

The new planned village of Harrietfield 1823 And the people who first lived on Plot One

Harrietfield is 200 years old

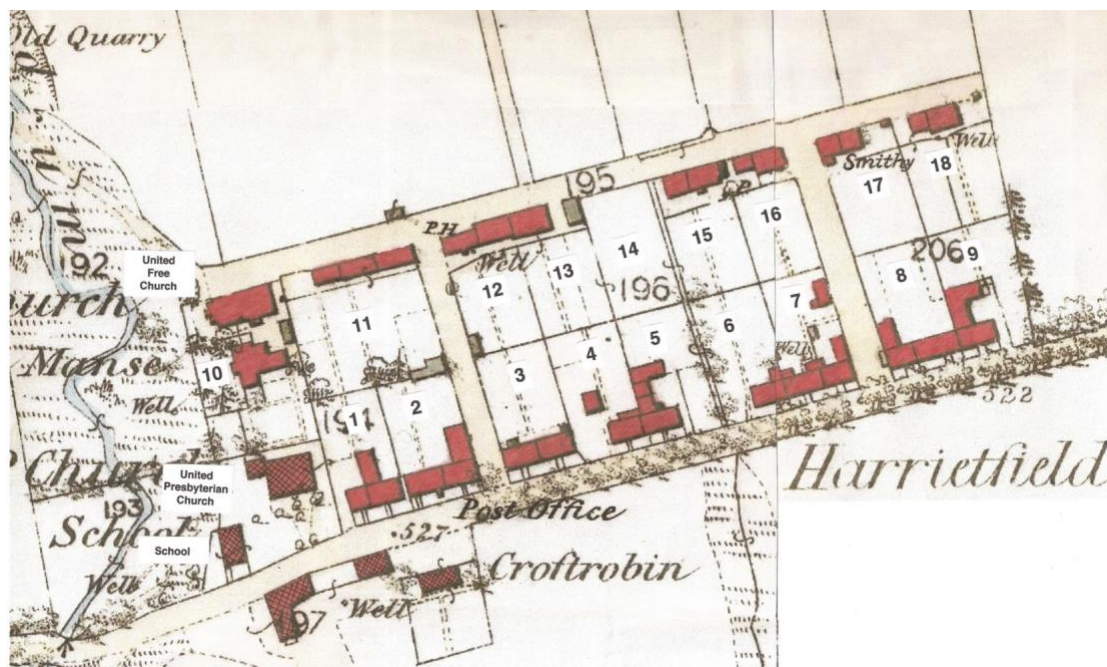
The village was laid out in 1823. Ninety-nine year building leases were available to people with local connections for the 18 plots of land.

Why plan a new village?

Harrietfield was established as part of a much bigger change – the reorganisation of agriculture. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries compact farms with a house and steading were replacing the age-old system of a few households grouped into a farmtoun working the traditional system of farming. The new system needed far fewer farmers and did not provide a place for those with useful non-agricultural skills, like the blacksmith, joiner, mason, gamekeeper or carter. A planned village was a common solution.

Harrietfield about 1860

Ordnance Survey first edition map, with plot numbers added



Why plan it on this spot?

The village was laid out beside the east-west road to the north of the river Almond where there were two existing buildings: the small farm of Croft Robin which was also an inn, and opposite it the

newly built church (1811) of the dissenting congregation. The cattle drovers' stance was just to the north at Kindrum next to the smith's forge and near a 'brew seat' (place permitted to brew ale) at Drumachar East. In addition, this part of the estate did not have fermtouns or enclosed farms, but was occupied by a number of small individual tenants whose leases came up for renewal in 1820.

The new village was laid out in two rows of nine plots each, linked by the east and west loans. It was called Harrietfield after the wife of the laird, Sir William Drummond, but was commonly referred to as Heriotfield well into the twentieth century, and was known locally as The Feus.

Logiealmond Seceder Kirk and Schoolroom
From Logiealmond by David Forrester, 1944



LOGIEALMOND SECEDER KIRK AND SCHOOLROOM

Plot 1

Plot 1 lies opposite Croft Robin and immediately to the east of the Church. On the other side of the church the congregation built a school to serve the area, completed in 1827. Plot 1 was slightly smaller than most of the village plots at a little under a quarter of an acre. This land was taken by John Halley (or Hally, Hallie or Hawley as he is called elsewhere), a mill wright. He had a 99-year

building lease from Whit 1823 for a tack of 15 shillings and a penny annually.

Like other plots in the village, it was not registered in the Perth Sherriff Court Records until 1832 when the lessee had fulfilled the requirement to build a house with a value of £10 within 10 years, and to meet the other specified conditions.

If you took a plot, what did you get?

The plots were let on 99-year building leases and were '25 falls' in area, or just under a quarter of an acre. The leases state that the land in the village would be let to villagers in preference to strangers so long as they paid a fair rent. The estate did not advertise in the papers for their new tenants, and as far as we can tell those who took the leases had local connections. The lease of a pendicle was an optional extra: a strip of land of about 2.5 acres to the north of the village suitable for crops or animals.

Building stone was freely available from the estate, and the main source was beside the burn west of the village. The house had to be roofed with slates from the Logiealmond quarry. Peats for fuel could be dug on the moor under the direction of the Moss Grieve at a price of between 2 and 3 pence a cartload. These were only for your own use – no selling on to anyone else.

The lease stated that a bleaching green would be provided when a number of plots had been taken. The date of this is blank on all the leases, though an area to the east of the burn is marked on one of the estate maps. At that time growing, spinning and weaving flax into linen on a handloom in the house was a common occupation.

If you took a plot, what were your obligations?

