

# History of Portsoy

## PORTSOY IN MY YOUTH

*(The 1920's AND 1930's)*

by

**MRS. M.A. WILLIAMS (BUNTY REID)**

### **Campbell Hospital to Junction with Marine Terrace & Cullen Street.**

Campbell Hospital has two wings - nearer scarlet fever - further diphtheria - centre block was Matron's and Nurse's Home - laundry, disinfectant block, garage for ambulance behind - driver was Mr. George Pirie, father of Mrs. Betty Wood - fields opposite belonged to Murray's farm - cattle trough at bottom of hill on corner of Borough Road - next was Johnnie Raeburn's croft where Nurse's bungalow now stands - next small cottages and then Murray's dairy farm - next door now Aileen Robertson's, lived Jeannie Simmonds or Simmers - two-gable end on street cottages occupied by Postie Smith family and the Rhind family, father retired, daughter a tailoress - house with pillars belonged to Maggie Kemp who ran a small general shop - opposite was the property of Bailie Gray, a mason who kept a small dairy herd - grandfather of Ian Gray, Cullen Street - wooden gate now blocks what was the open entrance to the Sutherland Park - to the left was a standpump and opposite was a huge road roller - town circuses were held in the lower part and also travelling fairs lit by naphtha flares - there were swings behind the lemonade factory on Hill Street.

### **Marine Terrace**

First house belonged to Kinnairds who had Jockie the tailor as lodger - next door lived Wilson the tailor who worked for W. Robertson - grandfather of Helen Marr - the space above the house usually had a flock of hens and geese, sometimes a goat - the brick house was occupied by retired fisherman Pirie - the big house belonged to Robb, solicitor, from Keith, who, with family moved into in June and stayed until September, father commuting daily to Keith and one could time one's day by his movements - long house owned by Brangan the tailor, later by McHattie, a retired London river policeman who taught swimming at the Breeks - no swimming pool in those days though the west side of the pool bay had a special cement ramp and at high tide was known as the men's bathing place. The Breeks was then the main swimming place at high tide complete with changing hut on a cement base with a pavement in front which led to a short flight of cement steps ending in a flight of wooden steps almost down to highwater mark. A long lifeline with a lifebelt was kept in the hut. At low tide we went farther west, walked past Castle Rock and along the cliff top to Calendeer, a lovely rock enclosed pool at the foot of the cliffs. If we walked further round we came to John Legge's Well, a spring with a rich iron content, supposedly named after a man who had a croft nearby, on the area which is now a car park. Between the swimming pool and entrance to the well were two cannons - here was held a huge bonfire at the end of World War I and around it danced the teenagers of the day. A watch was kept all night in case sparks from the fire set fire to the stooked harvest in the fields opposite. We often walked to Heathy gathering

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crowperts and wild flowers, and sometimes walked from there along the headlands to Dunniedeich where there was a salmon bothy, now demolished, and a huge cliff of red rock which was quarried during World War II to make the foundations of the aerodrome at Boyndie. Sometimes we continued beyond the Heathery Road to McCurrach’s croft, now derelict, where our elder companions bought milk, this was usually in the evening.

### **Cullen Street from Hill Street**

First house on left occupied by Mitchell family, he a retired Sea Captain, son of a painter, who married Rosie Irving daughter of Irvine the tailor - upstairs lived the Rainnie family - next house belonged to Miss Smith and her brother, also a retired Sea Captain - behind and up a close was a small cottage occupied by the Robertson family, he a surfaceman on the railway. Two little cottages gable end to the street lived in by Mrs. Simpson and daughter, Mrs. Cruickshank and another Simpson family - at corner of Barbank Street was Peter Sutherland, carter and contractor, who supplied the town hearse drawn by two black horses decked with black plumes for funerals - across Barbank Street was Tower House owned by the Badenochs, he an auctioneer, the two daughters kept goats which were grazed on the braes - behind was a cottage occupied by the McGruer family. In a square area but on the street was a cottage occupied by “Paddy” Hill and wife Betsy - he Irish and a porter at the station - would get drunk on Saturdays and get dressed in Irish outfit of cream breeches, green tailed jacket and green cocked hat with shillelagh under his arm, and would dance in the street. It was not unknown to watch a little drama outside their cottage - Betsy putting Paddy’s belongings out on the street and Paddy putting them back and keeping up a violent exchange of words which went on for some time until Betsy would give up and Paddy would be allowed inside. In the Square were four or five little houses, one well back and at right angles to the others which extended to the street - one housed Lexie Innes, grandmother to the Stott family and another a widow and two daughters - the next house was occupied by a Mr. Hay a surfaceman and his family. On the opposite side of street were two houses - on the ground flat there were the Milnes, parents of Mrs. Neish and the Strathdees, parents of Frank - upstairs were the Barclays. grandparents of Mrs. Janet Rae and the Fairweathers. Going up the street one came to two dwellings, one gable-end cottage occupied by Howies and opposite was the house of Gussie Paterson, a fishcurer and salesman - backing these were the homes of Cooper the Postman, Margaret Ritchie’s parents, and Angus a salmon fisher - we used to see him returning from Dunniedeich with fish baskets on his shoulder en route to the Railway station - next to these were two pantiled cottages occupied by Riddochs and a dummy and her mother - we never knew their names - outside was a stand-pump - a close led to the byre and yard of Mac Farquhar who also ran a taxi business - he lived with his mother who, though quite elderly, bathed every day at the Breeks whatever the weather. Their house was one of a terrace which ran round into Hill Street though with different owners - next door lived officers of the Salvation Army - next door lived Mrs. Ewing whose husband had owned Mill of Durn - her neighbours were Sergeant and Mrs. Reid, he retired, probably from the Boer War - the Misses Tough lived in the top house which ran round into Hill Street.

