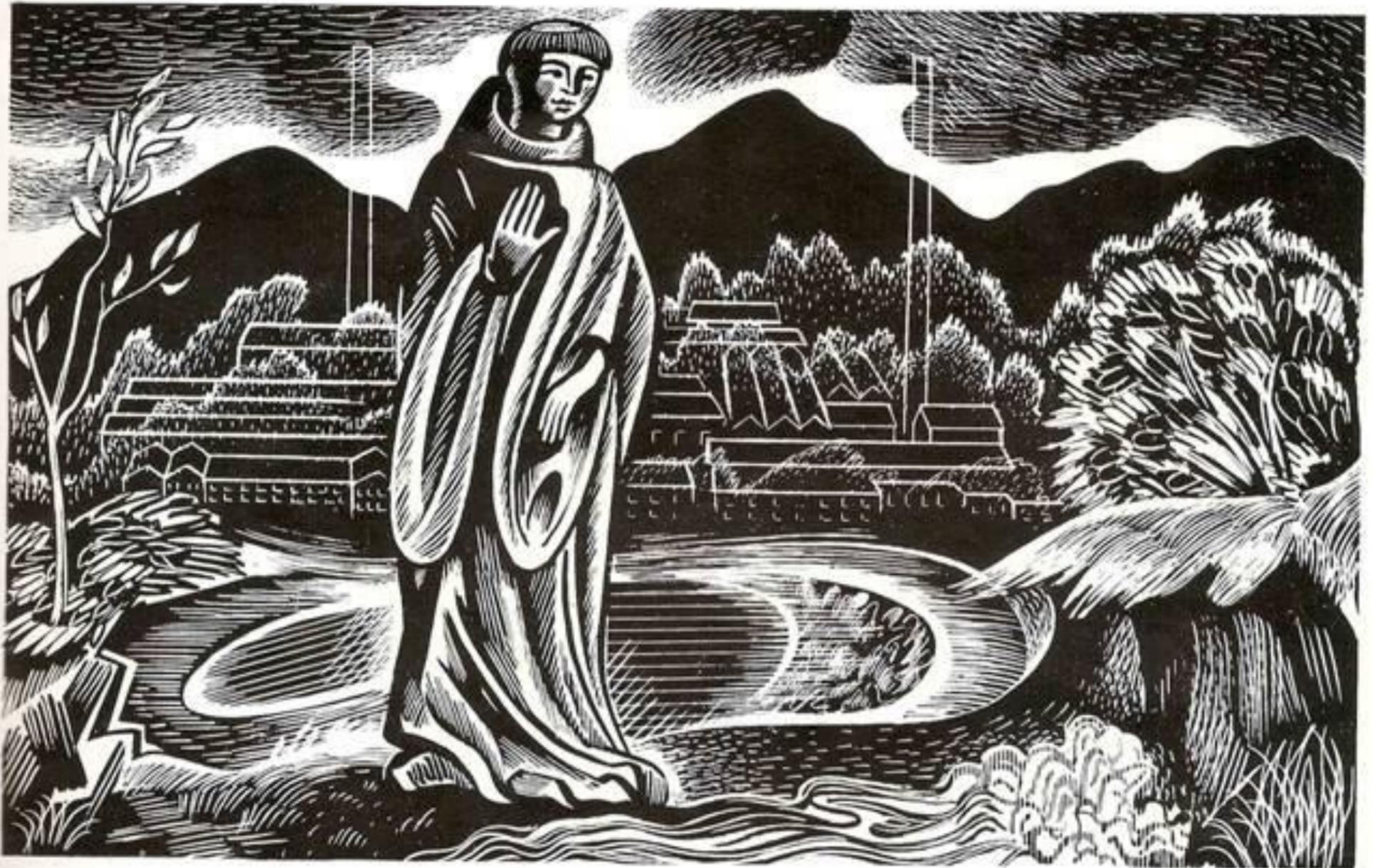


THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE

S A I N T K E N T I G E R N



Drawn by JOHN FARLEIGH

St Kentigern “dog of the King” more popularly called Mungo” was the illegitimate grandson of King Lot of Lothian, one of whose strongholds at Mount Lothian lay just over the Esk river to the east. Water and immersion were important to many Celtic saints, and wells and springs are dedicated to Mungo across Britain. Did he regularly immerse himself in the ancient spring dedicated to him at Valleyfield?. The valley or howe here was a mystical place, particularly around the confluence of the Black Burn, and magical beasts were thought to roam its woods. Safe routes through this eerie hidden valley crossed between the Howe Gaits on the open hillsides toⁱ east and west.

St Kentigern or Mungo’s kirk sat above the valley on its west side and became part of the lands associated with the Pennycuick family. Opposite, across the river, was the outer watch-place of Mount Lothian: “Uttershill” which as the centuries passed became associated with a branch of the Preston family, known later for their power and influence in Edinburgh and their great castle at Craigmillar.

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Between St Mungo's church with its tower and bell and oval enclosed sanctuary for the souls of the dead and the Preston clan's Uttershill Castle lay the fertile valley bottom, known in course of time as "Valleyfield".

As centuries passed the Penicuik and Preston families lost their lands, power and influence, and sought fortune overseas. Here at home Penicuik and Valleyfield came to be controlled by the Clerks, a prosperous Forfarshire merchant family who had made great wealth dealing in works of art in reformation Europe.

In due time Captain Penicuik led one of the ships of the ill-fated Darien trading expedition to central America, and the Prestons of Valleyfield took up soldiering in Canada, and sailing to China with the East India Company.



Here's a cup that Sir Robert Preston- "Floating Bob"- commissioned during his time in China (showing the Prestons' heraldic unicorns) and the great house in Fife he built and called Valleyfield with gardens by Humphrey Repton around 1800 with the fortune he'd made with the East India Company. But let's go back to Penicuik and the year 1700.

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*John Law of Edinburgh inspired speculation in paper money -his revolutionary financial ideas continue to this day
The portrait here of around 1715 is by Alexis Simon Belle.*

Valleyfield in Penicuik back in 1700 was in hands of the Clerk family. There by the ford in the river a solid house stood with a substantial Mill attached which was used for the production of

paper. Agnes Campbell (who carried on the profitable business of her husband, Andrew Anderson, the King's Printer in Scotland) had the lease of it. He'd been dead for fifty years. Known as Lady Roseburn after the mansion she built by the Water of Leith, she jealously guarded her late husband's printing monopoly and developed her Penicuik paper supplies. Her friend was Daniel Defoe. And her nephew, John Law, became notorious for introducing paper money, bubble economics, and many banking ideas still in used today, as chief chancellor of France. The French connection of the papermill was to continue for the next hundred years. With Edinburgh lawyers in the background, Valleyfield was operated by the Watkins and Boswell interests through the century and the lavishly appointed ornamental gardens around the house were known for their spectacular Jete d'Eau intermittent fountain, presumably operated from St Mungo's Spring. Watkins, a later King's Printer, "was struck dead by lightning in the middle of a blasphemous outburst" while walking along the Esk. The mills had then been under the control of Thomas Boswell an Edinburgh

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lawyer and relative of Dr Johnson's biographer.



James Boswell of Auchinleck, Edinburgh lawyer

In 1779 another strong business-woman took over, at Valleyfield, Marjorie Fidler, who'd been brought up in France. Born in 1734, she was the daughter of William Fidler, native of Trieste and Orkney, and clerk in the Scots Exchequer, and Jean Johnston whose parents had an Edinburgh druggists shop. When Marjorie was eleven Prince Charlie came to Edinburgh, and her father joined him with all the Exchequer money he could lay his hands on. Marjorie attended the ball in Holyrood Palace, where the young prince kissed her on the cheek.



The Bonnie Prince of Marjorie's childhood

After the Stuart defeat at Culloden the Fidler family fled to France, but

Marjorie returned to Edinburgh in the 1750s where she began trading in tea and lace among a few wealthy families. She soon became recognised as "a first rate man of business". In 1757 she married Charles Cowan, a Crail-born grocer with a shop in Tolbooth Wynd, Leith. The Cowan business prospered, thanks to Marjorie's good management and personal attention, and the couple moved from their flat above the shop to James Court, Lawnmarket. They began to supply families and businesses with paper and in 1779 Charles Cowan took ownership of the well-established paper mills at Penicuik which he named Valleyfield Mills.



*The old doocot, Marjorie's wellhouse — Penicuik
The old doocot, Marjorie's wellhouse — Penicuik
The old doocot and wellhouse at Valleyfield on the site later used for a billiard room. The hydraulic ram driving the "Jete d'Eau" in the 18th century probably operated from here*

Marjorie Cowan quickly applied herself to the business of making and selling paper. In 1787 the Edinburgh business address for tea and paper was "at the cross" and five years later moved to Moray House, Canongate a house with impeccable Jacobite

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credentials and head-quarters of their bankers the British Linen Company. The Cowans were to stay on at Moray House for fifty years, and the design of Penicuik Town Hall, and the similarity of the Canongate and Penicuik clocks, were a later generation's recognition of that early association. In her widowhood from 1805 to 1819, when her sons Alexander and Duncan had taken over the business, Marjorie Cowan lived in Regent House, the small eastern part of Moray House, with Duncan and the paper sales offices next door. "She used to wear gowns of dark print, with a shawl pinned down at the sides, and on dress occasions, a cap with a very full border of fine lace, so disposed as to show all her forehead, a nicely starched neckerchief, a silk gown that might stand alone, and an embroidered muslin apron; over all this a better sort of shawl was worn..For going out she had two short cloaks, made of mode silk, and lined with fur...she always called her son Dunky ringing a bell out of the window when she wanted him...she frequently went into his house in the evening to play at cards, and generally ended by calling it a bungling business. After the rubber was over, they had supper, and her modicum was a glass of rum with two or three spoonfuls of marmalade mixed in a drinking jug..." Marjorie Cowan kept her Jacobite loyalties to the end, often asking if there was

"any hope or prospect of the Chairlies coming back again". In 1817 when she was 83 her son Sandy introduced her to Prince Rothenstadt, a visiting Swedish nobleman who was one of the Stuart line. Marjorie was moved to kneel in tears before him.

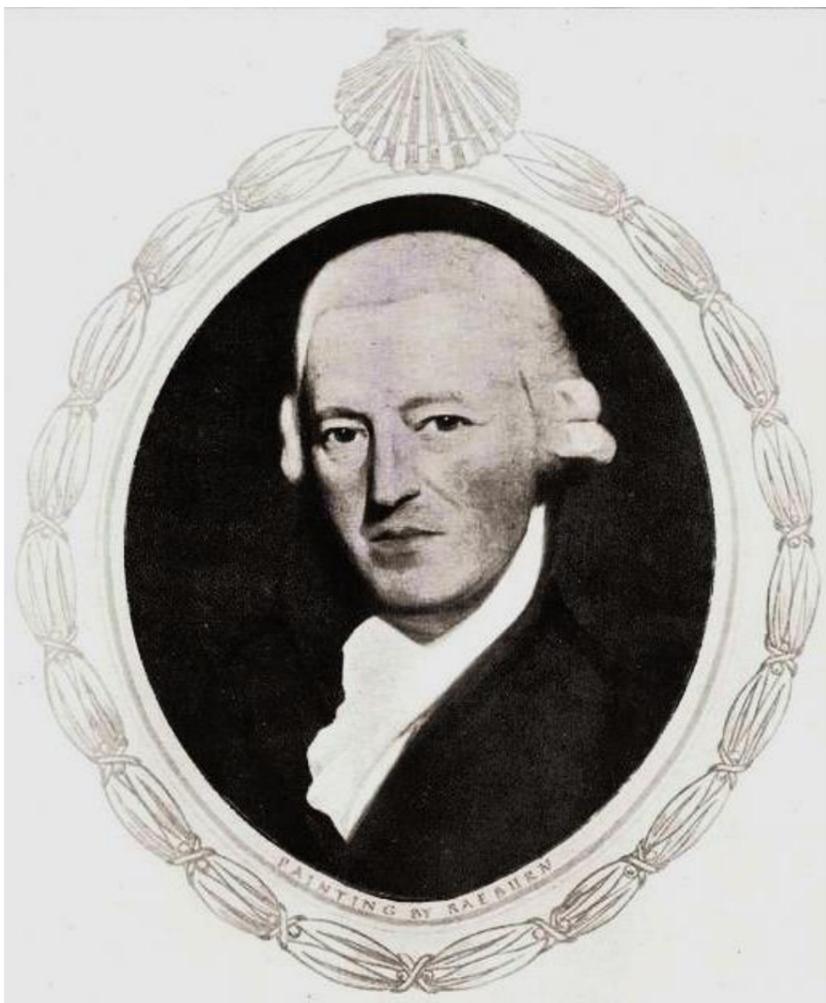


Valleyfield House and Mill beside the river

But all this was towards the end of her long life. Before that she had experienced the birth of her fourteen children and settled down at Valleyfield. "She had received an excellent education in a French convent, and was an indefatigable worker in house, garden and business, but it was in part due to her French education that she sent each of her fourteen children as infants to be brought up at Crail, under the supervision of her husband's relatives, till they were about five years old. When living at Valleyfield, of which she was very fond, she paid great attention to her dairy, poultry and garden, selling with her own hands her spare milk to the poor who wanted it, and keeping cans set in order, each labelled for its own customer. Every egg laid was marked

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with the date and the hen's name. Her husband was somewhat severe, though a really good man, and liked to be a gentleman on all occasions. But she had a great contempt for grand ways and would-be grand people. One day she was in the garden with a large lapful of cabbages &c., which she had been cutting for the kail, when her husband came in with a strange gentleman. She walked past him, dropping a curtsey, and saying 'your servant, Mr Charles', thus saving his blushes for a wife so employed. She had a keen sense of humour and a high spirit of honour, and she detested deceit. She knew Allan Ramsay's works almost by heart, and was well read."



