1 Aberdeen City: Davidson Links with Civic History

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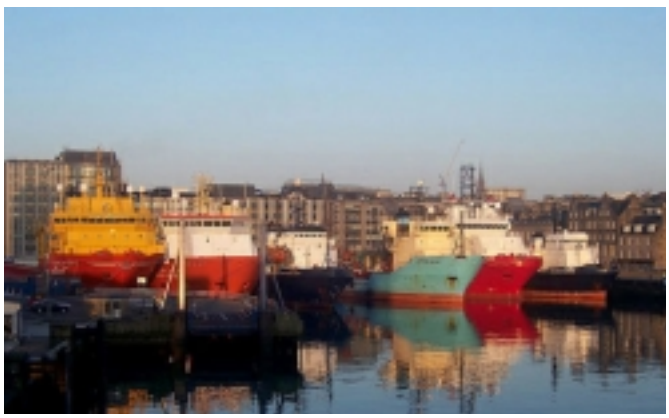
The Burgh records and memorials at the Town House, and elsewhere across the City include many illustrious Davidsons, who have played their part in the long civic history of Aberdeen.

Davidsons have been connected with Aberdeen's maritime history which stretches back centuries. It is still the most important centre in Europe for servicing the North Sea Oil and Gas industry. A visitor to Aberdeen cannot fail to recognize the importance of ships and the sea as the quays reach into the city centre. Aberdeen's trading history reached across the North Sea to Scandinavia, the Baltic and Europe, and trading still does. Its fishing industry survives but on a far reduced scale from its heyday.

Steam Trawler

Aberdeen Harbour

Aberdeen was also the centre until recently of a longstanding shipbuilding industry. The Davidson connections go back to the very early years of the 1600s when the burgh records tell of "Alexander Davidsone, ane tymberman in Sanct Androise, and ane honest man who had bocht the Wode of Drum" who asked for a lease of the Trinity Friars' Kirkyard in which he "intends, God willinge, to big ane bark". On 28th July 1609, the official launch of the ship "Bon-Accord" took place.



Oil Industry Supply Vessels

From the 18th & 19th centuries, there are surviving records of many different Davidsons from Aberdeen, who were shipmasters and seamen, fishing folk, or merchants who owned or part owned ships involved with the trade from this great port.

Today, this busy port can be viewed from many vantage points. The Maritime Museum in Provost Ross's House in Shiprow overlooks the quays and is an excellent centre to study Aberdeen's maritime history.

Maritime Museum

Sir Robert Davidson was a prominent citizen and hero of Aberdeen, who is still remembered six hundred years after his death. He was an innkeeper, wine importer, customs inspector, alderman and pirate. As Provost Robert Davidson, he led the local forces out to defend the city at the **Battle of Harlaw** in 1411. He was killed in this terrible battle, which left many hundreds of Scots on both sides of the confrontation dead on the field. His body was brought back into Aberdeen and buried in the St Nicholas Kirk.

Possibly the carved memorial to Sir Robert Davidson, in St Nicholas Kirk, Aberdeen.

St Nicholas Kirk, Aberdeen

The Davidson Memorial at Harlaw near Inverurie. Erected in 1914 to honour Sir Robert Davidson, Provost of Aberdeen, who led the Aberdeen citizens out to defend the city at the Battle of Harlaw in 1411.

Sir Robert Davidson's Sword, Trinity Hall

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Davidsons of Aberdeen have been involved as merchants over many years in this great trading city. We have evidence that one **Alexander Davidson** was in occupation of the restored merchant's house now known as **Provost Skene's House** in the 1650s.

This surviving 16th century merchant's house located in the centre of Aberdeen, is now used as a museum to display Aberdeen's rich architectural and social heritage.

Provost Skene's House today

Entrance Doorway

Sundial

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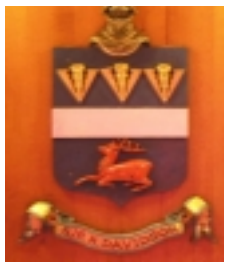
Davidsons have long been involved at the heart of the civic affairs of the City. The current **Town House** built in late 19th century dominates the centre of Aberdeen with its tall Flemish style tower. The building also houses some fine artifacts associated with some famous Davidson citizens, as well as part of the city archives.

Aberdeen Town House

Aberdeen Arms above the Entrance



Purported Arms of Sir Robert Davidson, the hero of the Battle of Harlaw in 1411.

Part of the Heraldic ceiling in the St Nicholas Room created when the building was designed and built in the 1880s.

One of the Mortification Boards dating from 1632, which is displayed just inside the main entrance of the Town House.