### **Hill Street from Cullen Street**

Next door to the Toughs lived Mr and Mrs Morrison - they owned 4 houses in their block, 2 in Cullen St and 2 in Hill St - we, the Reids lived in No 14 for a few years after the 1st World War. My father was the partner of Alan Fortune and managed Fortune & Reid’s until the death of Mr. Fortune, when he bought the property. The houses had a communal garden, part allocated to each tenant - there was a common wash-house and drying green and a high wall

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round three sides of the area - once I threw my shoes and socks over the hedge on to the drying green in imitation of children who ran barefoot to school but it wasn't an enjoyable experience ! Behind the hedge was a grindstone complete with hole for wooden handle for turning - how it came there I have no idea - over the North wall was an open space occupied by steam engines and threshing machines owned by Dod Anderson, Nellie Anderson's father - we used to be thrilled to watch them pass the house on Autumn evenings en route to the threshing. Next door, now Alan Strathdee's, lived Mrs. Paterson and daughter, the father having been killed in an accident at Mill of Durn. An arched door hid a coach house belonging to the house at the top of the lane and at the end of the street was, and is, the Episcopal Church - opposite is Cadzow House owned by Captain Smith and family and the daughter was one of my Sunday School teachers in the early 20's. - there was a flagpole in the garden. Next door lived the Robertson's, he a retired farmer. The long house was lived in by Bannerman Robb, solicitor, and his family. Westcote was the home of Miss Quinn and her brother Carlo, she a teacher, who insisted on lace collars and pupils had to have a handkerchief. If not, a piece of rag was supplied so all could take part in the communal "blow" which was a daily routine. Carlo had an endless fund of Irish stories. Across the lane leading to Sutherland Park, which had a large wooden pavilion and which later had a putting green laid out, lived Mrs. Joiner, later the Stables family, he a retired farmer. The house with the porch belonged to Mrs Osborne and later her daughter Mrs. Gillan, at one time organist of the United Free Church, and behind was a small cottage occupied by the Duncan family, the mother of Alan Duncan, plumber - she used to milk at the dairy. In one of the semi-detached houses lived "Peachy" Smith who took in summer visitors, one Eric Bacon, keen on rock fishing was "locked on" the rock Legmoon. Peachy realising what had happened when he failed to return at his usual time went to the beach and talked to him and others until the tide turned and they were able to get off. Hamewith, then Whiteville, was occupied by Miss Smith and Miss Minett - two retired ladies. Next door was the house of the owner of the lemonade factory and his wife and the factory which we often visited to watch the process, sometimes buying lemonade for our house and on the odd occasion we were given a small bottle of Cream Strawberry for ourselves. The bottles were sealed with an earthenware stopper fixed by a strong wire clip. The lady's dentures clicked as she talked. Next door lived the Barron family, he a tailor who took over Wiseman's business on South High Street. In the end house lived Mrs. Legge and family, later the parents of Nellie Masson bought it.