Marjorie's husband Charles Cowan 1735-1805

In these years, Charles Cowan was often occupied with the business in Edinburgh, while Marjorie remained

at Penicuik. Until 1812 the family house at Valleyfield stood next to the papermills on the River Esk, and Marjorie's ease with French language would have been useful in the paper-making craft where French expertise was so important. Charles kept a carriage for travelling to and fro, but his wife greatly preferred her white pony. "On one occasion, when engaged to dine with Sir John Dunbar at Auchendinny, such a snowfall occurred that her host could scarce believe she could come, till he saw her riding up the avenue looking more like a snowball than anything else."



A snowy day at Auchendinny House

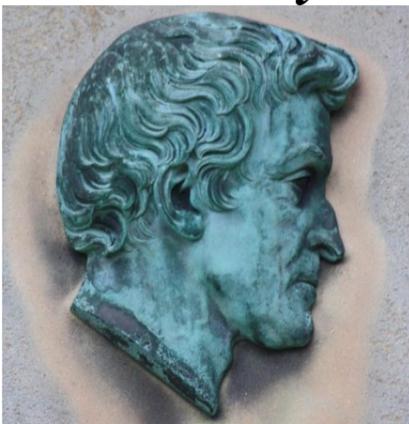
Marjorie is said to have had a wonderful gift for swearing, both in French and Scots. She used to look from a window to see who her visitors were, and if they were unwelcome, she simply refused to see them. But if they were welcome, she would call out

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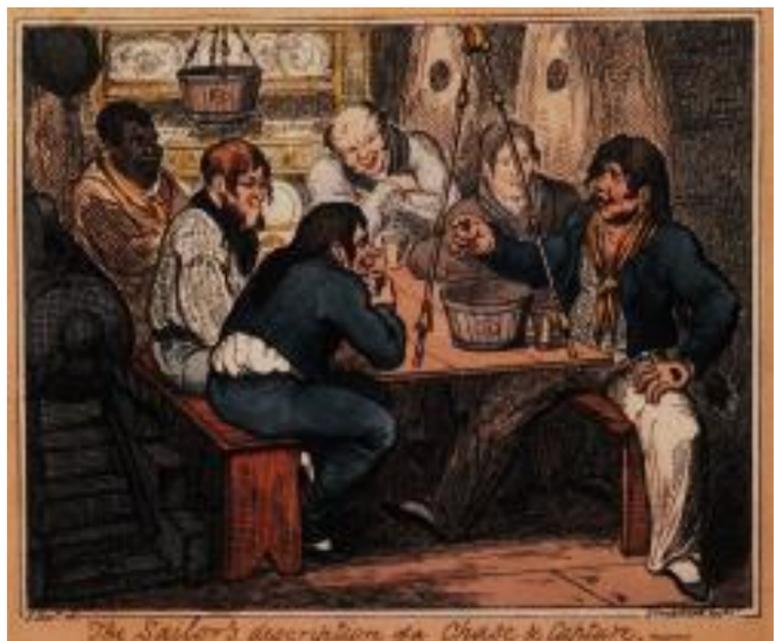
Female mask decoration at Moray House

"Come awa' ye de'il, come awa' ye de'il, I'm real glad tae see ye." Once she was found by her husband in a silk dress gathering peas. He took her to task, saying that he certainly thought she of all people would have put on an apron. "Well," she replied, "if you like me in an apron, I'll always wear one," and so she did, however unsuitable. Like Moray House, her storerooms at Valleyfield in those days might have been stocked not just with paper, but with barrels of American apples, a barrel or two of salted beef from Shetland (the delicately flavoured small cattle were stored each Michaelmas), and huge American cheeses as big as cartwheels. Much loved by Marjorie, Valleyfield was to become the home of the next generation of Cowans, and their younger son Alexander, founder of the papermaking company which bore his name and shell trademark for more than 150 years.



Alexander Cowan (1775-1859) and his shell trademark

Alexander had studied Chemistry and Physics at Edinburgh in the 1790s. He married Elizabeth Hall in 1800 and they took up residence at Valleyfield, where the first of their many children were born. With the European War, trade declined badly and rags from the continent were hard to obtain. (Rags pounded until they disintegrated were the main ingredient of all paper in those days) As papermaking came to a standstill, Alexander walked round with his foreman and made arrangements for the workforce to move to Melville Mill and elsewhere. The Government bought the mills and house and garden in 1810 to serve as a prison camp for captured sailors and kidnapped foreign civilians. They used the old house as a prison hospital, and fitted up the rag sorting huts and paper stores as dormitories with double tiers of hammocks suspended from cast iron columns for the thousands of European sailors and other prisoners of war who were held there.



Contemporary sailors and the blue pennant of the Naval Board of Transportation who ran the prisons, hulks & camps

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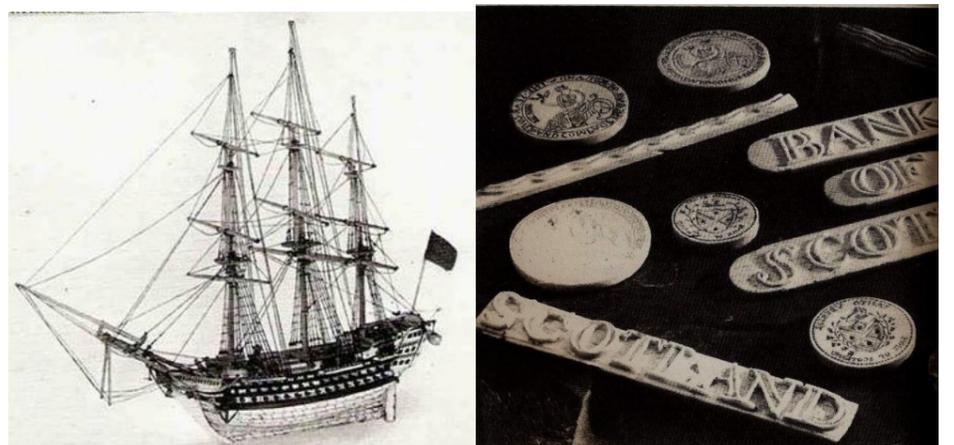
Overlooking the compound, the Navy Board who operated the camp commissioned the King's Architect, Robert Reid (who had just finished the Leith Custom House) in 1811 to build two new houses on the brae next to the old St Mungo's Well and doocot. On the left a smaller one for the prison chaplain on the right a larger for the Naval Agent as commander of the camp



*Robert Reid (1774-1856) as King's Architect in Scotland designed and supervised what became the new Valleyfield House
He was the last person to hold the title of "Master of Work to the Crown of Scotland"*

The Valleyfield prison camp was one of hundreds of holding places for Napoleonic prisoners: Dartmoor and Perth prisons both date from that time. Walls and sentries were deployed and the mill lade became a moat, Prisoners young and old occupied themselves in digging escape tunnels under the huts and spreading the excavated earth from holes in their pockets as they exercised in the prison yard. They kept and cooked chickens and prepared food from the simple kale turnips and potatoes they were provided with. Excursions came out from Edinburgh to look down on the compound and sniff the cooking smells of the camp's "Café de Paris" or watch fights which broke out. The prisoners made straw dolls for sale in

Penicuik's weekly Thursday Market, or prepared elaborate naval models or forged banknotes and papers with carved bones.



Thousands of men were held at Valleyfield for nine long years and not all the prisoners were French. The old Valleyfield house as camp hospital at the heart of the compound was worn out and would never regain its former glory.

The story of Valleyfield prison is told in two fine books by Ian MacDougall:

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“The Prisoners of Penicuik” and “All Men are Brethren”. When the war was over, the prisoners were marched out and the mills stood empty. The Government had ideas to use them for making official paper. But Alexander Cowan had kept the water power rights and was able to negotiate repurchase, return to his beloved Penicuik and gradually restart papermaking with some of the original workforce after 1820.



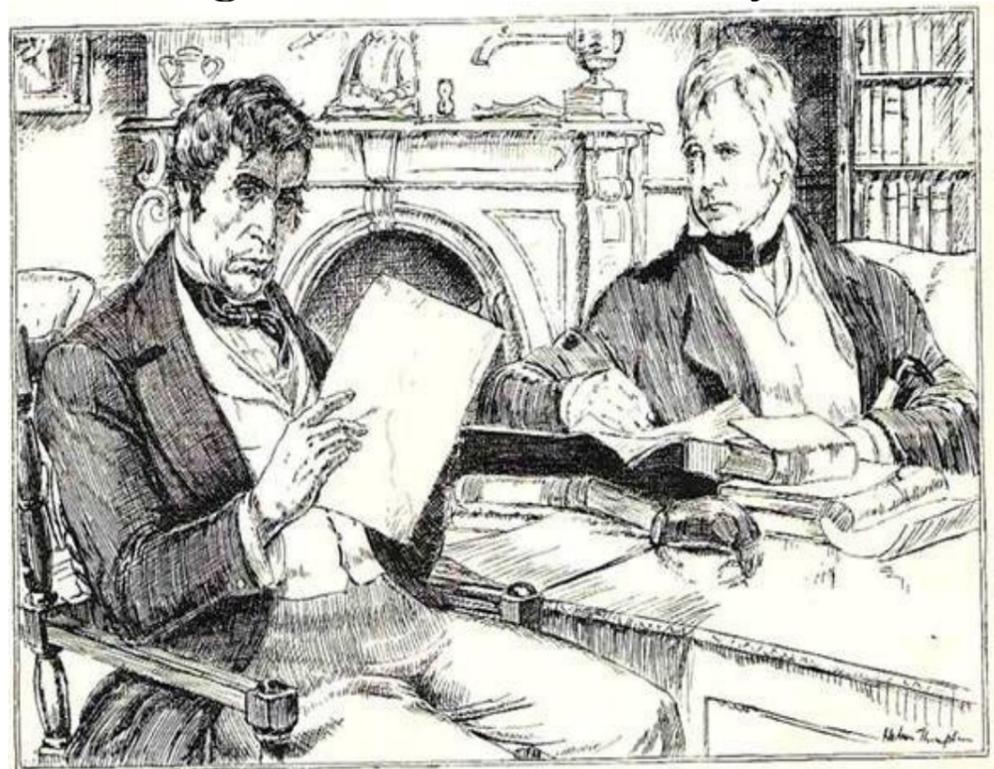
Bryan Donkin (1768-1855)

The mills were fitted out with revolutionary new machinery by Bryan Donkin & Company and the two Robert Reid houses expanded and joined to form a new Valleyfield House for Alexander and Elizabeth Cowan and their big family. Donkin’s



Thomas Telford (1757-1834) & James Jardine (1776-1858)

friend Thomas Telford was meanwhile building the new bridge at Penicuik, while Telford and James Jardine laid out the new Edinburgh Water Works at Glencorse and Jardine designed the Innocent Edinburgh & Dalkeith Railway.



Alexander Cowan receiving the manuscript of Heart of Midlothian from Walter Scott (1771-1832). The illustration by Heber Thompson RE

Walter Scott (who gave Alexander his manuscript of The Heart of Midlothian and whose novels were printed on Cowan paper, like so much else in those days) was a regular visitor. Indeed, Cowan and his bankers at the British Linen had been among Scott’s financial guarantors and held steady through times of market turbulence in the book trade.

