

## MY STIRLING AS REMEMBERED 70 YEARS AGO

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One of the most interesting papers given to the Stirling Field and Archaeological Society was that given in 1927 by Mr J. W. Campbell (2), one of their oldest members, of his recollections of Stirling in his youth around 1854. A great many changes in the town of Stirling had taken place in those seventy years, and while the later similar period has not made so great a difference on the appearance of the town, I feel that perhaps those changes which have occurred over those decades should be noted, as far as I recollect, for the benefit perhaps of some local historian seventy years on (1). Perhaps some of the local residents can correct me, or come up with added information.

### **Port Street, Murray Place, Thistle Areas**

The main streets, Port Street, Murray Place, Barnton Street, etc, are in part relatively unchanged apart from the shopping complex, but new traffic regulations, a new road, the demolition of buildings and changes of shops, have given an appearance to some parts different from that familiar to me in childhood and youth.

The nature of the traffic, and its vastly increased volume, has been one of the chief reasons for the alterations to roads which have left me bewildered. In my early days one entered the town from St Ninians, negotiating the Railworks, still in production, which jutted out into the road, and would probably be faced with the green double decked petrol tram at the terminus, on the lines in the middle of the road. It must have been a real modern innovation; either during or just before the First World War, for the normal tram was a double decker drawn by two horses as the petrol variation was extremely unreliable, and more often off the road than on it. The horsedrawn trams to St Ninians found the slope up from the Black Boy too much, and required an extra horse to help them up the incline to the end of Melville Terrace. The trace boy and his horse waited on the road in front of Dr Vost's house opposite the Black Boy, and the recess in the banking for the horses' nose bag may still be visible.

To us youngsters the sight of the trace horse with its jangling harness, and the trace boy reclining on its back was one of the highlights of a walk out Melville Terrace. Miss MacJannet, an elderly, old fashioned lady, who then lived in Woodlands, used to come out to feed the horse. The main tram terminus was at the foot of King Street from which they ran to Bridge of Allan. They were all double deckers, with sparrd wooden seats, and a single sparrd backrest which swung over to reverse the seating. In summer, open single deckers appeared on the Bridge of Allan run, and it was a great treat for a five or six year old to sit beside or near the driver and watch the horses.

The main depot was about two hundred yards from Causewayhead on the Stirling road, near the old Causewayhead Station, and consisted of a large

single storey stable on the right from which the new horses were led out ready harnessed. On the left was the tram park and the manager's house. The latter is still there, but the stables and tram park have entirely disappeared. The trams ceased to run just after 1918 when motor buses began to appear. These I think were the General Omnibus Co., with a depot at the end of Forth Street. The buses were unusual in that they were Petrol Electric, which meant, we believed, that they were powered by electric motors with their own petrol engine as a generator. At first, they (and nearly all motor lorries) had solid rubber tyres, which on the still cobbled roadways were not altogether comfortable. However pneumatic tyres and smooth asphalt surfaces appeared not long after the end of the War. The road laying replacing the cobbled streets was a major disturbance.

To return to the approach to the town. The main road from St Ninians has changed little in appearance. Apart from extensions by the new public departments, all the houses and mansions are still standing, though few are left in private ownership. The greatest change is that a complete football stadium has intruded into what was a select residential area for Glasgow and Stirling businessmen and county families. To the south east the residential area of Randolph Road and Livilands now houses the new Royal Infirmary after its move from Thistle Street.

Where Melville Terrace meets Park Terrace, there used to be at the back of Port Street, a block of private houses with their gardens reaching down to Park Terrace, an area now occupied by the garage. The Black Boy still stands despite the opposition of some in the town who objected to it as indecent (3). Some humorists, not long after it was unveiled in the late 19th century, dressed him in a vest for the benefit of the good public of the Terraces on their way to church. However that was long before my time.

The road to the Park is unchanged in appearance, although Allan Park has suffered a cinema and a garage at last. At first glance the section of Port Street beyond Park Terrace to Dumbarton Road is much as it was seventy years ago, but has been extended to cover Col. Morton's house and stable at No. 1 Pitt Terrace. Familiar shops have however disappeared. Before the pend on the left, leading to the flats was Isa Whyte's flower, vegetable and sweet shop, considered to be one of the best in the town. Sowden and Forgan's music shop on the other side of the pend was originally a double shop across the road beside that of Harris the tailor. Halfway to Dumbarton Road was the bakery and tea room of Elder the Baker, a popular rendezvous and thought to have the best bread and cakes in the town. Next to this large shop was another institution – Jean Johnstone's fish shop, also held to have the best fish. It is still there though Jean Johnstone has long gone. Palmer's shop next door is relatively new having originally been in King Street. It too was considered the best in the town for travel goods, umbrellas and other weather ware and sports goods.