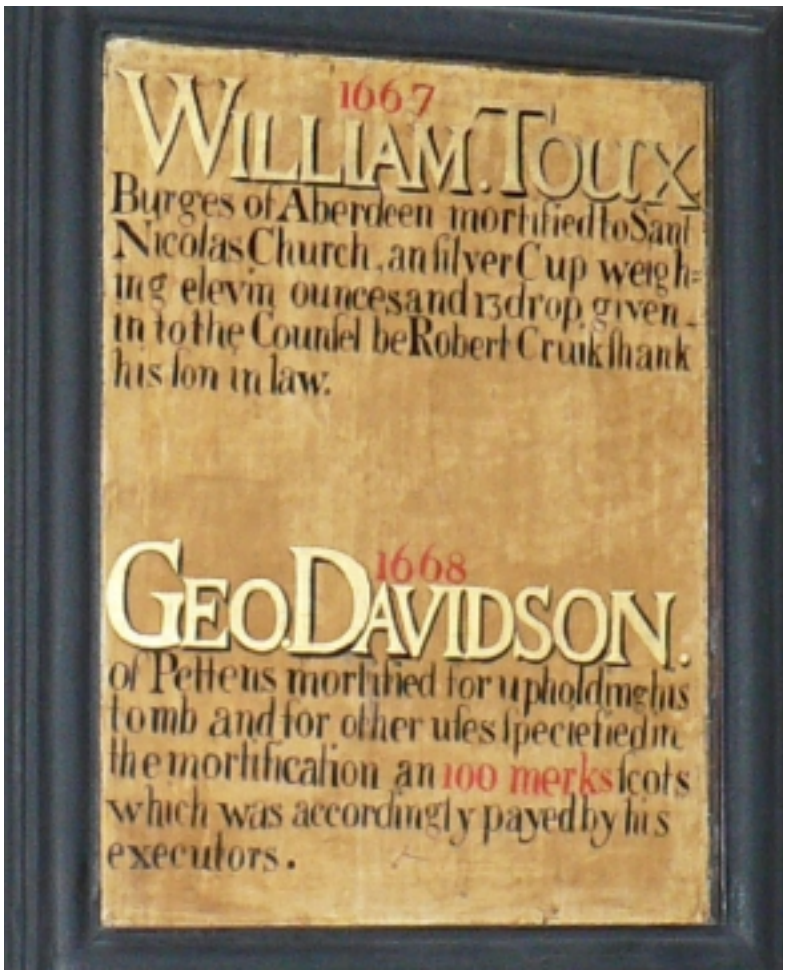
Three Davidsons are listed:

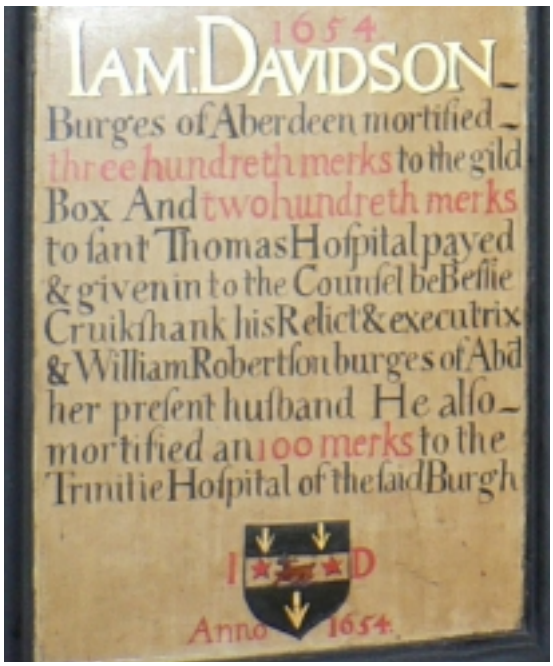
Mr. Will Davidson
… we have not identified this Davidson yet

Mr. Alexr. Davidson
… of Cairnbrogie

Geo. Davidson, The Elder
… of Pettens

Mortification Board which details one of the bequests made by George Davidson of Pettens in 1668.
[see Section 3]





Mortification Board detailing a bequest made by Iam [?James] Davidson together with his arms dating from 1654.

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Alexander Dyce Davidson was born in 1807, the son of George Davidson, the mill wright superintendent of the Devanha brewery, Aberdeen. Alexander was educated at Aberdeen Grammar School and later at Marischal College. He was ordained in the South Church in 1832, in which parish he had grown up.

Alexander became the tutor in the family of James Blaikie, Advocate and Provost of Aberdeen, whose daughter Elizabeth Blaikie he married in 1840. In the same year, he transferred to the Belmont Street, West Church, where he led the parish into the Free Church at the Disruption in 1843. Alexander devoted his life to this parish until his death in 1872. He was a popular minister, particularly with the students from the university.

Reverend Alexander Dyce Davidson

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Generations of Davidson families have known St Machar's Cathedral in Old Aberdeen. This fortress church is a magnificent historic building alongside King's College University and the Old Burgh House. This area of Aberdeen, lying to the north of the modern City Centre, is well worth visiting.

