

# **Burntisland Heritage Trust**

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January 2008

## **"BURNTISLAND'S PEOPLE"**

### **PROPOSAL FOR A PANEL TO COMMEMORATE SIGNIFICANT LOCAL PEOPLE**

Burntisland Heritage Trust would like to have your comments on our proposal to erect a display panel to commemorate a number of people with strong local connections - specifically people who have done something significant in a national context, who have left an enduring and important local legacy, or whose personal sacrifice merits a permanent record.

We have set up a Heritage Trust sub-committee (comprising Ian Archibald, John Burnett and Iain Sommerville) to take this project forward and we hope to obtain funding for it from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The sub-committee has drawn up a short list of names. These are shown in Annex A, and there are fourteen in total. These are the people whom we are currently recommending should be included on the panel. The panel will, inter alia, complement the War Memorial, and we have included one heroic figure - Thomas Corstorphin, Burntisland Town Officer, who died in the line of duty. There may be others like him and we would like to hear about them.

Annex B is the reserve list and contains those whom, for a variety of reasons, we have not at present included in Annex A. But we can consider promoting them if there is support for this.

We have completely excluded living persons and persons who died relatively recently - with the hope that, in the years to come, our successors will be in a better position to assess their achievements with due objectivity. Oliver Cromwell has been excluded because he was essentially an enemy of the town.

We anticipate that the panel will be structurally similar to the existing panels at the main entrance to the Links and in the High Street just to the east of the Kirkgate mini-roundabout - although the new panel will be slightly larger and of better quality. We would welcome comments on where the new panel might be located. A strong candidate would be the main entrance to the Links, as illustrated in the basic artist's impression in Annex C.

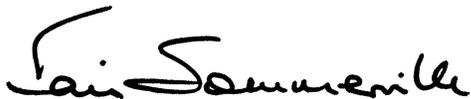
If you would like to comment, here are some questions you might want to consider:

1. Can you think of anyone we have missed altogether and who should be commemorated?
2. Would you like to see anyone promoted from Annex B to Annex A?
3. Would you like to see anyone deleted from Annex A?
4. Have you any views on where the panel should be located?
5. Have you any other comments?

Please let me have your reply (if you wish to send one) by Saturday 9 February. My contact details are at the top of this letter.

Thank you for your help.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Iain Sommerville". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'I' and a long, sweeping underline.

IAIN SOMMERVILLE  
Trustee, Burntisland Heritage Trust

## ANNEX A

### PEOPLE RECOMMENDED FOR INCLUSION ON THE COMMEMORATION PANEL

**Janet Allan (died 1598).** In the 16th and 17th centuries, witchcraft trials took place throughout Scotland. At least nine Burntisland women, the innocent victims of religious hysteria, were convicted and executed. Janet Allan suffered the worst fate of all, to be burned alive at the Lammerlaws.

**William Bald (c1788-1857).** Born in Burntisland. Pioneering cartographer, surveyor, and civil engineer. Significant contributor to the infrastructure of Ireland. Designed and built the Antrim coast road, one of the world's greatest scenic routes.

**Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847).** Citizen of Burntisland. Radical preacher and social reformer. A man of towering intellect, and the leading Scottish churchman of his generation. In 1843 he led nearly 500 of his fellow Church of Scotland ministers out of the General Assembly in an unparalleled act of rebellion, and founded the Free Church of Scotland.

**John Clephane.** 16th century ship-owner and politician. Formed the first Town Council of the Royal Burgh of Burntisland in 1586. First Provost of the town (1586-88). Represented Burntisland in the Scottish Parliament of the day. Raised the funds to build the new Parish Church in East Leven Street.

**Thomas Corstorphin (1802-1844).** Town Officer, Burntisland Burgh. Fatally stabbed while attempting to arrest a deranged man who had been threatening the public.

**David Danskin (1863-1948).** Founder and first Captain of Arsenal Football Club. Born in Burntisland in a building which stood at the west end of what is now Somerville Street.

**William Dick (1793-1866).** Citizen of Burntisland. Pioneer of veterinary education in Scotland. Founder of the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, Edinburgh. Planned and built Craigkennochie Terrace, Burntisland.

**Henry Brougham Farnie (1836-1889).** Born in Burntisland. Writer of operettas which were record-breaking hits on the London stage of the 1870s and 1880s, competing successfully with those of Gilbert and Sullivan. He also wrote the world's first golf instruction manual.

**George Hay Forbes (1821-75).** Episcopalian priest in Burntisland. Distinguished scholar and prolific publisher. Designed and built the Parsonage in East Leven Street, described by the Victorian Society as "one of the most important buildings of the mid Victorian period". Provost of Burntisland from 1869 to 1870.

**Robert Pitcairn (1752-70).** Born in Burntisland. Discovered Pitcairn Island in 1767 while a Midshipman on HMS Swallow. From the Swallow's log of 1767: "It appeared like a great rock rising from the sea and it having been discovered by a young gentleman, son of Pitcairn of the Marines, we called it Pitcairn's Island." He was lost at sea, aged 17.

**James Robertson (1720-88).** Born at Newbigging. Lived in Somerville Square, Burntisland,

in a house which survives to this day. Joined the British Army as a Private. Rose to the rank of Major and was posted to the American colonies in 1756. Promoted to General in 1777, and appointed the first Civil Governor of New York in 1779.