**Seafield Terrace from Seafield Street.**

The first house was occupied by Jabez Burgess and family. He was the Provost at one time and was a carter and ran a dairy. Space now occupied by two new houses was the site of a byre and outbuildings. Next door lived the Nobles, he was a salmon fisher and the son was the local doctor along with the late Dr. Macrae. Hermiston with coach house and stable belonged to Dr. Reid - a right of way ran from Seafield Terrace along the south side of the house to Durn Road. The first cottage next door belonged to the Misses Craik, the elder a teacher at Bogmuchalls looked after her sister who got around with a crutch having lost a leg in an accident. The cottage next door was once a tailor's workshop. Nile Cottage was occupied by the Misses Forbes, one owned a shop now the Cup and Saucer cafe in Seafield Street, the other kept house. Wakefield was built as the manse of the United Presbyterian Church, now the Town Hall. One daughter trained as a dentist and her daughter once told me her mother had been required to extract a tooth on her wedding day. Beyond, there were allotments where 4 bungalows now are, with fields opposite, in the mid 30's forming part of a nine-hole golf course. Next to these was Doston occupied by Mrs. Broomfield and family - upstairs lived Dr and Mrs. Macrae until Mrs. Broomfield moved to America. The Manse was

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occupied by the Rev. Campbell and family who late in the 30's moved to Roslin. Sunnybank was occupied by Mrs. Morrison, daughter Mrs. Raeburn and grandson George Raeburn, formerly by Dr. Paterson and family, wife ran the local dramatic society - family moved to London in 1916 and the family returned regularly to Portsoy on holiday until outbreak of 2nd. World War.

**Seafield Street, Roseacre Street and Seafield Place.**

The Town Hall was the United Presbyterian Church and next door was the bakery owned by the Peterkin family, all educated at Fordyce Academy, all graduates, six in all, teachers, doctors and scientists - later the bakery was run by James Reid, uncle of Mrs Elsie Gray, then the McHatties followed by Donald. Next door were two shops, draper and grocer, the present Co-op was built as a furniture showroom for Alfie Smith who later went to America. Across space in front of Loch Soy, now a car park, was Milton's bakery - parents of Mrs. Ronnie Macrae, followed by Stuart, daughter lives in Dunalistair, Durn Rd. - son Jack succeeded father and sold out to Sandy Bowman. The Station Hotel was owned by James Cruickshank, father of the present occupant of Durn House, then by Lindsay who started a hirer's business, the “bus” used for outings was a bottomless hut on a lorry - on our arrival in it for a Girl Guide Rally at Park House, Cornhill, our Commissioner said she thought it was the Black Maria which did not amuse Mr. Lindsay ! Next door lived the Hendry family who took over Miss Forbes' shoeshop. The house is now part of Robertsons, Drapers, who occupied the house round the corner in Roseacre St and workshops extended to the end of the street. The opening led to the Territorial Drill Hall now the Hepburn's house. Opposite there was a small cottage lived in by a Mrs. McFarlane and continuation of the street led to the Railway Station passing the Foundry behind which were two small workshops, one occupied by a coppersmith. The Station House was opposite the Foundry with what used to be a goods shed covering part of the line which ran to the Old Harbour. The cottage on the corner belonged to Anderson, photographer, and next door was the smiddy and house of Adam Ingram the blacksmith. Opposite in the house occupied by Mrs Milne, lived previously, Jessie Hendry and her father a retired farmer. The Bank House was occupied by the Campbell family whose daughter was Guide Commissioner at one time. The Bank was then the Union Bank. Next door was the office of Young, Solicitor, and the office is now a chip-shop. House next door with shop belonged to “Yankee” Jim McDonald, watchmaker and jeweller who also hired out bicycles. Over the bridge was the cottage owned by the Murdoch family and now the Salvation Army Hall. The lane, now Seafield Place, had several houses, one occupied by McKay family with next door Mrs. Grant and grandson. Next again “Babbie Doups” owing to her bowed walk. Jim Taylor's house was built on the site of the slaughter house where we peeped in on the way to the school. There Dod Mackie slaughtered for Hay and Murdoch the two butchers in the town. Three cottages opposite McKays were fully occupied and behind them, up the close, were various residents. Willie Milne ran the grocer's shop that was attached and now converted into flats. The antique shop was Irvine the tailor. First on the opposite side were small cottages up steps housing various families. The shop next door was a saddlers and the house by the bridge was owned by Wattie Scot, carter, with a cart shed next door, now a garage. Across the bridge was the Temperance Hotel, owned by Mrs. Reid, grandmother of Mrs. Elsie Gray, whose son James ran the bakery next to the Town Hall. The shop with house above was owned by Ross, tailor and draper with workrooms in the basement - next the shop owned by Miss Forbes, shoemaker, also with workshops in the basement. The corner shop now an antique shop was that of Daniel, the baker, who made very good date scones. The Church Hall was originally the Established Church with the manse in Durn Road now home of Forrest the baker. Beyond was McIntyre's grocery with

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house above, later Murray’s taxi business and now an antique shop. Next was the shop owned by James Russell who employed several workers for repairs in the basement and the house was occupied by the family. Next was the jewellers belonging to Leys, grandfather of A. Leys Durn Road, and house and shop on corner belonged to John Duncan. The two sons also served in the shop and a milliner was employed. The father was often seen in the garden in tasselled smoking cap, presumably not allowed to smoke in the house.

