



THE STEEPLE

Newsletter of The Montrose Society

AUTUMN 2005

ISSUE NO. 11

Committee Members 2005 - 2006

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Forthcoming Golden Jubilee

Plans are coming into shape to celebrate the 50th. Anniversary of the foundation of the Montrose Society in 2006.

The Society was initially formed in the spring of 1956 following considerable controversy about the impending demolition of the "Toorie Hoose", near the harbour.

In these 50 years the town has seen many changes, and the Society has played a significant role in fostering awareness of its history, its unique townscape and built environment, and its people through a programme of lectures, award schemes, and publications.

The suggestion has already been made that we consult the members regarding ideas to mark this milestone, and there is still time for suggestions to be considered and acted on. Please contact me or any committee member.

A Jubilee dinner has been arranged for April 21, 2006 in the Links Hotel at which the main speaker will be Sheriff Alexander (Sandy) Jessop. We are planning to "flush out" as many past presidents and key Society activists as possible to make for a memorable evening. The costs will be subsidised for Montrose Society members to encourage a large turnout.

I am researching the formation of the Society. If anyone has information re these times and the circumstances I would be interested in hearing from them.

Annual Awards and Commendation Scheme

2006 will see a change in the format of the Awards.

The Civic Awards Scheme for encouraging the Highest Standards in Architecture, Townscape and Conservation will continue. Over the years it has been very successful and it is vital that we maintain its standing and reputation.

We have decided to wind up the Commendation Awards Scheme, which, while successful in encouraging decoration standards for commercial premises, we feel has now "had its day". We are considering further initiatives to encourage improvements in how Montrose shows its face to the world in association with the Jubilee Celebrations.

Sandy Munro, President

MEETINGS

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

Annual membership is £8.

Visitors £1.50 per evening.

Juniors are free.

Coffee and Tea available.

Meetings are held from September to March.

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



James G Low

Low's book on the "Highways and Byeways of Montrose" is well known to all interested in the history of the town, and the Society is fortunate to have some



of the author's original manuscripts for the other projects he was working on. These were donated to the Society by Mrs Alison Gough, a relation of Low, who has provided typewritten transcripts of "The Dominicans of Montrose 1230 - 1587"; "The Bells of St Mary 1463 - 1676" and "The Ancient Hospital Of Montrose 1587 - 1942". Mrs Gough is currently transcribing two volumes of "The Blackfriars".

Tony Sutton

Arbuthnott The Boat Builders

A couple of months ago a Graham Toward phoned from Berwick on Tweed looking for photographs of the boat builders Arbuthnotts. We have quite a large selection in the archives, so when he visited I was able to find out more about his interest in the yard. Apparently he and his family have been coming to Gour-



don for their holidays for the past twenty years and he became interested in the fishing industry. He showed me a history of fishing boats in the Berwick on Tweed area that he wrote, and promised to give a copy of the Arbuthnott story. This arrived a few days ago and is really excellent, a very comprehensive piece of research and well illustrated. Anyone interested to read it please contact me.

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Barbara Dickson

(Montrose)

Wife of James Chalmers (Arbroath)

Barbara or Margaret Dickson

Christened 19.04.1781 Died 25.02.1861

Father James Dickson, Mother Christian Murray

James Chalmers

Born 02.02.1782. Died 1853

A Montrose lady whose life has intrigued me for many years was Barbara Dickson. She was born and christened in Montrose in 1781. Her father, James Dickson, was married to Christian Murray and at some stage in his life he was a Bailey in Montrose.

My interest in Barbara Dickson was her marriage to James Chalmers, the inventor of the adhesive postage stamp. As I understand from their family papers they had nine children many of whom died at an early age. Barbara was a member of the Glassite Church when she married James and was a great helpmate in his business and family affairs. James used to contribute on postal reform to the Montrose Review. His letter of 30th. September 1839 is looked upon as the idea that saved the Post Office from collapse.

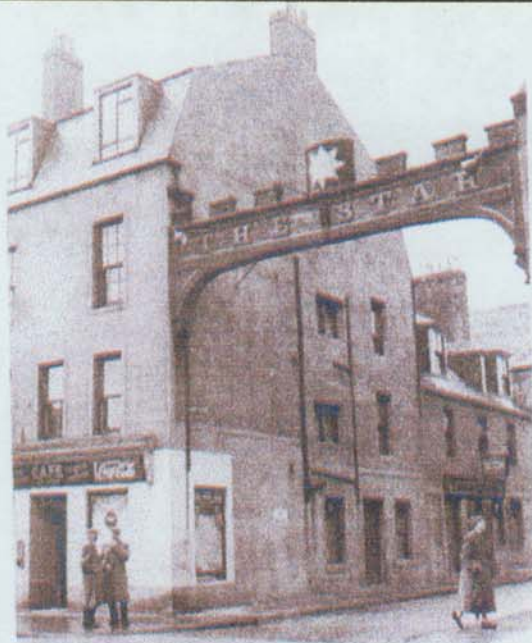
Morris Scott, Arbroath



Inventor of

J. Chalmers

THE ADHESIVE STAMP



The Star Hotel Arch as it was.