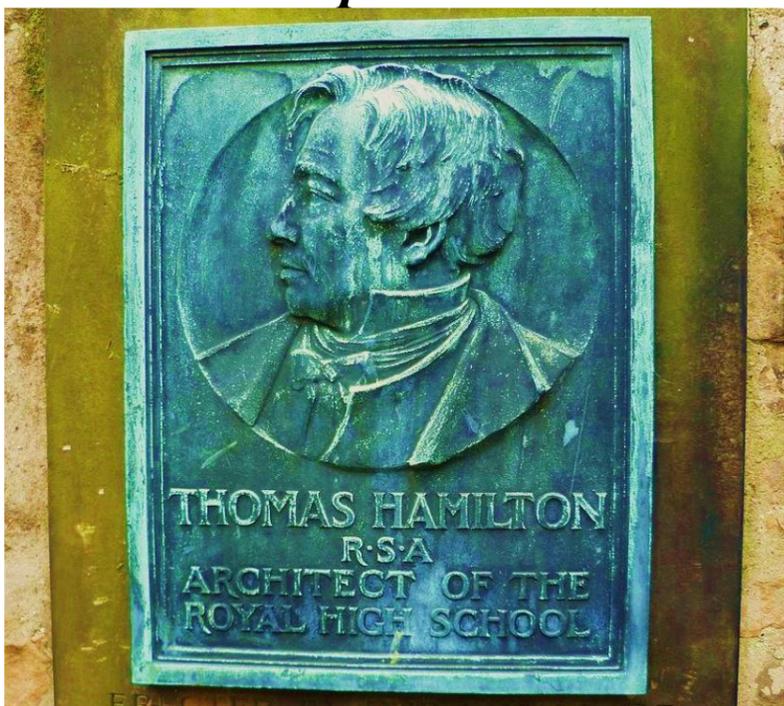
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Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) & Elizabeth Fry (1780-1845)

Alexander's friend and cousin Thomas Chalmers spent summer holidays at Valleyfield in the 1820s, and was believed to have been once visited there by fellow social reformer Elizabeth Fry.

In the gardens down the bank Alexander commissioned the architect Thomas Hamilton (designer of the Edinburgh High School on Calton Hill) to design a monument to international brotherhood and the memory of over 300 of the prisoners who had died during their Penicuik captivity. Walter Scott helped to choose the inscription.



Architect and masonry expert Thomas Hamilton (1784-1858)



The Valleyfield Monument erected by Alexander Cowan.

It was designed by Thomas Hamilton, who created the stone porch of Valleyfield House at about the same time

In 1828, after the death of his first wife, Alexander had left Valleyfield to live in Moray House, the firm's first Edinburgh headquarters. He now married his brother Duncan's wife's sister Helen Brodie, a resident of the Canongate, and began a second family of another ten children.



Alexander as a widower with the surviving children of his first family outside Moray House in 1828: Charles, Helen, Elizabeth, Duncan, Lucy, James, John and Marjorie. The second family was still to come

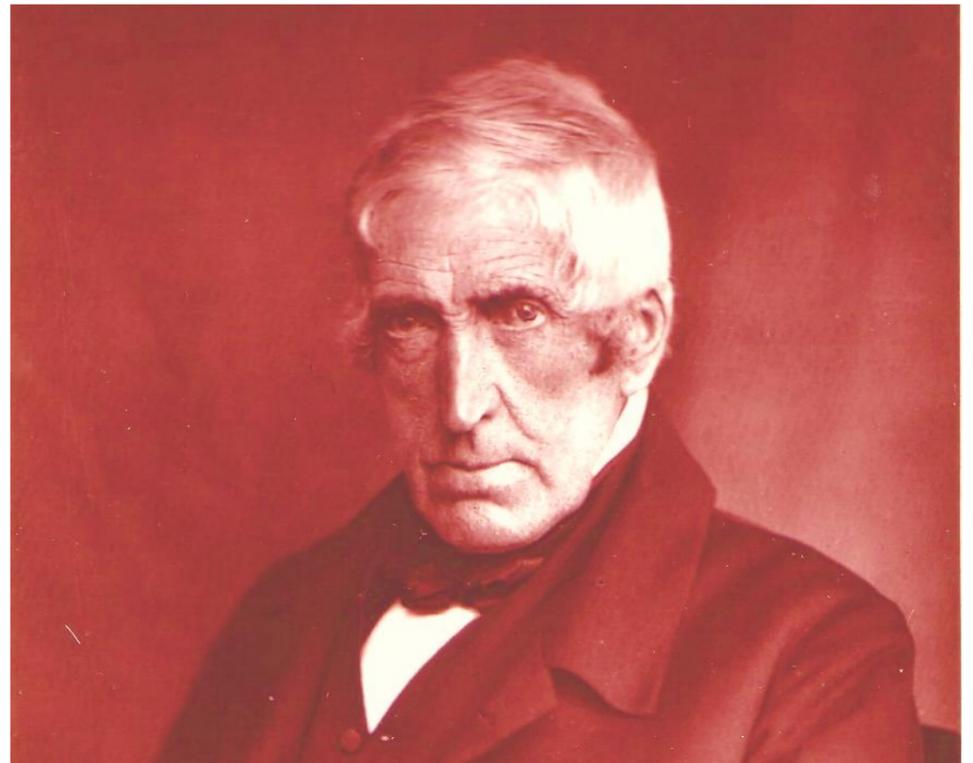
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Alexander Cowan was a generous man, reluctant to speak ill of any human being, and is said to have given away more than half his income



in works of love and kindness. Walking down the Canongate, he was so struck by the poverty and cold of the houses with their cracked, broken and rag-stuffed windows that he gave his glazier instructions to repair every widow from the Castle Hill to Holyrood at his own expense. In the cholera outbreak of 1832 when the sick were shunned by their neighbours, he did all he could to help the folk in the Canongate. As soon as he heard of a case, he would visit the patient, and even lie down beside them to prove to their friends that there was nothing to fear. As early as 1796 he helped to set up a parish library in Penicuik. With his brother Duncan, he arranged a new public water supply in the High Street.



In 1851 he started a Penicuik village museum at the mills with the help of his friends. It was looted more than a hundred years later when the mills were asset-stripped by the Reed Group. Alexander's high business standards demanded that all transactions must

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profit buyer and seller alike, no advantage must be taken of misfortune. Alexander Cowan's gardens at Valleyfield and Moray House were well-known, and he was a regular contributor to the Royal Horticultural and Astronomical Societies, as well as to the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. Like Walter Scott, Alexander Cowan took an interest in gas supply. The Valleyfield House and Mills were lit by gas from 1830, and Messrs Cowan supplied the village of Penicuik from 1845 until new gasworks were built at Eastfield in 1877.



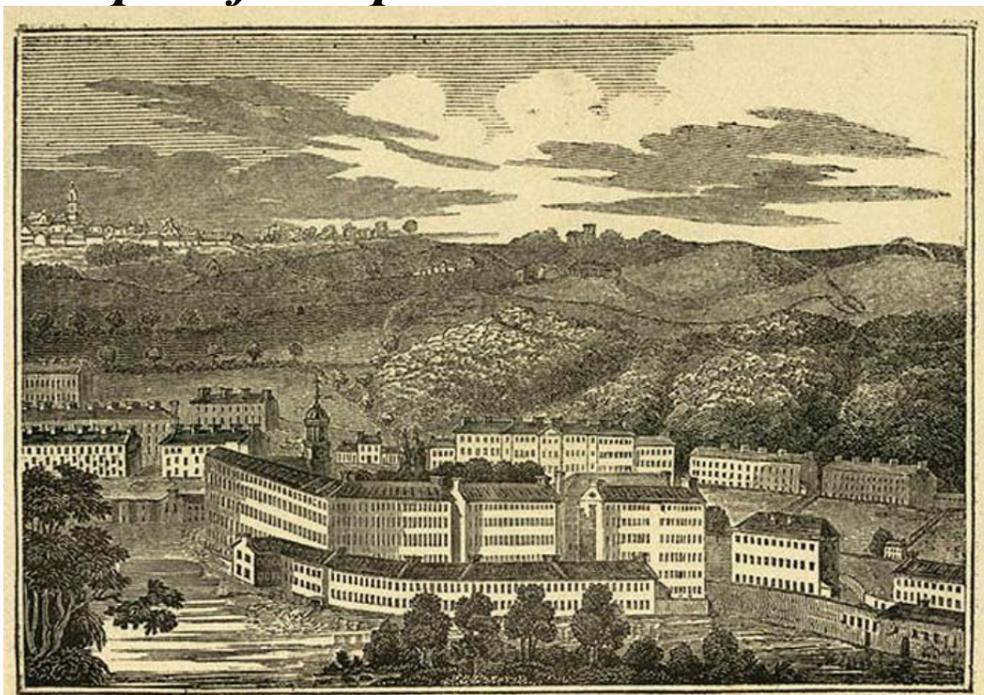
Alexander in 1857 with second wife Helen Brodie and a few of his second family. Mary Cowan (top left) who was soon to make her life in Japan, was 17th of Alexander's 20 children.

On his death in 1859, Alexander left money for the common good of Penicuik people, from which the Cowan Institute (Town Hall) was later built and endowed with 5,000 books.

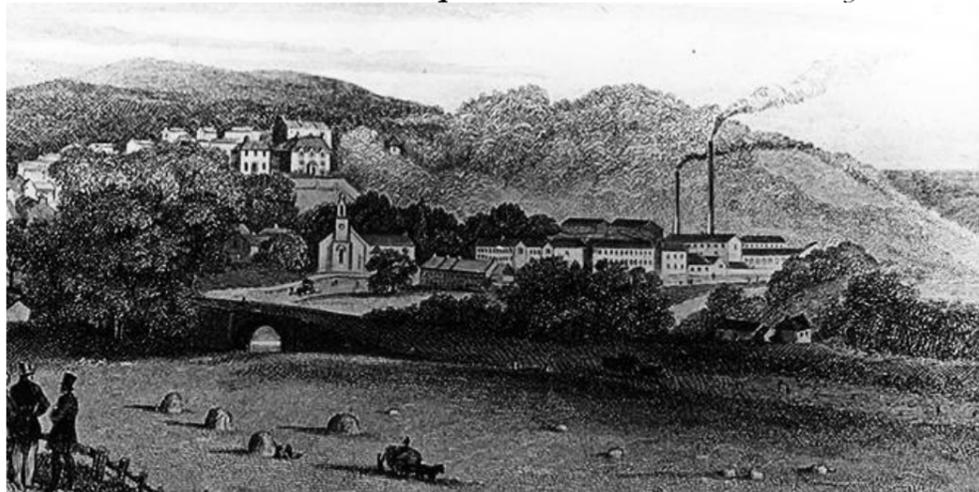


*Charles Cowan (1801-1889) & Catharine Menzies (1799-1872)
from Water Colours by Kenneth M'Leay, R.S.A.*

Charles Cowan, Alexander's eldest son, was the next to live at Valleyfield and supervise the papermaking end of the business. Charles had married Catharine Menzies, daughter of Lanark's minister, in 1824, and they both heard and saw much of New Lanark's Robert Owen, the disciple of co-operation.



New Lanark & Penicuik compared: -the 2 Naval houses clearly visible



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Catharine's household management at Valleyfield was described by Thomas Chalmers as a perfect example of what real housekeeping should be. Charles and Catharine took a pride in the simple alterations and decoration to Valleyfield House in the early 1830s to accommodate their growing family.



Valleyfield House and Mills in the 1830s

Like many Cowans before and since, Charles was fascinated by the technical aspects of papermaking and wrote the article on it for Encyclopaedia Britannica. The rival Chambers' Encyclopaedia article also drew on Cowan experience and both were printed on Cowan paper. In 1835, to get round a Post Office rule that letters be restricted to a single sheet of paper weighing less than an ounce, the Valleyfield Mills produced giant sheets four feet by three and a half feet within the weight limit.

At Hogmanay 1836 Charles wrote in his diary that he sat up to bring in the New Year in the Valleyfield House dining room with mulled Port reading hymns appropriate to the occasion"

An impulsive man, neice Mary Constable (Mrs Forsyth) wrote: "Uncle Charles was always kind and hospitable. He had a bit of a temper, sometimes upset the chess-board if he was going to lose the game." Charles was often absent from

Valleyfield House on business and wrote back excitedly to his wife and family about his adventures.



In June 1838 it was the impulsive voice of Charles Cowan that broke the silence in Westminster Abbey after the moment of crowning at princess Victoria's coronation, starting the spontaneous three cheers of acclamation for the new Queen which so moved those who attended. Charles was recalling a childhood memory of being taken to the top of Harper's Brae on a dark night to see the illumination of Edinburgh for the Jubilee of George III in a spontaneous effusion of love.

