

# People in Logie Telford House

The lands on which **Telford House** now stands were once a part of a much bigger land holding by the **Telfer/Telford** family. This land holding can be traced back to the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century when **John Telfer** is recorded in **Blairlogie** in 1718. Separately, from the genealogical records of the **Telford** family, there are also notes that **John Tellfoord** (N.B. spelling at that time was as optional as it now is in British Universities) married **Isobell Monteith** at **Logie** on August 31<sup>st</sup> 1708, and their children, all registered in Stirling, were **John**, born 1709, **James**, born 1712, **William**, born 1715 and **Janet**, born 1718.



The **Telford** family are understood to have been in possession of the feu which comprised much of what is now **Telford House, Nethercraig/the Old PostOffice/Puddleducks, Boghead/Fenham** and about half of what is now the garden of **Blair House**. The land extended from the burn at the South Western corner of the present garden of **Blair House** as far East as the boundary between **Boghead/Fenham** and the current car park. It was bounded to the North by the old **Menstrie/Stirling** road ( the current **Back Loan**) and in the South by the new turnpike road. The old “King’s Highway” ( the **Back Loan**) through **Blairlogie** was superseded by the new turnpike road (the present A91) in 1806. This new road only became possible after the agricultural revolution of the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, when the marshland of the **Kerse** was drained.

It is clear from the descriptions of the properties that there were more houses, barns, byres and stables in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century than can be accounted for today; many of them disappeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: for example, the sites of both a stable and a barn are shown in an 1830 map of what is now the garden of **Blair House**. However, the precise boundaries of the properties at that time are far from clear in terms of the boundaries as we know them today.

**John Telfer/Telford** is said to have built himself a cottage on **Telford’s Feu** in 1728, and a datestone built into the wall of **Nethercraig** bearing the date 1728 and initials JT (John Telfer?) is said to come from this house or cottage that preceded **Telford House** on the same site. The old stone shed immediately East of **Telford House** is a relic from this time. More detailed facts become available on ownership and occupations as the history enters the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

It would appear that two branches of the **Telford** family then became involved in this land ownership, and both, at this time, were led by a **John Telford**.

In March 1825, the land, house, barn and stable known as **The Bog** on the East of **Blairlogie** was 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 son of **John Telford**, mentioned above.

In that year of 1825, his nephew, another **John Telford**, (the first born son of **William Telford** and **Cecilia Heugh**) was granted, with his wife **Jane Wright**, 1 acre and 45 falls (about one and a third acres in all) of land with house called **Boghead of Blairlogie**, lying to the East of the other **Telford** land at **The Bog**.

**William Telford** and his son **John** had grown up at **Clifford House, Bridge of Allan**, and both were employed as cashiers at the **Stirling Banking Company**. The bank was owned by seven partners, and it is believed that **William Telford** was one of them. In any event, he owned shares to the value of £1200 according to his will at the time of his death in 1810. Among the other partners were **John Wright** and **Peter Wright**, both of **Stirling**. The **Jane Wright**, who married the “**Bridge of Allan**” **John Telford** in 1823, was related to these bankers. At that time **Boghead of Blairlogie** was occupied by **Ralph Moir** a gardener, and presumably a tenant of the **Telfords**.

From other records from the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, ownerships and occupations of the people of the lands surrounding the yards, enclosures and houses of the **John Telfords** become known.

To the East, **Archibald Shearer**, sometime wheelwright in **Stirling** and now gardener in **Blairlogie**, owned land inherited from his uncle **Thomas Edmond**, whose father **Archibald Edmond**, was also **Archibald Shearer's** grandfather. His holding included a house and yard (formerly a byre and sheepyard). To the South and West, there are records of the stable or byre of shoemaker **John Bryce**, and the yard of **James MacLachlan**. Also recorded is the ownership by **John Bryce Taylor** of the ground in the South and East known as **The Orchard**.

