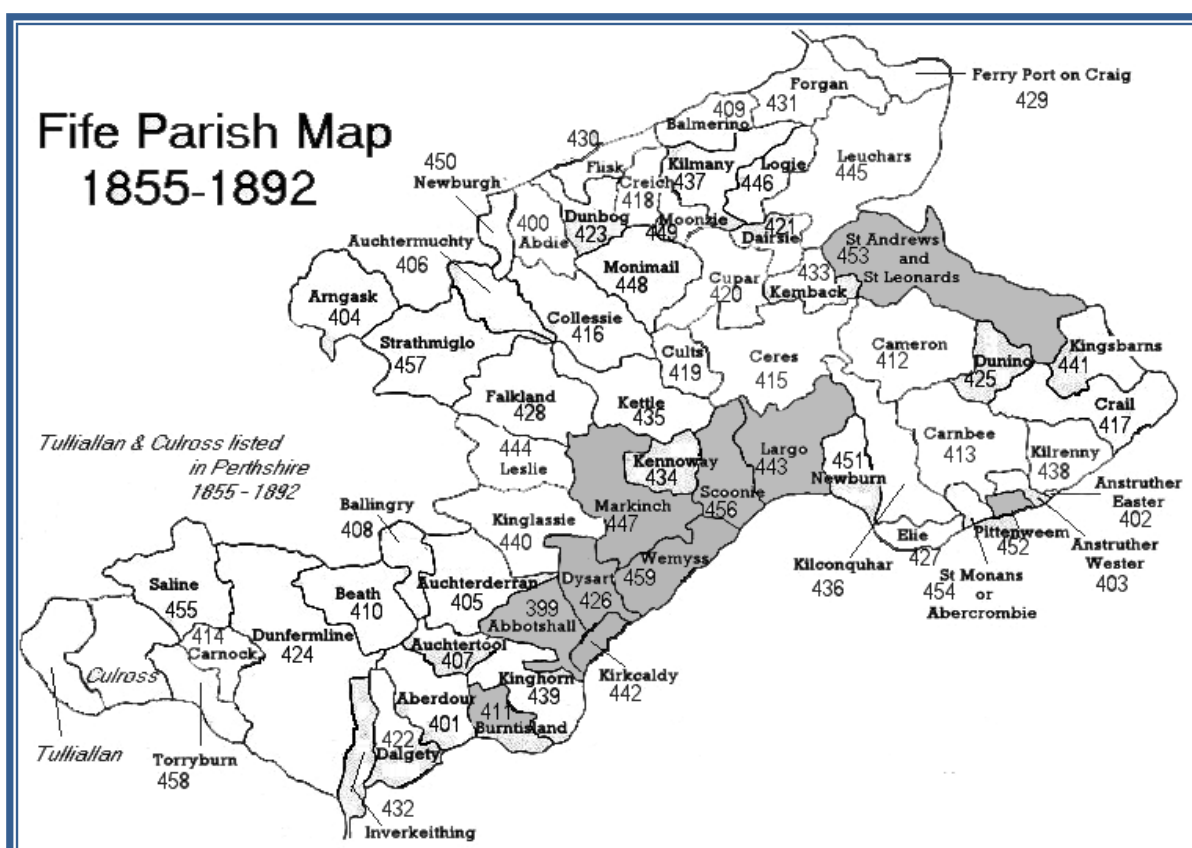
THE COUNTY OF FIFE, SCOTLAND

The county Fife (Gaelic: Fìobha) is situated between the Firth of Tay and the Firth of Forth, with inland boundaries to Perth and Kinross and Clackmannan. It was originally one of the Pictish kingdoms, known as Fìb, and is still commonly known as the Kingdom of Fife within Scotland.

It is a lieutenancy area, and was a county of Scotland until 1975. It was very occasionally known by the anglicification Fifeshire in old documents and maps compiled by English cartographers and authors.

Fife was divided into three districts - Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy and North-East Fife. Popularly known as 'The Kingdom of Fife', legend has it that upon the death of Cruithne, the Pictish realm - known collectively as 'Pictavia' - was divided into seven sub-kingdoms or provinces, one of which became Fife. The name is recorded as Fìb in A.D. 1150 and Fìf in 1165. It was often associated with Fotheriff.

King James VI of Scotland described Fife as a 'beggar's mantle fringed with gold' - the golden fringe being the coast and its chain of little ports with their thriving fishing fleets and rich trading links with the Low Countries, ironic given the much later development of farming on some of Scotland's richest soil and the minerals, notably coal, underneath. Wool, linen, coal and salt were all traded. A great number of the people within this genealogy are linked to fishing and whaling in the 19th century; trading to the Baltic and Low Countries during the 18th & 19th century; and linen production during the 18th century.



ABOVE: Map of the county of Fife indicating the Parish boundaries. Shaded areas are those associated with families within this genealogy.

THE 'LANG TOUN' OF KIRKCALDY

Kirkcaldy (Scottish Gaelic: Cathair Chaladain) is a town and former royal burgh in Fife, on the east coast of Scotland. The town began as a burgh under the control of Dunfermline Abbey. A harbour built around the east burn gradually led to the growth of the town surrounding the harbour itself, Main Street and Tiel burn following the demand of trade with the Baltic. Early industries which soon prospered included the production of textiles, nail making and salt panning.

Kirkcaldy has long been nicknamed the Lang Toun (Scots for 'long town') in reference to the 1.4 km main street of the early town, depicted so on maps as early as the 16th and 17th centuries. The name Kirkcaldy means "place of the hard fort", or "place of Caled's fort".

A reference to Kirkcaldy as a "villa", in 1182, is the only indication in the 12th century that it was regarded as a town. In 1304 the abbot of Dunfermline requested permission from King Edward I of England (Scotland being under occupation in this period) to hold a weekly market and annual fair (the latter is the basis of the modern Links Market) in this "most ancient of burghs". In granting this right, a year later, the king though termed Kirkcaldy simply a "manor". Burgh of barony status was granted by Robert I between 1315 and 1328, under the control of Dunfermline abbey.

Kirkcaldy harbour was acknowledged for having "a sheltered cove round the East Burn", thus giving easy accessibility for boats. By the early 16th century the vessels of the harbour had begun to engage in trade with the Baltic; later dealing with the import of grain in 1618 and continental beer in 1625. The success led to the growth of the burgh, surrounding the harbour, Main Street and Tiel (West) burn, commented on by Thomas Carlyle. During his stay he described the town as being "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 the South to the North, from the West Burn to Kirkcaldy Harbour, a favourite scene beautiful to me still in the faraway". It is around this harbour that the lives of the Tod, Bell, Oliphant, Beveridge, Hutchison and Williamson families revolved. Not only in terms of business, but socially and as a consequence personally with the various marital connections from 17th to 19th century.

Although difficult times threatened to beset the development of the town, local support for the Covenanting War (1644 – 65) led to the death of over 250 men. The burgh was also affected by the Highland Jacobite rebellion invading the town on two occasions during the 18th century on 1715 and again in 1745 – 46. Early members of the Oliphant family are believed to have been supporters of the Jacobite cause.

“Towards the close of the 18th century Kirkcaldy still deserved to be known as ‘the lang toun’... Trades in Kirkcaldy were small in scale but not disproportionate to the size of the town, the population of which in 1790 was no more than 2,607. The principal industry was linen weaving with over 800 looms, but there was also a leather industry and the harbour was an important feature.”¹

¹ From *The Hutchisons of Kirkcaldy, a history of the family and the firm*, unpublished.

As Kirkcaldy entered the 19th century, the arrival of the Kirkcaldy and District Railway, later to become part of the North British Railway, saw the town develop into the industrial heart of Fife – reviving the use of Kirkcaldy port, which had a severe setback during the mid-17th century. The harbour was catering for the growing trade of imports of flax, timber and hemp and exports of coal, salt and linen cloth, when a decision was made to build a new wet dock and pier from 1843 – 46, possibly driven by the influential shipowners and merchants such as the Bells, Tods, Hutchisons, Oliphants, Dougals and Beveridges – all families within the genealogy.

“Kirkcaldy society in the narrow sense was composed of its merchant traders. A map as late as 1839 credited few residents with ‘Esq.’ It was evidently a close knit society and the names which figure remain associated with the life of Kirkcaldy.”²

In Pigot’s Directory for Kirkcaldy (1825-26) there are listed forty-one shipowners residing in the parish; of these fourteen are connected to this genealogy – Michael Barker (1776 – 1838), Thomas Bell (1782 – 1842), George (1757 – 1835), Henry (1802 – 1894), James (1791 - ?) & Michael Beveridge, David Clephan (1769 – 1841), David Dougal (1769 – 1842), George (1767 – 1845), James (1800 – 1829), Robert (Snr. & Jun.) & William Oliphant (1797 - ?), and Alexander Williamson (1761 – 1838). “By 1831 the population of Kirkcaldy was now just over 5,000 people”.³



ABOVE: Kirkcaldy High Street c.1820

During the middle of the 15th century, the passing of feu-ferme status, for the first time, saw the town being able to deal with their own administrative issues and fiscal policies. The burgesses (or neighbours) became responsible for the affairs of the town, such as enforcing freedom from opposition and having trading rights. The first mention of a town council was made around 1582, where the head courts of the burghs would meet either in the common muir (also known as Volunteers' Green) or the Tollbooth which would be done particularly in the summer months. When Kirkcaldy was awarded Royal burgh status in 1644, the duties of the provost were initially completed by bailies, councillors and magistrates. Apart from the mercantile business of many members of this genealogy, several generations held positions in local administration as bailies, landwaiters, provosts, customs comptrollers and church elders.

The Scottish system of local government was closely associated with the Presbyterian church that dominated the life all within such small communities. The Minister was known to all and had great influence through the

² From *The Hutchisons of Kirkcaldy, a history of the family and the firm*, unpublished.

³ From *The Hutchisons of Kirkcaldy, a history of the family and the firm*, unpublished.

presbytery. One such minister of Kirkcaldy was Mr Robert Shirra (1724 – 1803). William Williamson (1804 – 1888) recalled the following tale:

“The well known and celebrated Mr Robert Shirra (1724 – 1803), the Minister at Kirkcaldy had my grandparents [Alexander Williamson (1727 – 1797) and Liliias Miller (1730 – 1799)] amongst his hearers and friends – one day Alexander was reprimanded for sleeping in his Church, and on Monday Mr Shirra when passing along the street was accosted by my Mrs Williamson (Liliias Miller) – "Oh Mr Shirra what made you expose my husband as you did?" – "Oh said Mr Shirra never mind Lilly, I'll no do it again."

“About this time 1782, the celebrated John Paul Jones (1747 – 1792)⁴ the American Privateer was cruising about, and he came into the Firth of Forth with his three vessels trying to get to Leith, but they were compelled by a gale of wind to set off to Holland. Mr Shirra went to Kirkcaldy Sands along with a number of his Elders and people and then knelt down and prayed that the Lord might send a wind and blow their enemies off the coast. Their prayer was answered as they soon left the Firth. Mr Shirra was much respected and liked by the people.

“Although witty and severe at times he had a kind heart and he was a real Christian – his anecdotes would fill a volume. One day Mr Shirra visiting a Farmer's family, and after putting the Juniors and Servants satisfactorily through "the questions" asked the kind laddie this – "Jock do you like your neighbour then as weel as yourself?" Jock having considered the question, boldly answered "Yes" – "Would you give him the half of your wages?" Jock was rather puzzled at this, but at length he answered quickly "I would, if he would give me half of his, he gets mail' than me."

“In Mr Shirra's time the people were more religious, and morning and evening worship was regularly performed in families – in the Churches the Presentor read out each line when singing the Psalms, and then the people joined. At the Sacrament time Thursday the fast day was like a Sabbath day and Saturday and Monday were strictly kept as days of preparation and thanksgiving days. The Town Officer kept all stragglers quiet by chasing them home – the young were kept in bondage.”⁵

Minister's often acted as school masters before they acquired an appointment to a church. **George Oliphant** (1767 – 1845) had a poor opinion of the Reverend Edward Irving (1792 – 1834)⁶ and Thomas Carlyle (1795 – 1881)⁷ who taught in different schools in Kirkcaldy in the early 1800's. Although neither of his daughters

⁴ John Paul Jones (July 6, 1747 – July 18, 1792) was the United States' first well-known naval fighter in the American Revolutionary War. Although he made enemies among America's political elites, his actions in British waters during the Revolution earned him an international reputation which persists to this day.

⁵ From *The Williamsons of Kirkcaldy* by William Williamson (1804 – 1888).

⁶ Edward Irving (August 4, 1792 – December 7, 1834) was a Scottish clergyman, generally regarded as the main figure behind the foundation of the Catholic Apostolic Church. His appointment at Haddington he exchanged for a similar one at Kirkcaldy, Fife, in 1812. Completing his divinity studies by a series of partial sessions, he was licensed to preach in June 1815, but continued to discharge his scholastic duties for three years.

⁷ Thomas Carlyle (4 December 1795 – 5 February 1881) was a Scottish satirical writer, essayist, historian and teacher during the Victorian era. He called economics "*the dismal science*", wrote articles for the *Edinburgh Encyclopedia*, and became a controversial social commentator. Coming from a strict Calvinist family but while at the University of Edinburgh, he lost his Christian faith. Calvinist values, however, remained with him throughout his life. This combination of a religious temperament with loss of faith in traditional Christianity made Carlyle's work appealing to many Victorians who were grappling with scientific and political changes that threatened the traditional social order.

were attending the particular schools, Oliphant was well aware of the punishments doled out to both boys and girls by these men. He would have put both in jail for the cruel way they used to punish the scholars. "Oh confound that tall squint-eyed fellow Irving I don't like him at all, he ought to be shipped off to Greenland, how do you think he frightened poor Andrew Malcolm my nephew so much as to cause him to go down a coal pit with the colliers and stay a week and frighten us all thinking he was dead, and why did he lift that young fellow Nicol by his ears across the desk and then lash him till he was black and blue, and one day give one of the fellows 120 lashes – Oh hang him he is as bad as the Russians were."

Thomas Carlyle was not as bad as Edward Irving in George Oliphant's eyes. At times Carlyle was severe but he never was so brutal as Irving. When they met he would say – "Well Thomas how are you today? Are you quite well my lad, how do you like your lodgings in the Kirk Wynd, are they comfortable?"

Oliphant could not understand what made Alexander Williamson (1761 – 1838) and Provost William Swan (1777 – 1833) ask the Laird of Raith to enquire at Professor Leslie at the College in Edinburgh to get teachers for the Kirkcaldy burgh school. Old Johnie Hume (1761 – 1840) and Charlie Melville (1776 – 1855)⁸ were well liked and respected teachers already. Poor Johnie Hume never was severe although the boys would set off powder in the school or put crackers in his coat pocket, and Charlie Melville (1776 – 1855) was considered an outstanding teacher. "No, no" Oliphant said, "these two fellows, Irving and Carlyle, should never have been sent over – we didn't want them – who the mischief wants their trash of Latin and Mathematics here I don't believe one of them knows anything of navigation or could take my Brig to Amsterdam."

