



BROUGHTON HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Broughton Tolbooth 1582–1829

New Series Number 9

October/November 2021

Fellow members

Welcome to the new edition of the newsletter, below are details of the remaining meetings for the year, we still are not sure about when in-person meetings will be resumed or what the arrangements will be for the Christmas Soiree, but we will keep you up-to-date with developments, in particular at the next meeting. May I remind you that if you want to 'attend' the meetings please send an email to Sandra Purves at spurves004@btinternet.com and she will send you the link.

A report of Prof Purdie's October talk will be in the next issue

Jim Eunson

Broughton History Society 2021/22 Programme

- Monday 1st Nov Peter Yeoman
Theme Healthcare in early Medieval Scotland
- Monday 13th Dec Christmas Soiree
(Provisional)
- **2022**
Monday 17th Jan Ian Riches
Theme National Trust of Scotland Archives
- Monday 7th Feb Una Race
Theme History of the Dog Trust
- Monday 7th Mar Bruce Keith
Theme Bridgescapes.
- Monday 4th April John Ennis
Theme The Linen Trade in Scotland
- Monday 2nd May Sandra Purves
Theme 200 years of the Union Canal.
- Monday 6th June AGM

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Scotland's Links with the Slave Trade—Professor Sir Geoff Palmer 6 September

Geoff Palmer spent most of his working life in Scotland conducting research on cereals and malted barley as part of the brewing process at Heriot Watt University. His mother had arrived in the UK from Jamaica in 1951 as part of the Windrush generation's move from the Caribbean to the UK homeland. Geoff landed in Liverpool four years later when his mother had saved £86 for his passage. Although his mother had a British passport, children did not have documents, which has led to more recent problems of these, now grown up, children being deported back to the Caribbean.

Jamaica had been owned by England from 1655 when Charles II, as head of the Royal African Company, brought in slaves from West Africa. The slave trade, as it became known, was at the forefront of business until the 1790s, by which time Scotland had become actively involved through the Act of Union in 1707. The Oswalds of Auchencruive, the Grants of Speyside, Malcolms of Poltalloch and several other wealthy Scottish families were closely involved in this trade and some, like the Wedderburn brothers, James and John, made a fortune from their Jamaican estates.

James Wedderburn stayed in Jamaica till the 1770s and then bought Inveresk Lodge near Musselburgh. His brother John had a Jamaican servant in Scotland called Joseph Knight and, in a famous case in 1774, he was freed, because he was not considered to be a slave in Scotland, though would have been if he had returned to Jamaica, being considered as a chattel or property of his owner. John Wedderburn fought the case, as he wanted him back, but Joseph had a white wife, a former servant of Wedderburn, and was now a free man. Henry Dundas had been one of the advocates supporting Joseph Knight's case.

In 1792 Henry Dundas, while Home Secretary, believed that the slave trade should be stopped gradually and he struggled with William Wilberforce effectively enough that he stopped abolition of the trade for another fifteen years. He was eventually impeached for misusing naval money while Treasurer of the Navy and, although he was acquitted by the House of Lords in 1806, his reputation was affected and slavery was eventually abolished the following year.

In 1782 Admirals Rodney (after whom Rodney Street is named) and Hood defended Jamaica, as it was too important to lose because of huge investments there. In the 1790s at the time of the French Revolution the British army attacked San Domingo in Haiti, as they wanted to destroy the French competition in the slave market (Jamaica providing over 50% of the slaves) but 40,000 British troops were killed in the process. By the end of slavery, there were about 600,000 British slaves in the Caribbean and Jamaica itself was probably more important in the slave trade than the USA. When slaves were finally emancipated in 1833-4 the owners received compensation of £20 million for the loss of their property, equivalent to £20 billion today.

There is now a temporary plaque in St Andrew's Square, which houses the massive monument to Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville, putting into context his role in extending the slave trade. Sir Geoff had been part of an Edinburgh Council committee discussing this issue, which went into abeyance for several years until being reconvened following the death of George Floyd in the USA last year. He is against the destruction of statues to historical fig-

ures who are now known to have been involved in the slave trade and supports explanatory plaques to put their roles into a historical context. In fact the square is full of slave related buildings, so they can't all be taken down.