In June 1827, **Mrs. Elizabeth Spittal or Dundas**, the wife of **Robert Bruce Dundas of Blair**, the feu superior of the lands, granted **Archibald Shearer** the privilege of “winning stones” in the **Craig of Blair**; a right already granted to **Archibald Edmond (Shearer's grandfather)** as far back as 1744 by **Adam Bennet of Blairlogie**.

However, in May 1805, **Archibald Shearer** had sold the western section of these lands to **William Bute**, and it was from **William Bute** that **John Telford** the banker bought this section of **The Boigs** called **Boghead of Blairlogie** in 1825.

In parallel with these events, his part of the **Telford** family had encountered a crisis. The **Stirling Banking Company** was one of the many that crashed in the early 1800's as a result of a general financial crisis, similar to the famous “South Sea Bubble” which occurred in the early 1700's. According to a book on **Sir Robert Peel** by **Anna Ramsay**, the **Stirling Bank** paid all its debts (unlike a number of other small Scottish banks). When it was first “embarrassed” in February 1826, it obtained an advance of £85,000 from the **Bank of Scotland**, but was finally declared bankrupt in August 1826.

In March 1829, succession of ownership of the **Telford** properties and lands known as **The Bog** passed from the deceased **John Telford**, still described as a **Wright in Blairlogie**, to his son, also **John Telford** and was confirmed by the immediate feu superior **Mrs. Elizabeth Spittal of Blair**. Delineations of the property, now officially designated as **The Bog**, again mentioned the adjoining lands of the shoemaker **John Bryce**, **James Henderson** on the East and a new name, **William Faichney** to the North.

**Mrs. Spittal's** Baillie at this time is named as **Andrew Robb** – another shoemaker of **Blairlogie**.

Indeed, two shoemakers, both named **Andrew Robb**, are recorded in the 1841 Census Records as living with their families in **Blairlogie** at that time. The first was 45 years old, living with his wife **Mary Robb**, 40 years old. The second had a larger family around him. This **Andrew Robb**, occupied an unidentified house in **Blairlogie** with his wife **Jane**, and their children **Andrew** (15), **Mary** (12), **William** (10), **Ralph** (6), **James** (4) and **Mary** (1). It is uncertain which of these two **Andrew Robbs** was the Baillie to **Mrs. Spittal**.

In 1832, the inheritor **John Telford** recognised the interests of his wife **Helen Ferguson**, by granting her a liferent interest in the ground and properties, and, in the following year of 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 existing upon his death – although the extent of this estate and whether it included other lands is not clear.

**Helen Ferguson** or **Telford** continued to live in **Telford House** under her liferent agreement, despite this change of ownership, and the 1841 Census records her, now 35 years old, at **Telford House**, accompanied by her sister **Janet Robertson** and **Janet's** fifteen year old son **James Robertson**. By the time of the 1861 Census – 20 years later – **Helen Telford** is still recorded as living at **Telford House**, but now registered as a widow and “lodging house keeper” and still accompanied by her sister **Janet Robertson** (60). By 1851, the settlement on **John Dawson**, woolspinner of **Inverness** and son of **John Dawson**, one time manufacturer in **Alva**, and now 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**. It was confirmed by **Robert Bruce of Kennet and Blairlogie**, the feu superior, in the same year.. The interest of the “banker” **John Telford**, continued in respect to **Boghead of Blairlogie**, though from a distance. **John** had migrated to London around 1834 and he then left for **New Zealand** in the 1850's with his sons **John** and **Thomas**, but without his wife **Jane** and his other children **Eliza** (17), **William** (16), **Cecilia** (14), **Jane** (12), **Margaret** (7), and **Hugh James** (4). At some time during these events, John had granted a liferent interest in **Boghead of Blairlogie** to his wife **Jane**, and in September 1852, there is a record of a Charter of Confirmation by **Robert Bruce of Kennet and Blairlogie**, as superior, in favour of **John Telford Esq.**, sometime banker in **Stirling** and now residing in **Wellington, New Zealand** and his wife **Jane Wright**, in liferent and their heirs in fee 1 acre and 45 falls of ground called **Boghead of Blairlogie**, with the houses built thereon, lying on the North side of the new turnpike, bounded by the property of **John Telford**, feuer in **Blairlogie**, on the West by the old road from **Blairlogie** to **Menstry**, by the remainder of the lands belonging to **Archibald Shearer** on the East, and by the said turnpike road on the South.