On the other side of the street adjoining No. 1 Pitt Terrace were a joiner's and undertaker's offices and a workshop behind, reached by a pend. Beside

the pend was Hogg the Chemist, Harris the tailor and next the public house George Owen the cycle agent, one of the two main suppliers of bicycles in the town. Old Mr Owen was a crafty chess player and one of the ablest of the Stirling Chess Club. I found that, as a young member, I had to be exceedingly watchful in playing him, I didn't often beat him!

On the corner of Dumbarton Road and Port Street was, in my earliest memory, the high class and extensive grocery of Robertson and Macfarlane in opposition to D. & J. McEwan across the road. When they ceased business their premises were taken over by Messrs. Graham and Morton as an extension of their fine furniture and house furnishing business next door. Next to G. & M. was Drummond's Tract Depot, still in the business of providing religious tracts, but now providing cards, notepaper, etc, very much changed from its worldwide trade at the beginning of the century from the centre it had built at the foot of King Street. The only further change is that at the end of the Town Wall in Dumbarton Road Alex Sands had his auction saleroom and undertaker's rooms. These have now gone and their place taken by a public toilet and less important salerooms.

Opposite Dumbarton Road the Craigs was the main access to the road via Fallin along the south of the Forth. It was even then what modern town planners would certainly call underdeveloped, being much as it had been at the end of the 19th century. As I have not been down the Craigs for over 40 years, I have no idea what changes have come about, and can only describe it as I remember, and presume that whatever changes have taken place that they are for the better.

In my time, Messrs. Gray, seedsmen and their stores adjoined the public house on the left, and a farrier carried on business behind the public house in the opposite corner, entered by a large gate spanned by a large wooden sign. The remainder of the upper part of the street consisted of fairly non-existent shops, with tenement houses above. Halfway down on the left was an open space filled by low toilets their roofs not greatly above street level. The ground fell back here to another street lower than the Craigs, where Stirling's first cinema was built, or almost the first. I can remember directly opposite beside the Observer offices and printing works, an entrance to the Electric Theatre. This and the Kinema were owned by the Menzies Bros, who later built the Picture House and ran the motor business in Orchard Place. To us, however, the Kinema was not considered the most desirable place of entertainment, and I cannot remember ever seeing a film there.

The Craigs opened out after warehouse property to an open square, into which a lane from Thistle Street led, running behind the Kinema and the former site of Macdonald Fraser's cattle market. Here the horse brakes, open wagons with wooden seats, began their journey to Millhall and Fallin. The factory on the right hand side was in full production but the vacant ground as far as Nelson Place was given over to allotments during and after World War I. This area – the Boroughmuir – was largely occupied by Messrs. Graham and Morton's extensive stables and furniture stores. Beyond that one could take a

pleasant walk along the burn, between Nelson Place and green fields, to the Shirra's Brae. On the right of the Craigs were the fairly old houses of George Street opposite the Craigs School, leading into the Well Green, where the building since identified, I believe, as a medieval chapel still served as a public wash house.

To return to Port Street, where more than any other place except the St Mary's Wynd new buildings have transformed the appearance of Stirling as I knew it. These have taken place on the right hand side where the new shopping centre and Woolworths have replaced first of all Kinrosses coachbuilding premises and workshops (4). Here there was a large showroom displaying carts, gigs, carriages and floats built in the extensive workshops behind the saleroom. Later the firm abandoned the horsedrawn carriage in favour of the new motor car, and these occupied the showroom while the coachbuilding works became a large and important garage and repair shop, probably the largest in the town at that time. Slightly further along were Mrs Hetherington's grocers' shop and two butchers' shops of the Cullen brothers. Why two brothers should open shops almost side by side I do not know, but I think there was some family disagreement. Both were highly thought of and well patronised. Practically next door was the ironmonger's shop of Messrs. Somerville and Valentine on the flight of stairs leading down to Orchard Place. This must have been an old property as the successive raising of the street and pavement had left the shop below street level, and, as it faced up King Street, it had flooding to contend with in heavy rain with the water coming down from the upper part of the town.

The other side of Port Street was very much as it is today though some of the shops have had their fronts renewed. Messrs. D. and J. McEwen were in the large corner shop, the largest grocery shop in the town, and a number of smaller shops including Stewarts the jewellers continued towards King Street. A little more than halfway was the large double shop and bakery of Keith and Ralston, probably the largest in the town. It was noted particularly for its cakes, and its tea room was a popular rendezvous for the ladies. It also had a branch in Bridge of Allan, and I have a faint impression of one in Dunblane where one got iced drinks after the tiring walk through the Glen. On the corner of King Street was Jimmy Gavin's men's' outfitters recognised as having a superior stock of men's' wear and accessories.