Glasgow had received £200 million from slavery and in acknowledgement of how Glasgow University had benefited from slavery, a plaque has been put up. More importantly, the university has set up a programme of reparative justice. They have also established a partnership with the University of the West Indies and new research will be carried out into slavery within UK universities. Sir Geoff says we cannot change the past but we can change the consequences of it and he supports greater inclusion of the subject in the school curriculum citing the words: 'You've got to know the lie to teach the truth'.

There were several interesting questions, comments and praise for Sir Geoff's work from the audience of 30 members which added to an already enlightening talk from a man who speaks from personal experience of coming from a slave background and still occasionally not being believed that he is the featured speaker at an event. He finished by noting that a recent DNA test showed that, although he has 97% links to West Africa he also has 3% Shetland Viking in his genes.

Maybe he'll make a Guizer Jarl yet!

Richard Love



Sir Geoff Palmer. image by Alicia Bruce @aliciabrucephoto

Broughton Primary School 125 and Hopetoun Crescent

Broughton Primary School is holding its 125th anniversary in 2022 and has asked if there are any members who attended the school or who may have photographs or other memorabilia relating to their days at this school which would be helpful for an event to be held then.

Donald Smith of the Storytelling Centre would like to know if there are any stories or photographs of the people who lived in **Hopetoun Crescent** from the early days until now.

(Originally there were only 4 Georgian houses, and these are still in existence). Perhaps some members have stories relating to the houses or gardens. If so, please pass them to me at jennybrucewick@gmail.com as I am collating information for Donald.

We have received a submission from via Deidre Brock MP of her father in law's reminiscences of living at no 8 Hopetoun Crescent Garden (Hope Crescent) as it was called then during World War 2, and this is reproduced below.

Jenny Bruce

A Wartime Childhood in 8 Hope Crescent by Charles Byron

These reminiscences are specific to my childhood memories of my years at 8 Hope Crescent. I have given no thought to any arrangement of this material but I'd better start with my birth date - 8th April 1931, about the only date I can confidently remember. My recent elevation to the nonagenarian club, if you take a vertical perspective, rather than a horizontal view, though in truth, my memory of the pertinent years seems like a timeless plateau inhabited with little events, snapshots that emerge and disappear, leaving little trace but often jumps to new events, as if seeking some intelligible sequence.

As I write this introductory passage, things are coming to mind - my introduction to 8 Hope Crescent. The war had not started. I know that because I heard Chamberlain's broadcast announcing the start of the war after I had started my new Primary School in East London Street. It was a strange time of fears about bombing, being gassed as we were issued with gas masks, and advice about bomb shelters.

My mother took a lease of the property from the Hope Trust. Her mother, Mrs Rudland and her sisters Louisa and Lena were already living at No 7. Mother's plan to start a full board and lodgings business was a successful venture. Edinburgh, during the war, which soon started, was crowded with troops, military personnel, needing accommodation.

Hope Crescent had a feature peculiar to it. There was plenty of space before the two houses at one end. 7 and 8 could claim kinship with the other pair of houses, 17 and 18 at the other end. Why the building project was suspended remained a mystery, but the large area of rough ground made a glorious playground. The area behind it was owned by the Post Office and we used to have fun climbing on the long poles there. A very dangerous occupation! The park opposite, with its trees and grazing horses, was well protected by iron railings until removed for war salvage. A blacksmith, with the aid of a rudimentary forge, used to shoe horses on a bit of the pavement at the Annandale end of the Crescent.

Life in the boarding house was all action - a very busy place. I remember helping with the various duties- going messages, lighting fires in the guests' bedrooms, carrying trays of food and drinks up from the kitchen in the basement to the dining room on the ground floor. A few residents made a big impression on me such as Hugh Barclay, an eccentric Edinburgh gentleman, who had a wonderful collection of records, a good gramophone and an excellent library of books. It was he who introduced me to classical music. He played the organ

in some Edinburgh churches, but for some reason could never hold down a job. Mr Harper, the Brown brothers who were medical students, a German Jewish doctor who was held in high regard, a Polish officer who spoke French and whom my mother persuaded to help me with my homework. We also had some eccentric old ladies like Mrs Sharp and her sisters who stayed with us till they died.

My memory of the war years spent at 8 Hope Crescent (a young and impressionable youngster) was deep. By the time the war ended in 1946, I was an adolescent. I left school in 1947 when I was 16, part of a new generation to face troubled times. Hopes to return to normality, when the old reference points were rapidly dissolving. Such memories constantly invade the present. It helps to explain my obsession with war films.

