

## People in Logie Nethercraig ~ Puddleducks



© Blairlogie Archives

Nethercraigs circa 1960

As with several other houses in the centre of **Blairlogie**, the early history of **Nethercraig** is linked to the history of nearby houses and a succession of the same family owners.

Early records show that the land on which **Nethercraig** now stands was part of the larger land and property of the **Telford** family called **The Bog of Blairlogie**. Records exist of a John Telfer or Telfoord with a feu in **Blairlogie** as early as 1718. It is also recorded that a **John Telfoord** married **Isobell Montieth** at **Logie** on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1708, and that their children were **John** (born 1709), **James** (born 1712), **William** (born 1715) and **Janet** (born 1718). There was already a cottage on the **The Bog** at this time, but **John Telford** replaced it with a new house in 1728, broadly on the site of which stands **Telford House** today. It is reputed that a datestone, later built into the wall of **Nethercraig** bears the date 1728 and the initials JT, and is said to come from the original cottage replaced by **John Telford** with his new cottage.

The extent of the property called **The Bog** at this time extended generally over the land currently occupied by **Telford House** and **Nethercraig**. It was bounded by the old **Stirling/Menstrie** road to the North, by the property of **John Bryce** shoemaker to the West, and, below that, by the line of the burn, and by the new turnpike road to the South.

To the East it was bounded by the land of **William Bute**, tenanted by **Ralph Moir**; and which now corresponds roughly to **Fenham**. Although descriptions of **The Bog** and surrounding properties at this time show that there were many barns, byres and stables that have not survived until today, **Nethercraig** did not exist then, and it would be built much later.

More detailed facts on this property become available as the history enters the 19<sup>th</sup> Century . In March 1825, the land, house, barn and stable known as **The Bog** on the East of **Blairlogie**, is recorded as owned by **John Telford**, wright of **Blairlogie**. The genealogy of the **Telford** family suggests that he was the direct inheritor (being the first born son of **James Telford**) himself the second born son of **John Telford**.

In March 1829, succession of ownership of the **Telford** properties and lands passed from the deceased **John Telford** wright of **Blairlogie**, to his son – also **John Telford**, and this ownership was confirmed by the immediate feu superior **Mrs. Elizabeth Spittal of Blair**. Delineations of the property, again officially designated as **The Bog** again mentioned the adjoining lands of shoemaker **John Bryce**, and a new name **William Faichney** to the North.

In 1832, **John Telford** recognised the interests of his wife **Helen Ferguson** by granting her a liferent interest in the grounds and properties, while in the following year 1833, the succession of ownership of **The Bog**, aside from the liferent interest of **John's** wife **Helen**, was granted to **John Telford's** nephew **John Dawson**, son of **John Dawson Snr.** a manufacturer in **Alva**. With this settlement of these **Telford** properties was added inheritance of all other of **John Telford's** estate, although it is not clear whether this included additions to the properties in **Blairlogie**. In 1851, this settlement on **John Dawson**, woolspinner of **Inverness**, and son of **John Dawson**, one time manufacturer in **Alva**, and then farmer at **Drumdrills (Bridge of Allan)** translated into reality, and the ownership of the house, barn, byre yard and piece of ground called **The Bog** on the East part of **Blairlogie**, passed to **John Dawson**. This ownership was confirmed by **Robert Bruce of Kennet and Blairlogie**, the feu superior, in the same year

When **John Dawson** inherited **The Bog** in 1851, he was already an established industrialist, and this acquisition moved him also into property ownership and management – most of it in and around **Logie**. He was to become an establishment figure in the district for the next half century. In 1852, he married the daughter of **James Bain** and **Janet Bain or Reid**. **Janet Bain** had been born in **Blairlogie**, probably at her parents' home – the cottage that has now been developed into **Rowanbank**. As his businesses prospered, **John Dawson** invested in further property in the **Logie** area. **Manor** or **Manner**, which was also known as **King's Powhouse**, had been in the ownership of the **Dundas** family since the early part of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, but the last **Dundas** to own it, **Edward Thomas Dundas**, sold it to **John Dawson** on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1877. In 1881, he added the ownership of **Longkerse Farm** to his list of properties.