One day Agnes Williamson (1802 – 1877) was beaten by Thomas Carlyle for not been able to "say her French" – her arm had a blue mark all the way up from her wrist to the elbow with the stripe she got from his tawse (a long leather trap knotted at the end). Her father, Alexander Williamson (1761 – 1838), wrote a severe letter about it and Carlyle replied saying he is sorry for it. Agnes' uncle, George Oliphant (1767 – 1845) was more aggrieved, suggesting – "Sorry for it, well, well, you are easily pleased, had he done that to my daughter Jess the first time I would have seen him on the pier I would have pushed him into the harbour that's all – him strike a girl"⁹.

Sometime after this both Irving and Carlyle left Kirkcaldy the one to shine as a minister, the other as a writer and philosopher, as all the world knows, and little did we all think what great men our two young tall raw-boned teachers would become.

Edward Irving married one of his pupils, Isabella Martin, the daughters of Mr John Martin (1770 – 1837) the Minister of the Established Church, Kirkcaldy. Before he got a Church he used to preach and crowds went to hear him he was so eccentric. One Sacrament Sunday evening he had gone into the pulpit of Kirkcaldy Church to preach for Mr Martin and the Church was crammed with people, when one of the Galleries gave way and caused an awful commotion and rush from all parts of the Church both above and below. The passages got

⁸ Charles Melville (1776 – 1855) was married to Isabel Nairn (1792 – 1852) – daughter of James Nairn (1767 – 1845) and Isabella Barker (1766 – 1842) – a grand - neice of George Barker (1705 – aft. 1784).

⁹ From *The Williamsons of Kirkcaldy* by William Williamson (1804 – 1888).

choked and people were squeezed together, trampled upon and killed on the Gallery stairs and passages below, and thirty lives were lost besides as many more hurt and bruised. One of the killed was Margaret Beveridge (1761 – 1828), wife of **Michael Beveridge** (1749 – 1819). It was in June a fine evening and when the sad news came into the town and people running home bleeding and bruised, it caused a scene never witnessed in the town before or since, and caused many to rue the day Irving ever came to Kirkcaldy.

As always in church the children found it difficult to keep quiet when the Presenter, old Geordie Smith, began to sing. The line was always read, drawled out and then he would give a slow mournful tune that the Covenanters sang once, and woe to any of the children who would laugh. Old John Malcolm's (1745 – 1825) pew was behind the Williamson's. He was an old sea captain and a gruff old fellow, and he was always ready to give the young Williamson children a slight knock on the back of our head with his knuckles to keep us quiet. One day a dog came into Church and that was great fun and a poor swallow one day flew about all day.

Baptisms were a great event for the parents and family and the young children of the church enjoyed a baptism and seeing four or five women with their infants all sitting in the Elder's seat before the pulpit – the more the bairns cried the more the children liked it. To hear the presentor singing and the infants crying at the same time was amusing to children.

As for understanding anything of the sermon it was out of the question, what boy or girl could know or remember a long sermon or exposition about Justification or Sanctification or adaptation perhaps nearly two hours long, and divided into firstly, secondly, thirdly, fourthly, fifthly, sixthly and finally and lastly. Some days two sermons were given at one meeting with two ministers in the pulpit sitting together. The presentor often had curious Psalms to sing and it was ludicrous to hear him give out – "I like an owl in desert air" or "I to the hills will lift my voice" – the queer way he looked.

The Beadle¹⁰ too was a curious character, and used to amuse the young when taking up the Bible – he was called Jamie Simpson and rung the Church bell, acted as Gravedigger and attended the Minister and his wife. Jenny swept out the Church and many times she had to chase the cheeky boys when they tried to pull the rope of the Church bell. She chased them with a long broom over the Churchyard till they were over the wall.

These things happened long ago and the actors of them are all gone – Minister, Presenter, the gravedigger, his wife and others all removed, and new men and new women in their stead, preaching, singing and digging graves as of old, they too in their turns to disappear and be forgotten in the tomb. And generations of the families from Fife mentioned in these pages experienced all of this and much much more....

¹⁰ In the Church of Scotland, the title is used for one who attends the minister during divine service as an assistant.

when coming up the Firth their flags were only half mast high, the sign of a death on board – then it was a sad scene, boats hurrying off to hear the news.”

Many of the families within this genealogy were directly linked to this industry as owners, captains and crews of the various boats that sailed out of the port of Kirkcaldy. The Dougal family owned *Regalia* (377 tons), *Chieftain* (333 tons), *Triad* (287 tons), *Traveller* (241 tons) and *Diana* (197 tons). The Oliphant and Williamson families owned *Mary* (210 tons) and *Earl Percy* (319 tons) as well as part shares in several others¹³. The Beveridge family were known to have owned the *Earl Percy* (320 tons), *Charles Forbes* (313 tons), *George* (261 tons), *Trident* (195 tons), *Elizabeth* (193 tons), *Sisters* (181 tons) and *Marjory* (172 tons)¹⁴.

In the nineteenth century the demand for whale products was enormous. Oil extracted from whale blubber and other products such as whale bone could be obtained and sold to markets throughout Europe. Where up to £60 per ton of oil being paid, owners saw an opportunity to make great profits from the Arctic whaling fields – particularly the Davis Straits. In addition, the English Parliament paid a bounty to shipowners who engaged in whaling.

Along with the dangers of the Arctic ice, England went to war with America in 1813 and the British whalers needed to protect themselves from American privateers. There were several skirmishes during this period; fortunately the Kirkcaldy boats managed to avoid running into them, unlike vessels from other parts.

Robert Oliphant (1765 – 1832), after captaining several of his uncle’s vessels from a young age, retired and took charge of “the Company formed in Kirkcaldy of the Greenland Fishing Co., a very large and lucrative Company. The partners in the Whale Fishing Company were beside Robert Oliphant, Mr Pratt, Viewforth, Edinburgh, Mr Dougall and others. It had on the whole a prosperous career, but it was a cold dangerous business, and woe to the crews of any of the ships that got beset on the ice and kept all winter in Greenland as some once were.”¹⁵

The first listed ship to sail from Kirkcaldy was the newly built *Earl Percy* in 1813. This 320 ton ship came from the Shields dockyards with a partially doubled hull to withstand the dangers of Arctic ice and was owned by members of the Beveridge and Oliphant families and was captained by a Captain Stoddard. Lloyd’s Shipping Register surveyed the ship and rated it several times throughout its working life. In 1833 the *Earl Percy* was given a new keel along with other minor repairs. She was one of the most successful whaling ships out of Kirkcaldy over her working life.

With the settled peace for the first time in decades the 1816 season saw a young **Robert Tod** (1798 – 1847) apprenticed aboard the *Earl Percy*. The only ship from Kirkcaldy to sail for the fisheries, and in the same year

¹³ Ownership of boats in the 19th century was based on a system of shares. A boat would be divided in 64 shares. Shares could be distributed to the boat builder, merchant, owner, captain, family members and friends. By definition each individual could be described as a ship owner. Obviously, the ownership of a vessel may become quite complicated and explains how several families are linked to a number of vessels.

¹⁴ Lloyd’s Register of Ships gives the following dates of construction: *Regalia* (1811), *Chieftain* (1832), *Triad* (1803), *Traveller* (1804), *Mary* (1830), *Earl Percy* (1812), *Charles Forbes* (1816), *George* (1830), *Trident* (1830), *Sisters* (1802) and *Marjory* (1814).

¹⁵ From *The Williamsons of Kirkcaldy* by William Williamson (1804 – 1888).

it returned to Kirkcaldy after taking 21 whales, with a full hold of whale blubber – meaning high profits for all concerned.

In 1819 several ships were lost through a series of gales and the crushing ice flows, including on the 14th July the brig *Sisters* (303 tons) on July 14, principally owned by the Beveridge family. She was lost whilst caught in a devastating gale in latitude 73° 33', south-south-east of the Devil's Thumb.

In 1826 the *Rambler* and the *Triad* supplied provisions to the *Dundee* and other ships in the Strait. The *Rambler* and *Triad* were both ships owned by various members of the Tod, Beveridge, Barker and Oliphant families. The *Triad* was built in 1803 at Shields and was owned at this stage by the Bell & Co – members of the Bell family but was soon owned by the Beveridge family. **Robert Tod** (1798 – 1847) was mate on the *Rambler* in this year until was made Master of the *Caledonia*.

The *Caledonia*, *Earl Percy*, *Rambler* and *Triad* all travelled to the Arctic in 1827 to search for whales – this season was particularly successful both in the Greenland waters and Davis Straits. The *Earl Percy*, under command of Captain Davidson, caught 22 whales resulting in 250 tons of oil. In the 1828 season it was the *Triad's* turn to return with a full hull of oil and bone.

By 1830 the fragility of the whaling industry became evident. In total 91 British ships set out for the Davis Straits, 19 were lost and 21 failed to catch a fish – the *Earl Percy*, *Rambler* and *Triad* coming home 'clean' while the *Egginton* took one whale and the *Caledonia* eight. All of the boats were severely damaged due to the storms, ice floes and squeezes. The 1830's were not good years for the Arctic whalers. The *Egginton* was lost in the Davis Straits in 1832.

The 1834 – 35 seasons were one of the most devastating for the Arctic whalers with eleven ships from various British ports beset in Davis Strait with early ice trapping them for the winter. Several ships were lost with their crews. Both the *Chieftain* and the *Earl Percy* had several bad 'squeezes' in the early ice but managed to return to Kirkcaldy without incident. The *Viewforth* of Kirkcaldy, captained by **William Oliphant** (1801 – 1836), was one of those ships trapped in the ice for four months. They managed to survive and eventually return to Kirkcaldy in February only having lost six of the original crew of 55. By the time they reached safety, the *Viewforth* had taken on survivors from others ships that had been lost – in total of the 85 persons aboard, only seven were fit enough for duty. The account of the crew's survival was well documented and is covered in more detail later. Sadly, Captain Oliphant died the year after, drowning in the Firth of Forth.

1835 was the year when the Kirkcaldy whaling fleet peaked with eight ships venturing to the Arctic. These included: - *Caledonia* (Captain Kinnaird), *Chieftain* (Captain **Robert Tod**), *Earl Percy* (Captain Stoddard), *Triad* (Captain Gray), *Viewforth* (Captain **William Oliphant**), *Hecla* (Captain Burnet) and *Regalia* (Captain Phillips). As already noted, five of these ships were owned by families within this genealogy. Ten years later, the number of boats involved in the industry had drastically reduced – by 1849 only two whaling boats from Kirkcaldy were recorded. In 1847 the *Chieftain* returned with 60 tons of oil but with the sad news of the death of its Captain – **Robert Tod** (1798 – 1847) and of the loss of the *Caledonia*.

For the next ten years three ships continued whaling with mixed success in the northern seas. The *Abram* (Captain Soutter), *Lord Gambier* (Captain Couldry) and *Chieftain* (Captain Hay) had a couple of good seasons in those years but mostly came back with only one or two whales each.

In 1862 these three ships were all wrecked and the Kirkcaldy Whale Shipping Company was wound up. Although the odd boat continued whaling up until the end of the 19th century. This was the effective end of the whaling industry of Kirkcaldy. The harbour and nearby beaches that supported the industry quickly became derelict and the memory of this once thriving industry has, for most locals, been forgotten.

Today there is little evidence of this industry except for the family names that are remembered in streets that bare their names around Kirkcaldy. Of course, as the century came to an end demand for whale products reduced, the whaling stocks had been devastated and members of these families had found new areas of employment while several individuals migrated to Canada, America and New Zealand.



ABOVE LEFT: The Kirkcaldy whaler, *Lord Gambier*, c. 1850 in Kirkcaldy harbour.

THE PRIME GILT BOX OF KIRKCALDY

George Oliphant (1767 – 1845), along with his brother-in-law Alexander Malcolm, and his son John Malcolm; **Robert Tod (1798 – 1847)**, Oliphant’s nephew; **Thomas Bell (1782 – 1842)**, Tod’s brother-in-law; and **John Bell (1806 – 1868)**, Tod’s nephew¹⁶ were involved in a rather unsavoury attempt to acquire the funds of a two hundred year old trust, known as the ‘Prime Gilt Box of Kirkcaldy’. The Prime Gilt Box of Kirkcaldy was an institution established c. 1590 for the benefit of old and disabled mariners belonging to the port of Kirkcaldy, and for their widows and orphans. Musters and crews of vessels from Kirkcaldy had contributed a percentage of their pay from each voyage – at the time of the court case in the 1840’s the assets amounted to some £3,000.

Those mentioned above had contrived a scheme where they had become the only formal members of the trust – the beneficiaries had an in descript associate status. As the formal documents pertaining to the establishment of the trust had long being lost, the six members of the trust agreed to liquidate the assets and distribute the profits amongst themselves after providing for any widows in the fund, but refusing the rights of any living mariners or orphans of deceased mariners. Their actions were discovered and challenged in 1842 by a Mrs Janet Young, presumably a widow or beneficiary of a deceased mariner, and others in the courts. Justice appears to have prevailed setting down a decision that the “funds, property, and effects, heritable and moveable, belonging to the Prime Gilt Box Society of Kirkcaldy, shall be... vested in the present Provost and Bailies of the burgh of Kirkcaldy...”¹⁷ This case appears to have been one of the first in jurisprudence relating to the rules of trusts, and as a result lead to the establishment of Trust Law. There appears to have been no long term consequences for the various members of the family – ironically Robert Tod’s widow and several relations of the group of six may have had reason to claim benefits from the trust due to various deaths at sea in later years. The actual wooden strong box is on permanent display at the Kirkcaldy Museum, attached to the Library in Kirkcaldy. It measures approximately 500 x 300 x 300 mm. It is reinforced with cast iron hinges and latch. It was more than likely stored at ‘Sailor’s Walk’; residence for several generations of the Oliphant family and also the customs office for the harbour of Kirkcaldy.



ABOVE: The Prime Gilt Box used for storing the assets of the society for over 300 years. Now displayed in Kirkcaldy Museum.

¹⁶ Alexander Malcolm and George Oliphant were married to sisters with the maiden name Allison, another name linked to the maritime history of Kirkcaldy.

¹⁷ Refer to Appendix 2 for the full text of the court decision.

THE LAST DUEL IN SCOTLAND¹⁸

The last duel to occur in Scotland was between David Landale and George Morgan. This occurred in Kirkcaldy in 1826 as a result of the rather obstinate and quarrelsome bank manager George Morgan forcing David Landale, a local businessman, to 'defend his honour'. After what appears to have been a protracted period of slander and innuendo George Morgan assaulted David Landale along the High street with a walking stick. The events leading up to the shooting of Morgan and subsequent murder trial are extensively described in James Landale's *Duel*¹⁹.

Within this genealogy, Alison Landale (1736 - ?) married Alexander Fowlis (1740 – 1806). Their daughter, Elizabeth Fowlis (1778 – 1850) married **James Clephan** (1768 – 1851). There is no known connection between Alison Landale and David Landale. The reason for discussing this event is that several other individuals discussed in these pages were associates of both Landale and Morgan and they were drawn into the situation, both before and after the death of George Morgan.