### **South High Street**

The windows of Duncan’s draper shop ran round into South High Street with next door the sweet shop of Douglas Gordon where we bough barley sugar on a string. Up the close were three houses, Gordon’s, Mrs. Wright and Grandsons, then Mrs. Barrie and family. The Elms was owned by Mr. Hay a retired farmer and family and he was known as Brackens from the name of his farm ; one daughter was a teacher, the other taught music and at one time accompanied silent films at one of the cinemas in Aberdeen. The son was a doctor. The Haven was the rectory of the Episcopal Church occupied by the Browns and across the lane was the house and shop of Murray the barber, his wife acting as the local midwife. Then McDonald the joiner, he being a member of the town band and a local councillor. In the adjoining house lived Joe Petrie a carter with Wordie who delivered goods from the Station. Next door were two flats, lower lived in by Moir an insurance agent and the upper by Mrs. Reid and family. The house and shop next door was owned by Adamson the chemist, also known to pull teeth. My brother had to visit him one Christmas Day to have a tooth removed - Mr. Adamson was an atheist and left wing socialist. Opposite was the Clydesdale Bank, smaller than now. One of the Manager’s daughters was a music teacher, other kept house, one son was a banker and the other a doctor. The music teacher was organist in the Parish Church and in 1927 and 1928 produced operettas with her music pupils and Sunday school children. The shop next door, like the Bank, was built by Colonel Moir and on his death was owned by McConnachie later by Alan Fortune and my father W.A. Reid. There were many stores in the close, paraffin store, salt house , lavatory, bottle washing house with carousel, upstairs was iron store with roof racks for hoes etc rolls of wire, plain and barbed. On a higher level, whole cheeses were kept in wire cages and turned regularly. Below was the cellar where wines and spirits were bottled, sides of bacon and ham kept cool (no fridges in those days), barrels of molasses and treacle stored. A long flight of steps led to a large store for farm seeds with a large sheet of metal on the floor where farmers’ seeds were mixed. On the ground next door was a cart shed with stable - goods were delivered in town, Fordyce, Sandend and to local farms. Two thousand jars of marmalade, the same of rhubarb and ginger jam were made each season in the toffee house, also large quantities of Swiss milk toffee for sale in the shop. Occasionally for special sales of work and fund raising, “pulled” candy was made, for which a large hook was fixed on one wall and the candy thrown over it and pulled. The house next door had a shop at one end and was owned by “Sconer” Jimmie, the first to sell ice-cream and it was usually singed. The shop and house next door was occupied by the Wallace family who ran the telephone exchange and the shop later was taken over by our first Italian called Aurelio Amadi in the early 1930’s who made superb ice-cream. The butcher’s shop and house belonged to Wm. J Hay while the adjacent shop was taken by a saddler. Backing it was Duncan’s house, Flo Duthie’s parents, gable end on to the street and opposite, across a small close, was a small cottage owned by McKenzies. Chapel House was owned by Alan Fortune, his sister and family, then came Wiseman the tailor, with house in lane and above shop. The lane was originally Well Road, later occupied by Barron the tailor, workrooms were above house next door in the lane and entered by a large metal gate, leading to garden, wash-house and garage. Next house in South High Street was that of Peter

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Thomson with shoe shop attached and now a chip shop. The office of Scrimgeour, solicitor, was next door and is now part of Laura’s drapery. Her house was occupied by Miss Geddes, teacher. The space occupied by the Telephone Exchange was a garden belonging to the North of Scotland Bank, but let out to various locals.