St Machar Cathedral

Heraldic Ceiling inside the Cathedral

Armorial Stained Glass

Davidson Grave

The Davidsons of Aberdeen County and the City are well represented in the alumni of the historic university of Aberdeen, which was founded in 1495.

Armorial above Door

Royal Arms

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The Old Burgh House

King's College

Davidsons from Aberdeen and across North East Scotland have had ancestors baptised, married or buried at the **St Nicholas Church**. If you look carefully, you will find many Davidson headstones in the kirkyard and inside the church.

View of the St Nicholas Kirk, Aberdeen from the East.

We highlight elsewhere in this Trail the monuments to **Sir Robert Davidson**, **George Davidson of Pettens, and the Davidson of Cairnbrogie Memorial**. We continue to collect data about the many other Davidsons whose memorials can be found here.

This church has a long history going back to the 12th century. It has witnessed many of the religious changes experienced through the Reformation, the Counter Reformation, and the Disruption, as well as the great economic changes which have swirled through the city over the centuries.

The current building dates from 19th century when it was rebuilt following a major fire. Today this historic landmark building, located in the centre of Aberdeen, still serves the city.

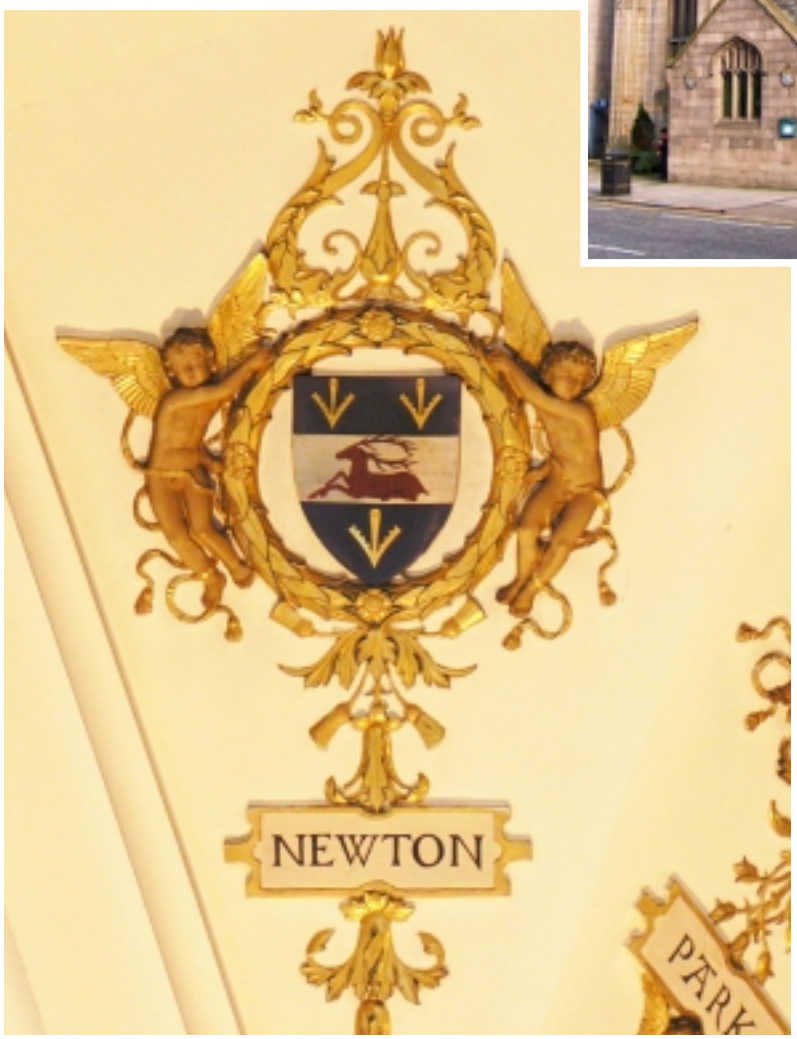
St Andrew's Cathedral: Aberdeen

Step inside the Episcopalian Cathedral from the busy King Street, just a few yards from the Town House and what a surprise you find. This Cathedral Church is the mother church for the Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney covering many small rural and highland congregations. The ceiling in the south aisle was decorated in the 1930s with the Arms of the 48 families in the North East of Scotland who remained loyal to the Jacobite cause during the 18th Century. The names of their estates have been used instead of the family names.

One of the Arms depicted is that of "Newton": the Davidson arms. This was the Davidson of Newton family [see Section 6]. This south aisle ceiling is spectacular as also is that in the north aisle, where strong links with the USA are represented with the Arms of the individual states.

St Andrew's Cathedral

Davidson Arms on Decorated Ceiling



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