You had to build a house, at least one storey high with garrets above, and the outside walls at least 8 feet high, built of stone and mortar, and covered with slate from the Logiealmond quarries. It must be ten foot back from the public road, and the ground in front should to be kept neat and clean as a garden or green. For this you paid a yearly tack.

The laird was keen to have a neat, clean, well-maintained and attractive village of which all could be proud. The house must have a back door and all 'nuisances' must be carried out to a dunghill in the ground behind and not left in front. Within three years of

starting, a stone dyke or thorn hedge had to be in place round the whole plot, the cost shared with any neighbours.

You had to build a house but you might not use your plot to 'erect any slaughter houses, candle makers' workshops or any other nuisances upon the grounds'. Public services for road building and repair were minimal so you were required to form and maintain the metal or gravel road outside your property, and keep the adjacent ditches clear by cleaning them out at least annually.

At the end of the 99-year lease it is stipulated that your heirs 'will flit with their wives, bairns, family, servants, goods and gear' without reminder or legal process. In practice in the early twentieth century the leases were replaced with Feu Charters.

Post card labelled Drumtochty, franked 1905
Ian McLaren Cottage on the left



John Halley and family

The Halleys had a long history as farmers and millers in the area, both in Logiealmond and south of the river around Cairnies.

The mill at Millhaugh had been let to a John Halley from at least 1749, perhaps longer, and probably through more than one generation, and the family held it until 1812 when the lease was sold by roup to Mr Davidson, another miller and farmer.

Across the footbridge and ford from Harrietfield on the south bank of the Almond was a corn mill at Millhole which is still known as Halley's Mill. (In 1895 Trinity College Glenalmond bought Halley's Mill and adjoining land and altered it to accommodate their Electric Light Generating Station as well as homes for some College staff.)

John Halley must have been a significant man in the local area and probably a welcome contributor to the new village of Harrietfield. In 1832 the Great Reform Act increased the franchise to include men with property valued over £10 or a lease of over £50 a year. This increased the electorate twelve-fold in Scotland, but it was still only a small proportion of the adult male population, a total of 34 in Logiealmond. John Halley of the Cairnies together with four other Halley farmers and millers in that area gained the vote.

In 1833 John Halley, like many other local people, contributed to the building of a Dead House at Chapelhill graveyard to guard burials from body snatchers. Other Halleys listed include David and Alexander farmers from Shannoch, and John the farmer of Rosebank, all in Little Glenshee, and Robert Halley of Ruthvenfield.

What John Halley built

John Halley was among the first to build on his plot. An estate plan of about 1830 shows two semidetached cottages fronting the road. The single storey cottages were not of equal size – the more easterly had the standard layout of two rooms with a central front door, and was later extended to the north. The more westerly was smaller, though it also had two rooms.

A younger John Halley, perhaps the son of the lease holder, and his wife Janet Menzies were among the first to have children in Harrietfield. Margaret was born in 1828, Catherine in 1830 and James in 1832.

The house on Plot 1
'Threshold Gossip', Clifton Johnson, The Land of the Heather, 1904



Who lived on Plot 1

The first comprehensive records of who lived where are from the first census in 1841. Neither John Halley nor his wife were resident on the plot in Harrietfield. However, three of their children were. Margret Halley aged 13 and James Halley 8 were living in the larger cottage with the school teacher, Thomas P. Stewart 30, and Mrs Janet Stewart 65 (his mother?), and Wiliamina Stewart who was only 2 months old (his daughter?).

Next door in the smaller cottage Margret Taylor 60 lived with Jess Halley 6, and Mary Crighton an agricultural labourer of 46. It is not clear whether the Halley parents or Wiliamina's mother were alive and if so where they were living.

The cottages on plot 1 were convenient for the teacher and pupils of the school. David Forrester says in his parish history that some of the teachers in its early days, including T. P. Stewart, were Divinity students. The school was later run for the whole community, not attached to any denomination and supported by voluntary contributions. It was replaced by the new and current school at Ballandie in 1858, and the old school building became the village hall and much later a house.

In later years

John Halley's oldest son, James, stayed in Harrietfield, but did not follow the family occupations of farming and milling. He became a journeyman tailor and by 1851 was living at the other end of the village, working for John Gorrie on Plot 8.

At this date, three painters lodged in one of the cottages on Plot 1. They were not local. John Stevenson was from Edinburgh, Archibald McArthur from Glasgow and Alexander Hay from Stirling. Could they have been working on the new buildings at Trinity College, which had opened in 1847?

James Halley inherited Plot 1 from his father and in 1858 sold the remaining lease to a retired millwright, George Robertson. George and his wife Christian passed it on to their daughter, Jane, a dressmaker, and she remained here until 1908. As she was the church officer for the north kirk in the village it became known as the Beadle's House.

The Free Church Minister for two years in the 1870s was John Watson. He became famous twenty years later when, under the pen name of Ian Maclaren, he published 'Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush', and other stories based on the people and places he had known in Logiealmond. The book starts with 'There grows a bonnie briar bush in our kailyard', which led to this style of literature, also exemplified by James Barry and S R Crockett, being called Kailyard.

Drumtochty, as the village was called in the novels, became immensely popular with visitors from Scotland, England, America and further afield in the late 1890s and into the next century. The American publishers Dodd Meade and Co sent Clifton Johnson, an artist and photographer to provide illustrations for the books. The smaller cottage on Plot 1 housed some memorabilia associated with the author, sometimes called the shrine, and the two cottages together became Ian Maclaren Cottage.

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Ian McLaren, 'Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush', 1894
Clifton Johnson, 'The Land of Heather', 1906
David Forrester, 'Logiealmond', 1944

Also, Ordnance Survey maps, census returns, British Newspaper Archive

Rosalind Pearson

2023

From 'Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush' by Ian Maclaren, 1895
illustration by F C Gordon
Harrietfield from the west. Ian Maclaren Cottage on left