### **Durn Road from Seafield Street.**

The Lesser Town Hall was a billiard room. The next door house belonged to Watson a mason and the Park Hotel was a private house owned by John MacDonald who owned the foundry and it was destroyed by fire in the 1940’s. The building was bought by Fred Wood and sister Mrs. Snowdon, mother of Mrs. Bob Drummond, and rebuilt as a hotel. Two cottages next door occupied by Taylors and Peterkins known as “Spootie”. He was boots at the Station Hotel and drove the hire car. Behind were two cottages, first owned by the Grays, parents of Mrs. Mollie Leys who was a corsetiere. They let out a room to Miss Harper, Breach Farm Fordyce, who taught music pupils there on a Saturday. Next were the Greens, he a cobbler with Russell and she knitted socks and stockings on a circular loom. Back to the street was the home of Miss Wighton and brother, a retired farmer. Lochside Villa was owned by Philip, a maths teacher at Fordyce, and his family. The last house before the railway belonged to the Peterkins, he being a retired joiner. The cottage across the railway entrance was owned by Robbie Raffan and family. He drove a horse-drawn van for Milton the baker. Opposite lived Johnnie Rae a stone mason and at one time Provost of Portsoy. Next door was McConnachie, known as Kambala, retired from somewhere abroad with his wife who owned a Dion Bouton car. Next was the Buie family retired from Longmuir farm, then the back entrance to Hermiston and once a right of way to Seafield Terrace. Rose Cottage housed the Watts, he a surfaceman on the railway. The last house was that of McKenzie, salmon fisherman. Across the railway line lived Edwards, signalman at the Station. The bungalow belonged to Ledingham’s, he the retired headmaster from Boyndie School, and this house was once a ladies school run by Miss Liddell. Dunalistair lived in by the Robertsons - Roseacre Cottage was the gamekeeper’s house and Roseacre itself was a shooting lodge rented out by Seafield Estates to various tenants for the shooting. Once rented to Squire Richmond whose orchard was regularly raided by the local youths. Then nothing else until the stables, coach house and doocot belonging to Durn House which was rented out by Seafield Estates to various tenants. Knowepark was the manse of the Established Church, then occupied by the Carmichael family. In Tanglin lived Miss Donaldson and Mrs Webster retired from a farm. Next door lived Miss Andrew and her brother also retired from a farm (my father used to say Portsoy was a home for retired farmers). Springbank was the home of W. Ewing, owner of the Mills. Next two houses were occupied by Grants who were connected with the Foundry and Scrimgeour, solicitor, and family. Seafield Cottage was the home of Charlie Flaws and family, the ground officer with Cullen House. Burnfoot was the home of Miss Bailie and then Mrs. Milton on retiring from the bakery, now occupied by her elder daughter.

### **Chapel Street**

At the corner, Irvine, tailor - next house, now demolished owned by Imray Ross - a small cottage lived in by Davy Allan, lamplighter - the Miss Lawson, house gable end on the street. The big house now demolished for sheltered housing occupied by “Da” Ingram. Small cottages in close next door to Stotts, then home of Irvine, tailor with Taylor, Janitor at school next door, retired from Army who taught P.E. at local school and Fordyce Academy before

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appointment of a qualified P.E. teacher. Workshop and house belonged to Dod Clark, joiner, grandfather of Mrs Helen Stuart and opposite lived Stewart, surfaceman inspector - then the Slater's who ran a sweet shop in the house. After the lane the first house was home of Miss Smith, teacher, Sandend, who cycled daily on a “sit up and beg” bike. The small cottages were occupied by Palmers and Peterkins, a chimney sweep and slater, and then upstairs, above Cochranes the plumber, lived the Duncans.

### Chapel Lane

First house was Miss Boyd's, then came Captain Taylor and family retired from the Merchant Navy. Then Jake McKimmie, also retired, who lost part of an arm in the 1st. World War, sold Singer sewing machines and taught dancing in what was the Town Hall now Kingdom Hall. Later the house was lived in by Smiths, son was a meter reader, and one daughter married to Hamilton, steel erector, Buckie.

### Aird Street

Cochranes, plumber's shop and house, then Gavin, insurance agent, with small adjacent shop used by Geddes, cobbler, later Newton, photographer. Then Blair House occupied by Morrisons, he a traveller for Ewing's Mills. The house with the gable end on to the street was Jane Campbell's - we were told if we kicked the stones protruding on the gable, things would fall off her mantelpiece. Next door lived Lyons, he a surfaceman, with James Farquhar, so-called sanitary inspector in the next house. Houses gable end on to the street and facing each other across a close - names of occupants not remembered. The next house, also gable end on to the street, belonged to Rennie, joiner. Across the lane was Knutsford occupied by Smiths, he a sea-going engineer and the last cottage before the school entrance belonged to a farmer known as “Pathies” who was beadle at the United Free Church. Along from it the entrance to the Roman Catholic Church and Vestry, then the entrance to Roseacre Lodge - across the burn to the house of Captain Mair, he retired from the merchant navy, who in the 30's, along with a Mr. Bremner, taught old time dancing in the Institute Hall. Next door lived Miss Robertson, and next door again lived George Thomson, retired farmer from Kindrought. The house Candacraig belonged to Major Chinn and family, one daughter taught at the local school and was at one time Guide captain. Across the street lived the Wrights, he an engineer at the Boyne Mills which made farm machinery. The next was owned by the Davy Family and then next door was occupied by the Sutherlands. They were fish merchants on a large scale and his brother was at one time MP for Elgin Borough and who gave two stained glass windows to the U.F. Church. House across the burn lived in by the Miltons, he a slater who at one time lived in Nile Cottage as we found some school books and jotters belonging to the family in the attic when we moved in to Nile Cottage. Francie Forrest, bowling green keeper, lived in the small house at the end of the old road to Boyne Castle. Aird House was occupied by Jim Hay, brother of the butcher. Little house in close was home of “Mickey” Hay butcher with Murdoch. Then came the house of Dod Anderson, owner of steam engines whose daughter ran a small shop in part of the house. The Commercial Hotel was owned by Madge Grant and next door was the office of Bannerman Robb, Solicitor.