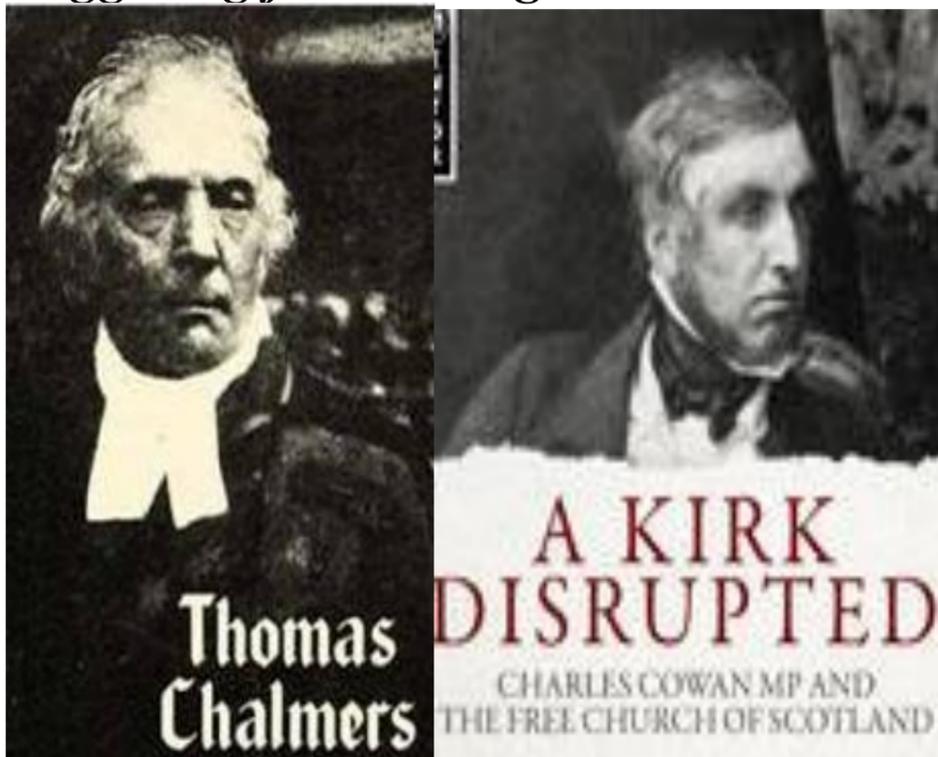


While his father Alexander shrank from public platforms and displays, Charles rather enjoyed them and the controversy that went with them. Before long he was deeply embroiled in the Disruption of the Church of Scotland in May 1843.



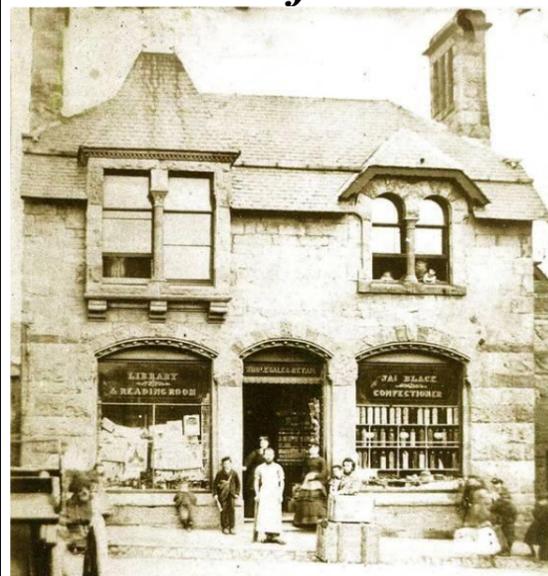
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As railways and a new democratic spirit began to spread across Scotland, the Church of Scotland became bitterly divided. The leading light of the reformers was the Cowans' uncle Thomas Chalmers who argued that congregations should be free to choose their own ministers and not accept those presented by landlords. His supporters led a huge walkout in the great Disruption to form the Free Church of Scotland. The new congregations suffered badly without any churches, buildings or church salaries paid by the state. Enormous sums of money had to be found to pay the hundreds of clergy and build the hundreds of churches and schools needed in every part of Scotland. Charles Cowan the Penicuik papermaker who was later to become one of Edinburgh's Members of Parliament, put his shoulder to the staggering fundraising task.



Charles and his Penicuik brothers John and James, and his many other siblings (there were 20 in all, by two mothers) led all sorts of social

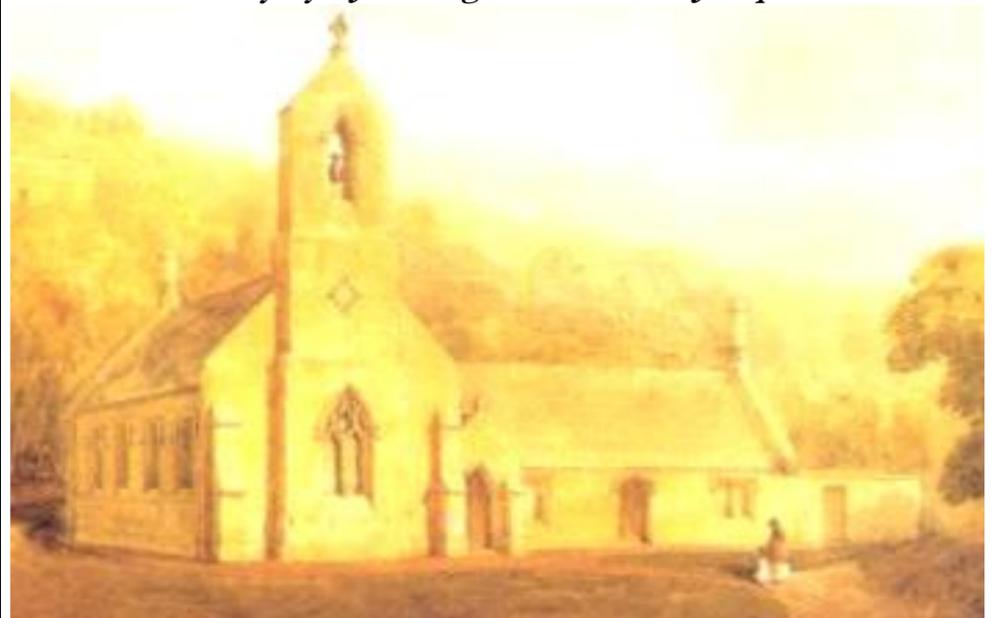
endeavours as Victoria's reign progressed. Often with buildings designed by Frederick Thomas Pilkington (Penicuik Free Church, Barclay Church) these included training for Edinburgh orphans close to Penicuik at Wellington School, better schools libraries and water supply for workpeople, Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, working men's houses and hostels in Grove Street, Fountain-bridge, improvements in the slums of the old town and Royal Mile, the relief of poverty in the highlands and islands, the Scottish National Monument at Stirling, the Scottish National Institution for the Education of Imbecile Youth at Larbert, and the work of Josephine Butler for fairer treatment of women.



Penicuik library by FJ Pilkington



Josephine Butler



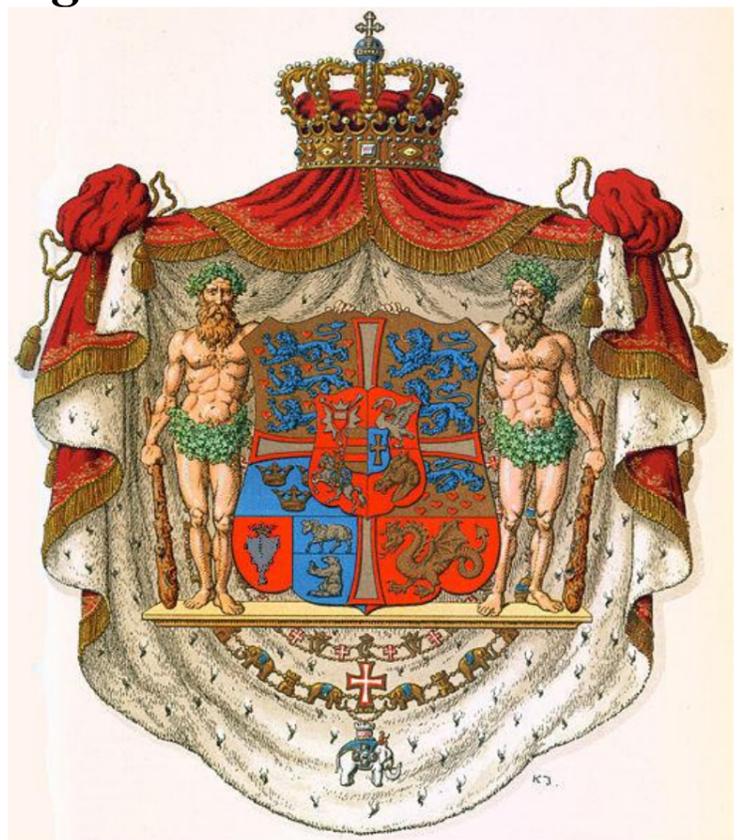
Valleyfield school supervised by Charles' sisters and brother John

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The Napoleonic Prisoners monument in the Valleyfield garden attracted visitors and many were entertained at the house in Charles Cowan's time. Prince Frederik Carl Christian of Denmark (1808-1863) who became King Frederik VII in 1848 was one such visitor. Next to the French, the Danes were perhaps the most numerous among the prisoners of Penicuik, and their naval traditions ensured regular pilgrimages official and unofficial. One of the most

*interesting topics raised by the royal visitor in the Valleyfield dining room was archaeology. Christian Jürgensen Thomsen (1788 – 1865) as director of national antiquities collections in Copenhagen had devised the revolutionary three-age system, proposing that prehistory had advanced from an age of stone tools, to ages of tools made from bronze and iron in an evidence-based division of prehistory into discrete periods. Denmark was credited as the originator of the three-age system of European antiquity and the study of stylistic change, decoration and context; recognising the importance of examining objects from "closed finds" to determine associations of common artifacts for various periods (stone - bronze - iron). Results were published in the *Ledetraad til Nordisk Oldkyndighed* (Guideline to Scandinavian Antiquity) in 1836 with an English translation in 1848.*

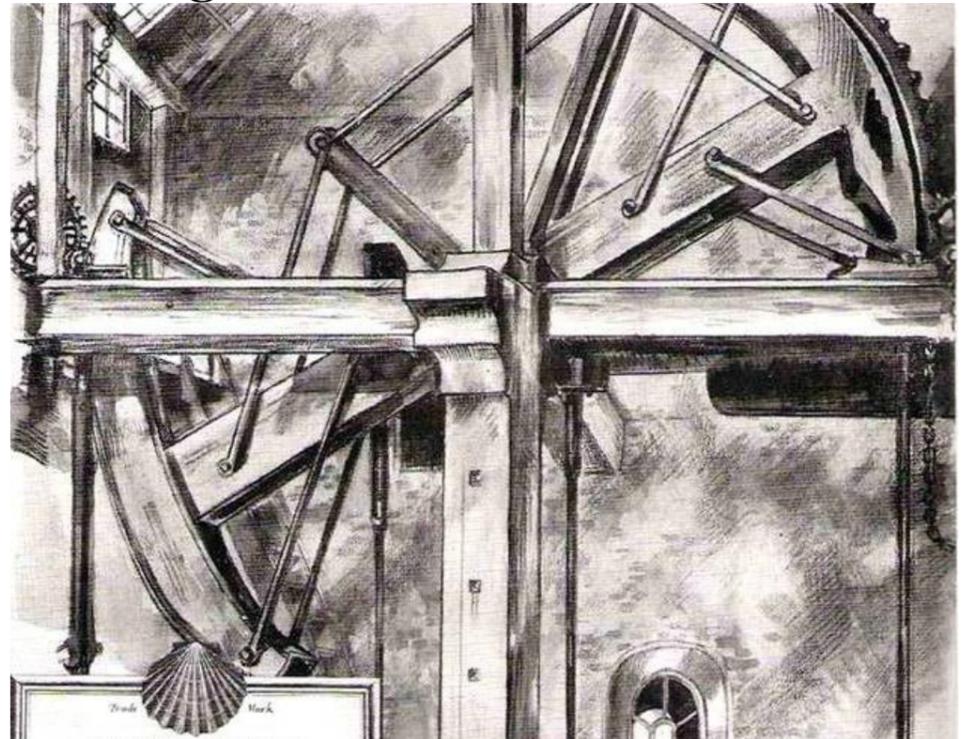


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As we've seen, Charles Cowan was a keen free churchman He was also a curling enthusiast and Valleyfield House still contains remains of some of his early curling stones in the hall. Charles became a free-trade MP for Edinburgh in 1847. On Wednesday 18th August that year his eldest daughter Jeanie was married to Thomas Chalmers at Valleyfield House.

