

## People in Logie Croft House



© Blairlogie Archives 2012

Croft House 1994

The earliest record of the land ownership of the site of **Croft House** is in 1772, when **Robert Reid** purchased, under feu, a piece of land “with half the houses thereon”, which is now the site of **Rowanbank**, and, in the description of the extent and boundaries of this purchase of land, mention is made of the land of **Robert Dawson** on the North and this is the site of the present **Croft House**.

Later, in 1789, the feu of this same **Robert Reid**, and also, by presumption, that of **Robert Dawson** adjacent to the North, was recognised and confirmed by **Robert Bruce Dundas** of **Blair Castle**, whose wife, **Elizabeth Spittal or Dundas** was the last of the **Spittal Family**, which had built and owned **Blair Castle** since 1480, when the land had been gifted to them by the King, to live at **Blairlogie**.

On 20<sup>th</sup> August 1826, **Jean Dawson**, the daughter of **Robert Dawson**, disposed the land, with the consent of **Alexander Rennie**, wright of **Menstrie**, to **Robert McGregor**, at that time residing at **Alva Toll-Bar**, and this transfer of ownership was registered by an Instrument of Sasine on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1826.

It was at this time also that the extent of the land is first formally defined in a surviving document as follows:

“that spot of ground lying in the village of **Blairlogie** containing three falls and twenty four ells with a house thereon, bounded by the road leading to **Stirling** on the North, the **Kirk Green Road** as newly set off on the East, **Robert Reid’s** feu in the South and the **Stormy Croft Dyke** on the West parts, lying in the **Parish of Logie** in the **County of Perth**”

Because **Robert Reid's** feu had come into existence in 1772, it is likely that the extent of the **Croft House** lands of **Robert Dawson**, defined in this 1826 document, were essentially the same in 1772, including "the house thereon".

It is also worth noting that an "ell" is an old measurement of approximately 1 yard or 1 square yard depending on the context, and a "fall" measures 6 "ells" or, again, 36 square "ells" depending on the context. The land in question, therefore, is in the order of 350 square yards in extent.

However, to return to the chronology, the end of the short lived ownership of **Robert McGregor** came on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1831, when he disposed the property to **James McDonald** Toll Keeper at **Saint Ninians**, and this was recorded in an Instrument of Sasine dated 19<sup>th</sup> July 1831. Thereafter, on 7<sup>th</sup> March 1843, **James McDonald** transferred ownership by Disposition and Deed of Settlement to his son **Archibald McDonald**, a Writer (solicitor) in **Edinburgh**; and that transfer was registered by an Instrument of Sasine on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1844. There is no record of **Archibald McDonald** having occupied **Croft House**, and, on 7<sup>th</sup> January 1848, by Disposition, he transferred the ownership to **James Crystal Junior** Writer in **Stirling**, for the sum of £280. This transfer or ownership was formalised by Instrument of Sasine dated and registered on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1848.

On 27<sup>th</sup> August 1848, a Charter of Confirmation was written on behalf of and signed by **Robert Bruce of Kennet** as feu superior, confirming **James Crystal** as lawful owner of "that spot of ground, etc." with a feu duty of One Shilling and Three Pence payable annually at Martinmas. Despite this similarity of name, this feu superior may not have been related to the **Robert Bruce Dundas**, noted above in 1789, as this **Robert Bruce of Kennet** had bought **Blair Castle** and the associated lands from the **Dundas/Spittal Family** in 1845.

**James Crystal Junior** died on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1857, and by a Special Service, his son **Andrew Crystal** petitioned **Hugh Barclay**, Sheriff Substitute, to recognise him, as Son and Lawful Heir and new owner of **Croft House**. This was achieved, but **Andrew Crystal** did not formally record this ownership title, nor register it in the Register of Sasines at **Perth** until 6<sup>th</sup> June 1867. The reasons for this delay can be surmised from the financial dealings that followed **Andrew Crystal's** confirmation of ownership. **Andrew Crystal** does not appear to have occupied **Croft House** himself for much (or maybe all) of the time of his ownership. Indeed, a note of this period records that **Croft House** was occupied by **Miss Thomson** at some point. **Andrew Crystal** is described as "sometime Writer in **Stirling** and now Distiller at **Gargunnoch**, residing at **Glenfoyle** near **Gargunnoch**". On the 19<sup>th</sup> of December 1866, **Andrew Crystal**, declaring himself to be the holder of twenty shares, each worth £25, in The Midland Counties of Scotland Property and Investment Company, disposed **Croft House** and its lands to this Property Company as security for a loan of £350, and The Society registered this interest in the Register of Sasines Reversions at **Perth** on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1866. Interest on this loan was payable at 5% per annum.