### **King Street Area**

King Street has not changed much in appearance except for the disappearance of Messrs. Graham and Morton on the left hand side of the street, and the extension of Menzies the Ladies' outfitter, on the other side, now linked to Kenneth Morton's new shop. Two important shops however lower down the street have disappeared. On the left just above Gavin's shop was Messrs. Crawford, booksellers. One could order any book through them if not held in their large stock of good quality literature. They also stocked good quality stationery and writing materials. Less extensive stock but also of good

quality was to be found in James Shearer's shop near the Gold Lion. He was the main publisher of local history, and those interested in the story of the town and its medieval buildings owe him a great debt for preserving accounts and drawings of them before they were swept away.

The most important shop in King Street, and in fact in the district was that of Graham and Morton. While their Dumbarton Road shop dealt in superior furniture, curtaining and furnishing materials, the King Street shop had the most extensive ironmongery business in the whole area. There were two shops separated by a long close which ran right back to the Town Wall on the Back Walk. Old Col. Morton had had unusual success in persuading the Town Council to allow him to breach the wall to provide him with a goods access. On either side of the close were large workshops and stores – blacksmiths and tinsmiths' shops, for grate building was one of their many services. Above the ironmongery shop was an extensive silver and cutlery department. Most of the county was served by the firm, particularly the rural area, as well as parts of Perthshire and even Argyll.

Macaree's clothing store was there then serving as now the middle and lower strata of the community. Only one other place should be mentioned and that was the Journal office with its printing works behind a relatively small shop. The Stirling Journal was the third of the Stirling newspapers and was owned by Drew Learmouth. It was a sober paper and came out, I think, on a Tuesday but was widely read. It was situated just above Crawford's bookshop.

The Corn Exchange is exactly as I remember it apart from the extension to the Council chambers, which to my mind is largely in keeping with the main building.

Where that stands there used to be an old two storied house. The top flat was used as a practice room by the Burgh Band, but the lower flat was a second hand shop kept by Mrs Dewar. It was an indescribable hotch potch of old furniture, books and household articles, picked up from the unsaleable items at local auction sales. Still one could sometimes pick up a bargain, especially in books, as she had no idea of the value of things. A friend of mine, a local architect, found a 17th century edition of Shakespeare's plays priced 6d, which he got for 3d because it was a bit dirty. Later he had it valued in London at £1000, as it turned out to be a rare edition. Mrs Dewar was also a zealous photographer of local vents, using a large box plate camera, mounted on a tripod, requiring her to be covered in a large black cloth. I well remember supporting one leg of the tripod while she photographed Earl Haig from a precarious stance in front of Campbell Bannerman's statue, as he unveiled the town's war memorial.

The Municipal Buildings had only been completed just before the 1914-1918 war, as I clearly remember being perched on my grandfather's shoulders to see George IV driving up Wallace Street in a small car on his way to open them.

On King Street next to the Arcade stood the shop of Menzies, the ladies' outfitters, as it does now. Then however its main business was bespoke

dressmaking, and the other items of ladies' dress requirements were confined to the present front shop, which ended at the foot of the stairs, at the top of which a glass partition divided off the dressmaking section. There was then no tearoom.

### **Friar Street Area**

Friar Street has not changed greatly in appearance. McCulloch and Young, even then, had a popular restaurant and the rest of the street has the same appearance, only Miss Crocket's paper shop, facing the bank, and Jimmy Millar's bakers shop facing down Friar Street have gone. At that time Friar Street was cobbled and open to all traffic, albeit mostly horsedrawn carts and lorries. At the top next to the public house was Leathley's fish shop. The Leathley's prided themselves on driving high stepping, mettled young horses for their fish floats and were notorious for their reckless driving, though I cannot remember their involvement in any accidents.

Their daredevil driving was equalled by that of Fullarton, the dairyman, or his young drivers. He had, I believe, a place in Baker Street and possessed I think, two of the earliest motor milk floats in the town painted a bright yellow. Their speed was something the sober townfolk was not accustomed to and they named them "The Yellow Peril".

Further down Friars Street before approaching the Co-operative buildings was a large deep windowed shop; once occupied by Hay the music seller, before transferring to Murray Place beside the South Church. It was then taken over by McLaren, the painter, who also dealt extensively in prints and paintings which were also displayed in a glazed passage to the right of his shop. Next door, but on the second floor were the auction rooms of Henry P Watt.

Incidentally one of the traffic hazards of this street was that on market days, one would probably be faced with a drove of cattle or sheep being driven from the market en route for the Corn Exchange and Dumbarton Road. The reason was that, still, at that period, the town had the right to collect the old medieval customs on farm produce and animals leaving and entering the town. At the bridge at the foot of Wallace Street, and, I think, on the St Ninians Road or Port Street there were provisions to collect these, but could be evaded for traffic to the west by using the Friars Street-Corn Exchange route.