David Landale was a flax spinner, bleacher and linen producer. During the years of war from 1793 - 1815 Kirkcaldy's linen producers had done extremely well. The Royal Navy consisted of nearly 1,000 ships that required sails and the half-million men of the army and navy required uniforms. After almost ten years of poor trade following the war, the linen industry had suffered a great slump in 1825 – with an economy that had been greatly damaged by the prolonged war against France and her allies. In 1825 Landale called together several business associates in the George Inn, located on the High Street.

The George Inn had an upstairs meeting room where local merchants often met after some quiet drinks below. The meeting, called by Landale, "agreed unanimously that a Chamber of Commerce and Manufacturing be established on the most liberal basis by admitting as members all manufacturers, flax spinners, bleachers and shipowners, residing in Kirkcaldy and its districts."²⁰ Landale was elected the first chairman of the Chamber of Commerce. Two of those present at this initial meeting were **George Oliphant (1767 – 1845)** and **William Oliphant (1801 – 1836)**.

Soon after this meeting rumours circulated that David Landale was in some financial difficulty. In the relatively small business community, these rumours had the potential to become self fulfilling. Realising this, Landale traced the source of the rumour back to a young teller, Alexander Beveridge, in the local Bank of Scotland branch managed by George Morgan – Landale had recently closed his accounts with Morgan's bank. Beveridge had told **Michael Barker (1776 – 1838)**, who was highly embarrassed by causing such distress to one of his associates.

The acrimony between Landale and Morgan grew with allegations and counter allegations – all documented through formal correspondence. No doubt the whole affair was the talk of Kirkcaldy society, many taking sides with Landale. Morgan did not enjoy a good reputation due to his belligerent and demanding attitude

¹⁸ Much of what is written in this section is based upon David Landale's book, *Duel*.

¹⁹ James Landale 2006, *Duel*, published by Cannongate Books, Edinburgh.

²⁰ Landale, pp 4.

towards many with whom he did business. Although George Morgan often threatened to ‘demand satisfaction’ of those he felt slighted him, the actual challenge never eventuated.

The breaking point came about one morning at a chance meeting between the two men. Words were exchanged with Morgan striking Landale with his cane in the High Street. Such a public insult could only be appeased by a public apology or a duel. Landale, who had never fired a shot, felt the only remaining recourse was to issue a challenge to Morgan upon the ‘field of honour’ as Morgan refused to apologise. Morgan continued to refuse an apology up until the men were facing each other with loaded pistols upon the duelling ground. Even by this date duelling was illegal and Landale was placing himself in a situation where he would be killed or, if successful, he would be tried for murder.

Those aware of the duel believed Landale was doomed – Morgan had held a commission in the army and was thought a good shot. Regardless of this, early in the morning of 23rd August 1826 in an isolated field outside of Kirkcaldy, following the accepted rules and conventions of a gentleman’s duel David Landale shot dead George Morgan. Immediately after the duel Landale escaped Fife to prepare his case as he expected to be charged with murder.

In the weeks and months between the murder of George Morgan and the murder trial several statements were gathered by Andrew Oliphant²¹, the Sheriff Depute of Fife. Oliphant’s letter was written in a tone that was defending Landale’s actions. Statements were taken by Oliphant from twenty-nine people including: **Michael Barker (1776 – 1838)**, William Tod (1789 - ?) and **William Oliphant (1801 – 1836)** – all members of the families discussed in this family history.

There is no doubt that these statements, taken from many of Landale’s friends and associates through the Chamber of Commerce, were made in defence of Landale. There was no love lost between the Kirkcaldy merchants and the local bank manager. George Morgan had perhaps not been supportive of them during those years of poor trade and this was their opportunity to achieve some retribution for his treatment of them and the other merchants and businessmen of Kirkcaldy.

David Landale was acquitted of murder and resumed his life in Kirkcaldy, remarried after the death of his first wife and reared his children. He continued in the linen trade and became involved with other business interests. Unfortunately, at the age of sixty he suffered a severe stroke. He suffered for fifteen years virtually unable to oversee his business interests and at the time of his death Landale and Co. was insolvent. – a cruel irony, considering the initial rumours that led to the duel was about David Landale’s inability to pay his creditors.

²¹ James Landale states that Andrew Oliphant belonged to ship owning family of Kirkcaldy – there are no OPR records to substantiate this claim, but it possible he was related to a branch not investigated in this genealogy.

THE BARKER, DOUGAL & OLYPHANT FAMILIES

The male members of these three families were long term merchant men and whalers – ship masters, owners and mariners in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries sailing out of Kirkcaldy's harbour. By 1834 the number of ships associated with the port of Kirkcaldy totalled 186. These families, along with the Bell's, and Tod's owned or owned a share in a considerable number – thirteen outright and part owners in several others. These ships were involved in both trade and whaling. Along with their business, the families had close personal associations as the genealogy shows several marriages between them, including other prominent maritime families of the region including the Williamsons and Beveridge's²².

Kirkcaldy Library has in its reference section the log book of Kirkcaldy harbour for the years 1832 – 1834 and it details all the movements of ships to and from the harbour. A brief look showed that *Mary* had come from Riga with 123 tons of flax²³ (12 Nov 1832), *Marjory* had come from St. Petersburg with flax (16 Nov 1832) and *Earl Percy* a whaler was carrying a full load (21 Nov 1832). *Elizabeth* came from Memel²⁴ carrying timber & flax (23 Nov 1832), *Earl Percy* was back from the Davis Straits with 75 tons of blubber and whale bone. (12 Nov 1833).²⁵ Interestingly, the Stocks and Clephan families discussed later were linen merchants, no doubt purchasing flax for linen production.

THE BARKER FAMILY

The Barker family, one of the oldest within this history, links several of the families – Oliphant, Beveridge, and Tod – belonging to this genealogy and several other families whom were part of the Kirkcaldy merchantmen fraternity.

JOHN BARKER (1667 – 1721)

A genealogy²⁶ compiled in 1917 for Mary Christian Hutchison (1843 - ?) notes John Barker's birth as the 14th August 1667. The place of birth and his parents are not provided. The Old Parochial Registers either do not survive or contain a record of this birth. On his twenty-fourth birthday John Barker married Lucras Patrick on the 14th August 1691 at Wemyss, Fife. The christening of four children is recorded there: Christian (1697 – 1735), **John Barker** (1699 - ?), Elizabeth (1702 - ?), and **George Barker** (1705 – aft. 1784). However, the death of James (c.1692 – 1721) and Lucretia Barker²⁷ (c. 1693 – 1754) are both recorded in Lair Registers.

²² There are Beveridge's linked to the Clephan family, however there is no evidence to show any direct relationships. That line appear to come from a family of weavers from Wemyss, Fife, Scotland. See the Section on the Beveridge families.

²³ The flax plant is cultivated both for its fibre, from which linen yarn and fabric are made, and for its seed, called linseed, from which linseed oil is obtained and used in linoleum production.

²⁴ Memel lies on the Baltic at the mouth of the River Niemen. The port city was founded by the knights of the Livonian Order in 1252 and became an important trading centre during the Middle Ages when it was part of the Hanseatic League. The region later came under Swedish control and, following the Napoleonic wars under Prussia. It remained within the German Reich until the end of World War I.

²⁵ From the Fife Family History Society website:- <http://www.fifefhs.org>

²⁶ This genealogy is held in the St Andrews University Library.

²⁷ Lucretia Barker (c.1693 – 1754) married Thomas Anderson, merchant and feuar of Dysart. They had four children: Christian (1717-1755), Robert (1719 - ?), Thomas (1721 – 1755) and Margaret (1731 – 1736).

GEORGE BARKER (1705 – 1784)

The youngest son of John Barker (1667 – 1721) and Lucras Patrick (c.1670 – 1720), George Barker was born 7 January 1705 in Kirkcaldy and was to hold the post Bailie²⁸ for the port of Kirkcaldy and was a ship owner and merchant there. He married Christian Bett²⁹ (c. 1710 – 1771) on the 2nd December 1732 in Kirkcaldy. They had four children: - Mary Barker (1733 – 1775), Agnes Barker (1742 – 1777), **John Barker (1738 – 1780)** and Christian Barker (1742 – 1777). John Barker, possibly the children's uncle and George's brother is listed as the witness to these baptisms. The two youngest daughters of George Barker (1710 – 1784) and Christian Bett (c.1710 – 1771), Agnes Barker (1736 – 1782) and Christian Barker (1741 – 1777), both married into other Kirkcaldy maritime families. The descendents of many of George Barker's children became some Kirkcaldy's greatest merchants, public figures and benefactors.

On the death of George's three daughters Mrs William Oliphant – Mary Barker (1733 – 1775), Mrs Henry Oliphant – Christian Barker (1742 – 1777) and Mrs George Dougal (? - 1771) – Agnes Barker (1742 – 1782), all seven of his living grandchildren were raised in a big house at the top of the West Pier in Kirkcaldy by George Barker (1705 – 1784) and Henry Oliphant (1741 – 1820). On George Barker's death his ships and the real estate was shared out equally between the seven children.

THE BETT FAMILY

The Bett family was an old Kirkcaldy family whose line ended in the early 19th century. Few records survive to indicate their place in the community. They were presumably part of the burgeoning merchant class establishing itself in the growing trading port and manufacturing centre that was Kirkcaldy in the 18th century.

PETER BARKER (1736 - ?)

Peter Barker was born 15 August 1736, the third child of John Barker (1699 - ?) and Margaret Brown (1700 - ?). He married Isabel Belfrage³⁰ on 9th April 1764 in Kirkcaldy. He too is identified as a shipowner. They had ten children: John (1765 - ?), Isabella (1766 – 1842) wife of **James Nairn (1767 – 1845)**³¹, Margaret (1768 – 1854), Marjory (1771 – 1837), Elizabeth (1772 – 1845), Barbara (1774 - ?), **Michael Barker** (1776 – 1838), George (1782 – 1801), Henry (1785 – 1785) and Christian (1789 – 1808).

²⁸ **Bailie** – (alternative spelling **Baillie**, from Old French) was a local civic officer in Scottish burghs, approximately equivalent to the post of alderman or magistrate in other countries. They were responsible for a jurisdiction called a *bailiary* (alt. *bailiery*).

²⁹ Old Mr Bett was in the Navy who was a Nephew of Janet Bett (c.1710 – 1771) above mentioned. George Bett was his son and there were two Misses Bett – they were never married and at their deaths the family became extinct in Kirkcaldy. Poor old Billy Norman who was well known to all the Boys being deaf and dumb lived with the Betts – he was a harmless creature and much felt for. He was the son of Mrs Bett by a former marriage to a Mr Norman. The Misses Bett used always to keep dogs for pets, and I remember of being told (when the last Miss Bett died and the house examined) that there were several boxes found in the garret filled with sand, and in each of them a dog neatly dressed where they had put the one after the other as they had died. They had never told anyone they had done such a thing. – William Williamson (1804 – 1888).

³⁰ Belfrage is a variation of the surname Beveridge. There is, however, no known connection to any other of the Beveridge families to be found in this genealogy.

³¹ James Nairn (1767 – 1845) and Isabella Barker (1766 – 1842): A history of their descendants can be found in *Kirkcaldy's Famous Folk*, Vol 3. During the 19th Century the Nairn family were pioneers in establishing the Kirkcaldy linoleum industry after the demise of the heavy linen trade – the demand for linen used for sail making was virtually wiped out as the age of steam came to the ship propulsion.

JAMES NAIRN (1767 – 1845)

James Nairn was the youngest son of Robert Nairn (c. 1730 - ?) and Agnes Allen (c.1730 – 1768) of Kirkcaldy. He was born 12th April 1767. His grandfather, Andrew Nairn had been Deacon of the Weaver's Guild and his father was also involved in the weaving trade. He married Isobella Barker (1766 – 1842) 30th April 1787 in Kirkcaldy. They had ten children: - Robert (1788 - ?), Isabel (1789 – bef. 1792), Agnes (1790 - ?) married to the Kirkcaldy school master Charles Melville (1792 – 1852), James (1794 - ?), Janet (1796 - ?), Sarah (1798 - ?), Margaret (1800 - ?), **Michael Nairn (1804 – 1858)** and James (1810 - ?). In the 1790's times were tough for all involved in the linen and weaving trade. The American war of independence in 1776 had meant the loss of a significant market – the same problems befell **James Clephan (1768 – 1851)**.

As a result James Nairn worked as both a grocer and shoemaker at different times throughout his life. However, he was part of the 'respectable' society of Kirkcaldy and was accepted amongst them – considering his wife; Isabella Barker (1766 – 1842) was a member of the large and influential shipowners and linen manufacturing family discussed above. In addition James Nairn was made a Burgess of the Royal Burgh of Kirkcaldy in 1786 and a Burgess of Kinghorn in 1790.

MICHAEL NAIRN (1804 – 1858)

Michael Nairn (1804 – 1858) was the second youngest child of **James Nairn** (1767 – 1845) and Isabel Barker (1776 – 1842). Some would say his involvement in the Linen trade was his destiny, given his grand-father's and great-grand-father's long tradition in the Fife linen industry. Michael served his apprenticeship in Dundee. By 1825 was running his own loom in the Linktown of Abbotshall and by 1828 he had moved back to Kirkcaldy and bought a house near the port building a canvas factory at the top of his garden. He profited greatly from selling canvas, primarily for sails, but had the foresight to see the age of sail was coming to an end.



ABOVE: Michael Nairn c. 1855.

