

**Genealogy – Beyond the Basics**

**Ledcameroch House– Exploring its History and its People**

## **Ledcameroch House, Dunblane – Exploring its History and its People**

### **Introduction and context**

I moved to Dunblane, and Ledcameroch House, in June 2012 and from the outset was curious about its history and the people who had lived there beforehand. It felt a privilege to live in this wonderful house and almost a duty to understand its history, character and inhabitants. A casual search of the internet one day revealed that it had once been called Whitecross House, and this aroused my interest in its origins.

Throughout its 155 years it has experienced considerable change – in its name, its identity and purpose, and its residents and owners. By utilising a wide range of genealogical resources this project traces both the origins of Ledcameroch House - its development from a single house to a property of multiple occupancy, and then finally to a re-development housing private residents - together with documenting the range of owners and occupiers of the house over its 155 year life so far, revealing some interesting and notable individuals along the way.

### **Methodology**

A wide range of sources and resources were utilised including the ubiquitous Google search engine. This provided a platform for a variety of sources online which together provided background information and history on the socio-economic context of Dunblane within which the house originated. It is recognised that all sources require further corroboration, given the often unregulated nature of content yielded by search engines, and attempts were made wherever possible to confirm information via official published sources.

I had previously registered with the *scotlandsplaces* website and the National Library of Scotland website, and became a volunteer to transcribe records which provided me with the opportunity to access many sources freely, and at the same time, become involved in the generation of transcribed and digitised genealogical and historical information. Ordnance Survey Name Books, Registers of Sasines, Land Ownership Records and Valuation Rolls, Title Deeds, Post Office Directories, OS maps and photos were all used to discover, explore and confirm findings. Visits to the local Dunblane library and Stirling Council's Archives and Planning Departments provided access to physical documents which were not available online, in addition to a visit to the Registers of Scotland Office in Glasgow

### ***Ledcameroch/Whitecross House***

The house has hosted a number of owners and tenants during its lifetime, summarised in Appendix One. The property was built in 1858 and was one of the first villas to be built in Dunblane, benefiting from the opening of the railway station in 1848 and subsequently, in 1858, the opening of the Callander line 10 years later, when Dunblane became an important junction for goods traffic.<sup>1</sup> The OS Six Inches to One Mile map for 1862 shows the house (known as Whitecrosses at this time) located within its own grounds<sup>2</sup>, also shown in Appendix Two. Additionally, the Sasine Register for 20 October 1858 shows it was located within 8424 acres of ground.<sup>3</sup> Sasine records from Registers of Scotland for the period 1858-1978 are outlined in Appendix Three.

### ***John Grahame Esquire – Whitecross(es) House 1858-1884***

Accessing the Ordnance Survey Name Books for Perthshire 1859-1862 afforded the opportunity to transcribe records related to Dunblane and specifically to Whitecross House which revealed that the house was more specifically called Whitecrosses House, was the property of John Grahame Esquire, Sheriff, and was described as “a neat and commodious dwelling house two storeys and slated-one storey slated offices attached.”<sup>4</sup> Further exploration in the Stirling Directory for 1865-6 listed John Grahame as a person of Gentry and Clergy and as a Sheriff-Substitute.<sup>5</sup> These two sources collectively allowed the deduction that this gentleman was a notable individual within the area and owning a significant amount of land.

In order to confirm his identity and that of any family, both the ancestry and scotlandspeople websites were utilised to access both census and BMD records. The 1861 census shows him living with his wife, widowed mother-in-law and 4 servants.<sup>6</sup> By 1871 he himself was widowed, living with his mother-in-law, and sons aged 8 and 9, and a governess and 3 servants.<sup>7</sup> Records from the Land Ownership Commission for 1872-3 show that the owner of Whitecross was a John Graham and that the house and grounds now occupied an area of 4790 acres, and had a gross annual value of £172.<sup>8</sup> The Sasine Register shows that from 12 November 1874 the house was to be known as Ledcameroch House.<sup>9</sup> This is the first reference made to Ledcameroch. The 1881 census showed John Grahame visiting Tulliechewan Castle in Dunbartonshire with his 19 year old son, by this time an Oxford undergraduate, on the evening of the census and there was no evidence of anyone living in Ledcameroch House during that time.<sup>10</sup> By 1891 he had moved and was living with his son, Alexander, his daughter-in-law, 2 grandsons and 4 servants in Methven, Perthshire.<sup>11</sup> Therefore I deduced that he had moved house sometime between 1872 and 1891. By using his birth year and location of birth, taken from census records, it was established that he had died in 1899 in Kinfauns, Perthshire.<sup>12</sup>

It is deduced from this account that John Graham was an educated man of some wealth which enabled the employment of servants and the ownership of substantial property in his lifetime.