Continuing along Murray Place there are some more major changes. Next to Somerville and Valentines opposite the foot of King Street was a wide flight of steps leading down to Orchard Place, a relatively wide street which ran along the back of Murray Place from Thistle Street. At the front of the steps on the right was a narrow lane or entrance to the Olympia theatre which occupied the ground behind what is now the new Centre. It was a largeish building which mainly staged variety shows. I have a feeling that it was owned or managed by the Menzies Bros, who had built the Kinema.

It was destroyed by fire just after World War II and never rebuilt. It was the largest hall in the town, but again it could have been a death trap owing to the

restricted access and egress. Somewhere down here also was a Territorial training depot.

The left hand side of Orchard Place consisted of basement access and storage rooms for the Murray Place shops. On the right hand side was a large garage and repair premises for Menzies who also built the Picture House at the end of the street on the corner of Orchard Place and the road down to the gasworks, behind which I think there was a bonded warehouse. At its opening a man named Menzies – no relation – who lived at the time in Plean Castle, created a scene over the pronunciation of the name Menzies about which he had strong feelings. This cinema was for long the only decent one in the town.

From the Picture House Thistle Street ran down past the gasworks to a lane leading behind the Kinema to the Lower Craigs. On the left of this lane had been a large area of ground occupied by Macdonald Fraser's cattle market leading to extensive railway sidings. This gave up shortly after or during World War I, and the resulting vacant area was used for the Shows on their visits to the town. Circuses however, preferred to set up their tents on the flat area of the King's Park.

### **Murray Place Area**

Next to the stairs down to Orchard Place stood the Waverly Hotel. Its proprietor, Peter Macalpine, was something of a character who was no respecter of persons and exceedingly outspoken. Beyond his hotel was the large double shop of McLachlan and Brown who were considered to be very high class ladies' dressmakers and outfitters. They also had an equally reputable gentleman's tailoring department facing the Station Hotel. Slightly further along Murray Place was the County Hotel, a temperance hotel, on the second floor above the shops. On the corner of Thistle Street was the large establishment of Virtue the ironmongers, who later had to migrate to a smaller shop in King Street.

The other side of King Street has also seen some changes mainly in shops. The bank at the foot of King Street, built by the Drummonds for their original Tract Depot, was already installed, and next to it, the shops of Hepting and Farrer, the jewellers (earlier Hepting, optician), and Drummond the seedsmen, who also had a nursery on the Cambusbarron Road. The other shops as far as the turn of the road have not made any impression on me, but as one approached the turning there was Jimmy Blair the hairdresser, Birrel the confectioner and on the corner Eneas Mackay, travel agency. Almost next to him was the photographer Crowe and Rodger, followed by McLachlan and Brown's shop already mentioned. On the entrance to the Arcade was the North British Butter Co, with Brown the hatter opposite. I may be wrong, but I have an impression that there was a small hotel on the upper floors.

At the top of Thistle Street opposite Eneas Mackay's premises stood the North Parish Church which has now disappeared. The Baptist Church next to it may soon go the same way, and give place to shops. The lane beside the

Station Hotel led down to large stabling for Jeffrey's extensive fleet of horse cabs, many of whom stood daily in front of the North Church and the Station, and latterly in front of the South Church, until replaced by the new motor taxis.

The Arcade consisted of a number of small shops, a ladies' toilet and an extremely large toy shop latterly run by Mr Craig. In the centre portion was the entrance to the Alhambra Theatre which stretched back behind the King Street shops. Most of it is now part of the extension of Messrs. Menzies. Again I am doubtful it would be permitted to function today owing to its limited access, but it was a very comfortable little theatre.

The large building at the top of the Station Road opposite the Station Hotel was built and run as the County Club. Below that on the Station Road was a sculptor's yard next to the Savings Bank which had moved from Murray Place. The other side of the street was the blank wall of the Station Hotel stables until Burns the jeweller from Port Street took a newly built shop in the early thirties.

To the Post Office the street has not changed much. The stretch from the high buildings, originally private houses were already occupied as business premises, including the dentist's surgery of Common, now in Albert Place. On the opposite side the space between the South Church and the bank then in operation, at the corner of Friars Street was occupied by a nondescript hall used as a church or meeting place by some religious body. If it has disappeared it is not before time. Hay's music shop from Friars Street was built here.