**John** and **Janet Dawson** had three sons and four daughters – many of whom developed their lives (and marriages) away from **Logie** and away from **Manor** and the family home at **Wellpark** in **Bridge of Allan**, and this detachment from residence by the family in **Blairlogie** is confirmed by the absence of any mention of them in the Census Reports of the time; but one son, also called **John Dawson** appears to have settled into the **Logie** businesses.

As part of his growing interests in **Logie, John Dawson Snr.** also erected the building that is now **Nethercraig**. It incorporated both a shop and a Post Office, and before its existence, the Post Office had been sited at the corner of **Manor Loan** and the new turnpike road where **Alastair Logan's** house now stands. It appears that this was done prior to 1880, because the first mention of the new Post Office, together with **John Dawson** (60) "postmaster and grocer", his wife **Janet Dawson** (58) and their daughter **Mary** (19) occurs in the 1881 Census Records. The Post Office building and shop also appears to have included sufficient space to accommodate boarders, because the 1881 Census also includes **John Manson**, a farm servant and his wife **Mary Manson** as residents in the same building. In the 1891 Census Records, both **John Dawson** and his wife **Janet** are listed as "postmaster and grocer" and "assistant in shop" respectively.

**John Dawson** died in 1900, and he left his wife **Janet** a liferent precept in **Manor**, and he left the whole estate, incorporating the liferent interest in **Manor** of **Janet Dawson**, to his son **John Dawson**. A window in **Logie Kirk** was dedicated to him by his daughters with the words "To the memory of John Dawson, who died on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1900" and can still be seen there to this day.

By the time of **John Dawson's** death, his son, young **John Dawson**, had long established himself as Postmaster in **Nethercraig**, and in 1902, he also made provision for the future by establishing a Trust that gave **Janet Dawson** or **Baird** (his wife) [Yes, another **Janet** and **John!!** Ed.] "in liferent, the whole heritable or moveable property belonging to me; to convey to the said **Janet Dawson** or **Baird** the business of merchant now carried on by me at **Blairlogie**, if she desires to carry on the same, otherwise it shall form part of my moveable estate; on the death of the said **Janet Baird** or **Dawson**, the whole of my means and estate shall be realised and the Trustees shall pay **John Dawson Kerr**, son of the late **Mary Dawson** or **Houston**, my daughter, £100; and to **Jane Baird**, presently residing at **Blair House, Blairlogie**, £50, and whatever residue there may be of my estate shall be paid to **Mary Houston**, daughter of the late **Mary Dawson** or **Houston**, after she reaches the age of 21"

In 1906, on his death, the provisions of **John Dawson's** Trust came into effect, and it is clear that his wife **Janet** chose to continue the business at the **Nethercraig** Post Office among the other enterprises of the late **John Dawson** her husband. It seems likely that, from the onset, **Janet Dawson** operated the Post Office business as a tenancy, and although the full roster of Postmasters during the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has yet to be established, it is known that the Postmaster at **Nethercraig** in 1910 was **William Wyper Ritchie** (63) who lived in and also ran the post office and shop with his wife **Euphemia Ritchie** (60), their daughters **Jean** (29) and **Flora McDonald Ritchie** (26) and adopted son **Angus Cameron Ritchie** (7). They also provided a home for **Euphemia's** sister **Mary Jane Hay** (50). By the Great War, **Nethercraig** was rented to a widow, **Margaret Carmichael**, and the Postmaster was **Alex Valentine**. This division of the building and occupancy of **Nethercraig** appears to be a feature of the period of ownership by **Janet Dawson**. **Margaret Carmichael**, described as a widow, is recorded as the tenant in the House, whereas **Alex Valentine** is recorded as Postmaster and Grocer. This dual occupancy of **Nethercraig** continued until 1924, despite complex changes in the ownership that occurred as a backdrop.

