



THE STEEPLE

Newsletter of The Montrose Society

NOVEMBER 2009

ISSUE NO. 17

Committee Members 2009 - 2010

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Montrose Now and Then Exhibition



The Toorie Hoose - late of Southesk Street

In 1957 a small group of people got together in an attempt to prevent the demolition of the Toorie Hoose in Southesk Street, an historic building of significance to the history of Montrose. They were unsuccessful, but the Montrose Society was successfully formed.

Since then there have been many other changes in the town, and members, over the years, have recorded some of the lost buildings and open spaces and what replaced them.

An exhibition was held in the Library gallery on September 15 to 26, 2009 and we hope it will have awakened memories of life in parts of the town that have changed beyond recognition.

You are invited to comment on any images that were of particular interest.

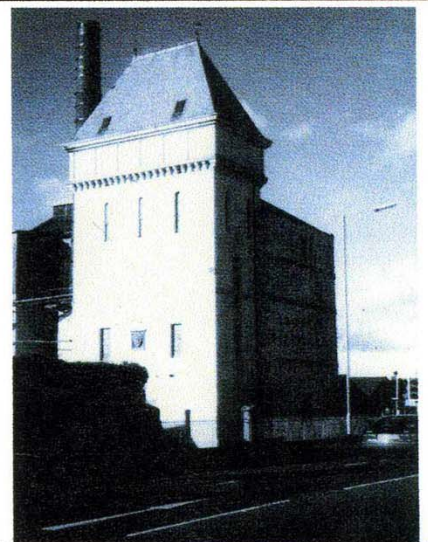
John Macpherson,

President

Lochside Distillery

In order to provide the origins of MacNab Distilleries Ltd it is necessary to give the reasons why the company set up in the former Lochside Brewery, as follows :-

MacNab Distilleries Ltd was a company registered in London in 1933, by, amongst others, the late Joseph Hobbs. Joe Hobbs, the prime character in the distillery story is probably known for his association with Fort William and the Great Glen Cattle Ranch along with his



Lochside Distillery before demolition

ownership of Inverloch Castle, then his home, now a very high class hotel still run by the Hobbs family. He also owned the Ben Nevis Distillery, now in the hands of the Nikka Company of Japan.

Joseph Hobbs was a man of many parts and had been very much involved in the whisky industry in his earlier years, including the former Hillside Distillery and up to about fourteen others. Some of his previous history is colourful and goes back to Canada when prohibition was in force in America. He was of British birth and not Canadian as supposed and another of his passions was a great love of the sea.

Continued overleaf

MEETINGS

Meetings are held in the Legends Suite, George Hotel, Montrose at 7.30pm.

Annual membership is £10

Visitors £2.00 per evening.

Juniors are free. Coffee and Tea available.

Meetings are held from September to March. Details of meetings for the current season are listed on our web-site :-

www.montrose.co.uk/monsoc

Do please come along to any/all you are interested in. You will be made very welcome.



The Montrose Society gratefully acknowledges the sponsorship from Petrofac Training in the printing of "The Steeple"

A Holy Willie of his Time

John Hepburn was minister at Farnell in 1579. He preceded Robert Burns by 200 years, but his attitude to his fellow man and sinner was worthy of William Fisher, immortalised by Burns in Holy Willie's Prayer. On 23rd March Hepburn wrote to John Erskine of Dun, his superior and Superintendent of Angus and Mearns in the newly-formed Church of Scotland.

'Honourable Sir, after most hearty commendation of service in the Lord, please you to know that I received your letter making mention of your convention to be held in Montrose the xxiii day of March instant, and I have done (as I understand) according to your mind and tenor of your writing: we have ordained our commissioners, and have authorised them with our commission and instructions; besides that we have summoned yet once again James Stirling, citizen of Brechin, who was summoned before and did not conform according to the process which I delivered to yourself on horseback behind the yards; I summoned him upon your writing, therefore if he attends you will deal with him as you think good, and also if he does not attend, give your sentence.

Pardon my homely conference in such matters; also there is another called Walter Grym summoned, whose crimes the commissioner will show you at length.

Marvel not, sir, that I have not kept diet [attended on the due day] myself, for I have such urgent and noisome [smelly] impediment as the commissioners can declare, that I may neither sit, stand or ride commodiously, and if I shall so continue shall not be able to journey with you toward Stirling. Nothing else now.

