

Friends of Dundee City Archives

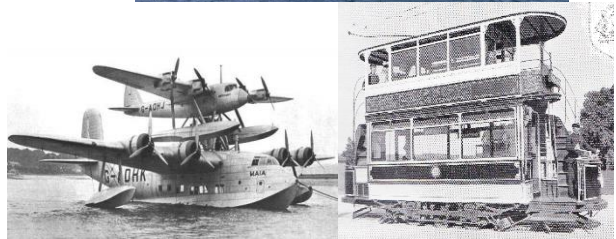
# newsletter

Autumn 2017

## CONFERENCE:

We are holding our conference on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October in St Andrew's Parish Church halls (Glasite Hall). Doors open at 09:30. The theme of the conference is:

### Land, Sea and Air



There will be talks on the Tay Ferries; Airways and Dundee Trams. We'll also have static displays, materials and databases related to the conference for you to browse.

Tickets are now on sale from the City Archives, 14 City Square.

Cost inclusive of lunch, coffee and teas

Members £17, Non-members £19

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The Friends of Dundee City Archives in association with Dundee Central Library (Steps Theatre) have been running occasional free **lunchtime archive films** which are proving popular with the public.

On 28<sup>th</sup> September, at 12.15 and 13.15, Iain Flett will show a short film entitled *"The Road and the Miles"*

Admission is free.

## MACMILLAN COFFEE MORNING

The Archives will be hosting a coffee morning on **Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September** as part of the MacMillan World's Biggest Coffee Morning. The event will start at 10:00 in the Public Lounge until around 11:30 (or whenever we run out of cake). All donations of food, whether home baked or bought, gratefully received. Please feel free to drop by for a cuppa and some cake.



## **FOUND IN THE ARCHIVES:** **BESSIE AND JESSIE**

By Sarah Aitken, Assistant Archivist

The things that turn up in the archives never cease to amaze me. And often in the place least expected. I was looking for some information about the decision to build the Caird Hall in the Town Clerk's subject files. File 253 contains accounts, minutes and correspondence relating to the purchasing of property for the Central Improvement Scheme. As the Corporation had bought a number of properties they now found themselves as landlords to a number of tenants. This is the story of two of those tenants – Jessie Moir and Bessie Young.

The first letter was from Bessie Young. Bessie tells us that she is a tenant grocer at 4 Greenmarket, having just taken up the lease. She started the business to support her family after her father died. She is appealing to the Council to give her some means of compensation so that she can take out another lease elsewhere in the city. We can confirm from the valuation roll that Bessie only took up the lease of the property in 1913/4. At the time she lived at 166 Perth Road with her step mother Elizabeth Young. From the 1911 census we know that Bessie would have been around 38 at the time of writing the letter and had previously worked as a bookkeeper. (I think this comes across in her letter as she seems very clued up with the money!) Her father Alexander Young, a joiner, died in 1912. The family, including Bessie's 7 half-siblings, lived at 9 Aberlemno Terrace, Perth Road. It seems that they briefly moved to Birkhill where her step mother leased a Grocers shop in 1913. This lasted less than a year as they had moved back to Perth Road and Bessie took out the lease for her own shop. The property was vacated and eventually demolished to make way for the Caird Hall development. She disappears from the valuation roll in 1915 and no trace of her can be found in the Dundee Directories. Perhaps she went back to bookkeeping. We

don't know if she received any compensation from the Council and there is no reply in the file. What happened to Bessie?



The next letter is of a very different tone. It comes from Miss Jessie Moir of 37 High Street. From a little bit of research we know Jessie was born in the late 1860s and lived with her brother Edward, a wine merchant, and his wife Christina. When Edward died in 1907 Jessie and Christina moved to the High Street. With Edward dead, the two women had to support themselves and Christina's children. So they started a dressmakers shop. Jessie describes the building as being "very superior" and they presumably had a refined clientele. Her letter complains about her new upstairs neighbour – John Sime. John was the secretary for the Jute and Flax Union – a growing union for the many thousands of Dundee Mill Workers, including many women. Obviously these were not the women would patronise Jessie's dressmaking services. Jessie complains about "the type of people" traipsing up and down the stairs, accusing them of "smelling of drink and the mills, spitting all over". The women she describes as "shawly women" causing a "perfect pandemonium" forcing Jessie to keep two ladies indoors until after it was over. She then threatens to leave the premises if this is not sorted out. I can just imagine Jessie sitting in her parlour complaining about the loiterers on her stair and seething about her new neighbour. She eventually moved out of 37 High Street in 1917 to 1 South Tay Street. She died in 1932 at 11 Oxford Street, leaving £1400 (almost £90,000 today) to her Niece Margaret Grant nee Moir.