*“The date was selected by the firm of Messrs Cowan & Co as a fitting opportunity to give to the large number of persons in their employment at Valleyfield, a day of rest and jubilee. At five o'clock afternoon, an assemblage of nearly seven hundred persons sat down to a substantial dinner in a capacious *Salle* of the paper works, tastefully decorated with evergreens and garden flowers. After dinner, toasts were proposed by the Messrs Cowan and the friends who surrounded them, to promote the local interests of the parish, and with the intimate relations which ought always to exist between employer and employed. Then the healths of Messrs Cowan senior and junior, and of Mr Charles Cowan, M.P., were given by their people, and most heartily received. About eight o'clock, the party adjourned to two neighbouring apartments, each eighty or a hundred feet in length, which were richly decorated with evergreens, flowers, flags, and various stars and devices, in variegated lamps, where dancing was commenced with much spirit to enlivening strains of music, the ladies and gentlemen of the party mingling for a short time in the Scotch reels and country dances. The coup d'oeil, at nine o'clock was charming and every one seemed gratified and happy. Upon the retirement of Messrs Cowan which occurred about this hour, dancing was resumed, and kept up till half-past twelve o'clock, when, after giving three cheers for their employer, the people quietly returned to their homes.”*

About this time one of the earliest recollections of John James Cowan, Charles' youngest son born 1846 was “my father taking me down the brae through the garden below the house, where he let me have a glimpse of the old beam engine, which was supposed to interest me, and thence he sent me home again.”



Charles Cowan left Penicuik for a new house at Westerlea, Murrayfield, in 1870, but was later to preside at a packed North Kirk addressed by William Gladstone when the Cowans and Lord Rosebery persuaded the old prime minister to stand for Midlothian in the 1880 election campaign.



Charles Cowan died in 1889. His two brothers in the business, Sir John Cowan (who built Beeslack House) and James Cowan MP were equally politically active in the Liberal interest.

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Three of the children of Charles and Catharine Cowan at the east steps of the front porch at Valleyfield House around 1845: Mabel (Marjory Isabella) born 1838, Margaret born 1840 and Anna born 1842

From a Water Colour by Hope Stewart

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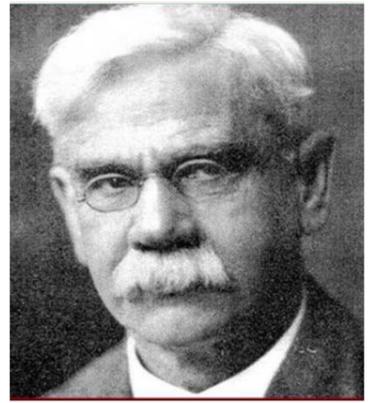
1868: OFF TO JAPAN

After their wedding at Uncle John Cowan's Beeslack House, Mary Cowan (one of old Alexander's second family) and her new husband Colin McVean (a minister's son from Iona) prepare to migrate to Yokohama where he will supervise the first maps for Japan's Imperial Government, the import of railway engines and the building of new lighthouses around the coasts. Here are album pictures of their Yokohama household and the Prince of Mito



Prince of Mito
Tokugawa

Mary Cowan and her descendants returned many times to Valleyfield. Colin arranged for Cowan cousin Campbell Douglas (later the designer of Penicuik's Cowan Institute) to help with laying out the new schools of Architecture and Engineering in Tokyo. As well as the couple's own children, Three Cowan grandchildren were born in Japan at the British Legation; they became the Gubbins and Luard families of SOE and Private Eye fame.



The son of the Chief Cashier at Alex Cowan & Co. also became a migrant to Japan. Cargill Gilston Knott was a brilliant mathematical mind and son of the chief clerk at the Cowan papermills. He was born in Valleyfield, Penicuik in 1856 and arrived in Japan in 1883 as Professor of Physics and Engineering at Tokyo, replacing James Alfred Ewing of Dundee. Soon after arriving, Knott married Mary the sister of the young Scots Professor of English at Tokyo, William Gray Dixon, whose early book about Japan "Land of the Morning" was published in Edinburgh in 1882 and still sits on the Valleyfield bookshelves, In Tokyo Knott worked with colleagues Fusakitchi Omori, Thomas Lomar Gray and David Milne in pioneering the science and instrumentation of seismology. He took part in establishing a network of recording seismometers across the Japanese Empire, and from this the team were able to locate the time and place where earthquakes occurred using only the recordings made at remote seismological observatories, with Knott using his talent for mathematical analysis. As well as seismological work, Knott was involved in developing the study of geophysics with Japanese colleagues, undertaking a geomagnetic survey of the country in only three months. For this the Emperor awarded him the Order of the Rising Sun in 1891. Knott returned to Scotland to work at Edinburgh University and was for many years Secretary of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE DAFFODIL MANIA!



Charles W. Cowan Esq

(1835-1920) of Valleyfield and Dalhousie Castle
Charles William Cowan succeeded his father at Valleyfield. He'd married Margaret Craig of the Newbattle, Portobello and Caldercruix papermaking family in 1861. Provost of Penicuik for 30 years, he is best remembered for his interest in the Royal Horticultural Society and his absolute passion for daffodils. The unique Valleyfield plantings were developed and even after a century of losses still contain varieties of rare interest to national collections.

THE PORTOBELLO ADVERTISER, FRIDAY, MAY 10, 1889.

Penicuik News.

VALLEYFIELD GARDENS --On Sunday afternoon the gardens and grounds of Mr C. W. Cowan, Valleyfield House, were thrown open to the public, when large numbers of the inhabitants visited the delightful grounds. The garden has been considerably altered from last year, and its appearance reflects great credit on Mr Thorburn, Mr Cowan's head gardener. The flowers were well forward, and the daffodils, spotted calceolarias, and geraniums were much admired, and the excellent walks about the monument and on the higher ground were thoroughly enjoyed by all present.



1890

"Irradiating the present: restoring the past"

W. B. Hartland

Daffodil Grounds, Ard Cairn, Cork.

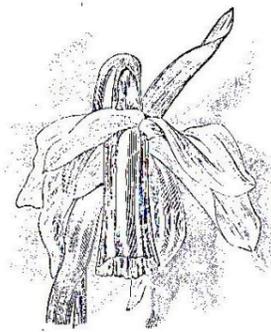
Dedicated to

MY SINCERE FRIEND AND PATRON,

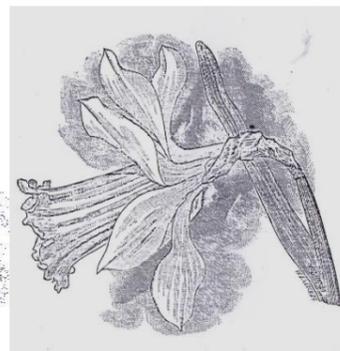
CHARLES WILLIAM COWAN, Esq.,

VALLEYFIELD, PENICUIK, MID-LOTHIAN.

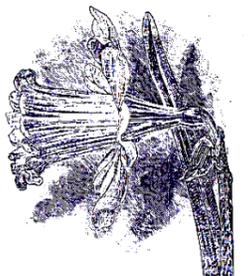
William Hartland, the pioneering daffodil grower of Cork, dedicated his 1890 collection to "my sincere friend and patron, Charles William Cowan Esquire, Valleyfield, Penicuik, Mid-Lothian". Charles William left Valleyfield before the turn of the century and moved to Dalhousie Castle, making room for a new generation (another Alexander) to supervise the business at Valleyfield.



Muticus - The Omega.
Many-flowered.



Princeps.
Two-colored.



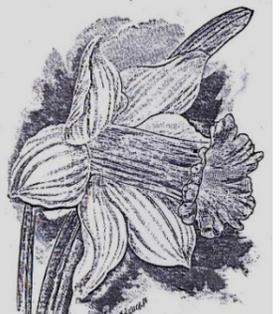
Henry Irving.



Saragosa.



Nelsoni Major.



Bicolor Horsfieldi.

THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE

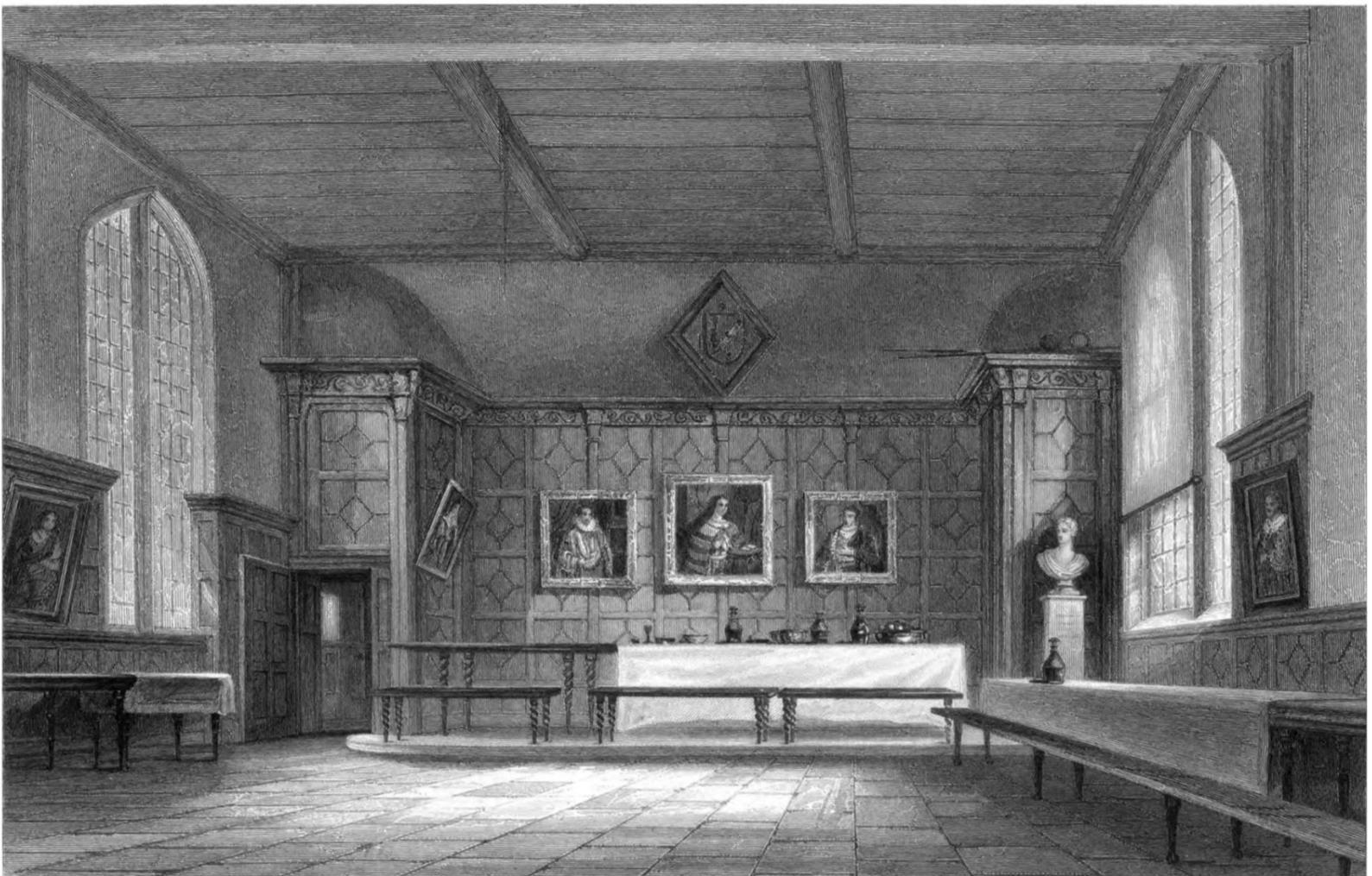
A SON'S EDUCATION AT CAMBRIDGE



J.A. Bell.

J. Le Keux.

PEMBROKE COLLEGE.
FROM THE STREET



J.A. Bell.

J. Le Keux.

THE HALL PEMBROKE COLLEGE.

While C.W. and Margaret Cowan were admiring their daffodils at Valleyfield, their eldest son was attending Pembroke College Cambridge. He would be stepping into familiar scenes, for the images upon which Le Keux's well known engravings were based were by none other than J.A. Bell, family friend of the Cowans and architect of Penicuik's Valleyfield Schools and Beeslack House. Great-Aunt Bissie Cowan (1810-1887) founder of the Penicuik Horticultural Society, had married a Thomson of Cambridge who died young. She ended her days at Beeslack.

THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE

THE NEXT LONG TERM RESIDENT AT VALLEYFIELD HOUSE WAS ANOTHER ALEXANDER COWAN

Like his namesake great-grandfather, the association lasted for well-nigh fifty years, though this time the residency was continuous. Like his namesake great-grandfather, this Alexander was married twice. His first marriage –to Alice Buchanan Comrie Thomson- took place at St Giles Cathedral Edinburgh. After Alice's death and burial in the kirkyard beside the garden twenty years later in 1912, Alexander married Florence Symington in 1913, this time at St George's Hanover Square, London



The entrance door to St Giles was opposite the magnificent Midlothian County Buildings to which Alex Cowan & Sons papermills had greatly contributed



Cowan shell and
Shell Oil shell
trademarks
differenced in 1904

Valleyfield House Gardens about 1904 These lower areas were used for Mill expansion in the 1920s
Note the washhouse behind the wall was removed by Mill agents in 1980. The greenhouses at right were beside the Valleyfield House curling pond

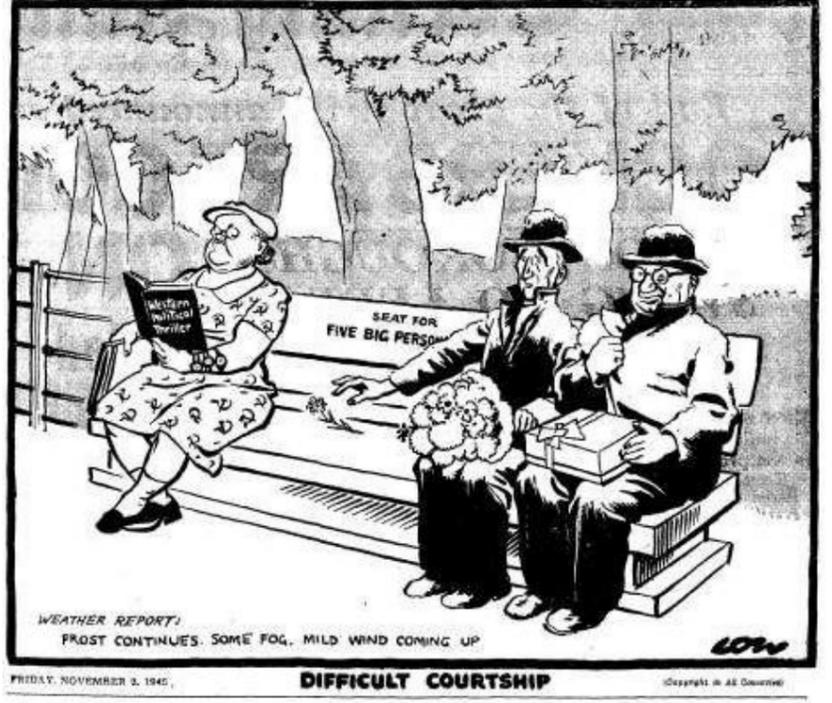
THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE



Alexander Cowan was involved in the opening of the Cowan Institute beside the top of the Valleyfield House garden in the 1890s and saw to it that only frosted glass windows overlooked his personal space. Naturally, in his long period at the head of Alex Cowan & Sons Ltd he was in and out of the building for social events

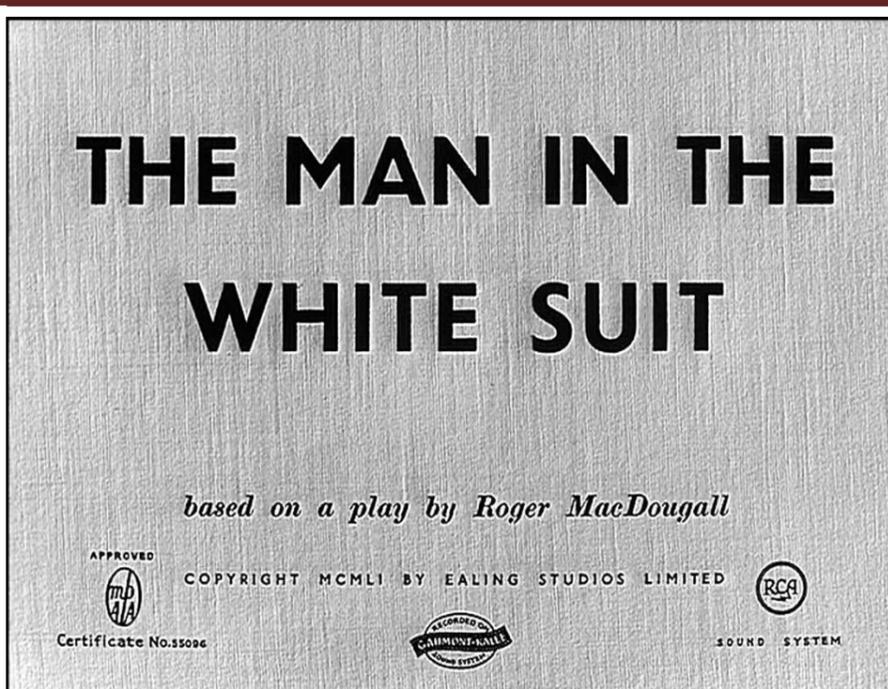
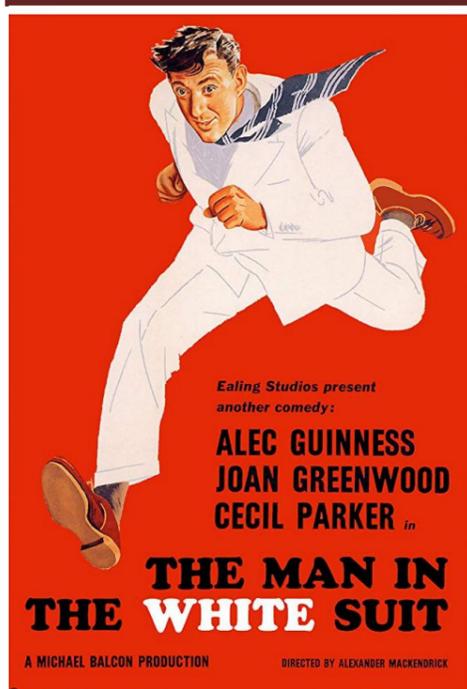
and acted as local magistrate and Burgh Provost for many years. His portrait (above) still hangs in the Marriage Room. While his wife Florence kept a series of poodles which were stuffed after death and placed in the Valleyfield House hallway amidst ticking clocks, Alexander was a keen stage-door follower of musical comedies in Edinburgh. The stars would be invited to Valleyfield to sit on the grassy bank at the front of the house. Evelyn "Boo" Laye and Jessie Matthews (above) were both brought out to Penicuik in this way.

THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE



David Cowan, son of Alexander and Florence, was the next (and last) generation of the Cowan family to live at Valleyfield House with his wife Margaret Burn-Murdoch and their young children. Sadly I haven't yet been able to assemble photographs of this period. With fuel rationing the house was bitterly cold. It was almost twice as big then as it is today (the west nursery wing was still undemolished and most of the 20-odd hearths stayed unlit. Just the little morning room on the right of the main front door was kept cosy. David Cowan was always a keen horseman and his later years was once to be found electioneering still as a statue beside the dual carriageway at the Auchendinny road end, in full riding gear and draped with a big union Jack. It was a Festival of Britain moment. But that was far into the future when in the early 1950s he decided to leave the business and Valleyfield House and go freelance into the paper trade. David Cowan died in 1997.

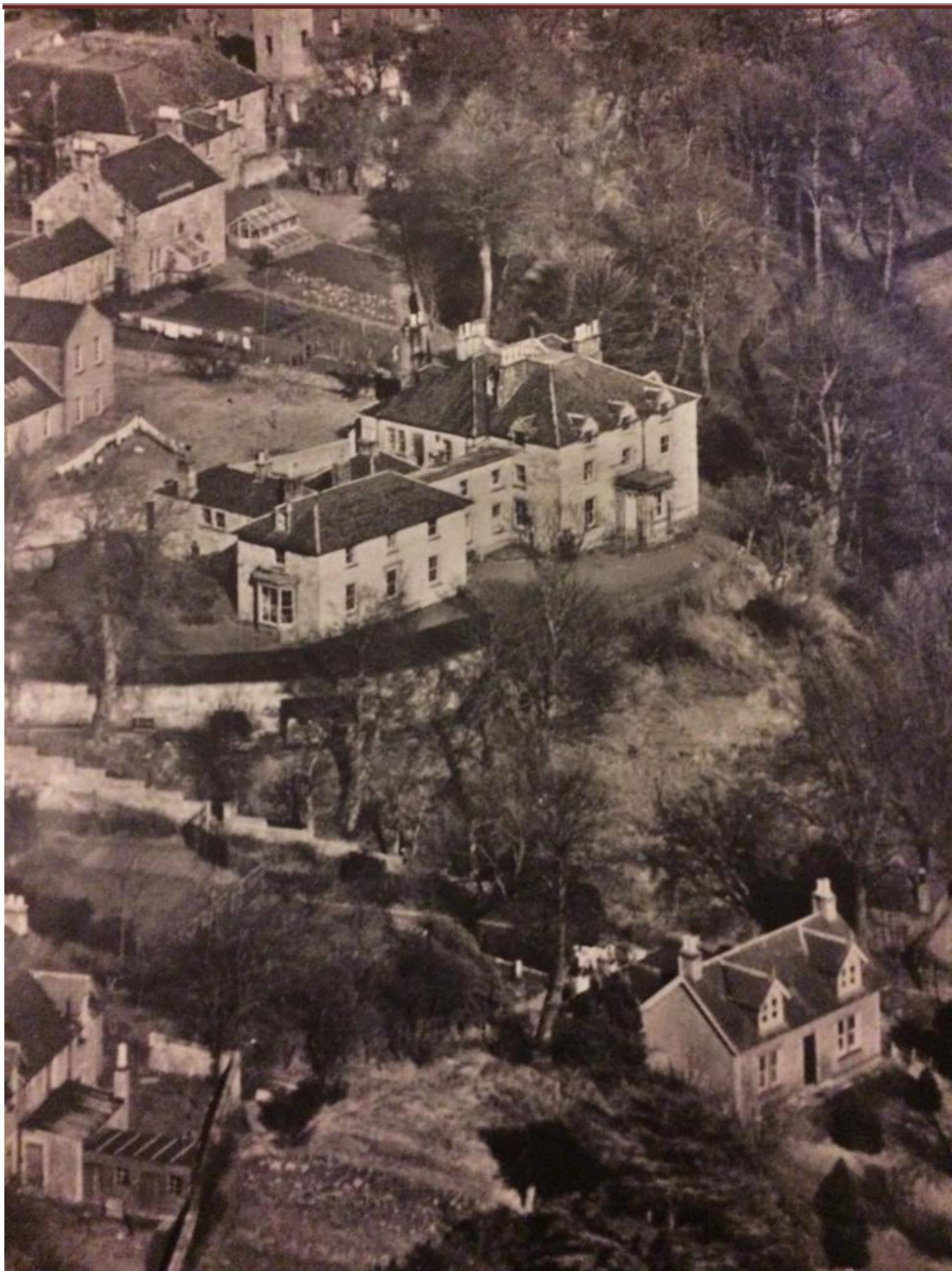
THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE



The Festival of Britain showed it was time for industry to invest in the future, and firms making textiles and paper would need to improve their strength, whiteness, durability and suitability for new uses. Science was enormously seductive at this time, and (building materials being hard to come by) Cowans decided to convert Valleyfield House to exactly the kind of well-equipped dream laboratory which had so captivated the Alec Guinness character in the film.



THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE



On 10th March 1952 (obviously a Monday washing day) an aerial photograph captures Valleyfield House. It was just before the nursery wing was due to be demolished to become the car park for Alex Cowan & Sons Ltd new research laboratories.

THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE

LIFE IN THE LABORATORIES



1950s photograph of staff on the steps of Valleyfield House, newly converted to become laboratories, a technical library, and experimental photographic, Xerox and printing workshops for Alex Cowan & Sons Ltd.

The west (nursery) wing of the house was demolished to provide space for a car-park. Rooms were fitted with fluorescent lighting, steam heating from the mill, and copious supplies of water, gas, electricity and assisted ventilation. The large ground floor kitchen became the main washdown wet laboratory, the ground floor dining room and first floor drawing room became dry laboratories with long lab benches, fume cupboards and Bunsen burners. A magic eye inside the entrance was a precaution against industrial espionage. Large male and female toilets were provided on the first floor, libraries and study rooms were on the top floor, dust free photographic and printing rooms were at the ground and first floor front of the building. Rooms were numbered, domestic decoration and fireplaces were removed, and an external fire escape was installed.

THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE



In 1965 Roger Kelly took a 6-photo panoramic view of the Esk Valley for a summer project "Distant aspects of settlements", part of his undergraduate town planning course. These two images are just a section. Little did he know that his future family home would be at the centre of the scene.