I should have mentioned that my three older brothers were all in the Royal Navy. Edinburgh was lucky in that it suffered little from enemy damage but there was a period when air raid alarms were frequent - possibly German planes passing over to bomb the Clyde-bank area. It was agreed by all the residents that a cellar below the main staircase in the basement of the house would be the safest place to use as an air raid shelter. It could get quite crowded but we didn't leave until the all clear sounded. As children we were quite pleased when there was an air raid, as we got the next day off school.

My brother Dougie was serving on HMS Hood and while it was in the area, mother wanted to demonstrate her thankfulness to those serving, so invited Dougie's naval pals - engine room artificers, to a meal in No 8. I remember the dining room filled with all those young men dressed in naval uniform - I think about 20 of them. It wasn't long after that that the Hood was sunk with all hands. Fortunately my brother had been posted to another ship but he lost all his pals.

The gardens at the back of No 8 and 9 were walled and had coping stones of flat masonry, allowing a young boy to easily walk along the top of the wall. One incident I remember was when I saw and heard a small plane high in the sky, going towards the Leith end of the city. It looked very bright in the sun, then another small plane appeared and gunfire was heard. It was an air fight! My mother was alerted and yelled at me to get down off the wall and come inside. I later heard that I had witnessed the first enemy air raid in the war. Portobello, I believe, got strafed.

Number 8 was heated by coal fires, the coal having been delivered by horse and cart, by a man called Peden. Mother always came out and gave a bun to the horse. She was very fond of horses, having come from a circus/ fairground background, which was kept secret from her family. It was also a secret that grandma was a fortune teller at Portobello but I knew that she held fortune-telling (by tea-cup) sessions in her house at No 7 and asked awkward questions. about this. There was some story about her being involved in making waxwork faces for dolls but I don't know if that was true.

I mentioned that the iron railings round the park were removed for war purpose (although never used) My father, unaware of their removal, went off to work one morning, crossed the road and leaned on what should have been the railing, fell over the low wall and injured himself. He had to come back in, bleeding and injured and was unable to go to his work in Rosyth dockyard that day. At one point, when the school was requisitioned for army purposes, my mother offered the use of one of our rooms as a classroom, so I didn't have far to go to school for that short time.

Kate Love

We are sad to report the death in August of Kate Love, wife of our Chairman, Richard Love. Her funeral was held at Warriston Crematorium and afterwards at the Mansfield Traquair Centre for afternoon tea and drinks. It was a true celebration of her life, with tributes paid to the many achievements of a remarkable woman.

Edinburgh born and bred, educated at the Mary Erskine School and the University of Edinburgh, Kate lived all her life in this area, on the north side of the city – moving from Dundas Street to Claremont Crescent and lastly to Bellevue Place, where she raised her family. She worked in administration at Edinburgh University's Extra-Mural dept and had her finger in many "pies". Kate knew everyone and was actively involved in many organisations. She was artistic and creative, excellent with her needle and thimble, and a member of the Edinburgh branch of the Embroiderers Guild, ending up as Chairman. She loved theatre and was often busy in the costume dept. of the University Drama Society (where she and Richard were active members).

Kate was born a Buchan, of which she was very proud. She kept up many connections with-in the family of John Buchan, was Chair of the John Buchan Society and contributed articles for their journal. Always interested in local history, Kate knew our district well. She was one of the campaigning individuals who rescued the Catholic Apostolic Church from dereliction to become the Mansfield Traquair Centre. Later she helped set up and was Chair of the Friends of MTC, active in fund-raising, publicity, and the guiding of visitors around that beautiful building.



Kate was a loyal member of Broughton History Society since its early days, a great source of local information, and she gave talks long & short on different topics. She was a wonderful support to Richard in his role as Chair.

Alas, Kate suffered a stroke at New Year in 2010. Life changed, but she did not let go of her many interests and welcomed regular guests to the house. Although confined to a wheelchair she was able to attend Society meetings in Drummond CHS, only a short push across the road from home, wheeled over by Richard.

Sadly, Kate's health declined further this year and she died peacefully at home in the early hours of Sunday 1st August 2021, aged 85 years. She will be much missed by those who loved her: Richard, their daughters, Anna and Isla, and by her many friends, far and wide, especially her neighbours.