### ***Reverend John Erskine Campbell Colquhoun – Ledcameroch House 1884-1905***

When we moved to Ledcameroch we were told, anecdotally, that our part of the house was an extension of the original building. The property has an inscription on its west gable end dated 1884, which suggested that either John Grahame, or someone else, had commissioned this extension.

A search of “Ledcameroch” yielded a number of links to the Dunbartonshire and Kilwinning areas, and I discovered a private website called *ledcameroch.co.uk* which had traced the history and proprietors of a villa in Bearsden, and found that a John Erskine Campbell Colquhoun (referred to henceforth as JECC) had bought Whitecross House in 1884<sup>13</sup> and had renamed it Ledcameroch House, presumably to replicate the Dunbartonshire equivalent. However this contradicts the information within the Records of Sasines<sup>14</sup> (see also Appendix 3 first page, Item 4 RHS) and therefore is not conclusive. The ledcameroch website had an enquiry sheet which I used to find out more information and I was informed that JECC had purchased Whitecross House in February 1884

but it was understood that it was known as Ledcameroch House from November 1874, thereby suggesting a transfer of ownership from that date.

In order to clarify at what stage the house changed ownership, the 1884 Register of Sasines for Perthshire was consulted at Stirling Council archives which showed that the property was sold in February 1884 to the Reverend John Erskine Campbell Colquhoun of Killermont and Garscadden, residing at Chartwell, Westerham, Kent and that it should be known as Ledcameroch thereafter.<sup>15</sup> The 1895 Valuation Rolls helped to substantiate this ownership.<sup>16</sup> These official source documents confirmed the change of ownership and change of name of property. The disposition date of 1884 fits with the inscription on the gable end of the house. However, it remains unknown why it was to be known as Ledcameroch House from 1874 under the ownership at that time of John Grahame as there appeared to be no known link with the Bearsden house, unlike that of Reverend Colquhoun.

A search of Ledcameroch House in the Directory of British Listed Buildings shows that it was extended in 1888, was designated a C Listed Building, and boasts interesting architectural features, including Stables, a Walled Garden and a Tower.<sup>17</sup> Anecdotally and for interest, we were informed by neighbours that the owner had a telescope and wanted a vantage point from which to view the surrounding countryside, perhaps the motivation for the tower. Finally this source also yielded possibly the only available aerial photograph of the house and its grounds, and of Dunblane Hydro which was built in 1885, and shows the extent of surrounding countryside within which it is situated, and for significant parts owned. (See Appendix Four). The date of this photograph is unknown but is at least before 1970 as land to the right and left of the grounds became housing areas from 1970 onwards.

Assuming that JECC now lived in Dunblane from 1884, and to clarify this, I checked the 1891 census and was unable to locate him residing in the house. However, I discovered that the census records for 1891, 1901 and 1911 in England all showed him living at Chartwell House, Westerham in Kent, where he was a minister living with his wife, with between 2 and 7 children over this time period, and 15 servants.<sup>18, 19, 20</sup> Chartwell House was the family home of Sir Winston Churchill from 1922 until his death in 1965 and is now a property owned by the National Trust of some 80 acres in area.

In order to complete the history of JECC it was fortuitous that the ancestry website provided associated links to the "Findagrave" website which showed that he died on 29 January 1917, and was buried in Crookham, Kent. ( Appendix Five). The England and Wales National Probate Calendar testifies this in 1917.<sup>21</sup>

It is presumed that JECC was a man of considerable wealth and status, living in his Kent home and presumably owning other properties in Dunblane, and perhaps elsewhere, as second homes for income and/or holiday residences.

### ***Ledcameroch House 1905-1970 and its owners***

As census records are not available beyond 1911, Valuation Rolls and Registers of Sasines were accessed manually from the Stirling Council Archives and from the ROS office in Glasgow to trace the owners and occupiers of Ledcameroch House beyond 1905. These official records were helpful to secure a comprehensive outline of ownership over almost 70 years. However, it is recognised that a

full picture of the size of the households is not possible, given that Valuation Rolls provide only head of household in their records.

Valuation Rolls for 1905 showed that JECC still owned Ledcameroch House while a Mrs Stewart occupied it.<sup>22</sup> However the 1915 Valuation Roll shows that Mrs (Jane) Stewart owned and occupied the house.<sup>23</sup>

In order to confirm when Mrs Stewart owned the property, the Register of Sasines showed that it was purchased on 8 November 1905.<sup>24</sup> The 1921-22 Valuation Roll showed that the trustees of Mrs Jane Stewart owned the house, and that a Brigadier General GF Erskine occupied it.<sup>25</sup> By 1925-6, it was owned by the trustees of Mrs Dorothy Ethel Dixon.<sup>26</sup> The Sasines for 1924 showed that the trustees of the late Jane Stewart had transferred ownership of the house to trustees of Dorothy Dixon in October 1924 for £5000.<sup>27</sup> (See Appendix Six)