*8 - George Nicol, baker : 10 - George Gray, farm servant : 12 - cycle repair shop : 14 - Jane Ann Campbell : 16 Blair House - Wm Morrison, grain merchant : 18 - Edward Thom, farm servant : 22 - James Farquhar, burgh workman : 24 - William Murray, joiner : 26 - Joseph Hay, labourer : 30 Alexander Lyon, mason : 32 - Alexander Morrison, labourer : 34 - Robert Cowie, signalman : Annie Mitchell, widow : 38 - James Smith, engineer : 40 - Jane Watt,*

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widow : 44/46 - Alex Rennie, joiner : 48 Miss Elizabeth Craigmyle : 50 Knutsford - James L. Smith, engineer : 52 James Duncan, retired farmer : 54 R.C. Chapel - Rev Wm. J. Shaw : 56 Eden Cott - George Mair, harbour master : 58 Mrs. Margaret A. Robertson : 60 Brae - Peter Fiddes, retd farmer : 62 Candacrais - Major John H. Chinn  
1/3 - George Anderson, mill owner : 5 - James Hay, road foreman : Mrs. Wm Morrison : 9 - Samuel Barclay, cycle agent : 11 - Charlotte Clark : 13 Aird House - James Hay, flesher : 15 George Mitchell, tailor : Francis Forrest, caretaker, Bowling Club : 19 Mrs Michie, widow : 21 Alex McKay, cattle dealer : 29 Burnside Cottage - Wm Milton, retd slater

### Church Street

The council houses at the top of Church Street were the first in Portsoy and occupy the site of pantile roofed cottages, up steps, known as the “Red Raw” - one tenant was Sutherland, carter with Wordie, who delivered goods and parcels from the station. Mrs. Phillips house was occupied by Dow Taylor, who kept a cow which was grazed on the East Braes, who sold milk - next door lived a retired assistant from Stuart’s bakery - and the house now being restored was home of Whitecross, the cobbler, with shop on the corner, later occupied by Stewart, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Soy House, the oldest in Portsoy, was occupied by Annie Riddoch, known as Annie Hochie as she had only one leg and she used a crutch. She kept a small shop in the house. The rounded window next door was in the house of Harry Ingram, solicitor, known as “Wingies” as he wore a tail coat whose tails flapped as he rushed around. The door beside the window gave access to his office. Next door was the home of members of the Peterkin family. The gap gave access to the printing works owned by Tom Anderson, who edited and printed a weekly paper known as “Tammy” and later taken over by Marcus Calder. Both families occupied the house and ran the shop next door - Calder also printed and sold postcards.

46 - James Mair, fisherman : 48 - John Sutherland : 52 - James Wilson, fisherman : 54 - George Pirie, fisherman : 56 - Jess and Elsie Mair, spinsters (Shavie) : 58 - Derelict : 60 - James Murray, fisherman : 62 - 64 - Derelict : 68 (shop) & 70 - George Harthill, fisherman : 72 Daniel Sutherland, fisherman : 74 - William Mair Jnr (Shavie), fisherman : 84 - Alex Slater, cooper : 86 - Wm. J. Reid, fisherman : 88 - George Findlay (Hodie), fisherman

Across the street from Calder’s by the bridge was a shop, belonging to George Wood who became provost, and has now been converted in to the Police Station. The garden next door belonged to Peterkin’s house. Council houses now stand on the site of small cottages, one lived in by Wattie Murray, who had a Joiner’s shop next door. Across Shillinghill was the shop of George McBain and the large house next door belonged to a branch of the Peterkin family. Council houses now replace the small cottages further up and then next door was McDonald, joiner, the workshop now belonging to David Urquhart. Next door lived McDonald, painter, with shop next door, part of the house being occupied by Bain, father of Peter, who assisted McDonald. House at the back of the close lived in by Johnnie Minty the barber, and house facing down the street lived in by Rosebelle Fairweather husband of a sea-going engineer. She usually was accompanied by a small pekinese dog. The garden on the corner is the site of a house occupied by Geddes, the cobbler, and was once a coaching inn before Seafield Street was created.