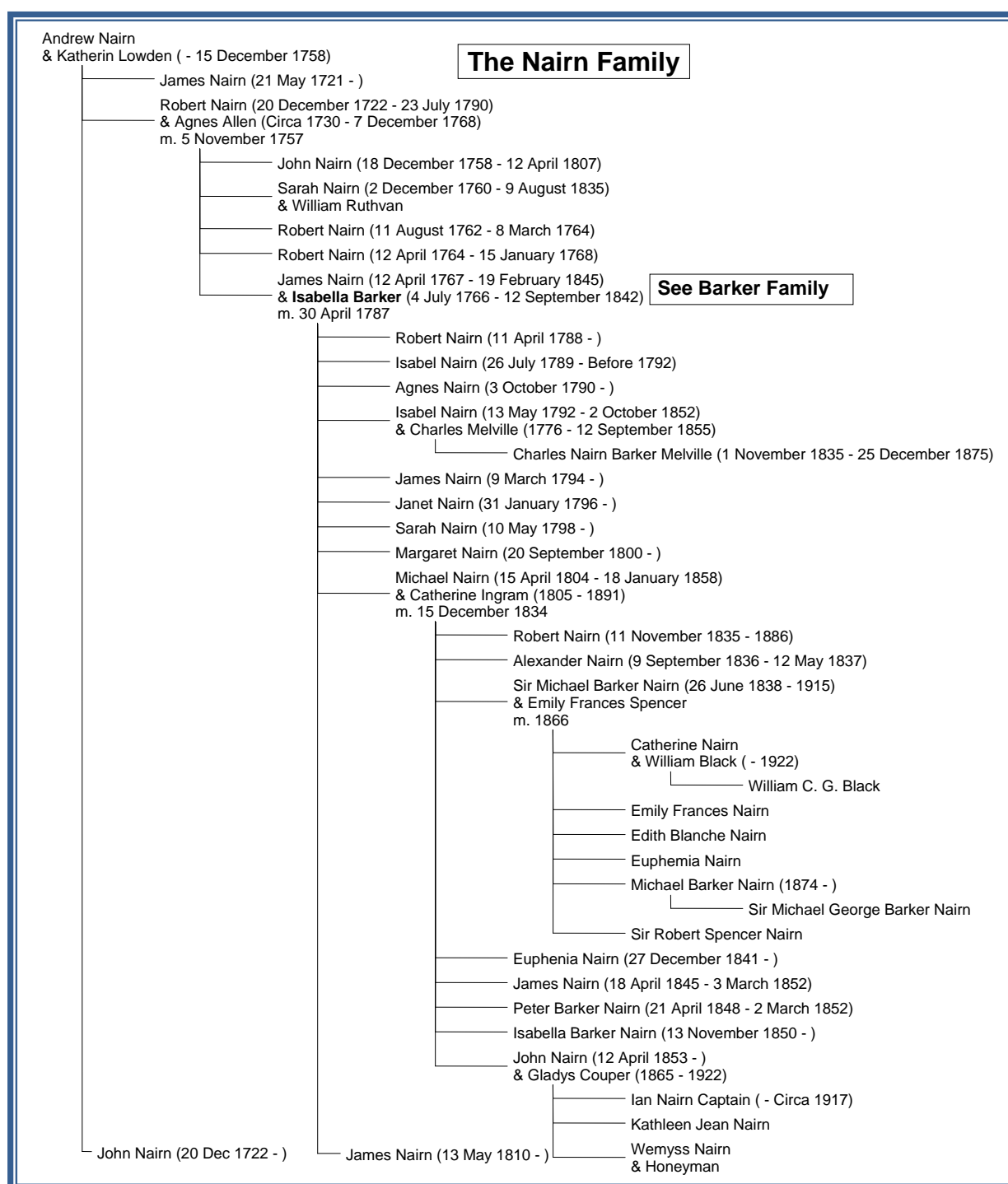
In Kirkcaldy on 15th December 1834 James married Catherine Ingram (1805 – 1891); she being the daughter of Alexander Ingram of St Mary's Bleechfields. They had eight children: - Alexander (1836 – 1837), Michael Barker (1838 – 1915), Robert (1835 – 1886), Euphemia (1841 - ?), James (1845 – 1852), Peter Barker (1848 – 1852), Isabella Barker (1850 - ?) and John (1853- ?).

Michael Nairn opened Scotland's first floor cloth in 1847 at Pathhead. It was nicknamed 'Nairn's Folly' as it was early 1849 before any sales to take place. Although Scottish floorcloth was exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851 it was not until the 1862 Exhibition that Nairn's was awarded and again in the Paris Exhibition of 1867 Nairn's Linoleum won recognition. The Kirkcaldy linoleum industry benefited the Nairn family and the Nairn family were great philanthropists of the town in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Michael Barker Nairn (1838 – 1915) gifted Dysart House which became the Cottage Hospital to the town in 1890 and its later extensions in 1899 and 1915. He set up a Sabbath School in Pathhead, assisted in the building of St Brycedale's Church in 1877, gifting two stained glass windows and the organ. Michael Barker Nairn (1838 – 1915) became burgess of Kirkcaldy in 1868 and was knighted in 1905. The Nairn Baronetcy, of

Rankeilour, Collessie, and Dysart House, Dysart, in the County of Fife, was created in the Baronetage of the United Kingdom on 16 December 1904 for Michael Nairn.

The Spencer-Nairn Baronetcy, of Monimail in the County of Fife, was created in the Baronetage of the United Kingdom on 20 January 1933 for Robert Spencer-Nairn, a Major in the Fife and Forfar Yeomanry. Born Robert Nairn, he was the second son of the first Baronet of the 1904 creation by his wife Emily Frances, daughter of Alfred Rimington Spencer. In 1928 he adopted the additional surname of Spencer.



JOHN BARKER (1738 – 1780)

The child of **George Barker** (1705 – 1784) and Christian Bett (c. 1710 – 1771), John Barker was born 26th October 1738 in Kirkcaldy. He followed in his father's footsteps, holding the post of Bailie for Kirkcaldy and was also a ship owner. He married Agnes Arthur (c.1740 – 1780) on 24th October 1760 in Kirkcaldy. The marriage was also recorded at Wemyss. They had ten children: - Agnes Barker (1760 - ?), Catherine Barker (1762 - ?), Elizabeth Barker (c. 1763 – 1785), John Barker (1764 - ?), Janet (1766 - ?), George Barker (1768 – 1780) – a surgeon, Margaret (1770 - 1854), Grizel Barker (1773 - ?), Mary (1776 - ?), and Robert Barker (1779 - ?). John Barker and his son George both died on the same day – 24th January 1780 – the cause has not been noted, however one would assume it may have been some sort of accident or possible due to one of the epidemics, such as cholera or typhus, so prevalent at the time. Agnes Arthur, wife and mother, died the 10th April of the same year, further supporting the cause of death from some epidemic.

MICHAEL BARKER (1776 – 1838)

In the old Kirkcaldy Kirk yard, against the eastern boundary wall, a large classically styled monument stands in testimony to Michael Barker, manufacturer and ship owner, and his siblings listed above. He was born in 1776, most likely in Kirkcaldy, the eighth child of Peter Barker (1736 - ?) and Isabel Belfrage. One can only assume he did not marry, as there is no mention of a wife and children upon the family monument. His business partner was William Russell.

ELIZABETH BARKER (1733 – 1785)

Elizabeth Barker was born the daughter of John Barker (1699 - ?) and Margaret Brown (c.1700 - ?) on the 17th July 1733 in Kirkcaldy. She was the first wife of Michael Beveridge (1738 – 1827)³² who married on 20th February 1767 in Kirkcaldy. Michael Beveridge held the position Comptroller of Customs as well as being a shipowner. They had seven children: Michael (1768 – 1820), John (1772 - ?), Henry (1773 - ?), Isabel (1776 – 1839), George (1777 – 1820), Margaret (1779 - ?) and Marjory (1768 – 1835). After Elizabeth Barker's death, her husband, Michael, remarried Barbara Graham (1768 – 1835) on 29th January 1789 in Kirkcaldy.



ABOVE: The Barker memorial stone in the Old Kirkcaldy Kirkyard.

MARY BARKER (1733 – 1775)

The eldest daughter of **George Barker** (1705 – 1784) and Christian Bett (c.1710 – 1771), Mary Barker (1733 – 1775) was born in Kirkcaldy on 3 December 1733. She married **William Olyphant** (c. 1730 – 1777) in Kirkcaldy on 11th April 1763. They had five children. The details of this family are outlined below.

³² Michael Beveridge's (1738-1827) pedigree is not known. The Beveridge name is common in Kirkcaldy and Fife and after extensive research, it is impossible to ascertain from which line Michael Beveridge descends.

AGNES BARKER (1736 – 1782)

The daughter of **George Barker** (1705 – 1784) and Christian Bett (c.1710 – 1771) Agnes Barker was born 13th February 1736 in Kirkcaldy. At the age of 26 she married George Dougal (c. 1730 – 1771) on the 17th September 1762. George is noted as a mariner and shipmaster. They had three children: - **George Barker** (1763 – 1823)³³ shipowner and master of the *Concord*; **Thomas Barker** (1765 – bef. 1793) and **David Barker** (1769 – 1842) who lived at Ferry Port on Craig, Scotscrag – a proprietor and shipowner.

THE DOUGALL FAMILY

George Dougal (? - 1771) of Kirkcaldy married Agnes Barker (1742 – 1782). They had three sons: - George Dougal (1763 – 1823) unmarried; Thomas Dougal (1765 – 1793) London, unmarried; and David Dougal (1769 – 1842) of Scotscraig, unmarried. The Dougalls, after being at School and done with their education became Merchants, their father having left them well provided for.

GEORGE DOUGALL (1763 – 1823)

“Went to London and made a large fortune by dealing in the funds etc., and getting splendid freights such as 7d a pound freight on Brazilian Cotton once by one of his vessels from Brazil to London and speculating in the British funds during the War. The £100 3% Consols were as low at one time as 69. He returned to Kirkcaldy where he lived and died, and left a large fortune which went to his brother David. He was never married.”³⁴

THOMAS DOUGALL (1765 – 1793)

Was a Shipbuilder and Architect – a clever man. He was lost in a fine vessel at sea – never married.

DAVID DOUGALL (1769 – 1842)

David Dougal (1769 – 1842) “Was a very successful manufacturer and shipowner in Kirkcaldy and lived there. He succeeded on the death of his brother to his fortune £100,000 or so, and at his death and being unmarried his fortune and estate of Scotscraig, where he died – it went to a male heir called William Stark whose mother, Margaret Dougal (? – 1830), was an only daughter of Provost Thomas Dougal(? – 1786). This Thomas Dougal being a cousin to David Dougal's father.

“However the law made this William Stark heir to this rich old man, and he became laird of Scotscraig much to the chagrin and disappointment of Robert Oliphant (1765 – 1832), George Oliphant (1767 – 1845) and **Mary Oliphant** (1771 – 1842) who were first cousins. Their mother, Mary Barker (1733 – 1775) and David Dougal's mother, Agnes Barker (1736 – 1782), being sisters. It made great talk at the time and the feeling in the town was that it should have gone to the Oliphant family and no will was found which was thought ugly. Rumour was that Mary Oliphant (1771 – 1842) was sure to get the property, as David Dougal (1769 – 1842) always showed great kindness to her and had her up at Scotscraig at times.”³⁵

³³ George Dougal (1763 – 1823) married Elizabeth Baxter (? – 1854) and had a daughter, Elizabeth (1819 – 1837).

³⁴ From Thomas Williamson's *The Williamsons of Kirkcaldy* c. 1873.

³⁵ From Thomas Williamson's *The Williamsons of Kirkcaldy* c. 1873.

WILLIAM STARK OF SCOTSCRAIG (1795 – 1850)

Known as the Lucky Baker's son. "William Stark (1795 – 1850) or as many used to call him "Willie Stark" was a lucky fellow as the world would call him. His father, William Stark (? – 1777) was a decent Baker and Kirk Elder in Kirkcaldy who married Margaret Dougall (? – 1830), the only child of Provost Thomas Dougall (? – 1786). Unfortunately for the Oliphants and others Margaret Dougall (c. 1745 – 1830) gave birth to William Stark (1795 – 1850) when she was fifty years old truly for many born 'out of due season' and the only one she had. The boy grew and lived, and by-and-bye came to William Kelly & Coy's Office in Glasgow where he was a Clerk along with Robert Kettle and others. He by-and-bye went back to Kirkcaldy and became a manufacturer along with David Dougall (1769 – 1842). William Stark (1795 – 1850) married Mary Brown by whom he had one son and three daughters.

"By-and-bye he fell heir to Scotsraig, his son, William Stark Dougall (1824 – 1847), however had died in Edinburgh before this, whilst studying as a medical man, or rather as an amateur in medicine. He caught fever and died. William Stark died shortly after getting possession of Scotsraig where David Dougall (1769 – 1842) died before him. The three daughters lived in Scotsraig, the eldest Miss Stark the heiress married Captain Maitland who took the name Maitland-Dougall of Scotsraig, the next sister married an English clergyman in England, and the last married a landed proprietor in Ireland."³⁶

CHRISTIAN BARKER (1741 – 1777)

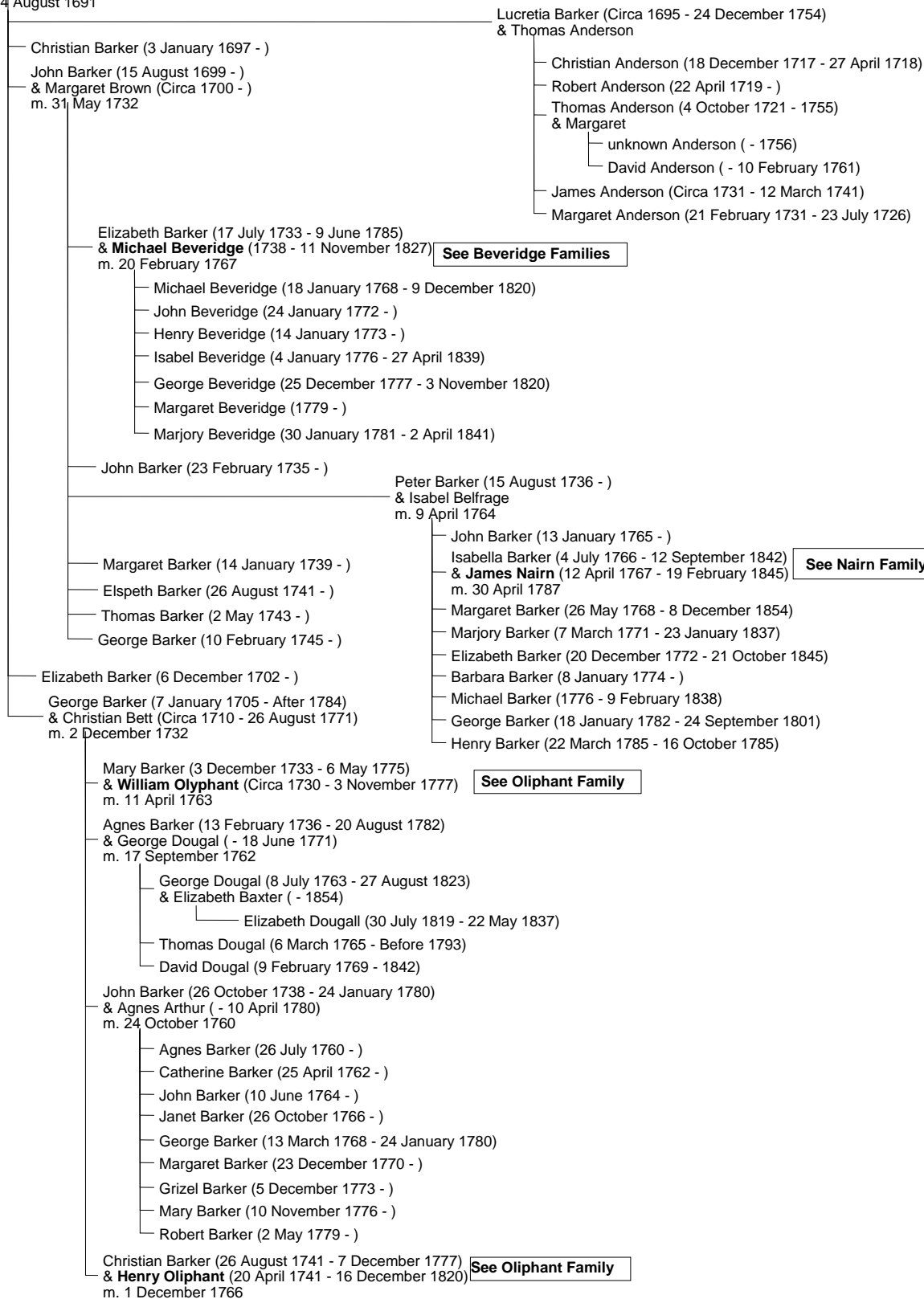
The youngest child of **George Barker** (1705 – 1784) and Christian Bett (c.1710 – 1771), Christian Barker was born 26th August 1741 in Kirkcaldy. She married Thomas Aitkin on 1st July 1763 and had a son John born 26th August 1764. The young widowed mother's life was turned upside down with the death of her husband, Thomas, by September 1765.