From the Post Office Maxwell Place ran down at an angle to the railway bridge, making a direct road to the Riverside. Beside the Post Office, Bailie McElfrish had a newspaper and tobacconist shop, displaying his posters along the railings. A kenspeckle figure he had a very sharp tongue, and woe betide any youngster who fell foul of him. On the right of Maxwell Place were some shabby houses, from some of which small businesses were run, and adjoining them were the stables and lorry park of Wordie the carters. The big Clydesdale horses were stabled on the second floor, reached by a wooden ramp, and it was always a delight to see and hear the heavy horses clomping up to the stalls. This disappeared in the early twenties when the Regal cinema was built beside the bridge. It had an excellent and popular cafe much patronised. The other side, Maxwell Place, consisted solely of the back premises of the Barnton Street shops ending in housing at the corner of Viewfield street which ran up to the County Buildings. In a yard, near the foot, a cycle repair shop was run by one William Shakespeare if my memory does not fail me. Beyond the entrance to Viewfield Street were small shops and Sergie's Restaurant. The latter served the farmers and drovers from the Live Stock Marts, which occupied a large portion of what had been Speedies mart, which had reached across to and down Wallace Street. The main entrance was at the end of the flats at the start of the Bridge and I think took up ground which had been railway sidings for cattle trucks now no longer used. Sergies had a perpetual sound of frying with the accompanying smells and its hygiene gave rise to suspicion. To us children, the sight of real mice playing with the sugar mice in the shop window was a constant fascination.



## Riverside Area

As we are on the old road to the Riverside, we might as well have a quick walk down memory lane. On the right of the bridge, or lane, was a very handy shortcut to the station along the back of the Regal and the back of the Post Office and gardens of the Barnton Street houses. It was a godsend in the old days when running along for the first train to Glasgow for a nine o'clock class at the University. On the left were the Livestock Marts. At the other end were the Ordnance stores which were a hive of activity in World War I with horse drawn military wagons carrying all sorts of equipment, as well as gun limbers and artillery. Opposite was the main railway goods yard, an extensive area stretching as far as the bridges at the foot of Wallace Street. Its Forth Street boundary constructed of a continuous fence of railway sleepers. Forth Street boasted quite a number of small industrial premises. On the right was Parks Brush factory, next to Oliphant's sweetie factory producing mainly boilings. Next to Oliphant's was the large open walled area, containing the lorry park and stables of Messrs. Cowan the carriers which extended back to Ronald Place. On the opposite corner of the road leading to Roseberry place was a yard for repairing agricultural machinery. I am not clear about the other factories, but one at least was a laundry, and the last was a lemonade factory, where the hiss of the gas being injected into the bottles was always thrilling to us youngsters. This building became the first depot of the General Omnibus Co.

In Argyll Avenue there was the flourishing Ochilview Tennis Club, a consuming interest on summer evenings when we stood on its wall to watch the players. The site of Riverside School was then the Cow Park, grazed by the cows of Gilvear, farmer and milkman. It was our favourite play area for football and cricket, always with a wary eye for Mr Gilvear who chased us for our lives. Another play area was a walled enclosure in the opposite field with house foundations built to about three feet.

The banks of the river were not built up and were guarded only by a simple wooden fence as far as the Boating Club House, which housed a number of single skiff, four oared racing skiffs as well as pleasure boats. It was quite popular with the young men who exercised in the racing boats, and even with some families who went for a row up the river. Pollution, not being recognised, as it is today, swimming was popular despite the evil looking mud.

Beyond the Boating Club apart from Provost Baxter's house, there was nothing but open field from behind Millar Place and Abbey Road down to the river and round to the Abbey Ferry.

There was a football pitch on the corner of Millar Place, though I never saw it in use. It was a nice evening walk through the fields along the river. There was as yet no Riverside Bowling Club. That came some years later.

At that time there was no footbridge to Cambuskenneth, and one was dependent on the "pennyworth of navigation" in the clumsy ferry boat rowed by a sturdy boatman. It was sometimes a hard haul if the river was running strongly. I don't remember whether it also operated at night.

At one time there were at least two textile factories and I think a sawmill on the left hand side of Abbey Road going towards the town, but I can only remember one nearest the river still in operation. The other sites were cleared just after 1918, or before that, and were used for the "Shows" after they left Goosecroft. At the junction of the Shore Road (Low Road) and Abbey Road was an old red washed building, said to be a salt factory, though I never saw signs of activity, beyond the occasional arrival of carts of raw salt. The harbour was even then deserted even in war time, although small vessels did use the Ordnance pier. D & J McEwan did, in the early thirties bring in an occasional coasting vessel with a cargo of grain, piloted by old Captain Wilson, the last of the river pilots, but the silting up of the river made this impossible. Curiously, the booking office for the old pleasure cruises on the river were still standing.