### Institute Street from Church Street

The Institute Hall was used by various bodies for sales of work, whist drives, dances - music supplied by the Twilight Orchestra, pianist Mrs. F. Kerr (Jean Bremner), violins Geordie Donald brother of Mrs. Helen Stuart and Charlie Clark late of the Station Hotel, drums by a

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Duncan, brother of Flo Duthie. Next door was the shop of Nurse Milton, daughter of Milton, slater, who also occupied the house. Jim Watt’s garage was a small cottage occupied by the Benzies.

**Schoolhendry Street**

Going down the street 13 - Alexander Robertson, retired farmer : 15 - George Anderson, Jnr, Engineer : 17 - Mrs. Margaret Gray : 19 - Alexander Goodall, mason : George Pirie, Elder, fisherman : 25 - Joe Bremner, tailor : 27 - George Addison, fisherman : 29 - Annie Legge, widow : 35 - John Pirie, Buxer, fisherman : 37 - Annie McBain, widow : 39 - William McLean, retd headmaster : 41 - Georgina Anderson : 43 - William Smith, carter : 45 - Mr. Alex McKimmie : 47 - George Benzie : 49 - William Sutherland, labourer : 53 James Wood, fisherman : 55 - John Wood, fisherman : Mount Pleasant - Joseph Mair, fisherman : 59 - Lily Smith : Anchorage - Mrs. J. Mowatt : 65 - David Wood, Jnr, fisherman : 67 - Andrew Murdoch : 69 - George A. Smith : 71 Johnnie Wood, Doo : Harbour Buildings -73A - Jacob Smith : 73 - Frank Gault, fisherman : 75 - Jeannie Mair, spinster : 77 - George Pirie, fisherman : 79 - George Wilson, fisherman : 81 - Wm Mair, Kissack, fisherman ; 83 - Findlay Wood, fisherman.

Going up the street 60 - Jockie Slater, fisherman. : 56 - John Mair, fisherman : 46 - George Pirie, merchant : 46 - Alex Wood, Post, fisherman : 44 - John Ritchie, trawl fisherman : 42 - James Robertson, farm servant : 36 - Alex Watson, mason : 34 - William Sutherland, fisherman ; 32 - Mrs. Munro, widow : 28 - Alex Chalmers, retd farmer : 26 - George Pirie, fisherman : 24 - John Watt, surfaceman : 22 - William Wood, engineer : Amherst - George Wood, fishcurer : 16 - George Wood, fisherman : 10 - John Wood, Park, fisherman : 8 John Taylor, pensioner : 6 - Helen Rodger : 2 - Findlay Slater, ship’s captain

**Seatown**

**Main Street**

1 - William Pirie, fisherman : 2 - Maggie Wood, widow and Maggie Hay, widow : 3 - George Wood, Jamesie, fisherman : 5 - David McDonald, fisherman : 6 - Alexander Slater - cooper : 7 - Mary Jane Slater, widow : 8 - James Addison Slater, fisherman : 9 - William Smith, Hay, fisherman : 10 - Francis Ferguson, labourer : 11 - John Pirie, fisherman : 12 - John Smith - fisherman : 13 - Mrs. Jane Pirie, widow : 14 Gowanbank - Henry McDonald, fisherman : 15 - Henry Shearer, Engineer

**Wood Street**

1 - Mrs. Ann Wood, Doo, Widow : 2 - John Pirie, fisherman : 2 - George Wood, Jamesie, Jnr, fisherman : 3 - William Wood, Post, fisherman. 5 - James Wood - fisherman

**Shillinghill from Church Street**

Below McBain’s shop two small cottages (*George Harthill and James Stephen*) then one facing up the street occupied by Farquharsons, grandmother of George Robertson, draper, and daughter, a teacher - on the other side if the bridge was the home of the Findlays, uncle and aunt of Mrs. Bill Murray. Then the houses of parents of Fobbie Kerr and that of Charlie Duncan - police station, now two flats, occupied by Wylie, the policeman.

### **Burnside Street from Seafield Street**

On left Frankfort House, home of Thow and family. He ran a buoymaker’s business where Tom Burnett Stuart now is, and he was succeeded by his son-in-law, J Cruickshank. Next, at the foot of the lane was the property of Eddie Murdoch, butcher, and after that was the home of the McDonald family, grandparents of Rosie Low. The site of the present sheltered housing was taken up by two blocks of houses facing each other across a close, known as “Droughties”, gable end on to the street and occupied by various families. The next big house was owned by McRobie family and then a small one storey cottage lived in by Willie Mair, postman, and his brother of “Ticky” an insurance agent. On the other side of the street was Jessie Currie’s cottage and next to it a hut, once a guide hut, and later taken over by Jehovah’s witnesses. The Wallie Green was the town bleach green with the Durn Burn running through it, after turning the wheel at the mill. The name Wallie comes from two hand pumps across from the mill, approached by a downward flight of steps, which always had a supply of clean water when the town supply was shut down to conserve supplies during warm weather.