In the next year 1867, on 21<sup>st</sup> February, **Andrew Crystal** discharged his debt of £350, owed to the Midland Counties of Scotland Property and Investment Company by further disposing his rights and property in **Croft House** to **John Murrie** agent for the National Bank of Scotland and **James Drysdale**, joint agent for the Clydesdale Banking Company as "Trustees for behoof of all his just and lawful creditors and for the purposes of the Trust specified". However, the formal discharge document from the Midland Counties of Scotland Society was only finalised and registered on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1867.

This rather complex episode in the financial life of **Croft House** is further complicated by the fact of **Andrew Crystal's** death during 1867. Whether the sale of **Croft House** was already envisaged by **Andrew Crystal** through the new Bank Trustees or resulted from the Banks recouping their money after his death, **Croft House** was offered for sale by Public Roup or Auction on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1867. No acceptable offers were received but after the Roup **Robert Bennet**, who already resided at **Blairlogie**, approached the Trustees with an offer of £260 – which they accepted – and they disposed the ownership to **Robert Bennet**. This disposition, describing the “spot of ground in **Blairlogie**, etc.” specifically excluded “the part forming Number Five hereof” which is then described as “subjects in **Stirling** known by the name of **Sauchie Orchard**” for which the Trustees retained their ownership.

**Robert Bennet** quickly moved the legal ownership of the **Croft House** property to a Trust which he set up in 1867, and he can be presumed to have been an absentee landlord as his address is always given as **Keilarsbrae House, Alloa**. This new Trust for the **Blairlogie** properties of **Robert Bennet** included a number of interesting names among the Trustees viz. **Robert Bennet** residing at **Cornton**, (relative?), **John Dawson**, farmer at **Blairhall Mains, Culross**, **John Peat**, of **Manor**, and **James Monteith**, Writer in **Stirling**. However, in his Registered Holograph Will dated 28<sup>th</sup> August and 29<sup>th</sup> September (codicil) 1879, **Robert Bennet** cancelled the appointment of all these Trustees and replaced them by **Isabella Bennet** (daughter) and **David Anderson**, farmer at **Woodhill, Carnoustie**, as the new joint Trustees. In August 1885, these two Trustees formally registered the lands of **Robert Bennet**, now deceased, in the General Register of Sasines for the **County of Perth** in the names of the Trustees. **Isabella Bennet** was now stated to live at **Keilarsbrae House, Alloa**, her father's former address, and **David Anderson**, was still residing at **Woodhill, Carnoustie**. The Trust therefore appears to have continued in the role of absentee landlord and few details are currently available of the occupants of **Croft House** during this period. Information supplied by **Steven Robb** concerning his ancestors fills one gap. He reports that **Pathfoot** was the centre of shoemaking, but after the village was destroyed ( with the exception of one house) to improve the policies of **Airthey House**, it is probable that most of the shoemakers moved to nearby **Blairlogie**. **John Robb** (1755 – c1825) was the son of **Andrew** a shoemaker of **Pathfoot**. The **Stirling** records seem to admonish him for selling shoes in **Stirling Market**, and he lived until at least 1823, when he purchased three lairs in **Logie Kirkyard**. Both **John Robb**(1819 -1895) and **Steven Robb's** great great grandfather **Andrew** (1825 – 1900 ) rose through the ranks of the mills to become managers (**Andrew** at **Gaberston**) , then **Tweedsdale** in **Peebles**, and **John** at **Keilersbrae** in Alloa. **John** cannot have been a tenant at his employer's house **Croft House** for long as he was still at **Keilersbrae**, and died at **Croft House** in 1895.

The Trustees continued to expand the investment in property in Blairlogie and elsewhere commenced by **Robert Bennet**, albeit now also as personal proprietors as well as on behalf of the Trust. **Lieutenant Colonel James Hare** of **Calderhall** and **Blairlogie**, and his son **Steuart Welwood Hare** ( the owners and occupiers at that time of **Blair Castle**) disposed, on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1901, to **Miss Isabella Bennet** in exchange for an obligation to pay feu duty of Sixteen Shillings and Sixpence per year, a parcel of land of Eleven and One Ninth Falls, lying to the West of the then existing boundaries of the **Croft House** site, and bounded in the North by the lane leading to **The Croft** and **Bain's Feu**, and on the South and West by the Orchard retained in the ownership of the **Hare Family**. It is this land that now forms much of the garden at **Croft House**.