**John Telford's** wife **Jane** died in **Paddington, London** in 1856, although she had generally been living in **Glasgow** at this time. It is interesting to speculate that the issuance of this Charter of Confirmation in 1852 was sought in order to clear the way for a sale of the land and house at **Boghead of Blairlogie**, because the next record that is held regarding this section of the **Telford** properties is at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, in 1913, when ownership is recorded as already being in the hands of **Mrs. Mary Wedderburn Morries Stirling of Blackgrange** from at least as early as 1876 ( although she actually resided, at that time, at **9, South Eaton Place, London**). It was in December

1913 that this ownership, and its disposition by **Mrs. Morries Stirling** to her son **John Morries Morries Stirling**, was recorded. It therefore seems as though the interests of the **Telford** family in land and property ownership in **Blairlogie** ceased around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The general connection between the extended **Telford** family and **Blairlogie** appears, however, to have survived banker **John's** emigration and the inheritance of nephew **John Dawson**.

**John's** daughter **Jane** married the **Rev. William McLaren** of the **United Presbyterian Church, Logie** in 1858. Before her marriage **Jane** had lived for a time in **Stirling** with her **Aunt Margaret**, sister to **John Telford**, who was married to the **Rev. James Gilfillan**, also a Minister of the **United Presbyterian Church**. **Jane's** other aunt **Rosanna** (sister to **Margaret**) is recorded as having died in 1871 at the **United Presbyterian Manse** in **Blairlogie**, where she must have been living with **Jane** and her husband the **Rev. McLaren**.

When **John Dawson** inherited **The Bog** in 1851, he was already an established industrialist, and this purchase 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** - who had been born in **Blairlogie**, probably at her parents' home – the cottage that has now been developed into **Rowanbank**.

**John Dawson** moved from his business of woolspinning in **Inverness** and developed a successful business as a drysalter in **Glasgow**. He built a substantial family home at **Wellpark** in **Bridge of Allan**, and it would appear that **Telford House** continued to be a property for the **Dawsons** to rent out to others and not a home for themselves. Indeed, following the tenancy of **Helen Telford**, the 1871 Census Records state that the tenants/occupiers of **Telford House** at that time were **Margaret Colville** a 41 year old, unmarried lady, with her sister **Christina Colville** (39) and their "general servant" **Elizabeth Finlayson**. Both of these ladies were designated "annuitant". They, also, became long term tenants for **John Dawson**, and are again recorded in the 1881 Census Records – this time with their designations being explicitly documented as "interest of money". By the time of the 1891 Census, **Margaret Colville** is still the named tenant, although her sister **Christina** is no longer with her.

There are records that **John Dawson** used **The Bog** as security for two loans of £150 and £100 respectively in 1880 and 1881; possibly in support of further property purchases at that time.

Although no precise facts are available, it must have been at about this time, from the middle to the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century that the old cottage was completely demolished, and in its stead ( and using some of the old masonry for the walls ), but a little bit further back from the old road, a house recognisable as it is today was built. Whether it was **John Dawson** who ordered this construction is not known, nor that of the architect, but it is clear that it was either the same architect ( or a copier ) who designed **Blairlogie Park**. It is quite likely that different builders were involved, as the sandstone used came from two quite different sources.