### **Barnton Street, Wallace Street Areas**

To return to the town. Barnton Street from the Post Office appears the same although many of the shops have changed ownership. On the right hand side the corner shop was Mrs Somerville's papershop. Next to it was Skinner's large chemist shop, and the extensive grocery of Messrs McEwan Bros. Few of the remaining shops along this side of the street have registered in my memory, except a few at the end, including Tyndale McLelland, a grocer beside Copley's fruit and vegetable shop, Forrester's fish shop and the large premises of Dowell the tailor with the windows facing the County Buildings. One clear picture remains in my mind. In front of the County Buildings one could sometimes see an old fashioned motor coach, with a poster proclaiming a run to Mussleburgh for 1/6 return. This was part of some rivalry of different bus companies, and as the Stirling company (General Omnibus?) was not allowed to use a terminus in Edinburgh, one could be taken straight through.

At the foot of Friars Street were the extensive premises and offices of the Stirling Co-operative Society, occupying the building on the corner which had once been Campbell's Royal Hotel, but before my time. I think that even earlier the large building at the foot of Queen Street, which was divided in my time into residential flats had been the original Royal Hotel. The reason for this is that when coming up Wallace Street, one could clearly read the sign "Royal Hotel Stables" which had been painted above the ground floor windows of the houses in Cowane Street, implying that the first few houses there had been converted to houses at an early date. Again this side of Barnton Street shows little or no structural changes, except that a little along from the last Co-operative shop stood the offices with printworks behind of the "Stirling Sentinel", one of the three local weekly newspapers, which were destroyed completely in a spectacular fire some fifty odd years ago. Unfortunately a number of unbound books and a stock of books on local history were destroyed, though through the efforts of a Mr Crobie, a number were found and saved. I have a set of the "Stirling Antiquary" rescued by him, and still readable despite the charred edges.

At the end of this side of the street, Viewfield Street ran up to meet the Bridge Street passing at the top. Burden's Brewery what was still in full swing

in my early days. The Viewfield church was then set back behind a massive wall, which has now been removed to give place to shops.

Queen Street looks the same today as it did seventy years ago, except the Queen's Hotel has taken over the building once residential flats, already mentioned. At the top right hand side in my earliest days was a busy tannery with along yard which ran down the back of the Bridge St houses, beside a long lane. The smell was atrocious from the processing and the rotting debris in the yard and we used to run down the lane as fast as we could, holding our breath. This ceased operating either during the 1914-18 War or shortly afterwards and the site was used for another cinema, the Queens, a pleasant picture house but a bit inconvenient to reach. I believe it has also ceased operating as a cinema.

Cowane Street, as I remember it, consisted mainly of old working class housing, some of which was have been over a hundred years old even then. It had been a colony of wool workers in the basements which had windows at pavement level. My grandfather who came to the town, probably in the sixties of last century, told me that he could then hear the whirl of the spinning wheels and clack of the shuttles from these ill-lit basements. If these have now been cleared away, it is not before time.

It is however at the foot of Union Street at its junction with Wallace Street that the biggest change has taken place and the approach from Davy Bain's clock to the Bridge is entirely different. Here, behind Davy Bain's clock, massive gates and fences barred the entrance to the town from the bridge, to allow the Forth and Clyde Railway to cross the main roads on its way to Gargunnoch, Kippen and all stations west. The crossing was controlled from a signal box set back from the road on the left, from which the signal man came down to shut the gates and lock the wicket gates on the pavement, and reopen them when the engine and two or three carriages had crawled over.

The clock reminds us of Provost Bain who had a thriving grocery business on the corner between Union Street and Wallace Street which he had built up over all his life in Stirling. I can just remember him as a little stocky man with a short white beard. I've heard it said that when, as a young man, he first set up his shop, he slept in it all week, and then, at the week-end tramped home to Auchterarder over Sheriffmuir with his takings. I doubt if one could dare do that today.

At the bridge, on the left hand side, stood a public house, the Bridge Customs, whose licensee was responsible for collecting the Burgh customs on farm produce, sheep, cattle, etc as already mentioned. There was a weigh bridge in front of the pub, and one often saw lorries, laden with hay and other farm produce including cattle and sheep, being weighed there. A small street connected the public house with the Old Bridge at water level and here the Town fishings, another ancient practice, rented by Mr David Bentley Murray were carried on.

### **Top of the Town and King's Park Areas**

The new road from the foot of Wallace Street to the Station runs across an area, then comprising a sawmill, part of Speedies mart which reached halfway down Wallace Street, and railway sidings. The road has also demolished the Live Stock Marts and the Regal Cinema.