## **SNIPPETS FROM THE ARCHIVES**

### **SWEETS FOR THE SOLDIERS**

Spotted by Linda Nicoll:

"At the outbreak of war, the fisher girls, who had worked with the herring fleet, found themselves out of work. Two thousand of them were offered work in Dundee, mainly in the textile industry but also elsewhere. In 1916, some of them were employed in the Keiller's Factory packing sweets for the troops. Obviously, rank was important as it was Ceylon Toffees and Chocolate Gingers for the officers and boiled sweets and Ju-Jubes for the common soldiers."



### **AN AMUSING EPITAPH (ALLEGEDLY FROM THE HOWFF)**

Spotted In Dundee Delineated (1822):

*"On Mr Alex Speid*

Time Flies with speed. With speed Speids fled

To the Dark Regions of the dead

With Speed Consumptions Sorrows flew

And stopt Speids speed for Speid it slew

Miss Speid beheld with Frantic Woe

Poor Speid with Speed turn pale as Snow

And beat her breast and tore her hair

For Speid, Poor Speid was all her care

Lets learn of Speid with Speid to flee

From Sin since we like Speid must die"

### **THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS:**

In the Wright Trade Scroll Book for 1804 there is an entry showing that a Free Master being a stranger in the burgh had to pay £31 10s for the right to practice is trade in Dundee. This equates to about £2,500 today. He also had to give ten shillings to the trades Gin Fund.

### **FOUND BY RICHARD CULLEN IN THE WEDDERBURN PAPERS:**

"Weight of a stone taken from Sir Walter Ogilvy forty-three ounces or three pounds seven ounces apothecary weight."

Signed by H. Earle and dated 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1808.

### **ARE YOU INTERESTED IN WATCHING OLD FILMS OF DUNDEE?**

...then these shorties on the BFI player might be of interest:

Dundee Students "Lady Godiva" carnival 1931

<http://player.bfi.org.uk/film/watch-dundee-students-carnival-1931/>

Dundee Fire Brigade 1901

<http://player.bfi.org.uk/film/watch-turn-out-of-the-dundee-fire-brigade-1901-1901/>

Gilroy's Works 1901

<http://player.bfi.org.uk/film/watch-employees-leaving-gilroys-jute-works-dundee-1901-1901/>

Baxter's Works (Iain Flett reckons the half time school)

<http://player.bfi.org.uk/film/watch-employees-leaving-baxters-jute-works-dundee-1901-1901/>

## UNVEILING OF THE MEMORIAL TO THE SEAMEN AND WOMEN OF DUNDEE



Linda Nicoll, Gillian Molloy and Martin Allan, along with others, recently represented the archives at the unveiling of the Memorial to the seamen and women of Dundee who gave their lives for their country and for freedom in the Great War 1914-1919. Here they are ready to head off to the occasion. The memorial was unveiled by Princess Anne.

The Roll can be accessed online at:

<http://www.dundee.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/seamensroh.pdf>

## FOLLOW THE ARCHIVES

Keep up to date with what's going on in the Archive by following us on Twitter. We are @DundeeArchives.

We are also starting a blog featuring stories about items found in the collections and events at the Archives. You can find this at:

<http://dundeearchives.wordpress.com>

You can follow the blog by email to make sure you don't miss a post!

## EVENTS

### Lunchtime Lectures

The doors of the Glasite Hall open at 12:30pm with refreshments of tea/coffee and a biscuit available.

Please note that the speaker may change due to factors out-with our control.

Lectures commence at 1.00pm.

- **Thursday – 5 October 2017**

### **V&A Dundee**

Julie Muir, V&A Dundee, will talk about the new museum on the Tay which is due to open next year.

Glasite Hall, St Andrews Church, King Street

- **Thursday – 2 November 2017**

### **Hugh McKenzie V.C.**

Linda Nicoll will be talking about Hugh McKenzie whose heroism in the Great War was acknowledged with the awarding of the country's highest military decoration.

Glasite Hall, St Andrews Church, King Street

- **Thursday – 7 December 2017**

### **The Watson Family**

Paddy McFarlane talks about the Rev. Thomas Watson and his wife, Minnie Cumming who were missionaries in Kenya.

Glasite Hall, St Andrews Church, King Street