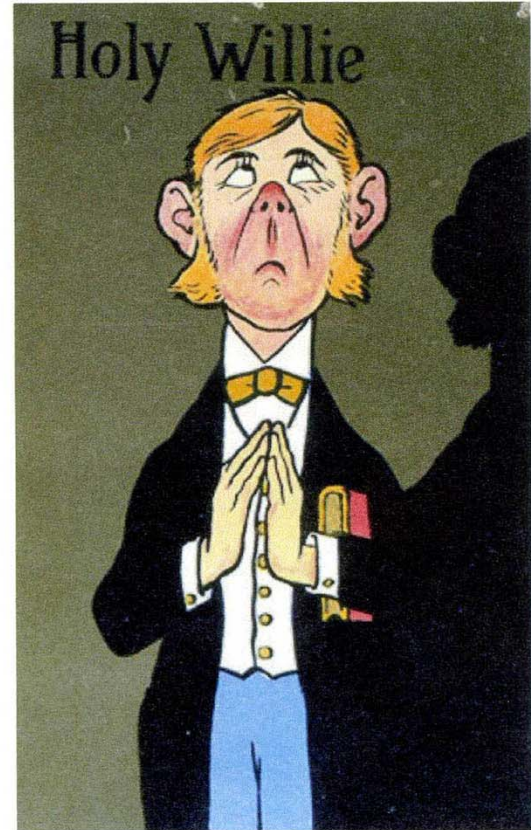
Committing you to the protection of the Lord our God at Brechin this xxiii day of March, yours to command,

John Hepburn.'

William Fisher, an elder in the parish church at Mauchline, was as hypocritical and self-righteous as the poem Holy Willie's Prayer suggests. At the Presbytery of Ayr he accused Gavin Hamilton, a friend of Burns, of breaking the laws of the church by making a journey on the Sabbath Day and by ordering one of his servants to bring in some potatoes from the garden on a Sunday! The Presbytery threw the case out.

Holy Willie came to a sticky end when late one night in February 1809, coming home drunk, he fell in a ditch and perished in the snow. What became of the Rev John Hepburn is not recorded.

Duncan Macdonald



Holy Willie (as seen about 1910)

Remaining Programme of Meetings 2009/10

November 19, 2009

A Ferryden Boyhood

Ian Paton, Ferryden

December 10, 2009

Saving Historic Buildings

Neil Grieve, University of Dundee

January 21, 2010

Kinnaber - The Khyber Pass of the Scottish Railway Wars

Professor Charles McKean, University of Dundee

February 18, 2010

The Railways of Aberdeenshire - The Way We Were

Gordon Casely, Aberdeen

March 18, 2010

Montrose - A Bird's Eye View

Raymond Sutton

-Also-

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Meetings are held at 7.30pm in the Legends Suite,
George Hotel, Montrose unless otherwise stated.**

Annual membership £10.00, Visitors £1.50 per meeting, Juniors Free
Coffee and Tea are available

**Original Design, Layout and Typesetting of 'The Steeple'
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Lochside Distillery

Continued from front page

Sometime in the early 1950's, MacNab Distilleries Ltd headed by Mr Hobbs had purchased a redundant distillery called "Glen Mavis" in Bathgate in Midlothian and had things well advanced to start up grain whisky distilling there. However due to some local problems, believed to be concerning adequate water supply and effluent discharge, he abandoned this project.

As Lochside Brewery was up for sale he purchased it around 1956/57, and transferred everything from Glen Mavis "literally "lock, stock and barrel". He had probably had associations with this area through his company's ownership of "Arbroath Warehouse", a former flax mill run as a bonded warehouse from the early years of the century, but by Mr Hobbs from 1949'ish. Funny how redundant flax mills turn up in these stories.

MacNab Distilleries Ltd having taken over the Lochside building promptly designated it "Lochside Distillery" and proceeded to convert it to a grain whisky distillery using much of the existing equipment, apart from the grain still itself which was installed as new. Grain whisky distilling required a different manufacturing process from malt whisky in that it used large amounts of maize as well as malted barley. The maize was imported from America, France, South Africa or wherever the market was best. The malted barley was purchased locally from Scottish maltsers.

Malt whisky is produced from an only malted barley mash, no other cereals are permitted, the resultant "worts", fermentation and dilute alcohol content being the same as in the grain system but the alcohol distilled twice through "pot stills" and matured in the same type oak casks for three years before becoming Scottish malt whisky. Malt whisky, usually bottled at a later stage of maturing in cask, is the traditional, characteristic, upmarket product that we know and love.

Blend whisky is a mixture of grain whisky and malt in varying economic proportions according to basic cost. Grain whisky is much cheaper to produce.

Whether malt, grain or or blended whisky is in the bottle all must be the same age of maturation as described on the bottle. Anything not described with age must be a minimum of three years years of age in an oak cask. The law is very strict on this.

Charles Sharpe

Contributions of stories/texts/photographs for future issues of "The Steeple" or information and artefacts regarding "bygone Montrose" are always welcome. Please contact any committee member or come along to one of our meetings.