1980:

DERELICT

INDUSTRIAL

PROPERTY

IN

MIDLOTHIAN

FOR SALE

THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE

RETURN TO FAMILY LIVING

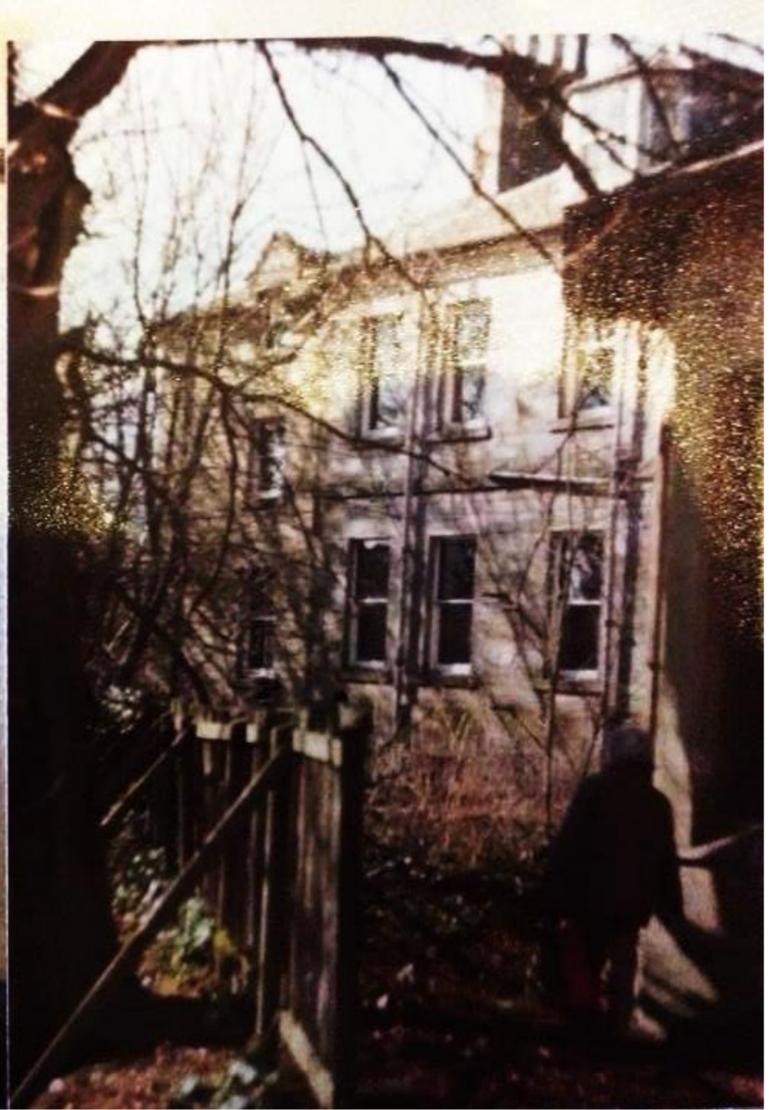
After the mill closure in the seventies the building had suffered some progressive damage and dereliction. Coming from their house in Durham Road Portobello in 1980 Jane and Roger Kelly were surprised when Alex Cowan & Sons Ltd's successors Reed Paper and Board accepted their knockdown offer.

Little by little, with their three young sons, family and friends they restored Valleyfield House and its derelict laboratories to pottery studio and domestic use. Planning permission to resume residential use at the industrial premises had to be obtained. In July the family moved in, joined by Jane's mother Kay Monk who retired from her teaching job in London. Biggar doctor's puppy Sandie the Labrador joined the family. With industrial equipment, furniture and heating pipes everywhere, the house had little working water, power and sanitation, though the old over-engineered electric wiring was pressed back into service.

With 17 rooms, three of them very large, there were literally hundreds of glass window panes, slates and light bulbs and tubes to be sorted out. A bridge was designed and built to connect the house directly with the top garden. Some townspeople predicted that the family would not last long in the haunted old house and that a rebirth as a pub could be expected



THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE



THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE



THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE

VALLEYFIELD'S NEW LIFE AS PENICUIK POTTERY



THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE

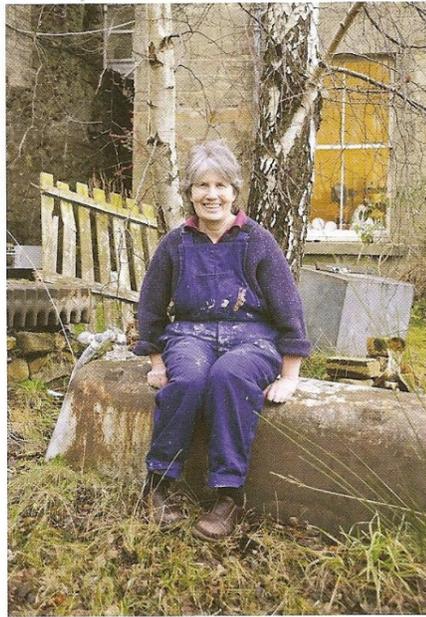


Jane Kelly

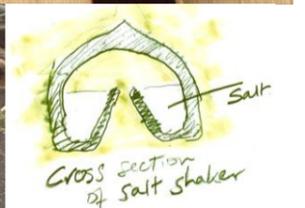
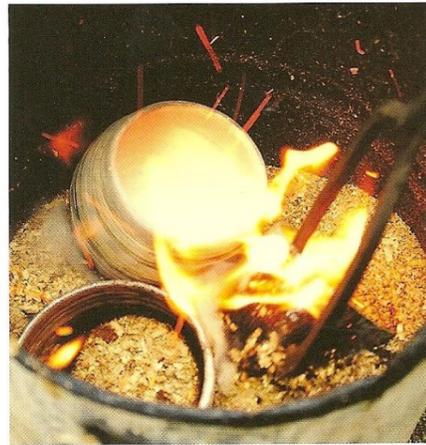
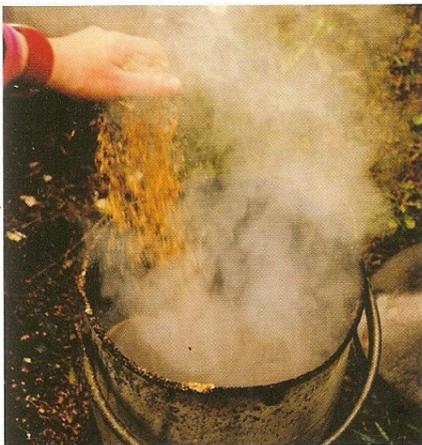
Jane was raised in New Zealand and London and trained as a potter in Rochester before coming to live in Portobello in the mid 1970s and setting up her studio in the centre of Penicuik. For many years she worked with adults at Cannonball House and South Bridge, with residents from the Garvald community for young adults with special needs, and with children. She continues to run annual pottery summer schools associated with the Penicuik Arts Festival.

In her own work she concentrates on useful thrown ware like jugs, teapots, mugs, cups, plates and bowls, saltshakers and butter dishes. She also undertakes commissions – recent clients include Dalhousie Castle Hotel and the Traverse Theatre. She likes to experiment with different materials, from clay dug in her garden to specialist porcelain. “At heart I am an alchemist”, she says – “I aim to transform the most basic elements into something of lasting use and beauty”.

Jane’s exhibition piece is a set of tea bowls made using the Raku technique, a rapid high flame process in which the burning pottery is smothered in sawdust from the wych elm wood before being quenched in water. She writes: “What I love about Raku is the magic of the

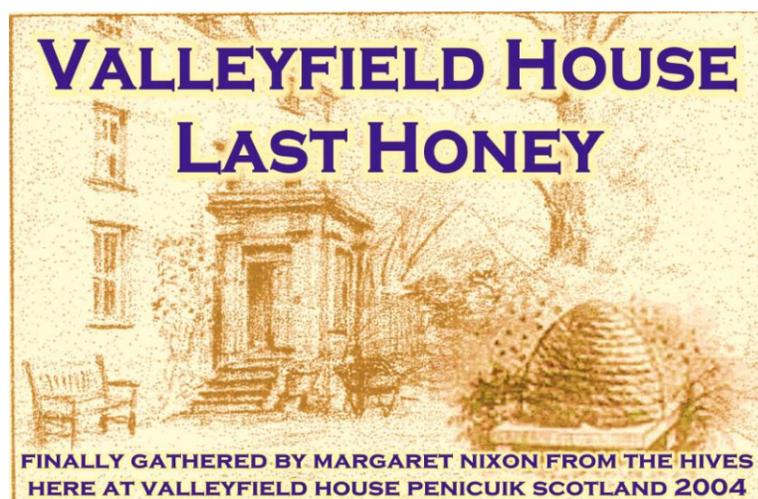


changing colours of the clay and the glazes in the firing. It is quite impossible to make two pieces exactly the same. I also like the simplicity – firing needs the minimum of space and time”.



THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE

1990-2018: TWENTY NINE YEARS OF ROGER'S SHOP



Created in response to a suggestion by Carolyn McKerchar, and in a deliberate reference to Marjorie Cowan's shop at Valleyfield House 200 years before, the shop was open for two hours a week every Saturday, with 20 vegetable boxes and a good supply of organic groceries, fresh bread eggs and milk all at strictly cost prices:- no markup. Trade was brisk and all the helpers and customers eventually spawned ideas for the Penicuik Trust, Open House, Cinema, Lost Garden, and Penicuik Storehouse.

THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE



THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE

1993-94 BUILDING & LAUNCHING THE JEANIE HENDERSON

This house in Penicuik, where Jane Kelly makes [Mariners teapots](#), was built by the Navy in 1812 to oversee the Admiralty Transportation Board's inland depot for 5,000 Napoleonic sailors. A working pottery now for almost forty years, it was appropriately and memorably also used for a while by boat designer Iain Oughtred and friends, who built his famous Ness Yawl *Jeanie Henderson* here one winter and launched it through a window. Robert Reid, King George III's architect in Scotland, had supervised the building of Valleyfield House for the Navy's personnel at the same time as he built Leith Custom House. 180 years later, over the winter of 1993-1994, Iain Oughtred and Mike Hall built the *Jeanie Henderson* in the old downstairs dining room. They sourced gaboon ply through Silvermans of Borehamwood from Bruynzeel's sustainable forests in Gabon, and vacuum laminated it on both sides with Scots wych elm veneer with the help of a modified milking machine which they installed in the cellar below. Wych elm was used around the sheerstrake, decks and bulkheads and the centreboard case, with lighter ash for thwarts, tiller and trimming, and oak for the gunwales. Timber was brought from the Airfield Sawmill at Cousland. The *Jeanie Henderson* was built to a length of 19 feet 2 inches and a beam of 5 feet 3. With floorboards and sidebenches in place, she weighed 245 pounds.



JEANIE HENDERSON: BIRTH BY DEFENESTRATION

There was a big Penicuik party to remove the window and pass the long slim finished boat out. After loch and sea trials, and an appearance at the June 1994 Wooden Boat Show at Greenwich, the *Jeanie Henderson* returned to Penicuik that August for a place at the town's Street Fair which Roger organised in those days.

THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE



The *Jeanie Henderson* spent many of her early days in the Moray Firth where she responded well to all kinds of conditions. As Kathy Mansfield later wrote in [Wooden Boat Magazine's Small Boats 2006](#): “ I remember trying to photograph boats at the delightful Scottish Traditional Boat Festival at Portsoy on Scotland's Moray Firth, when a short steep sea had built up with wind against a four-knot tide. Every small boat there, every skipper, was frustrated, stopped in their tracks, sails and spars lurching —except for one. Iain Oughtred appeared in his lovely Ness Yawl... ..and slithered over the tops of the waves as if on some sort of buoyant magic carpet. Iain left the other boats standing, sailed rings around them, came back to see what was holding them up, like an irritating youngster who has completely outpaced the oldies”.



THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE

1996-97 REDISCOVERING THE OLD DAFFODILS



KATE DONALD AND FAMILY

Just before Christmas 1996 Kate Donald managed to spend a little time looking at transparencies Lynne Farrell took when she, Margaret Nixon and the Donald family visited Valleyfield to look at the daffodils one wet Sunday the previous spring. These had come to her notice after a chance encounter Kate Donald had with Margaret Nixon at the Edinburgh Botanic Garden. Margaret at that time kept her beehives at Valleyfield House and frequented Roger's shop so was able to direct Kate the daffodil expert to the Cowan collection. Kate sent prints of the daffodils, some of which have been identified, together with engravings of the same daffodils from William Baylor Hartland's catalogue of 1890, which was dedicated to Charles Cowan. **"Without doubt it is a very exciting collection of old daffodils; many are not known from other sites, and most are not commercially available. It is therefore an important collection which should be saved, if at all possible."**



Valleyfield 26 April 1996

NARCISSUS 'Henry Irving'

Syn. *N. obvallaris maximus.e.*

a large form of the Tenby Daffodil. Like Golden Spur (which may be at Valleyfield but not spotted on that visit), 'Irving' is probably a relic of earlier cultivation, or possibly a resultant hybrid, having been discovered in an apparently wild condition near Leiden before 1885. It received a First Class Certificate (FCC) from the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) in 1886.