Christian Barker either through necessity, grief or the support of a relative, married her brother-in-law **Henry Oliphant (1741 – 1820)** – Christian's sister, Mary, was married to Henry's older brother William Olyphant (1724 – 1777). No doubt the pair had known each other for a number of years through their older siblings and they may have known each other longer as they were of the same age in a relatively small community. Whatever the circumstances, Christian Barker and Henry Oliphant were married in Kirkcaldy on 1st December 1766. They had three children: Christian (1770 – 1836), Robert (1772 – 1779) and Janet (1777 – 1852). Unfortunately, Christian Barker died 7th December 1777, some three weeks after the birth of her daughter Janet, perhaps due to the complications of giving birth; thus, leaving her eldest son an orphan and three other young children to be raised by her father, **George Barker** (1705 – 1784) and husband in George Barker's house.

³⁶ From Thomas Williamson's *The Williamsons of Kirkcaldy* c. 1873.

The Barker Family

John Barker (14 August 1667 -)
& Lucras Patrick
m. 14 August 1691



THE OLIPHANT FAMILY

There is some dispute about the pedigree of this family. The genealogy cited earlier suggests a James Oliphant and Isobel Wyse to be the antecedents of this Oliphant family. The author of the St Andrews manuscript declares the destruction of the official records prevents precise dates being provided. The marriage of William Oliphant (c.1660 - ?) and Christen Grieg (c.1660 - ?), along with the birth of their children has been obtained and followed by the Old Parochial Registers available and along with the additional information provided therein makes the following pedigrees appear correct.

The Oliphant family of Kirkcaldy can be traced back to the middle of the 17th century. William Oliphant (c.1660 - ?) and Christen Grieg (c.1660 - ?) of Abbotshall and were married 20th May 1687 at Kirkcaldy. They had five children: William Oliphant (1698 - ?), **Robert Oliphant (1702 – 1770)**, twins Archibald (1704 - ?) & Henry (1704 - ?), and Helen (1707 - ?). William Williamson (1804 – 1888) supports the claim that the Oliphants of Kirkcaldy were descendants of the Oliphants of Gask. They were well known Jacobites and several sources cite the Kirkcaldy Oliphants were also known to have Jacobite sympathies. William Williamson (1804 – 1888) makes the assertion that a brother of **Robert Oliphant (1702 – 1770)** fought at Culloden with Bonnie Prince Charlie in 1746.

SAILORS' WALK or OLIPHANT HOUSE – KIRKCALDY

“Sailors’ Walk claimed to be the oldest house in Kirkcaldy, is a heritage listed building. While the bulk is 17th Century it incorporates earlier parts said to date back to around 1460, as old as Ravenscraig Castle or slightly older. The south wing is older than the north wing having crow stepped gables and projecting beams. There is a ‘painted ceiling’ on the part entered from Malcolm’s Wynd. The beams have various bible texts in black lettering and the floor boards between shows some evidence of elaborate painting and decoration of birds and floral motifs.

The Customs Office had been housed in the building – probably as several of the Oliphant family and their relatives were known to be land-waiters or customs officials. “At one time the house contained four dwellings, East House, High House, The Garret and Laigh House, but by 1820 it was fully under the ownership of the Oliphant family. The building situated at the eastern end of the High street stood overlooking old Kirkcaldy harbour. The view from the first floor provided a clear view of all boats coming and going. This view is now obscured by apartment housing that has been built upon landfill into the original harbour.

Upon one of the walls within Sailors’ Walk there is the Coat of Arms of Charles II dated 1662. One of the principal rooms in the south wing is known as Queen Mary’s Room, so named after Mary of Guise (1515 – 1556)³⁷ who was thought to have stayed there, mother of Mary Queen of Scots and wife of James V.³⁸ This room has relief decoration around the wall with fleur-de-leis, perhaps relating to her French origins. The Oliphant’s were known to be sympathetic to the Scottish Jacobite cause in Scotland – a claim no doubt supported by the decoration discovered in the house.

³⁷ As young bride of James V of Scotland who she married by proxy, Mar landed in Fife on 10th June 1538, and married in person to James V a few days later at St Andrews.

³⁸ This information was taken from *Kirkcaldy's Plaques to People and Places*, Kirkcaldy Civic Society, 2000, pp 11 – 12.

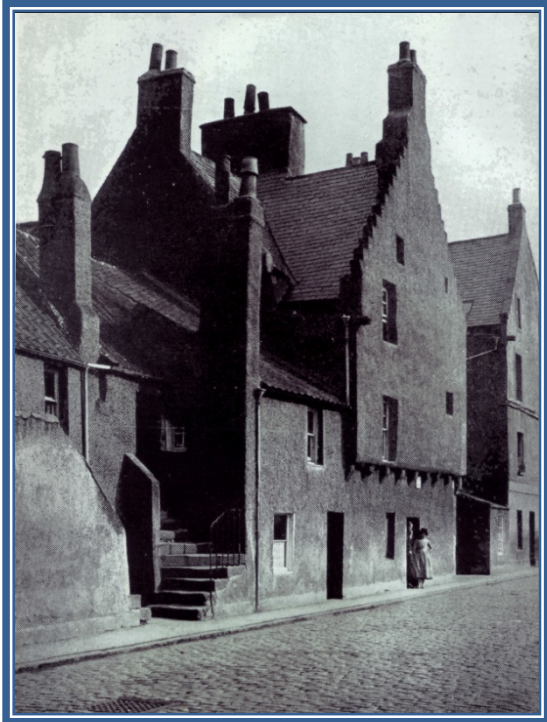
BELOW: Chart so arranged to show how each portion of the house and ground came into the possession of William Oliphant (1797 - 1867).

NORTH LANDS OF SMEATON											
Road Lying between Kirkcaldy Subjects and the Lands of Smeaton											
Fish or Smith's Wynd Houses with outside Stairs	OLIPHANT'S TERRACE					Stairs leading to Harley Terrace					
	Kail Yaird 18 th Century – Ground at one time belonging to Patrick Drysdale. Acquired by William Oliphant (1797 – 1867), and made by him into a garden. Corn Barn 1650 - 1800 or so.										
	<p>No. 1. <u>Patrick Jackson.</u> Thomas Brown. Elizabeth and Christian Brown Derelict for many years – bought by Robert Oliphant (1705 - 1770). 1771. Inherited by his son, Henry Oliphant (1741 – 1820), the shipowner and repaired by him. 1781. Life-rented to his wife, Janet Hutchison (c.1760 – 1837) (His first wife was Christian Barker (1741 – 1777)). On death of Mrs Janet Oliphant or Hutchison (c.1760 – 1837), it was inherited by his son William Oliphant (1797 - 1867) 1837.</p>	<p>No 2. <u>James Pittilloch.</u> John Laing and Elizabeth Barker-possibly (1702 – 1771). Left by above Elizabeth Barker (1702 – 1771) to John Barker (1699 - ?) and George Barker (1705 – aft 1784), 1771. Bought by Henry Oliphant (1795 – 1824), son of Henry Oliphant (1741 – 1820), the shipowner. Bought by Henry Oliphant (1823 – 1869), writer in Aberdeen, son and grandson of above two Henry's. He sold to his uncle, William Oliphant (1797 - 1867), for £1 10/-</p>	<p>No. 3. <u>High House and Garret, David Laing, 1719.</u> Walter Laing 1763. Robert Law, brought from above £7 – 1767. David Anderson brought it for £13. Sold to Alexander Oliphant (1793 – 1821), who left it to Robert Oliphant (1791 – 1829), brought by William Oliphant (1797 - 1867). <u>Laigh House</u> David Laing 1719. Walter Laing. 1763. Alexander Gib – brought for £7 – 1767. Left to his daughter Agnes Gib or Mitchelson Inherited from her by her son, Henry Mitchelson. Brought for £75 by trustees of William Oliphant (1797 - 1867)</p>	<p>No. 4. <u>About 1650 Robert Brown. Mariner.</u> <u>Alexander Baird.</u> John Baird, son of above. Life rented to Grizel Whyte, wife of John Baird 1733. Christian Baird, daughter of the above next proprietor she married Thomas Dougall (1765 – 1793). Inherited by John Baird, nephew of Christian and grandson of above John Baird and Grizel Whyte 1765. Mrs Stark Dougall, sister of John Baird jr. Succeeded. 1786. Her daughters, the Mrs Stark Dougall, sold it for £400 to William Oliphant (1797 - 1867).</p>	<p>No. 5. <u>About 1600. Patrick Rankin</u> <u>James Whyte</u> James Whyte's heirs Bought by David Bowman, son of Thomas Bowman across the Wynd, subjects pertaining to Thomas Bowman. 1693 Janet Bowman, daughter of above, inherited and left to her son, James Robertson. Bought in 1826 by Robert Oliphant (1791 – 1829), as trustee for his father, Henry Oliphant (1741 – 1820), the shipowner. Sold by Robert's widow, afterwards Mrs Forrest to William Oliphant (1797 - 1867) 1837.</p>	Malcolm Wynd or Common Vennel Now known as Oliphant's Wynd. Subjects pertaining to Thomas Bowman 1682.					

HIGH STREET SOUTH



Clockwise from top left: Oliphant's house or Sailor's Walk as it appeared in 2008; The 17th century Coat Arms of Charles II that survives in one of the private rooms; The cedar lined office that was the Customs Office; Elevations of the buildings prior to the restoration carried out in the 1950's; and the decorated ceiling with various biblical texts.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Images of Sailor's Walk – Photograph c. 1890. A postcard image from c. 1950; Photograph c. 1950 prior to restoration; Rear of building from garden 2008; and from window into Malcolms Wynd 2008.

ROBERT OLIPHANT (1702 – 1770)

Robert Oliphant (1702 – 1770), a mason in Kirkcaldy, married Jannet Bett (c.1705 – 1769) sometime around 1724 and had five children: **William Oliphant (1724 – 1777)**, **Elizabeth Oliphant (1729 - ?)**, Christian (1734 - ?), Agnes (1736 - ?), and **Henry Oliphant (1741 – 1820)**. William and Henry married the daughters of **George Barker (1710 - 1784)** and Christian Bett (1710 – 1771) as noted earlier.

Robert Oliphant and Jannet Bett are remembered in Kirkcaldy Old Kirk yard. On the reverse side of the 'masonic stone' with the following inscription that is barely legible – “AD 1778 In memory of Robert Oliphant and Jannet Bett his spouse who lay here. This stone was set by William and Henry Oliphant”. This may suggest that their siblings had all died when quite young or certainly before the death of their parents.



ABOVE: The grave stone of Robert Oliphant and Jannet Bett. The hour glass, skull and cross bones are 17th century symbols of mortality.

WILLIAM OLYPHANT (1724 – 1777)

The Child of Robert Oliphant (1702 – 1770) and Jannet Bett (c.1705 – 1769), William Olyphant was born 24th May 1724 in Kirkcaldy. William Oliphant married **Mary Barker (1733 – 1755)** on 11th April 1763 in Kirkcaldy. In early records William's profession is recorded as a 'sailor', later he was to become both a shipowner and shipmaster. They had five children: Christian (1764 - ?), **Robert Oliphant (1765 – 1832)**, George (1767 – 1845), Janet (1769 – before 1784) and Mary (1771 – 1842).

ELIZABETH OLIPHANT (1729 – ?)

Lizzie Oliphant was the eldest daughter of Robert Oliphant (1702 – 1770) and Jannet Bett (c.1705 – 1769) born 2nd March 1729. She married Alexander Brown c. 1760. They had six children: - Janet (1760 – ?), Jean (1761 – ?), James (1763 – ?), Christian ((1776 – ?), William (1771 – ?) and Henrietta (?– ?).

AGNES OLIPHANT (1736 - ?)

The Child of Robert Oliphant (1702 – 1770) and Jannet Bett (c.1705 – 1769), Nancy Olphant was born 10th October 1736 in Kirkcaldy. She married Mr David Boswell of shipowner of Leven c. 1755 and had three children: - Agnes, **Robert Boswell (1761 – c.1833)** and George.

The Boswalls of Kirkcaldy were descendants of the Boswell Lairds of Auchinleck, Ayrshire. They were also descended from the royal Stewarts through an illegitimate daughter of James Hamilton, Earl of Arran. Robert Boswall's mother was Agnes Oliphant (1736 - ?) of the prominent Kirkcaldy merchantman family, and his father was in the same business; many of his ancestors' occupations are described in documents as "skipper burgess of Kirkcaldy."

ROBERT BOSWELL (1761 – c.1833)

Lieutenant Commander Robert Boswall (1761 – c.1833) was born 19th January 1761 in Kirkcaldy and died circa 1833 in Leven. He married Ann Connell 19th February 1801 in Garrison of Gibraltar, Spain, daughter of Captain Thomas Connell. She died Abt. 1833 in Leven, Fifeshire, Scotland.

Robert Boswall (1761 – c.1833) was chosen by a childless relative, Dr. Alexander Boswall, to be heir to his purchased estate of Blackadder in Berwickshire, Scotland. To prepare him for this responsibility, Robert was placed in the Royal Navy and a fiancée, Lady Lucy Ann Preston of Lincolnshire, was chosen for him. Robert did well at sea as Masters Mate aboard the HMS *Queen Charlotte*³⁹ and when his captain died at sea⁴⁰ he was bidden to take care of the widow and her daughter.

Boswall was made Lieutenant Commander in October 1800, commanding the British Gunship *Cacafogo*, during English hostilities with Spain and France. While moored at the Royal Navy Garrison in Gibraltar, he married his former Captain's daughter. Dr Boswall disinherited him for disobeying his wishes and Lady Lucy Ann Preston was given to another cousin, Thomas Boswall, who did inherit both the Blackadder estate, and the family's Kirkcaldy shipyard.

This was not the only consequence of Robert's actions. When he eventually sailed into Portsmouth Harbour with a wife and child in tow, he was immediately turfed from regular service and put on half-pay for his folly, after which he moved to Leven. Unfortunately, he was humiliated once again – when the War of 1812 began and he was called back to Portsmouth to take command of a warship, he was illegally off on a trip to India sailing a Kirkcaldy merchantman for his luckier cousin, the heir Thomas Boswall. His chance to salvage his naval career had been lost, and he was once again denied the chance to be a player in the great events of England's history, as he had been at the turn of the century.

HENRY OLIPHANT (1741 – 1820)

The youngest child of Robert Oliphant (1702 – 1770) and Jannet Bett (c.1705 – 1769), Henry Oliphant was born 20th April 1741 and like his elder brother, was to become both a shipowner and shipmaster in Kirkcaldy. As noted earlier he married his sister-in-law and the young widow of Thomas Aitkin, **Christian Barker (1741 – 1777)** on 1st December 1766 in Kirkcaldy. This was Henry Oliphant's first marriage which produced three children: Christian Oliphant (1770 – 1836) married to **George Beveridge (1757 – 1835)**, Robert (1772 – 1779) and Janet Oliphant (1777 – 1852) married to her cousin **Robert Oliphant (1765 – 1832)**.