Following **Isabella Bennet's** death in 1920, the surviving Trustee, **David Anderson**, appointed his daughter **Miss Anne Telford Anderson**, also to be a Trustee for the **Bennet** properties. **Isabella Bennet** made a will on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1915, which was formally registered, after her death, on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1923. Prior to this, however, and following **Isabella Bennet's** death, a search was made to establish the extent of the lawful rights of ownership of the estate by solicitors Miller and Bryce. This search reveals the extent to which **Robert Bennet** and his family invested in property in **Blairlogie** and the surrounding district. He had bought the cottage known as **Hillside** from **Marcellus Park**, who had emigrated to **Bergen, New Jersey**, for the sum of £16 – 5 – 0. He owned four and a half acres in and around **Logie**, including the site of what is now **Blair House**, which was sold by the surviving Trustee (**David Anderson**) to **Andrew Philip**, Potato and Coal Merchant on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1920. Two pieces of land, extending to some 6 acres lying South of the **Stirling/Menstrie** road were disposed to **Lord Balfour of Burleigh**, who owned and occupied **Blair Castle** between 1864 and 1891.

**Isabella Bennet's** will stated that in 1915 she was residing at **23, Randolph Terrace, Stirling**, and the will left all her property equally to her brother **John Dawson Bennet**, then living at **Kimberley, Australia**, and **Miss Annie Telford Anderson**, daughter of the now deceased **David Anderson**, now residing at **Woodhill, Carnoustie** which had been her Father's residence.

The search by Miller and Bryce may well have been occasioned by these two inheritees establishing the extent of the property they had been left before disposing it to realise the capital, because **Croft House** and the attached land was put up for Public Roup or Auction (For the second time in its life) on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1924. The successful bidder was **Alfred Percy Waller**, then resident at **4, Glebe Terrace, Alloa**, with a sum of £400. £380 of this sale price was paid to **Miss Anne Telford Anderson**, living at **Blairgowan, Carnoustie**, and £20 was paid to **John Dawson Bennet**, sometime of **Kimberley, Australia**, and then at **Lansdowne, Cape Town, South Africa**.

**Alfred Percy Waller** owned **Croft House** from then until his death on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1937, and whether he occupied the house for all or part of that time is uncertain, but there is a record that **Mrs. Ellen MacFarlane or Wardrope**, who lived with her husband at **Hillside**, worked and resided at **Croft House**, in the capacity of Housekeeper..

On 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1937, a Decree of General Service was obtained by **Alfred Waller's** son **Charles Curtis Waller**, who lived at **71, Court Way, Western Avenue, London**, to establish him as the lawful heir and owner of **Croft House**, but this ownership was short lived insofar as **Charles Curtis Waller**, sold **Croft House** in 1938 to **Mrs. Jean Mackie or Allan**, and her husband **John Robertson Allan**, who are stated as already residing at **Croft House** (perhaps as tenants of **Alfred** and then **Charles Waller**) for the sum of £350. It is of note that the **Allans** put up **Croft House** as security for a loan of £200 from the Commercial Bank of Scotland, all of which was repaid when the **Allans** moved on and resold the house in 1944.

The new owner was to be **Chichele Keppel Bampton**, Captain in the Royal Navy, who purchased **Croft House** and the existing grounds from **Mrs. Jean Mackie or Allan** on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1944. Prior to moving to **Blairlogie**, **Captain Bampton** had been living at **Westward Ho, Glenburn Road West, Bearsden**. He paid One Thousand Three Hundred and Five pounds. Within his first year of residence, on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1944, **Captain Bampton** purchased from **Major General Sir Steuart Welwood Hare** of **The Blair**, a piece of land lying to the West of **Croft House** that extended the garden (and what is now the Orchard

at **Croft House**) by about One and A Half Acres. This extended the grounds of **Croft House** westward to the boundary with **Blairlogie Cottage** – at that time owned by **Miss Marjorie Edith Jameson**. In the South it was bounded by land retained by **Major General Hare** to the main **Stirling/Menstrrie** road and by the lands of **William Dalrymple** and the **Manor Powis Coal Company**.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1947, **Captain Bampton** again added to the property at **Croft House** by purchasing the buildings (previously, as far back as 1830, used as a brewhouse, then a byre, but, by 1947, as a garage) lying between **Hillside** and **Magnolia Cottage** and facing westward onto the **Square at Blairlogie**. Payment for this transfer of ownership was to be £1 per annum for the water supply plus £1 per annum as feu duty.

**Captain Bampton** died on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1974, and ownership of **Croft House** passed to his widow, **Mrs. Nancy Margaret Bampton**, and this transfer of title of ownership was formally recorded on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1976. **Mrs. Nancy Bampton** lived to be over 100 years old, but died on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1996.