The area of the town where change is most marked is St Mary's Wynd, and the top of the town as far as Broad Street and St John Street are concerned. Upper and Lower Bridge Streets are, I understand, reviving, whereas in my time they were in decline from their previous reputation as a fashionable area for the well to do upper class and military families. The Wynd, however, was a complete and absolute slum which had been neglected for two hundred years. Many of the houses had been built in the 17th and perhaps 16th centuries and they were beyond repair, housing the poorest of the poor, with a reputation for flouting the law. My father, a Special Constable in World War I, used to tell of exciting chases down the back of Upper Broad St to the Wynd. This was all cleared away in the thirties, and new housing built. It sometimes seems to me that it is a pity that some of the more interesting doorways and other architectural features were not incorporated in the new buildings. The renovation of the old 18th century houses in Broad Street was much more imaginatively done and the appearance of the street hardly seems to have altered.

Seventy years ago the Police headquarters were still beside the old Burgh Court Buildings where courts were still being held.

A good many old houses on St John Street have either disappeared or have been renovated. One which has gone, was pointed out as the Hangman's House, next to the court buildings, no doubt convenient for that gentleman to carry out his duties at the Burgh Cross. The Erskine Church was a thriving body though now deserted, and the once well kept grounds overgrown. It seems that in these days it is too much to ask people to climb the hill to church, as I am told that the East and West churches have also ceased regular services. I have a great feeling of regret, as I took great interest when the two churches were rejoined to restore the building to its original fine appearance. One thing of the restoration was the excavation of the choir, and part of the nave of the old West church, to provide choir rooms, etc. The site of the church had been a town cemetery in the middle ages, and many had also been buried there after the church was built, and so hundreds of skeletons turned up. Amongst them was found a sepulchral chalice which, I hope, has been duly preserved by the Kirk authorities. The beadle and I searched the ground round the place where the chalice was discovered, thinking that an important cleric, meriting burial with a chalice, might have had a ring or something to identify him. We found nothing but scraps of coarse black material as from a monk's robe with copper clips to hold it closed. This crumbled immediately on exposure to the air. Later, on trying to discover whom this might have been, I came to the conclusion that it was possibly Archbishop Hamilton Archbishop of St Andrews who was

executed at the Old Bridge or the Cross in 1571 for supporting the Catholic faith and persecuting the Reformers.

As we proceed down Spittal Street, we find the Old High School where I spent so many happy days now abandoned and likely to be put to other use. Some parts of it, mainly the frontage must be well over a hundred years old. The enormous rooms built at a time when classes were equally large were no longer suited to modern teaching techniques, and the school population outgrew its original home. How things change! I can just remember Dr Lawson, the Rector, the last of the old school of teachers, coming to the school in his frock coat and tile hat! Now the school has moved out to a new site where there were open fields at the back of Snowdon Place.

Below the school the Education Offices occupy what was the old Royal Infirmary before its removal to Livilands. I can well remember as a very young primary schoolboy waving to the wounded soldiers of the 1914-18 War convalescing in the gardens of the hospital below the school playground. There were few facilities for school lunches in these days, though a small luncheon room staffed mainly by the domestic department served those pupils from a distance with a bowl of soup for 1d, a meat and potato course for 4d, with 2d for a sweet. Those of us in the town had to run up and down Spittal St for a hurried meal!

## **People**

We have now been around the town looking at the changes in its appearance, but what of the peoples' lives? What differences are there in the habits and amusements in these seventy odd years? Stirling was lucky in having the great open space of the King's Park. It provided a very popular golf course supporting the Stirling Golf Club, then much nearer the Park gates, with the artisan's club, the Victorian, behind it. The flat region of the Park did not then have any tennis courts – they came in the late twenties, and were exceedingly popular, though that popularity seems to have waned. There were no toilet facilities at that time until they were erected at the gates and, for some reason, caused considerable ribaldry in the local press. At the same time a putting green was laid down. The rest of the flat area was used for cattle shows and football pitches and was at these times exceedingly muddy. I cannot remember any swings or other amusements for children. For most Stirling people the Park provided a fine walk (on Sundays) round the racecourse by the quarry. Incidentally in the early years of the 1914-18 war there was a small airfield at Tolleninch farm, and the quarry was a vantage point to watch these early stringbags taking off and landing. The air currents above the Castle caused quite a number of crashes which always added spice to the anticipation of the spectators.

There was also the King's Park football team with its pitch at Springkerse over the bridge at the foot of the Craigs. It was moderately successful and had a good following in the town. It had one fervent supporter in Prig Wordie. Who

he was was a mystery as was his means of support. He claimed he was one of the wealthy Wordie family who had the carting business, that may have been. His main object was making the price of his next pint and he went around picking up trifles to flog. He often came to the Smith Institute with what purported to be antiques or historical curios, few of which were genuine. However he never caused trouble and on away football matches he was to be found at the station with his decrepit hat, decked in the red and white club colours held out until he had collected his fare. There was considerable interest in amateur football and on Saturday afternoons, a dozen amateur clubs would be playing in the King's Park. In summer months one would watch Stirling County Cricket club playing at Williamfield, while the same ground was the attraction for Stirling High School rugby and hockey teams. Eventually partly due to my own humble efforts, the school had its own ground in an adjacent field.