³⁹ HMS Queen Charlotte was a 100-gun First rate ship of the line of the Royal Navy, launched on 15 April 1790 at Chatham. She was built to the draught of Royal George designed by Sir Edward Hunt, though with a modified armament. In 1794 the Queen Charlotte was the flagship of Admiral Lord Howe at the Battle of the Glorious First of June, and in 1795 she took part in the Battle of Groix. At about 6am on 17 March 1800, whilst operating as the flagship of Vice-Admiral Lord Keith, the vessel was engaging in a reconnoitre of the island of Cabrera when she caught fire. The crew was unable to extinguish the flames and at about 11am the ship blew up with the loss of 673 officers and men.

⁴⁰ The HMS *Queen Charlotte* did burn at sea off the island of Cabrera in March 1800, and although the record does not show the captain's name as Connell, he may have been one of the officers, and the date is consistent with this account.

Seven years after the death of **Christian Barker (1741 – 1777)**, presumably in childbirth, Henry Oliphant married Janet Hutchison (c.1760 – 1837)⁴¹ on the 20th April 1784 in Kirkcaldy. They had eight children: Cecilia (1785 – 1872) married to **Alexander Anderson (1782 – 1856)**, Elizabeth (1787 - ?), Mary (1788 - ?) married to William Thomson a block maker in Leith; Robert (1791 – 1829) married to Margaret Seaton Peddie, Alexander (1793 – 1821), Henry⁴² (1795 – 1824) married to Margaret Brown (c.1800 – c. 1870), who lived in Townsend Place and Captain of the *Caledonia*; William (1797 – aft. 1867)⁴³ a shipowner; James (1800 – 1829)⁴⁴ a shipowner; and Cecilia (1785 - ?) who married to **Alexander Anderson (1782 – 1856)** – a farmer in Bankhead.

According to Thomas Williamson (1804 – 1888) people had little time for the second family of Henry Oliphant (1741 – 1820) – “his wife, Janet Hutchison (c.1760 – 1837) was not considered his equal and her Children were not well brought up. The sons being rather reckless and the daughters cold-hearted and proud. All the other Oliphants had sense and kindness and were respected.”

ALEXANDER ANDERSON (1782 – 1856)

Alexander Anderson (1782 – 1856) was born the 16th May 1782, the son of John Anderson, farmer at Dothan (part of Auchterderran) and was the brother of the Reverend William Anderson (1773 – 1825). Alexander was a farmer at Chapel but also seems to have farmed at Easter Touch. He married Cecilia Oliphant (1785 – 1872) on 4th June 1805 in Kirkcaldy. They had eleven children: Henry/Harry (1807 – 1878), John (1806 - ?), William (1818 - ?) Janet/Jessie (1809 - ?), Jean (1811 - ?), Alexander (1813 - ?), Cecilia (1816 - ?), Jane (1818 - ?), William (1818 - ?), Margaret (c. 1820 - ?), Mary (1821 - ?) and Elinor (c. 1825 - ?).

Alexander Anderson fell into financial difficulty which led to his family living in poverty. In 1831 Alexander Anderson along with his wife, Cecilia Oliphant (1785 – 1872), nine of his children and his son-in-law, Thomas Anderson, immigrated to Western Australia. They sailed in the *Egyptian* from London and arrived at Freemantle on the 28th December 1831. Eventually, he took to farming and worked as a miller at Thorpe Mill, Bothwell, Tasmania.

“When they left England Mrs Anderson [Cecilia Oliphant (1785 – 1872)] was glad to get from her cousin, Mary Oliphant (1771 – 1842), some old clothes for her children for the voyage. In course of time however, one of the sons got on well with his sheep runs and land near Melbourne then only a few houses, and by-and-bye when gold was discovered he got wealthy and helped his family and his sisters got married well to some of the people there. Philip Black had a station and he married one of the Anderson Girls. They all by-and-bye came home and settled. Harry Andreson (1807 – 1878), one of the sons, bought Chapel House, north west of Kirkcaldy. He married a lady belonging to Aberdeen and they had a family.

⁴¹ Janet Hutchison (c.1760 – 1837) was the daughter of John Hutchison. There is no evidence to suggest a relationship with the other Hutchison families found in this genealogy.

⁴² Henry Oliphant (1795 – 1824) married Margaret Brown (c.1800 – c. 1870) 27 December 1821 and had two sons: - Henry Oliphant (1823 – c. 1870), who became a writer to the signet in Glasgow, and Captain of the brig *Eliza*, James Oliphant (1824 – 1852) who died in Riga.

⁴³ Married first Jane Morgan (c.1800 – 1851) and secondly Christina McDonald (? – c.1867) leaving no family.

⁴⁴ Married on 26 February 1822 in Dundee to Margaret Caithness, daughter to George Caithness – a shipowner in Dundee. Thomas Williamson (1804 – 1888) claims James Oliphant ‘went out to Australia’.

Henry Anderson (1807 – 1878), the second son of Alexander Anderson (1782 – 1856) and Cecilia Oliphant (1785 – 1872), had arrived in Western Australia before his parents in the *Eliza* in 1831 and eventually settled in Bothwell, Tasmania, possibly as a miller at Thorpe Mill. He then moved to Victoria in partnership with George Russell. Their first station was on the Moorabool River and at the end of 1837 moved up the river Leigh, close to Mount Buninyong. Henry married Julia Lyall (? – 1890) in Geelong on 9th January 1841. After dissolving his partnership with Russell, Henry Anderson took up land on the Mount Emu Creek, a few miles below Skipton and formed the Boriyallock Station. Here he remained until around 1852, then Anderson returned to Fife and brought the estate at Chapel, ‘having made a few thousands by the gold he brought home’. It is in Chapel he died in 1878. His wife, Julia Lyall returned to Australia where she died in Geelong 1890⁴⁵.

Their fifth son, Alexander Anderson (1813 - 1893) travelled to Australia with his parents and siblings and later moved to Victoria and held the Emu Creek Station, near Skipton, and later the Bangal Station dying there in 1893.

In Abbotshall Cemetery along the southern wall stands a large stone capped with a draped urn. It reads:- *“Erected by Henry Anderson of Chapel and Alexander Anderson of Bangal, Victoria. In memory of the Reverend William Anderson their uncle born 18th May 1773, Ordained Minister of Abbotshall 1st August 1810 and died 25th August 1825; Alexander Anderson their father born 16th May 1782 died 26th November 1856; Cecilia Oliphant their mother born 28th October 1785 died 9th April 1872; The above Henry Anderson of Chapel died 10th October 1878. Aged 71.”*

At least four further generations, direct descendants of William Olyphant (c.1730 – 1777) and Mary Barker (1733 – 1775) were ship owners and masters of either merchant ships or whalers. Both of the boys, **Robert Oliphant (1765 – 1832)** and **George Oliphant (1767 – 1845)**, owned ships, as did several of their sons and grandsons. His daughters, Christian Oliphant (1764 - ?) married **John Tod (1758 – 1821)** – a shipowner and master⁴⁶; and **Mary Oliphant (1771 – 1842)** married, in Edinburgh 5th August 1791 Alexander Williamson (1761 – 1842)⁴⁷, another Kirkcaldy shipmaster in his own right.



ABOVE: The Anderson stone in Abbotshall kirk yard, Fife, Scotland.

⁴⁵ From *Fife Emigrants and Their Ships*, pp 2 – 3.

⁴⁶ See section on the Tod Family – page 57.

⁴⁷ Alexander Williamson (1761 – 1842) and **Mary Oliphant (1771 – 1842)** had eleven children: - Alexander (1792 – 1841) a shipmaster, William (1794 - 1842) a shipowner, John (1796 – 1870), Robert (1797 - 1870), Mary (1798 – 1871), Agnes (1802 – 1877), Thomas (1804 - ?), Lillias (1806 – 1875), George (1809 - ?), David (1811 - ?) and Christine (1817 – 1844).

ROBERT OLIPHANT (1765 – 1832)

Robert Oliphant was born the eldest son of **William Olyphant** (1724 – 1777) and **Mary Barker** (1733 – 1775) on the 20th September 1765. He initially worked for his uncle, **Henry Oliphant** (1741 – 1820). Robert Oliphant then followed his father, grandfather and great-grandfather to become a shipowner and co-owner of several ships, including the *Brothers*, the *Favourite*, the *Firm* and the *Friends*. They went principally to Holland and Heligoland and the Baltic, also the Mediterranean, and he used to command one of them.

During one trip to Rotterdam when Robert Oliphant was young man he fell in love with a young countess, or she fell in love with him. His uncle, **Henry Oliphant** (1741 – 1820) and his friends dissuaded him from marrying. The Countess gave him some fine diamond shoe buckles which afterwards he gave to his sister, Mary Oliphant (1771 – 1842). One was made into a beautiful crescent shaped brooch and presented by Mary Williamson (1798 – 1871) to Anne Mary Williamson on her marriage to Charles M Macdonald, of Dowlutpose Tiehoot, East Indies.

Robert eventually married his cousin, Janet Oliphant⁴⁸ (1777 - 1852) on 3rd January 1797 at Kirkcaldy. They had nine children: - William (1797 – 1801), **Henry Oliphant (1799 – 1834)**, **William Oliphant (1801 – 1836)**, Christian (1804 - 1825), Robert Oliphant (1806 – 1807), Mary (1808 – 1857), Janet (1810 – 1883), Robert (1811 - 1807) and George (1815 – 1874). Of those who lived to adulthood, only Mary and Christian appear to be only ones to have married⁴⁹. Tragedy appears to have visited the male members of this family.

Robert Oliphant was a clever, active young man and was given command of one of his Uncle's Vessels before he was 20 years old. After sailing for several years in various vessels, he retired and conducted his business and latterly took charge of the company formed in Kirkcaldy of the Greenland Fishing Company - a very large and lucrative company in its day.

The other partners in the Whale Fishing Company included Mr Pratt of Viewforth, Edinburgh, Mr Dougall as well of several others. It had on the whole a prosperous career, but it was a cold dangerous business, and woe to the crews of any of the ships that got beset on the ice and kept all winter in Greenland as some once were.

One year they brought a young Eskimo to Kirkcaldy and the pieces of whale and live bears brought home from the whaling expeditions caused the local children great fun.

⁴⁸ Robert Oliphant's (1765 – 1832) and Christian Oliphant's (1770 - ?) mothers were sisters – Mary Barker (1733 – 1775) and Christian Barker (1741 – 1777). Their fathers, Henry and William Oliphant were brothers, sons of Robert Oliphant (1765 – 1832).

⁴⁹ Janet's and George's death certificates note them as single. Mary Oliphant (1808 – 1852) married Robert Hutchison (1806 – 1883) on 18th April 1837. They had eight children as noted in the genealogy on page XX. Robert Hutchison was the son of Alexander Hutchison (1772 – 1834) and Joanna Binnie (1780 – 1829) who married on 9th August 1804. They had six other children: - John (1805 - 1853), Janet (1808 - ?), William (1810 - ?), Isabel (1811 - ?), Thomas Binnie (1813 - ?), Alexander (1815 - ?), Joanna Binnie (1817 - ?), and Mary (1820 -?). Alexander Hutchison (1772 – 1834) was one of three children of John Hutchison (? - 1825) and Isabel Bett (?). The others being William (1773 – bef. 1777) and William (1777 – 1852). Christian Oliphant (1804 – 1825) married David R Thoms, another shipmaster of Kirkcaldy. There were no children from this union.

GEORGE OLIPHANT (1767 – 1845)⁵⁰

George Oliphant (1767 – 1845) was the youngest son of **William Olyphant** (1724 – 1777) and **Mary Barker** (1733 – 1775) born 24th September 1767 in Kirkcaldy. He followed the nautical tradition being both a shipowner and Captain in Kirkcaldy. He married Ann Alison (1775 – 1819) on the 11th June 1808, daughter of Mr Andrew Alison, Leith, one of the leading men there⁵¹. They had two daughters Janet or Jessie (1809 – c.1869) and Mary⁵² (1813 – bef. 1874), fine girls, and many a happy night was spent with their cousin, Thomas Williamson (1804 – 1888). Ann Allison (1775 – 1819) died when her daughters were quite young, and they were left alone, to be raised by their father, George Oliphant.

Mrs George Oliphant, Ann Allison (1775 – 1819), was known for her beautiful dresses and her stately lady like manners, like one of the high toned ladies of Edinburgh. She rather awed her young nephews, her manners being lofty and austere.

Uncle George, as he was known to his family, was a very general favourite known to everyone, and no one could entertain enmity towards him – nothing selfish – kind and affable to everyone old or young – how the young ones would listen to his stories and adventures of an evening, till he would quietly stop all at once and say – "Come, come its getting late its near ten go away home now, your mother will be very angry for me keeping you so late, here's your good health and good night."

"He was one of those who lived in stirring times. There were wars and rumours of wars. When he went to sea in his vessel no one could tell if he would return. In his younger days the French Revolution had not burst forth but America had thrown off her allegiance to England and we had America and her privateers against us. That poor fool in Russia the mad Emperor Paul (1754 – 1801)⁵³ was ready at any moment to declare war against England. Later on, the horrid war with the French and Danes when Nelson, like a defiant messenger of wrath, bore down upon Denmark at Elsinore⁵⁴ scattering her noble fleet, and at the Nile and Trafalgar he destroyed and segregated the fleets of France and Spain. George Oliphant lived in all these eventful times down to the close of the Continental War in 1815 at Waterloo and after that down to 1843 or 1844⁵⁵ when he died.

"When George was a boy of about twelve he and his brother **Robert Oliphant** (1765 – 1832), a little older, took a sail out to their uncle's, **Henry Oliphant** (1741 – 1820), vessel at the time anchored in the Firth of Forth to spend the day on board. No sooner had they boarded, that three ugly vessels were seen beating up the Firth and standing close in where they were. These vessels carried the American flag at their masts head and they soon found they were the ships of the famous American revolutionary Captain John Paul Jones (1747 – 1792). They tacked, however, and were trying to beat up to Leith to land with the plan to plunder the town.

⁵⁰ This account of George Oliphant's life comes from Thomas Williamson's *The Williamsons of Kirkcaldy*.

⁵¹ A rope and sail maker in Leith.

⁵² Mary Oliphant (1813 – bef. 1874) married to John Smith. They had two sons who migrated to Australia after the death of their mother.

⁵³ Paul I (1754 – 1801) was the Emperor of Russia between 1796 and 1801.

⁵⁴ Horatio Nelson In 1801 was dispatched to the Baltic and won another victory, this time over the Danes at the Battle of Copenhagen.

⁵⁵ George Oliphant (1767 – 1845) died on the 15 January 1845.

“The wind, however, blew too hard and they abandoned the attempt and sailed down the Firth again. The boys got ashore all safe but all on shore were in great distress as they feared John Paul Jones (1747 – 1792) might board their vessel and plunder her and carry off the crew. To the Scots and English John Paul Jones (1747 – 1792) was a great vagabond. He eluded the British Men-of-War and he was never caught, he died in France after serving in the Russian and French Navy.