**Janet Dawson** died in 1920, and, at that time, the provisions of her husband **John Dawson's** will came into force, and, with the liferent provisions ended, the properties were therefore offered for sale. In May 1921, ownership passed to **Miss Mary Houston** of 4, **Mellville Terrace, Stirling**, granddaughter of the **John Dawson** who owned **The Bog**,

and who died in 1900 She paid £1000 for the whole property, still named **The Bog**, and which still included **Telford House**. It is interesting to note that, in order to finance the purchase, **Mary Houston** secured the property against a loan of £400 from **Miss Mary Rough** of **41, Polwarth Terrace, Edinburgh**, and that this loan did not get repaid until 1945, when this was done by **William Kennedy, Post Office, Blairlogie**. (Of whom more later)

Although **Mary Houston** took ownership in 1920, it was not until 1924 that she decided to move into **Nethercraig** herself, and this she did, with her sister, **Kate**, at the same time taking over the role of shopkeeper. Her new Postmaster was **William Kennedy**, whom she married in 1926, becoming **Mrs. Mary Kennedy**, and her title to the property from then on is recorded in this married name. Her sister **Kate** moved out and later lived at **Crowsteps** as a tenant of **Mary**. The **Kennedy** ownership and occupancy of **Nethercraig** continued until 1937, when **Mary Kennedy** died, and **William Kennedy** continued on his own. **Mary** and **William Kennedy** had one son called **George Robison Kennedy**, who, although concerned in the later history of **Telford House**, played no further part in the history of **Nethercraig**.

In 1960, having been Postmaster for around 36 years, **William Kennedy** sold **Nethercraig** and the post office and shop business to three ladies – **Miss Agnes Paterson Mackenzie Wark**, a retired nursing matron, **Miss Elizabeth Jarvie** and **Miss Janet Gow McMillan**, both also retired nurses. All are recorded as formerly from **1, Mayville Avenue, Giffnock**. **Miss Janet McMillan** moved into the residence and became the Sub Postmistress. It is at this point therefore, that the history of **Nethercraig** became formerly divorced from its neighbour **Telford House**.

Amusingly, it could not escape for long, and, in July 1965, **George Robison Kennedy** sold **Telford House** to the same three ladies who had earlier purchased **Nethercraig** – **Mesdames McMillan, Wark** and **Jarvie**. However, this reconciliation lasted only briefly until **Telford House** was sold separately to the present occupants in 1983.

**Miss Janet McMillan's** tenancy of the Sub Postmistress role at **Nethercraig** lasted until July 1965, when **Nethercraig** was sold to **Mr. Harry Blackadder** and his wife **Helen** who then ran the shop and Post Office until 1986, at which time the village Post Office and shop was closed, and **Nethercraig** was sold for use as a private residence only to **John Meiklejohn**. He lived in **Nethercraig** until June 1993, when it was purchased by **James Fraser Mitchell** and his wife **Isobel Jane Mitchell**, and they lived there with their two daughters **Nicola** and **Melissa** until January 2005. The **Mitchell** family quickly reinstated **Nethercraig** to its place as a commercial and social centre for the



village. **Isobel** renovated the part of the building that had contained the shop and Post Office, and, on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May 1994, opened a tea room called **Puddleducks**. Meanwhile, **Fraser** worked to create an outstanding garden of ponds and exotic plants in the extensive grounds behind the house. His work was quickly a major attraction for

visitors to the tea room and he was encouraged to start and build up a successful landscape gardening business to complement **Isobel's Puddleducks**.

In January 2005, **Fraser** and **Isobel Mitchell** sold **Nethercraig** to the present owners who moved in with and following the tradition of **Nethercraig** being a centre for commerce, did not wait long before re-opening the garden centre building in the grounds behind the house in the Autumn of 2008 with a new business in the name of "Inside Out".