**Mary Somerville (1780-1872).** Pioneering mathematician and astronomer, at a time when women's participation in science was discouraged. Her home in Somerville Square, Burntisland, still survives. Her first book, "The Mechanism of the Heavens", was published in 1831. In 1835 she became one of the first two women members of the Royal Astronomical Society. Her name lives on at Somerville College, Oxford.

**James Thomson (c1691-1766).** Minister of Burntisland Parish Church from 1719 to 1738. In 1738 he became one of the eight ministers who joined the first major secession from the Church of Scotland. Taking much of his flock with him, he established Burntisland's Associate Congregation in a new church where the public library now stands. Today's Erskine Church is the direct descendant of Thomson's breakaway congregation.

**Andrew Young (1854-1925).** Distinguished photographer, artist and historian. Born, lived and worked in Burntisland. His reputation as a photographer spread far beyond his native town, and he was a significant contributor to prestigious publications. He was also an artist of considerable talent, and his painting, "A Scottish Fair", sold for over £60,000 in 2007. Between 1907 and 1910 he painstakingly restored the old and intricate guild panels of Burntisland Parish Church.

## ANNEX B

### RESERVE LIST - PEOPLE OF LESSER SIGNIFICANCE, OR WHOSE LOCAL CONNECTION IS NOT AS STRONG, OR WHOSE CLAIM TO FAME CANNOT YET BE SATISFACTORILY VERIFIED

- Ayre, Sir Wilfrid.** Entrepreneur and shipbuilder. He and his brother Amos founded Burntisland Shipyard in 1918.
- Ballantyne, Robert Michael (1825-94).** Novelist. Inspired by Inchkeith, he wrote "The Coral Island" while lodging in Burntisland.
- Couper, David (1809-82).** David Couper was the first Minister of the Free Church; lived at 16 Craigholm Crescent; and received an honorary degree (details unknown).
- Fairfax, Admiral Sir William (c1739-1813).** Hero of the Battle of Camperdown (1797). Father of Mary Somerville. Lived in Somerville Square.
- Gladstone, Sir John.** Plantation owner, slave owner, politician and entrepreneur. Secured for Burntisland "an additional supply of good water". From an 1862 directory: "Upwards of twenty years ago, the late Sir John Gladstone, of Fasque, [and the Duke of Buccleuch] erected a substantial and commodious low-water pier, making Burntisland the principal Ferry station between Fife and Mid-Lothian. The pier with the right of ferry was sold to the Railway Company on their obtaining their Act of Parliament, and has been worked by them, in connection with the Railway, ever since." Received the Freedom of Burntisland in 1847.
- Hamilton (or Hamilton-Grierson), Sir Philip James (1851-1927).** Born in Burntisland. Advocate. Solicitor to the Board of Inland Revenue in Scotland between 1892-1919. Wrote "The Silent Trade: A Contribution to the Early History of Human Intercourse". Invested as a Knight in 1910. Awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws by the University of Edinburgh in 1920.
- Lamb, Andrew (c1565-1634).** Minister of Burntisland Parish Church from 1593 to 1596. Later Bishop of Brechin and Bishop of Galloway, and an influential figure in the national affairs of the Church of Scotland.
- Landale, David (1806-95).** Eminent geologist and mining engineer. Built the Binn House.
- MacOmish, Margaret (c1842-?).** Distinguished scientist; reputedly involved in the invention of the sphygmomanometer. Lived at North View, South View and/or Craighkennochie Terrace.
- Melville, Sir Robert.** Controversial figure. Influential in the affairs of the town. Second provost of Burntisland (1599-1603, and also 1604-06). Vice-Chancellor and Treasurer Depute of Scotland and an Extraordinary Lord of Session.
- Mitchell, James Lothian (1863-1908).** Pioneering socialist, educationalist and headmaster. Secured Burntisland's public library and persuaded the Town Council to purchase the

Rossend estate.

**Pitcairn, Major John (1722-75).** Citizen of Burntisland. War hero in the American colonies. Father of Robert Pitcairn.

**Playfair, John (1748-1819).** Geologist and mathematician. Brother of William Playfair. Adoptive father of his nephew, William Henry Playfair. Lived latterly in Burntisland, where he died.

**Playfair, William (1759-1823).** Apprenticed to Andrew Meikle; draughtsman to James Watt. Pioneered the graphical representation of statistics. Brother of John Playfair. Died in Burntisland.

**Shepherd, James (1830-1906).** Linoleum manufacturer and benefactor. Lived in Rossend Castle. Donated the sites for the public library and the Erskine Church.

**Wood, Admiral Sir Andrew (1460-c1538).** National war hero: "Scotland's Nelson". Served James III, James IV and James V. Commander of the "Great Michael". Reputedly lived at one time at 34 High Street (old numbering).

**Young, John and Young, Joseph.** Local farmers, distillers and benefactors. Donated the Music Hall to the town in 1869.

#### **Kings and Queens:**

**Alexander III.** Died at Kingswood.

**Charles I.** Ill-fated journey via Burntisland in 1633, when his baggage ferry sank.

**James V.** Saw the potential of the harbour, and granted Royal Burgh status to Burntisland.

**James VI.** Proposed the new version of the Bible at the General Assembly in Burntisland.

**Margaret, Queen (later Saint).** Relics hidden at Rossend Castle at the time of the Reformation.

**Mary, Queen of Scots.** Often visited Burntisland, staying at Rossend Castle.

**ANNEX C**

**POSSIBLE LOCATION FOR THE COMMEMORATION PANEL**