As his business prospered, **John Dawson** invested in further property in the **Logie** district. **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 15th 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 ownership of **Longkerse Farm** to his list of properties. **John Dawson** was registered at **Logie Kirk** in 1879 as having the right to be buried in the *Manor Aisle*, and he is also noticed in several church records as donating to the poor and appearing in the Parish Valuation Roll in 1888 with a valuation £284.

**John** and **Janet Dawson** had three sons and four daughters – many of whom developed their marriages and lives away from **Manor** and **Telford House**, despite growing up at **Wellpark** in **Bridge of Allan**. However, **William Dawson** of **Wellpark** and **James Dawson** of **Airthrey** are noted in the congregation at **Logie Kirk** in 1893.

**R. D. Taylor**, writing about **Blairlogie** in the **Journal of Horticulture** in 1904, mentions a “veteran pear tree” standing in the orchard of **John Dawson’s** garden in **Blairlogie**. At that time the tree was estimated to be about 400 years old.

**John Dawson** died in 1900, and he left his wife **Janet** a liferent precept in **Manor**. He left the estate, including the provision of the liferent interest in **Manor** to his son – also called **John Dawson**.

A window in **Logie Kirk** was dedicated to the older **John Dawson**, 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.

Now under the stewardship of **Janet Dawson**, the tenancy history of **Telford House** continued, and, in the 1901 Census Records, the new occupants are listed as **David Oliphant**, a 57 year old roadsurfaceman, with his wife **Christina** (63) and their two children **Jane** (27) and son David.

By the time of **John Dawson’s** death, his son had established himself as Postmaster in the family’s property at what is now **Nethercraig**. As shown by old Ordnance Survey maps, **Nethercraig** was not built until around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It was subsequently both a Post Office and a shop and the famous **Puddleducks** tearoom in its time. Prior to its existence, the Post Office was at the crossroads in the house now occupied by **Alastair Logan**. In 1902, **John Dawson** made provision for the future by establishing a Trust that gave **Janet Dawson or Baird** (his wife) “ in liferent, the whole heritable or moveable property belonging to me; to convey to the said **Janet Baird or Dawson** 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”

The Trustees appointed by **John Dawson** were **Daniel McNiel Watson**, **Sunnylaw House, Bridge of Allan**, **John Eadie**, farmer **Blairmains, Blairlogie**, and **James Ferguson Mackie**, solicitor, **Stirling**.

In 1906, on his death, the provisions of **John Dawson’s** Trust came into effect, and it is clear that **Janet Dawson** chose to continue the businesses of **Nethercraig**, the **Post Office**, and **Telford House**, as offered.

Although she may have operated the Post Office herself for some time during the first few years, by the time of the Great War, the records show that she had rented out **Nethercraig** to **Margaret Carmichael**, a widow, and that the Postmaster was **Alex Valentine**.

It was around this time, also, that **Janet Dawson** moved into **Telford House** herself, and the 1911 Census Records show her as the sole occupant. However, there are indications that part of the house was later rented to tenants/lodgers while **Janet Dawson** remained resident in the main section of the house, and a miner (**Mr. J. Comrie**) shared the occupancy of **Telford House** at the time of the Great War.

**Janet Dawson** died in 1920, and at that time, the provisions of her husband **John Dawson's** will came into force and 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** in the records of the sale. 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).

**Mary Houston** continued to rent **Telford House**, and, initially, her tenant remained **Mr. Comrie**, the miner. However, in 1924, a new tenant, **Mr. J. Coutts Morrison**, an "executive Officer", was installed, but he was quickly replaced in the next year, 1925, by a Post Office engineering inspector called **Kenneth Mackenzie**, and there is also a record in the Post Office County Directory of 1912 of tenancy being held by a **Mr. William Ritchie**.