“George Oliphant was the Master of his own vessel. His ship was one of the merchant vessels of the Baltic fleet, which had congregated in Leith Roads. Britain was at war with the Danes (c. 1801) and a convoy was the only safe way they could attempt to go abroad. Always one or two ships of war were assigned to accompany them. The ships had to keep close together by day and at night by signal. When passing near one of the Danish Forts the Danes began to fire and one ball went through either the main top-sail main top gallant sail which angered George. He got his speaking trumpet out of his cabin, put it to his mouth and roared out to the Danes thus – "Avast firing there you cowardly rascals, what do you mean? Do you mean to hurt people? – and then turning to the man at the helm said – don't be frightened Davie keep her full, don't mind these cowardly beggars, if I had them in Kirkcaldy they would pay sweetly for that top sail.” The convoy safely sailed through the Baltic.

From another voyage to Russia around 1800, George Oliphant recounted the following tale – “We were at peace with Russia when he left the Firth of Forth, but that capricious mad wretch Paul I was Emperor⁵⁶, and England at the time never could tell what a day would bring forth. He used to annoy the English captains who came with their vessels to Cronstadt – the place where vessels lay as with few exceptions for want of water in the Neva and none could come up to St Petersburg.

“Well, Paul used to annoy the English Captains by the absurd *Ukases* (orders) he issued. One day an imperial order would come out that "all the English must appear in Cocked hats" – another that "all the English must appear in knee breeches" – another that "under pain of Siberia all English must appear in plain hats”.” Not dreaming that war would be declared so suddenly by Russia against England, and having heard nothing of it when George left, he sailed up quite pleasantly and anchored at Cronstadt.

“The little Custom House boat came along side and the officers came on board. Shortly after this a boat with Russian officers came on board, fine fellows with the feathers in their hats. “Good morning Gentlemen, good morning, hope you're well, how's my good friend the Emperor, glad to see you, what will you take? I have got some fine London porter and Edinburgh strong ale on board and Scotch Whiskey anything you like gentlemen.” The Officers replied, “Oh thank you very much Captain Oliphant, you're very kind, we have bad news for you, the Emperor has declared war a few days since, against England, and you will require to give us your ships papers as we must lay an embargo on your ship and you will require to go with us as Prisoners of War and march up to the interior.”

⁵⁶ Paul I (1754 – 1801) was the Emperor of Russia between 1796 and 1801. Paul's independent conduct in foreign affairs plunged the country into the War of the Second Coalition against France in 1798, the emperor suddenly changed his mind and turned toward armed neutrality against the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in 1801.

“Well, well, I said, I can't help it and I must just do as I am told I suppose, no use for crying for a thing of this kind – when do we start and where are you going to send us? Take off your porter quick and be hanged to you – you are a pretty set of blackguards to be sure, wait till I get you in Kirkcaldy, you'll catch it.”

“The next day we had to leave the ship and set out on the road to a small village near Moscow nearly 400 miles from St Petersburg. Well we went off with bag and baggage – escorted by Russian officers and poor some creatures of soldiers. My crew walking and I riding on a small Russian poney – we were fed and allowed a few copecks (less than a penny) to each man and a ruble to me a day. When the officer ordered me the money I told him to keep it that he needed it more than me.

“After a good deal of hardships passing through the small Russian villages on the way in the districts of Petersburg and Novogrod, we came at last to the Moscow district where we were billeted in a small town on the river Moscva. The people were kind to us as far as they could, and I was allowed to walk about, and by-and-bye I got acquainted with one of the Magistrates or Governors of the district, and I used to go to his house and visit him and the family.

“The Russians were a naturally kind hearted and innocent people as I found them. Their priests however, kept the people very strict – everything and every trifling circumstance had to be blessed. When the ice melted and broke up in spring, the rivers are blessed; when the cows first go out to the spring grasses, they are blessed; when summer brings on the cherries or apples no one dare eat any till a certain day, when they are blessed; and then the people can buy and eat them. I was amused at the butchers – killing their pigs, salting them and then letting them freeze to send hundreds of them off to St Petersburg to the frozen market there for sale.

“When winter was fairly set in, and the snow got hard, how splendid the fellows thundered along on their sledges and droskas. The fellows made ice hills by placing blocks of ice upon each other and pouring water on them, making a high sloping hill - smooth in the middle about 20 feet broad, a space on each side to go by steps up to the top where there was a broad space for the men and their droskas or sledges where they set them off down the ice hill. Anyone going down paid a copeck, and they had to manage the best way they could the sledge with their legs and arms spread out. When they lost their balance and came tumbling down, how all the fellows laughed.

“They are happy creatures, and how they danced and sung. The Russians are great dancers and sing well too. However when an order came for men to be drawn for the army what a sad commotion it made women and girls crying. They were drawn by lot and all the unlucky fellows were soon bundled off, never in all likelihood to return. One woman lost a son by fever and all she did was to make the sign of the cross on her bosom and exclaim well thank God he will never be a soldier.

“The punishments in Russia were very severe – to be sent off to the mines in Siberia was one; lashed by the knout was another; or to run the Gauntlet was another. For as little as keeping dirty streets you may get lashed. If you happened to pass a Russian lying on the road you wouldn't go near him – but tell a policeman or a soldier at any of the stations – if you were found beside him and he be dead, ten to one you would be blamed for it.

"We had it very cold sometimes and many were frost bitten. It first appeared on the cheek like a white mark with no pain. The moment a friend sees noticed it, he would rub your cheek hard with a handful of snow till it disappeared. I saw it as low as 10° of frost that is 10° below zero. The poor fellows' beards all a piece of ice and if they spat their spittle would be a piece of ice before getting to the ground. As one of their religious ceremonies the Russian women, a day or two after birth, used to dip their children into the river by having a round hole cut in the ice.

"Their eating was coarse and dirty food – black rye bread, fish, and soup made of coarse peas, beans and herbs. Sour krout too was one of their dishes. In winter bands of wolves used to appear near the place we were living to the terror of any poor travellers.

"One day at the beginning of spring I called over to see the Governor, and on entering I found him looking serious and sad and on going up as usual to speak to him he exclaimed – "Oh Captain Oliphant have you heard the sad news?" (and before answering him I thought in my own mind what can he mean, has Paul ordered us all to Siberia?) then I said, "No my dear friend not a word of news good or bad have I heard since I was seeing you last time". "Well, well, I am grieved to tell you Captain our beloved Czar Paul is gone". "God bless me," said I, "Gone, where is he gone to, that's curious enough, where has he gone to – does nobody know where he is?" – "Oh Captain, Captain he is dead". "Lord bless me you don't say so, when did you get the news – I'm sorry for that do you know." "Well Captain one of the Russian Courier Officers brought me word yesterday, and it is quite time – our beloved Czar took ill and died suddenly." – "Well, well, I said it can't be helped, however Governor I am sorry for it, very sorry for it, but what will we do now?" He could say nothing so I went back pretending to be sorry, while inwardly hoping that this might be the means of freeing us from our captivity, and so it proved before long. Paul had been strangled by the nobles and soon his successor proclaimed peace and we got free. After bidding farewell to my kind Russian friends, we all left after the snow had somewhat melted. We arrived safely again at Cronstadt, and took possession again of the ship and was given a good remuneration for loss of cargo and time, and got home again with flying colours."

Some time in the 1800's George was made a Baillie of Kirkcaldy, however he never liked to be referred to as Baillie Oliphant. When on the Bench he had a reputation for quickly dealing with the cases coming before him. One day some men and women were tried for stealing, and after sentencing the men to imprisonment he was asked, "What is to be done with the women Mr Oliphant?" – "Oh just send the blackguards to jail too and be done with them."

In another case, two men had had a dispute about their cocks and hens, the one saying his hens had left and were at the other man's house, while the other denied it and said he was keeping all the hens. To add to the confusion the mens' wives and even some of the hens filled the court. Baillie Oliphant became annoyed and told them to be all quiet or he would send all of them to jail. When some order was restored he told James Morton, one of the Town Officers, to go and collect the whole of the cocks and hens and put them on the Street exactly half way between the two men's houses, and let each find their way home as they liked, and each fellow to keep his own and not trouble him again or he would fine them.

One afternoon Jenny, George's maid, came running into the room crying – "Oh Mr Oliphant there's great uproar on the pier wi' a black man who has just come from Leith by the pinnance, and he's fighting with the

carters on the pier and like to kill folk and they want you to quiet them, you should really go out". "Not a bit will I move!" said George, "Let them fight away and be hanged to them – do you suppose I am going to leave my dinner for them, the blackguards? No no Jenny, the carters are quarrelsome blackguards, and if some of them are killed I'll not be sorry for them."

"Another day Jenny came to to him and said – "Mr Oliphant, there's a real decent man downstairs wanting to see you." – "Go down and ask him what he wants." – Jenny came back and said – "He is a decent man selling a nice book, and he says he has just been at the Minister's and he took one, it's real cheap, only a shilling." – "Oh don't you believe him Jenny, tell him I won't have any of his books."

"In the course of time Geroge Oliphant got pale and died, leaving behind him no enemies, but a pleasant memorial of originality, kindness and worth, and everyone who knew him remembers him with pleasure. His remains rest in the old Churchyard of Kirkcaldy beside his wife [Ann Alison (1775 – 1819)]."⁵⁷

The Oliphant head stone features several interesting carvings which makes it stand out. On the front masonic symbols are carved within a laurel wreath on the front of the stone. On the reverse a skull and crossed bones also feature, this indicates man's mortality. Although the writing carved on the stone is fading, on close examination the front reads:

*Sacred to the memory of Ann Alison, Wife of George Oliphant, Shipowner, Kirkcaldy. Who died 19th January 1819 aged 42 years. Also the said George Oliphant who died 15th January 1845 aged 77 years.*⁵⁸ On the reverse of the stone it reads: "AD 1778 in memory of Robert Oliphant and Jannet Bett his spouse who lay here. This stone was set by William and Henry Oliphant."



ABOVE: The head stone of Anne Alison (1775 – 1819) and George Oliphant (1767 – 1845), both shipowner and mason.

HENRY OLIPHANT (1799 – 1834)

Henry Oliphant was born the 2nd December 1799, the son of **Robert Oliphant (1765 – 1832)** and Janet Oliphant (1777 – 1852). He was a shipmaster, who drowned when he fell into the Forth and Clyde canal on the 4th February, 1834. One afternoon on his way from Grangemouth to Edinburgh to visit Mr Pratt at Viewforth coming by the Canal, Henry jumped out of his boat when in motion, stumbled into the canal and was most unfortunately drowned – his death was much regretted by all who knew him. He died unmarried and without children.

⁵⁷ From Thomas Williamson's (1804 – 1888) *The Williamsons of Kirkcaldy*.

⁵⁸ Taken from the Fife Family history Society website: <http://www.fifefhs.org>. These gravestones are to found in the Old Parish Kirk Graveyard, Kirkcaldy

WILLIAM OLIPHANT (1801 – 1836)

William Oliphant was born the 23rd July 1801, the son of **Robert Oliphant (1765 – 1832)** and Janet Oliphant (1777 – 1852). Captain William Oliphant, like his older brother, drowned close to home, after surviving several perilous annual whaling expeditions to the Davis Strait. Including the ill fated winter of 1834 – 35 when several whaling ships were trapped, including his ship, the *Viewforth*, in the Arctic ice.

The 1834 whaling season appears to one of the most tragic on record as several whaling ships found themselves trapped by early arctic ice that prevented them from making the normal return voyage in October. The *Viewforth*, commanded by Captain William Oliphant (1801 – 1836), was one of the trapped vessels. The *Viewforth* was unfortunately beset by the ice during September 1834, just before they were about to sail for home. They were kept fast among the thick ribbed ice, and they had to endure the misery of a cold and totally dark winter except of course what light came from the Moon and Stars. Thomas Williamson (1804 – 1888) could recall the sad state of the Kirkcaldy community were all in when it was known they were beset in the ice.

Help could not be sent until the spring when the vessels would again be going out. After a horrid winter a heavy gale whirled down the whole Davis Strait and the *Viewforth* was twisted like a cork on the water, but it enabled the ship to escape into open water. Those still able managed to get sail on her and head to the Orkneys. With a fresh crew at last they got to the Firth of Forth and home – but few survived. Starvation, cold and broken spirits did their work among a great many and their bodies lay unburied among the snow. Thomas Williamson (1804 – 1888) used to listen with interest and sorrow to the narrative of the calamity from his cousin, William Oliphant (1801 – 1836). When he came home William's spirits were crushed and his constitution broken, and he gave up thoughts of ever again going to sea.

William Oliphant related the following account of the experience – "When I saw the ship was fairly and firmly fixed after all our efforts to saw her out of the ice and all hope over and gone, and all the other ships away, I nearly gave it up in despair – I called the officers and crew and said: "We would do our best to live till relief came in the spring. We must go on short allowance and try burning the blubber and what wood we had or could gather to endeavour to have light and fire to cook with." I promised "I would share all I had with them, and that I would do all I could to comfort them". By-and-bye the sun disappeared and then nothing but gloom. We were far off land and the white Greenland bears were our companions. The cold got intense and far below zero – even freezing the rum and brandy! Some of the men got sulky and obstreperous, some cried, some got ill, and then some began to die – we had to lift them out of their hammocks and lay them on the ice alongside the ship and covered the corpse with a little snow. Before we got clear in January there were thirty bodies buried in the same way all lying around us. In fact, at the end, we had scarcely strength left to remove them out of the ship. Accustomed as I was to every comfort at home, the contrast now was dreadful, but hope kept burning beside my glimmering lamp, and I dragged on dull and weary weary, till at last Providence sent

us deliverance from death. How we used to dish out and divide our scanty store! – our hard biscuits were worth gold to us – we brought some home with us and our friends would ask one as a relic"⁵⁹.

This disaster appears to have captured the public's attention with a painting recording the event. In 1836 a thirty-six page book edited by the Reverend J. Bain was published, titled *Sufferings of the Ice-bound Whalers; containing copious extracts from a journal taken on the spot by an officer of the Viewforth of Kirkcaldy*. The author is not cited and the opening paragraphs states "the following journal ... is highly creditable to the head and heart of its author, whose name is withheld merely in deference to his own excessive modesty".⁶⁰ The Journal was in fact kept by William Elder (1813 – 1882)⁶¹, an officer or mate of the *Viewforth*⁶². The Reverend Bain certainly conveys a sense of the sailor's despair even if there is an emphasis on the spiritual inclinations of the ice bound seamen.

The crew suffered terribly from the dwindling rations, frostbite and scurvy. There appears to be ever present thoughts of doom in the trapped mariners that urged them to maintain formal religious services amongst those ships trapped nearby. On more than one occasion the crew were forced to abandon ship, believing its hull was about to give way under the power of the crushing ice. The crushing and sinking of the ship *Jane* of Hull forced all to further stretch what meagre rations they had even further. A description from the surgeon, Alexander Jolly⁶³, of assisting three sailors who had been separated from the boat over night illustrates the extreme conditions:-

One sailor "had to be carried on board.... His feet and all that covered them were frozen in one lump. Having cut away the legs and uppers of his boots, I found it necessary to go through the same operation with the soles and stockings, the latter tore away the flesh from the insensate mass. So completely frozen were the poor man's feet, that when he attempted walking on the deck, the sound was like the knocking of a pair of clamps on a wooden floor. When carried to the fire he was not satisfied with being near it, but he actually thrust his feet into the midst of it, and it was with the utmost difficulty I could prevail on him to withdraw them.... The

⁵⁹ As recorded in Thomas Williamson's *The Williams of Kirkcaldy*.