The Valuation Rolls between 1925 and 1952 showed that Dorothy Dixon remained the owner of Ledcameroch but it had a number of different occupiers over that time period. In 1930-31, John McKechnie paid an annual rent of £10 and the land associated within the grounds was tenanted by the Dunblane Co-operative Society for agricultural use.<sup>28</sup> By 1945-46, Dorothy Dixon both owned and lived in the property and the woodlands and land were still used for agriculture but were not rented to anyone.<sup>29</sup>

The Register of Sasines for 1952 show that Dorothy Dixon sold Ledcameroch to James Forrest Carnegie and Elizabeth Margaret Aitken Carnegie for £7500 on 3 March 1952.<sup>30</sup> James Forrest Carnegie was a timber merchant and key leader of the Glasgow based Brownlee and Co Ltd which was ultimately bought over by Meyer International in 1986. He was married to Elizabeth (Betty) Thin, the youngest grand daughter of James Thin, the Edinburgh bookseller.<sup>31</sup> (See Appendix Seven) Unfortunately, there were no valuation roll records for 1952-56 available at the Archives to confirm these changes and to see if they lived in the properties or rented them.

From 1952-1970 there appeared to follow a period of stability in ownership of Ledcameroch, demonstrated by the Valuation Rolls over this time period. Valuation Rolls between 1956 and 1970 show it was remained under the ownership of JF and Mrs Carnegie and occupied by various occupants including a John Sangster<sup>32</sup>, Edward Chambers in 1966-7<sup>33</sup>, and Harry Candlus from 1968-1970.<sup>34</sup>

### **1970-2001**

The Carnegies sold Ledcameroch to Dunblane Hotel Hydro Company Ltd on 22 September 1970 for £27000.<sup>35</sup> Subsequently it was sold to Reo Stakis Organisation Ltd for the same price on 20 March 1975.<sup>36</sup> This period of ownership lasted for 14 years and the house was used as staff accommodation for employees from the adjacent hotel. Anecdotal comments from local residents related that it was poorly maintained over that period and had “fallen into disrepair and disrepute”!

## **2000 -present day**

Records available at Stirling Council's Planning department showed a variety of documents related to a Planning application which had been tendered to convert the house and adjacent coach house to 6 apartments and a single dwelling house respectively in 2002.<sup>37</sup> Paperwork related to this testifies that the building had been poorly maintained and that some changes unsympathetic to its character and standing had possibly been undertaken without proper planning consents. Planning consent was finally given to Country Property Developments, Stirling in approximately 2002, under the stewardship of Prentice Kennedy Partnership Chartered Architects and over the following 2 years the apartments were developed and sold to individual proprietors.

### **Commentary on Sources**

The *ancestry* and *scotlandspeople* websites were key in enabling the tracking of residents of Ledcameroch House via BMD, Census and Valuation Roll records and in validating information. *Ancestry* is a source of both transcribed and original source documents online at a relatively low cost given the number of visits made to this site. Inevitably some transcriptions can be inaccurately reported and in this research for example I found the name "John" wrongly transcribed as "Jolon". Valuation Rolls provided an additional source of information to confirm the whereabouts of individuals out with census dates while recognising that ownership does not necessarily mean that they are actually resident at the property and also that it only gives the head of household, and no idea of the size of household.

OS Name Books were helpful in providing supplementary information on the property, and its inhabitants. It is recognised that the quality of these records and the resultant transcriptions are dependent on legibility of the writing, and accuracy on the part of the transcriber.

Registers of Sasines provided key information on transfer of ownership and helped enormously in building a picture of the "descendants" of Ledcameroch House and both complemented and supplemented the Valuation and Census information. Some of the Sasines records were obtained by a visit to Stirling Council Archives section although it was not possible to take photocopies of these documents and I had to take notes, thereby limiting the opportunity to have reference to check on at a later date for accuracy purposes. Access to the Archives was also limited owing to restricted opening hours.

A visit to Stirling Council's Planning Office was worthwhile although the records were only available via microfiche and it was not possible to see all files or to take copies and so detail and accuracy of some references is compromised.

Finally a worthwhile visit to the Registers of Scotland office in Glasgow provided additional information on the sale and ownership of the house and helped to achieve a more comprehensive picture of its history. Unfortunately the legibility and size of handwriting on these documents compromised definitive clarification of some detail of property and land transfer transactions.

## **Summary and next steps**

It has been an interesting, revealing and absorbing journey to discover the evolution of Ledcameroch House and to trace its origins and its owners. The quest for information is not exhaustive and in fact, with every discovery emerges new questions and challenges. Having been exposed to, and used, the range of genealogical information available and accessible, it is interesting to reflect that in some senses it is easier to obtain information about the past than about more recent times, a tribute to the work undertaken by many people and organisations to ensure that information is transcribed, stored and secured for many more generations to use, enjoy and enhance learning.

The scope of this project has been restricted only by time and it is intended to continue the research into the previous residents and owners of Ledcameroch House, each of whom would warrant a project in their own right.

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