In 1926, **Miss Mary Houston** became **Mrs. Mary Kennedy**, and her title to the property from then on is recorded in that married name. Her next tenant then became **David Oliphant** a roads maintenance foreman, who had formerly lived at **Crossroads Cottages**. He commenced his tenancy of **Telford House** in 1928, and remained her tenant at **Telford House** until her death in 1937.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> January 1927, there is a record of a General Disposition and Settlement by **Mrs. Mary Houston or Kennedy** wife of and residing with **William Kennedy, Post Office, Blairlogie**, to **William Kennedy**, as her sole executor and administrator in the event of my death, to permit my cousin **Miss Margaret Houston Gilfillan, Post Office, Blairlogie**, to have in liferent my heritable property known as **Telford House, Blairlogie**, to occupy or let, and on the death of the said **Miss. Gilfillan**, or on my death if she should predecease me, to all the children of my marriage. This became important later in the history. At **Nethercraig**, **Mary Houston** ceased to rent out the house and moved in herself in 1924. **William Kennedy**, who she married in 1926, became the Postmaster and shopkeeper. This ownership and occupancy 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**.

In 1960, **William Kennedy** sold **Nethercraig** and the Post Office 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 formerly of **1, Mayville Avenue, Giffnock**.

**Miss Janet McMillan** moved into the residence and became the Sub Postmistress.

At this stage in the story, the history of **Nethercraig**, for so long a part of the property called **The Bog**, goes its own way, as did **Boghead of Blairlogie** in the 1870's, to their own separate histories.

Returning to **Telford House** itself, the will and settlement made by **Mary Houston or Kennedy**, permitting her cousin **Miss Margaret Houston Gilfillan**, also residing at **Post Office, Blairlogie**, to have liferent tenancy in **Telford House**, came into effect in 1937, on the death of **Mary** in that year.

**Margaret** had married **David Oliphant**, the tenant, and, although "ownership" through the liferent continued to be credited to **Margaret**, she and her husband lived in **Telford House** until 28<sup>th</sup> June 1964, when **Margaret** died. **David Oliphant** was the brother of **Mrs McKerracher**, who lived with her husband at **Logie Crossroads** until they died in the 1980's. Another sister married **Mr. Stoddart**. **David Oliphant**, who had no children of his own, adopted **Margaret** (generally known as "Rita" ) **Houston**, who was the daughter of **Jessie Houston** and **James Leitch**. **Jessie**, had two sisters, **Mary** (Mrs. Kennedy of the Post Office), and **Kate** ( who lived in **Crowsteps, Blairlogie**, as a tenant of her sister **Mary** ) .

Under the terms of **Mary's** will of 1927, ownership of **Telford House** now passed to her son **George Robison Kennedy** who by this time was an architect, living at **Fairfield House, Hunter Street, Kirn, Dunoon**. In September 1964, **David Oliphant** offered to lease **Telford House** from this new owner, and this offer was accepted by **George Kennedy**. However, "The Lessee notes that the said **George Kennedy** is considering making alterations and improvements to the premises. Should these proceed, the said **David Oliphant** shall be given the occupancy of a bed-sitting room, kitchenette and toilet, while the work is in progress for a rent of £1 per week."

In fact, the work did go ahead, and, in December 1964, **George Kennedy** let three rooms of **Telford House** to one **William McDonald** for a year, for a rent of **£6 10s 0d** per month, with the joint use, with the tenant of the remainder of the house, of the entrance, the hall and water closet.

However, in July 1965, **George Kennedy** sold **Telford House** to the same three ladies **Miss McMillan, Miss Wark and Miss Jarvie**, who, in 1960, had bought **Nethercraig**, and there is a record of their assignment of ownership of the house to the **Co-operative Permanent Building Society** – presumably with respect to a mortgage. One of the ladies' first moves was to instal a new bathroom and larder in 1967, as part of what was essentially a complete makeover and modernisation of the property; but, in 1983, **Miss Jarvie** died, and the other two ladies were required to sell because **Miss Jarvie's** executors needed her share of the proceeds to



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Telford House  
Circa 2000

implement her bequests. The **Misses McMillan** and **Wark** moved to **Menstrie** where they bought a house.

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