For evening entertainment in the wetter months, there was no radio or television, though primitive crystal wireless sets with earphones were beginning to appear, often a homemade effort. One had to make ones own amusement with hobbies, card games or the early scratchy gramophone. Outside one could go to one of the picture houses, the Olympia, Alhambra, or the Albert Hall if a celebrity concert or lecture was being staged. The Stirling Fine Art Association had an annual exhibition in the Smith Institute with a weekly concert, provided mainly by local artists which were well attended. There were also numerous clubs in the town for indoor sport and games and interests which had a flourishing membership. The local Gilbert and Sullivan Society also had a winter season when they staged a G & S opera usually in the Albert Hall, playing to packed houses.

However there was a peculiar custom indulged in by the Stirling men folk. On good nights they would gather in front of the Post Office and meet their friends, or just watch the world going by. Then they would stroll along to the end of Port Street at least and return, perhaps once or twice a night, no doubt settling the affairs of the town and the world. Sometimes we would extend our walk to include the Terraces or over the top of the town. I wonder if this has died out since the War.

Perhaps the great night of the year, often eagerly anticipated especially by the younger folk was the Friday evening before the "Brigallan Games". This was memorable because of the great attraction of this visit of the "Shows". It was, then, a Mecca for almost every kind of show business on the roads in Scotland. Huge roundabouts, swings, helterskelters, hoopla, boxing booths, sweetie stalls, peep shows and anything to conjure the money from folks' pockets.

On that night almost everything on wheels was on the road, apart from the hundreds making their way by Shanks pony. Horse drawn gigs, floats, brakes, cabs and carts, extra trams and later every conceivable motor vehicle – early

high buses and charabancs with single seats running across with doors on each side, and so high that grasping handles one had to climb up two high steps to get in, taxis and even private cars. The games seem to have declined considerably in attraction from these exciting times.

Looking back I wonder if we were not a lot happier with our simpler amusements, with more time for our hobbies and pursuits, than the present day frenetic search for ways to combat boredom and the hideous assault on our senses by the mass pop scene.

At any rate this nostalgic journey round the town has brought back to me many happy memories. Maybe some have been faulty, not surprising after seventy or more years, and I apologise if that is so. Yet I feel I should put on record details about the town which may soon be forgotten and which perhaps would be useful to future local historians who may find here some last clue or piece of interesting information.

#### EDITORIAL NOTES

- (1) The author was born in Stirling in 1911, graduated from the University of Glasgow and taught in the High School of Stirling before moving to Dunfermline in 1946. He was Principal Teacher of History at Beath High School, Cowdenbeath, where, unusual for the time, he taught mainly Scottish history, inspiring a generation of Fife schoolchildren, including the current Director of the Smith. He died in 1996.

As a young man he helped his uncle Joseph McNaughton, Curator of the Smith Institute, to compile the Smith's 1934 Catalogue, a standard reference work to this day. His earliest publication was an *Index to the Transactions of the Stirling Natural History and Archaeology Society* vols. 1-57 (1878-1936) in 1936.

FNH published the author's *History of Old Stirling* in 1980 (140pp) and for some years thereafter he had been working on the basis of this paper.

Stirling, his home town, was constantly in his thoughts, and he amended and extended this paper between then and the time of his death. He was an inspirational teacher who encouraged his pupils to explore and examine their history, and his own love of Stirling was passed on.

He was a founder member of the Scottish Genealogy Society, and this manuscript was passed to the Forth Naturalist by his executor, Sheila Pitcairn, Chairman of Dunfermline Heritage Trust.

- (2) J. W. Campbell's paper is in the *Transactions of Stirling Field and Archaeological Society* volume 50 pp136-149 entitled 'Humorous Reminiscences'. However a major survey of the growth of Stirling, based on the evidences of the Ordnance maps of 1858 and 1913, by William A. Ballantyne, is more akin to McNaughton, and much more comprehensive than Campbell's above.

Ballantyne is published also in the Stirling Society *Transactions*, in two parts, part I in volume 49 pages 144-185 on changes in the central part of the burgh, and part II in volume 50 pages 85-109 on changes in the various districts into which he divided the burgh, the Craigs, St Ninians, Wellgreen, Burgh Muir.

- (3) Campbell's paper has the story of the Black Boy.
- (4) We published 'The Kinrosses of Stirling and Dunblane' including the story of the Coachworks in the *Forth Naturalist and Historian* volume 21 pages 97-108.