⁶⁰ *Sufferings of the Ice-bound Whalers*, 1836, pp 5.

⁶¹ William Elder (1813-1882) was the eldest brother to the founders of the Australian Elders Pastoral Company. With the fledgling colony of South Australia only three years old, Alexander Lang Elder (1815-1885) arrived in Port Misery (now Port Adelaide) in 1839 aboard the family-owned *Minerva* to launch a new arm of the Scottish based merchant and shipping business. Alexander was a member of a Scottish merchant family which had decided there was real potential in the newly founded colony of SA and he was dispatched to both set up business and explore opportunities – particularly in goods that could be returned to Britain for sale, such as wool. Alexander battled for the next few years consolidating the business until the copper boom in the mid-north of South Australia in 1842 turned things around. He branched out as a metal broker and the company never looked back. Alexander's brothers, William (1813-1882), George (1816-1897) and Thomas (1818-1897) joined Alexander but it was Thomas who stayed on to become an Australian while the other three eventually returned to Scotland and England. It was Thomas who realized the potential of the pastoral Outback and it was under his encouragement the business imported camels to arrange transport. This unlocked the vast interior of Australia, making it possible to tap into the Great Artesian Basin and the hidden water that made grazing viable. He was laying the foundations of a national business empire that would be built on the back of the sheep but which was funded with cash from the copper boom; cash that enabled him and his peers to acquire huge tracts of land. Thomas migrated to Adelaide in 1854 and worked with George for a year. After George departed, he formed Elder, Stirling & Co, a partnership with Edward Stirling, Robert Barr Smith and John Taylor. In 1856 Barr Smith married Thomas Elder's sister Joanna, and on Stirling and Taylor's retirement in 1863, Barr Smith and Thomas Elder formed Elder Smith and Co.

⁶² From *The Polar Record*, Vol 14, No. 92, 1969, p 581

⁶³ 23rd March 1840: James Jolly and Jean Robie of Brechin (Angus) are today mourning the loss of their son Alexander (22) who drowned while bathing at Geelong (Australia). During his days as a medical student, Alexander had served as a surgeon on board the whaler "Viewforth" and survived being icebound in the Davis Strait.

result was, that after the dead parts were removed, inflammation began, and was succeeded by mortification, till the poor fellow sunk under the weight of his sufferings.”

Even after finally breaking free of the ice drifts, the privations of their sufferings continued: - “February 2nd These past few days are so full of events that I hardly know what to write. We are now in the dark blue sea, escaped from the very jaws of destruction by one of the greatest miracles ever experienced by men in this transitory world. Truly, ‘the Lord hath made us a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters.’ Let us praise him for his goodness and his wondrous works to the sons of men. About thirty of our men cannot move a limb. Other two and myself are all that remain out of a watch of fifteen, once as stout and as willing fellows as ever trod a ship’s deck. Other two of our little company have been called to the world of spirits.”

After eleven months at sea, the *Viewforth* entered Stromness harbour on the 14th February 1835. Fourteen of the men aboard (eight had originally come aboard from the *Jane*) had perished in the bitter arctic winter. “There is ample evidence that the attention of Captain Oliphant and the surgeon were unremitting, and that availed themselves of all the limited resources within their reach.”

The following spring poor William Oliphant (1801 – 1836) stayed at home and no wonder – he saw the vessels however all go away again in spring, little thinking he would never see them return. One fine day he went in a small pleasure boat accompanied by a boy to visit Dysart on business a short distance from Kirkcaldy. On his return (the boy refusing to come back) and shortly after leaving Dysart Harbour and not far off the shore a sudden breeze caught the sail and upset the boat which sunk carrying him suddenly down, and it was supposed he must have been entangled among the ropes. So innocently perished one who had braved and survived the horrors and dangers of an Arctic Winter.



ABOVE: A painting depicting the ice-bound whalers in the Davis Strait. The *Viewforth* is in the foreground.

It seems a cruel twist of fate that Captain William Oliphant was to die in such a minor accident, so close to home a little over a year after surviving an Arctic winter. This brief article appeared in the “Scots Times”: - *“Captain Oliphant, who commanded the Viewforth when she was detained among the ice in Davis’s Straits the winter before last, came to Dysart on Tuesday in his boat from Kirkcaldy, and after doing some business was returning by the same conveyance, nobody in the boat but himself. The wind being ahead, and rather squally, the boat upset about ten minutes after leaving the harbour, and he was co-signed to a watery grave. About two years ago he had a brother that fell into the Forth and Clyde Canal, and was drowned.”*⁶⁴

This sad event so sudden, so very unlooked for, called forth the condolences and the sympathies of everyone for his mother and family. Boats went out in their dozens, the Firth was dragged in all directions, but his body could not be found. Several weeks elapsed till one fine morning a solitary wanderer along the beach on Kirkcaldy sands saw a dark mass moving gently in the sea near the shore, and it was soon discovered that it was the remains of poor William Oliphant (1801 – 1837).

His Mother was not allowed to look on the face of her son – He was taken home and soon after he was consigned to the tomb where so many of the Oliphants repose. William Oliphant shares an unmarked grave with two of his brothers, Robert and Henry, in the Kirkcaldy old Kirkyard.



ABOVE: Kirkcaldy harbour, c. 1860 – much the same as it was when William Oliphant and his brothers and relatives sailed for the Davis Strait, the Low Countries, Russia and Canada.

⁶⁴ *The Scots Times, Edinburgh, 23rd July 1836.*

MARY OLIPHANT (1771 – 1842)

The daughter of **William Olyphant** (c.1730 – 1777) and **Mary Barker** (c.1733 – 1775), Mary Oliphant (1771 – 1842) was born 20th August 1771 in Kirkcaldy. She married Alexander Williamson (1761 – 1838), himself a shipowner and corn merchant⁶⁵ whose family was widely involved in the Kirkcaldy shipping industry. They married in Edinburgh at Cannongate Kirk on the 5th August 1791. They had twelve Children: - also a ship owner, William (1794 – 1842) married to Ann Makkie (1806 – 1846), John (1796 – 1870) married to Elizabeth Hendry⁶⁶ (1799 – 1844), Mary (1798 – 1871), Robert (1800 – 1866), Agnes (1802 – 1877), Thomas (1804 – 1888), Lillias (1806 – 1875), George (1809 - 1863), Isabel (1809 – ?), David (1811 - 1814) and Christina (1817 – 1844) “who died of brain fever”. John Williamson (1796 – 1870) and Elizabeth Hendry on 2 March 1826 in Kirkcaldy and had three children. At least one of their children, Alexander, migrated to New Zealand circa 1870 and their descendants continue to live in New Zealand.

Mary Oliphant was devoted and kind to her family with a great deal of her brother's, George Oliphant (1767 – 1845), manner in her and anxious to raise her children well. She used to give them questions on Sunday evenings and when they were done she would divide nice sweeties, gingerbread, or some nice rock amongst them. The older children would try to get the longest commandment to repeat, such as the 2nd and 4th, as they thought they would get more sweeties. It was a great affair if they could say a great many of the paraphrases or a lump of the 119th Psalm. On Sundays she would have the children neatly dressed for Church with Bibles and some pennies for the collection plate. The family had a nice pew of their own in Kirkcaldy Parish Church bought and paid for (no seat rents then) and there they would sit. When standing at the Prayer they had to be pretty quiet as their father, Alexander Williamson (1761 – 1842), used to be up in the Gallery along with the Magistrates in the Magistrates' Loft.

Mary Oliphant lived to a pretty old age and was beloved by her family and friends, and many a widow and fatherless child she helped in her day, any of the naked she literally clothed, and she died as she had lived a sincere Christian, endeavouring to impress upon her family all that was good and upright to the end of her days. Her remains rest beside those of my father's in old burying ground of Kirkcaldy Churchyard.

THE WILLIAMSON FAMILY⁶⁷

The first known member of this family comes to us through a letter written to an Alexander Williamson by a house in Rotterdam and dated 1721, indicating he must have carried on an extensive trade at that time with Holland. Before him there was a Provost John Williamson (1569 – 1657) in Kirkcaldy, most likely a forefather of his. Thomas Williamson (c.1695 – 1751)⁶⁸, most likely a son of Alexander Williamson, was a Merchant in Kirkcaldy. Thomas Williamson (c.1695 – 1751) married Jean Ramsie (c.1695 – 1753) on 25th November 1720 and had seven children: - John (1723 – 1724), Thomas (1726 – 1776), **Alexander**

⁶⁵ Alexander Williamson owned 48/64's of the ship *Mary* (210 tons) of Kirkcaldy.

⁶⁶ Their second son, James Hendry Williamson, died in Wellington, New Zealand 14 September 1878.

⁶⁷ Much of this history comes from *The Williamsons of Kirkcaldy*, by Thomas Williamson (1804 – 1888) c. 1873. Unpublished.

⁶⁸ The letter may in fact be to his great-great-grandfather – Thomas Williamson (1804 – 1888) refers to his great grandfather as an Alexander Williamson, However it may have in fact been his Great-great grandfather.

Williamson (1727 – 1797), David (1729 – 1731), James (1731 – 1734), Jean (1733 – 1735) and Agnes (1736 – 1820).

ALEXANDER WILLIAMSON (1727 – 1797)

Alexander Williamson (1727 – 1797) seems to have followed the same trade in Pathhead, Fife and was married to **Lillias Miller** (1730 – 1799) on 19th May 1749⁶⁹ They had eight Children: - Thomas (1750 – 1792) – he seems to have gone to sea but died at home; **Margaret Williamson** (1752 - ?), **John Williamson** (1754 – c.1812), **Mary Williamson** (1756 - ?), **David Williamson** (1758 – 1835), Alexander (1761 – 1838), Jeanie (1765 – 1833), and Agnes (1767 – 1824).

LILLY MILLER (1730 – 1799)

Lillias Miller (1730 – 1799) came from Milnathort near Kinross⁷⁰ – her forebears were the Millers of Urquhart and they lost their property at the time of the Reformation about 1660. Her father's name was Thomas Miller, a farmer living not far from Kinross and Lochleven.

David Miller was Grand-uncle to Lilly Miller (1730 – 1799). After hiding in a cave for several days and being supported by a hen laying an egg daily, he was discovered and afterwards taken to Edinburgh Castle. David Miller was confined there for some time. The Earl of Rothes asked him "what he was doing there, (he knew him well) an honest man like you". His answer was "If I were not an honest man I would not have been here" – then the Earl said – "Will you take your liberty?" "Yes, if my conscience will allow me". Then the Earl put his cloak over his arm and said follow me, and he did so in the guise of his servant and got away.

JOHN WILLIAMSON (1754 – c.1812)

The son of **Alexander Williamson** (1727 – 1797) and **Lillas Miller** (1730 – 1799), John Williamson (1754 – c.1812) married a daughter of a Clergyman in Edinburgh called Wright and went to London where he lived and prospered. He had six sons and one daughter who all died in infancy or youth. The daughter died about 8 years old, and her pretty little velvet cloak trimmed with ermine was sent down to her Aunt in Kirkcaldy as a memorial. Mr & Mrs John Williamson both died in London, and were interred in a burying ground south side of London I believe near where Barclay Perkins & Co. Brewery now stands – they died in 1812 or 1815. He was a man of refined taste and often assisted poor artists, especially poor George Morland (1763 – 1804) the clever but unfortunate Artist.

MARGARET WILLIAMSON (1752 - ?)

The daughter of **Alexander Williamson** (1727 – 1797) and **Lillas Miller** (1730 – 1799), Margaret Williamson (1752 - ?) married a Mr Beugo in Edinburgh and they afterwards went to London. He was a fine painter. They had one son. Mr Beugo died in London – she died in Pathhead and was interred in the family grave there in the old churchyard close beside the old castle called Ravenscraig Castle an old Ruin built by our rude forefathers the Picts.

⁶⁹ Lillias Miller (1730 – 1799) was the daughter of Robert Miller born 4th October 1730. They came from Milnathort near Kinross whose forebears were the Millers of Urquhart and who lost their property at the perilous times of the Reformation and were hunted down as if they were wild beasts.

⁷⁰ Lillias Miller was born 4th October 1730 the daughter of Robert Miller in the Parish of Orwell in Kinross.

MARY WILLIAMSON (1756 - ?)

The daughter of **Alexander Williamson** (1727 – 1797) and **Lillas Miller** (1730 – 1799), poor Mary Williamson (1756 - ?) seems to have had a sad history. She married a Soldier called Taylor, a son of a Dr Taylor of Edinburgh or neighbourhood. They went to the Island of Corsica where they both died. They left one son under the charge of a kind Officer who took care of him and brought him safely home and Alexander Williamson (1761 – 1838) brought him up. His name was Alexander Taylor – he went to sea but died when in Hull.

DAVID WILLIAMSON (1758 – 1835)

The son of **Alexander Williamson** (1727 – 1797) and **Lillas Miller** (1730 – 1799), David Williamson (1758 – 1835) went to London and lived there for several years and was a printer connected with the Times Newspaper. He was never married. He returned back to his native place and died and was buried in the grave of his ancestors.

ALEXANDER WILLIAMSON (1761 – 1838)

The youngest son of **Alexander Williamson** (1727 – 1797) and **Lillas Miller** (1730 – 1799), Alexander Williamson (1761 – 1838) went to sea as a young man and in the course of time became shipowner in Kirkcaldy. He married **Mary Oliphant** (1771 – 1842) on the 5th August 1791. They had eleven children: - Alexander (1792 – 1841), William (1794 – 1842), John (1796 – 1870), Mary 1798 – 1871), Robert (1800 – 1866), Agnes (1802 – 1877), Thomas (1804 – 1888), Lillias (1806 – 1875), George (1809 - 1863), Isabel (1809 – ?), David (1811 - 1814) and Christina (1817 – 1844). After being at sea for many years he lived at home, and both he and his wife died in Kirkcaldy and were buried in the old Kirkcaldy kirkyard. He was a magistrate of the town and much respected as an upright honest man.

When at sea during the war he witnessed many a strange sight, what with the press gangs carrying off sailors and putting them by force on board of the ships of war and the convoys that used to congregate at Leith, Cork, and other places and ships of war bringing in French prisoners and French privateers and American privateers and the constant danger of capture at sea all these sights made a sailors life at that period a time of peril and excitement.

The press gang once carried him off in their boat to Leith and he was put on board a frigate lying in Leith Roads getting manned. A clever fish wife of Fife who used to come with her fish in her kreen to Kirkcaldy had heard he was pressed and she set off in a boat with her fish to Leith, went on board the Frigate and managed by exchanging part of her dress and dressing him up, got him smuggled into her boat and got him safe away – a noble deed of the fisher woman. She knew his people and probably they asked her to try and get him off.



ABOVE: John Williamson (1796 – 1870), son of **Mary Oliphant** (1771 – 1842) and Alexander Williamson (1761 – 1842).