Golden Spur at Croft 16 today

The Corona (trumpet) should have 6 obscure lobes (Golden Spur has 6, very distinct, incised lobes). Like most cultivars related to, or derived from, *N. Hispanicus* (e.g. 'King Alfred' and 'Golden Spur') 'Henry Irving' has a dark brown projection at

the tip of each anther. It was widely used as a cutflower but fell out of favour—and, although it probably survives at the edge of bulbfields and in old gardens, is not known to be in cultivation.



Hartland's Irving at Croft 16 today



Valleyfield 26 April 1996

NARCISSUS "Maw's Bicolour"

Not 100% sure this daffodil is "Maw's bicolour" although the plant broadly agrees with the species description in John Blanchard's *Narcissus – A Guide to Wild Daffodils*.

THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE



Valleyfield 26 April 1996

NARCISSUS "Maw's Bicolour"

Not 100% sure this daffodil is "Maw's bicolour" although the plant broadly agrees with the species description in John Blanchard's *Narcissus – A Guide to Wild Daffodils*.



Valleyfield 26 April 1996

NARCISSUS "Horsfieldii"

Many of the early bicoloured hybrids were bred from *N. bicolor* including 'Empress, Victoria, Grandis (all these could be at Valleyfield) and *Horsfieldii*. The latter is one of the earliest known hybrids, being exhibited by John Horsfield, an impoverished weaver in 1845. Like 'Irving' it was used as a *cutflower*, but has long since been superseded. It is scarcely known in cultivation. RHS Wisley may have it and it would be worthwhile comparing the two stocks.



Valleyfield 26 April 1996

NARCISSUS *abscissus* hybrid – 'Nelsonii' type

This group of daffodils was bred by Edward Leeds before 1877. They were dubbed the Stove-pipe daffodils because the corona tends to be very straight and barely expanded. This is a very distinct characteristic of *abscissus*, the "clipt-trunk" daffodil of Parkinson (1629) indeed, *abscissuscan* mean "cut off" in Latin. The species is widespread in the French Pyrenees and was cultivated in France in the 19th century, being noticed as a garden plant in 1860 by the botanist, Gay,



Valleyfield 26 April 1996

NARCISSUS 'Princeps'

Peter Barr, a contemporary of Hartlands attributed Irish origin to *Princeps* in 1884 but the following year obtained it from Italy. The Valleyfield stock isn't quite the same as that grown at Kate's former home, *Blinkbonny*, but as 'Princeps' is variable, this may be permissible. No doubt if Hartland had supplied the former it would stand to reason that the Valleyfield plant would be a superior Irish clone!), Kate and Duncan have come across other 'princeps-ish' daffodils in roadside verges across Scotland, supporting the variability theory. However it is STRANGE that both 'Princeps' and a 'Nelsonii' hybrid were flowering at the same time "Ceps" was long valued as one of the earliest daffodils for the *cutflower* trade whereas *N. abscissus* doesn't usually flower until May.



Valleyfield 26 April 1996

NARCISSUS "Saragossa"

Another very exciting find. Kate dimly remembered a brief reference to this daffodil – perhaps in an old Barr catalogue – but has been unable to track it down. She has never come across it in cultivation before and since it is not listed in any of the photocopies of early catalogues, it was probably fairly unusual even in 1890.



Valleyfield 26 April 1996

NARCISSUS "Scoticus"

Syn. N. pseudonarcissus var. humilis.
This is more than an attractive form of the Lent Lily and was probably merely a commercially coined name for a variant which has become *naturalised* in Scotland (and elsewhere?). While it was widely offered in catalogues – as the Scottish Lent Lily or Garland Lily) at the turn of the 20th century it is no longer available in the trade and although *N. pseudonarcissus* is very variable, it would be very useful to save the form known as *scoticus* which may have been widely planted, judging by its popularity in the catalogues. It sometimes occurs in old planting lists, at Inverewe for example.



Croft 16 | old daffodils in Valleyfield pots

RHS SILVER GILT MEDAL



RHS Greener Gardening Show 31 March/1 April 2009
Croft 16

THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE

2006: MAKING THE TIMEWATCH DOCUMENTARY

In 2006 a BBC Timewatch documentary **The Last Duel in Scotland** was partially filmed at Valleyfield House. It was screened the following year. Rooms in the house were adapted to become the Kirkcaldy linen merchants house and the Kirkcaldy bank manager's house for scenes in the story and dolly shot tracks were laid down.



THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE IN THE GARDEN



THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE



THE VARIOUS LIVES OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE



BESIDE THE RIVER: OLD VALLEYFIELD HOUSE

BEFORE 1700 *from Mungo's time to Preston, Pennycook and Clerk estates*

1700-1720 *Lady Roseburn's house & Valleyfield papermill*

1720-1750 *Watkins family house & Valleyfield papermill*

1750-1780 *Boswell family house & Valleyfield papermill*

1780-1800 *Marjorie & Charles Cowan & family & Valleyfield papermill*

1800-1812 *Elizabeth & Alexander Cowan & family & Valleyfield papermill*

1812-1820 *Royal Navy Board of Transportation: Prison Hospital*

1820-1980 *Alex Cowan & Sons (old house became part of Valleyfield mill)*



ON THE HILLSIDE: NEW VALLEYFIELD HOUSE

1812-1820 *Royal Navy Board of Transportation camp commandant*

1820-1830 *Alexander Cowan first family & summer visitors*

1830-1870 *Catharine & Charles Cowan & family & Alex Cowan 2nd family*

1870-1892 *Margaret & Charles William Cowan & family*

1892-1912 *Alice & Alexander Cowan & family*

1912-1942 *Florence & Alexander Cowan & family*

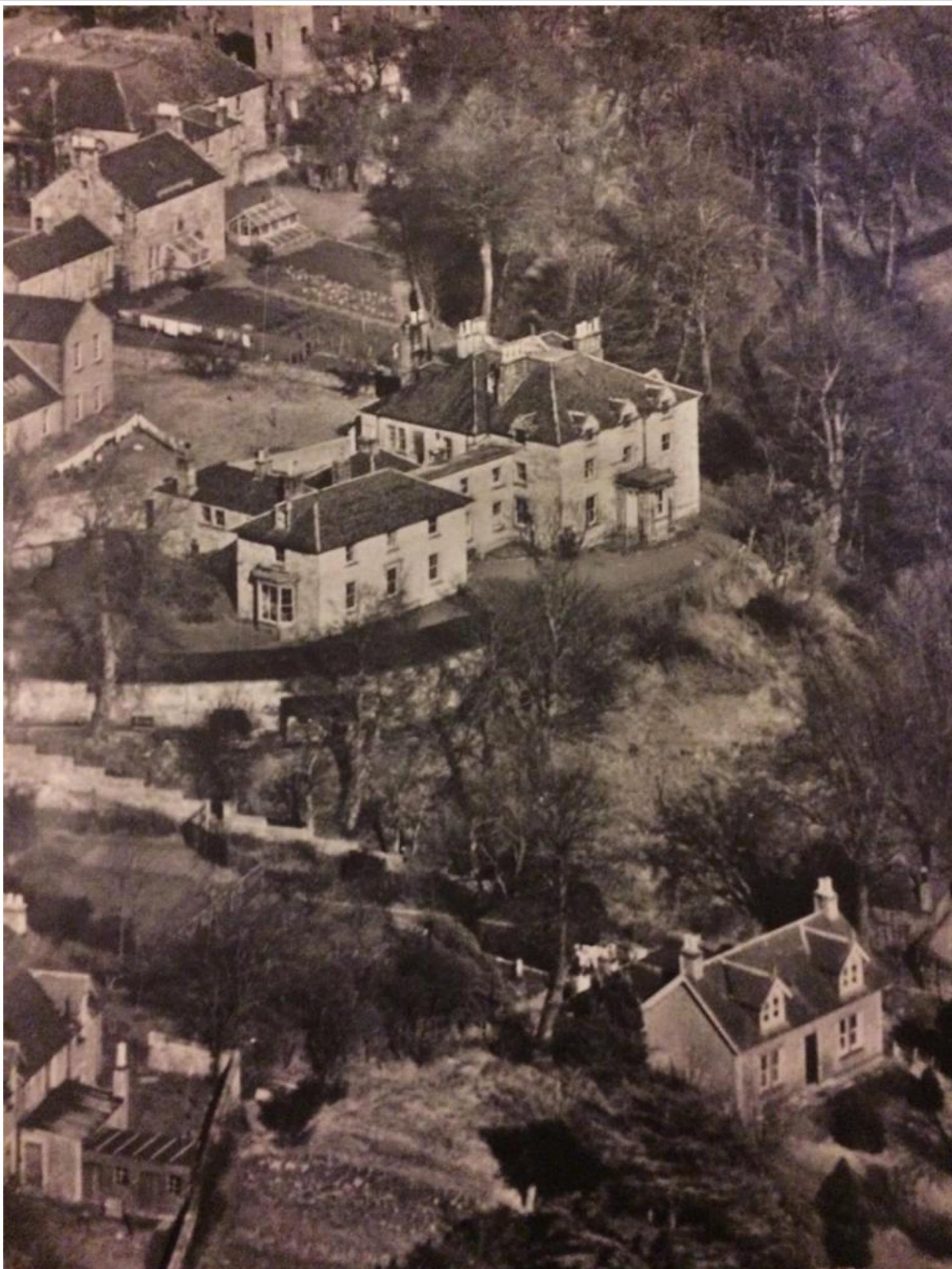
1942-1954 *Margaret & David Cowan & family*

1954-1980 *Alex Cowan & Sons Valleyfield Research Laboratories*

1980-2019 *Penicuik pottery, Jane & Roger Kelly & family & visitors*



THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE

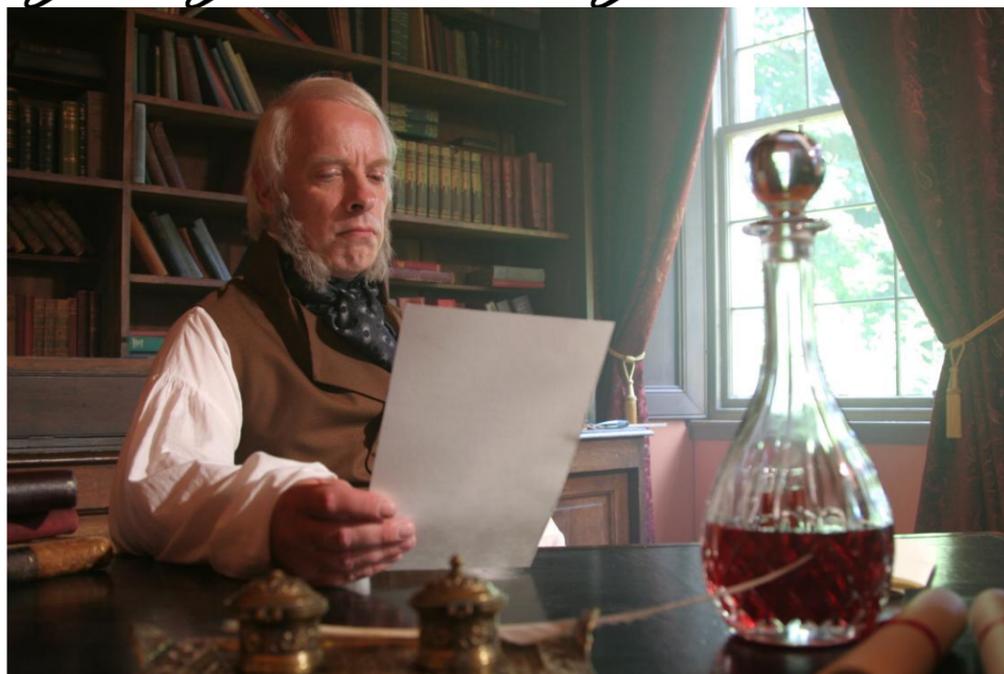


THE STORY OF VALLEYFIELD HOUSE



The old dovecote, Warrington, 1836

Dusk gathers on the last day of 1836 and this Seventeenth Century dovecote still stands outside the Dining Room at Valleyfield House. As midnight approaches Charles Cowan is inside sipping Port and reading Hymns to bring in the New Year.



In 2006 an actor in the same room sips Port for a BBC Timewatch Documentary.