The Star Hotel Arch

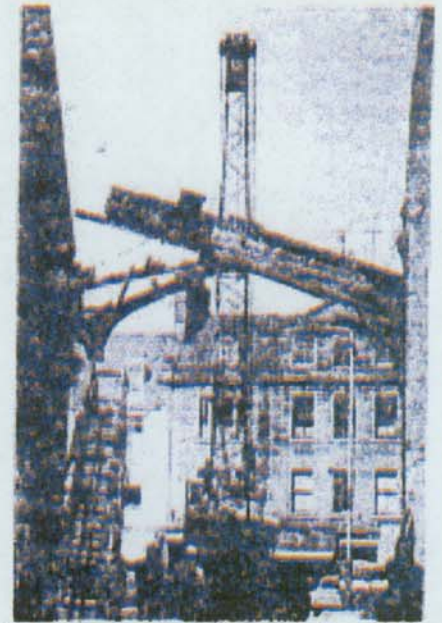
The early 60's saw the removal of one of Montrose's prized treasures.

When Clark Newsagents were bought over by John Menzies their plans were to remove the old building and build a modern style shop. The Star Hotel arch which spanned New Wynd and abutted the newsagents would have to be taken down, then after the new shop was built the sign would be refitted as before. Unfortunately rot was discovered in some of the timber structure of the arch and while it was being lifted down it more or less split in two.

R Pert & Son, local builders, had the only mobile crane in town and so were given the task. The crane driver was Ernie Sutton (my father).

The Star Hotel arch was a unique piece of architecture which enhanced the High Street - perhaps it may be replaced one day.

Raymond Sutton



The removal of the arch by Ernie Sutton and crane of R Pert & Son.

Scurdyness Lighthouse

The Lighthouse we are so familiar with, standing sentry at the mouth of the South Esk, is not the first to have occupied that position.

In the days of sailing ships, Montrose was not an easy port to approach. As far back as 1547, James V's pilot warned that 'If you would enter the haven of Montrose, hold to the south side of the entry, so you shall shun a bank of sand' -- the Annat Bank.

A certain Captain Greenville Collins produced 'Great Britain's Coastal Pilot' in 1693 which showed clear directions for ships entering the River. His instructions were to line up the ruin of Inchbrayock Church -- then almost the only building on Rossie Island -- with the central of three hills in the middle distance, probably a summit behind the Fullerton Estate.

Trade in and out of Montrose was on the increase from the beginning of the 18th century, and by 1768 the shipmasters of the town were complaining to the Town Council of the lack of guidance for vessels making for the harbour, particularly at night. The Council acceded to their request, and engaged a local mason, Andrew Barrie, to build 'a beacon... four-square, twelve feet on the outside of each side, and twenty feet high' Unfortunately the Council had not done its homework and had omitted to consult the landowner, the Laird of Usan, who was understandably peeved to find a tower being built on his land without his permission. An agreement was eventually reached and the first Lighthouse on Scurdyness was completed by 1771. Barrie was paid £53.8s.10d.

But by 1804, the shipmasters were already petitioning the Town Council that 'the Tower that was built many years since on the Ness has been taken down ... for the purpose of erecting a Fort or Battery on the place where it stood'. The council do not appear to have responded to this plea, nor to another one in 1813. But a tower was built in 1813, by a Mr McIntosh, and paid for by public subscription. It appears in the background of an engraving of the town of about 1825.

The present Lighthouse was built by the Commissioners for Northern Lighthouses and first lit in 1870.

Duncan Macdonald (With acknowledgements to Mr Bill Ogg)

The Montrose Society was founded in 1956. Its stated aim is to provide a forum for those interested in the town of Montrose and its immediate area, and who want to know more about its history, its people, and the events which have shaped its character and will influence its future. An important part of the Society's work is the preparation and publishing of research into local history, covering areas such as cultural and social history and townscape.

The Society seeks to encourage the highest quality design and preservation standards within the built environment by maintaining a "watching brief" on new development.

The Society runs an annual CIVIC AWARDS programme.

Programme of Meetings 2005/06

September 15, 2005

GENERAL WADE'S MILITARY ROADS

Alfie Ingram

October 20, 2005

FIONN MACCOLLA - Novelist
TOM MACDONALD - Montrosian

Denis Rice

November 17, 2005

THE COUNTRY HOUSE OF RENAISSANCE SCOTLAND

Prof. Charles McKean

December 8, 2005

PLACE NAMES AROUND MONTROSE

Duncan Macdonald

January 19, 2006

BRIDGING THE SOUTHESK

Raymond Sutton

February 16, 2006

ELECTRICITY IN MONTROSE

John Thomson

March 16, 2006

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
and ARCHIVES PRESENTATION

Tony Sutton

April 21, 2006

50th ANNIVERSARY DINNER

Links Hotel

May 19, 2006

AWARDS EVENING

Montrose Museum

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

Annual membership £8.00, Visitors £1.50 per meeting, Juniors Free
Coffee and Tea are available