### **Bridge Street**

*1 - Shop, G.G. McRobie : 4 - Henry Harris, seaman : 4 - William McKay, fisherman : 6 - James Steven, engine driver : Henry Cook, painter.*

### **Culbert Street from Bridge Street**

McRobie’s shop, now a house under construction, with large store on Low Street, where wine and whisky (brand known as “Glenboyne”) were bottled ; he also provisioned local boats for the herring fishing ; must often been out of pocket as, if the fishing was bad, there was no money to pay for provisions of boat and families which were “kept” by supplier - if next season was good, things were settled for that year, but not for the previous one. The corner shop was run by Jessie Currie, later by Milne, shoemaker. The house next door has now been incorporated into a scheme of flats for single people, along with house gable end on to the street, once occupied by Frances Gallow, now Mrs. Bob Gray and above there were two cottages occupied by Grant, coppersmith, with workshop behind Foundry now site of Charlie Gray’s tattie shed and upper cottage home of Chisholm, salmon fisher, daughter Tassie was my first Guide Captain. They are now all part of the Boyne Hotel. The present Post Office and house were part of the Chemist’s shop on the Square with photographic studio. Some small cottages led down to Masson, painter’s house and shop.

*20 - James Masson, Painter : 18 - Andrew Henderson, grieve : 14 - Mrs. Walker : 12 - Annie Leitch : 10 - Mrs. T. Sandison : 8 - Isabella Sandison  
9 - shop, Jessie Currie : 9 - Miss Margaret Wood, clerkess : 9 - Margaret Wood, Widow : 11 - Adam Taylor, labourer : ? - Francis Still, miller : ? - Isabella Symon, retired*

### **Low Street from Culbert Street**

The council houses have replaced a row of small cottages. At the foot of the Star Inn close was the home of the Gray family, son a chemist. Houses beyond McBain’s bakery had front lean-to’s as kitchens and are now council owned. The Shore Inn belonged to the Millers - two sons were tea planters and they were uncles of Mrs. Dod Clark.

*7 - David Pirie, fisherman : 9 - James McGregor, fisherman : 11 - Wm. Mair, fisherman : 11 - Thomas Gray, engineer : 13 - Wm. Mair, Jnr., fisherman : 13 - James McKay - fisherman : 15 - Mrs. Jessie Smith : 27 - Bill Slater, fisherman : 31 - Alexander Pirie, fisherman and*

*George Pirie, fisherman :*

### **North High Street from the Square**

On left was house and shop of Jean Hogg or Reid, now annexe of Boyne Hotel. Then Edith McKenzie and brother with neighbour Dod “Stump” who was keeper of the then Town Hall, now the Kingdom Hall, and a family called Still whose son became a chemist. Next were small cottages now council houses then the big house, occupied by McHattie on retirement from the bakery, latterly by Mrs. Shearer. Behind was a small cottage, the home of “Shetland” Babbie and husband Willie, a retired fisherman - she used to knit as she walked along the street and talked to one and all in her Shetland accent. She used to wash and stretch Shetland shawls, often seen drying on a frame beside her front door. Next came Pat Hay’s house and house up steps belonging to the McKay family, one daughter Mrs. McDonald, another Mrs. Flett late Postmistress. Across end of Barbank Street was Kate Salter’s house now council property with a derelict building accented by archways, often sketched or painted by visiting artists, these seen on old postcards of Portsoy. On the way back up to the Square, McBains house stands back from the street with next door what was the Star Inn - now council housing. The gable end house which had been derelict for some time has now been restored. Next door Peggy Mair and her Mother lived and had a sweet shop in one of the rooms. Then came the home of the Wrights, the beadle of the U.F. Church with Frank Strathdee’s parents next with gable end on to the street. At the end stood Matthew’s Temperance Hotel, now the Boyne Hotel, catering for bank and shop employees.

*1 -3 - Robert Hogg, fisherman, : 5-7 -Edith McKenzie, clerkess : 9 - William Mair, fisherman : 11 - George Currie, fisherman : 13 - Mary Ann Ferguson , Widow : 23 - John Hendry, cooper : 25 - William Pirie, fisherman : 27 - Mrs. Lily Pirie, widow : 29 - Joseph Mair, fisherman : 31 - David Harthill, fireman : 33 - Robert Hay, shoemaker : 35 - James McKay, fisherman.*

*26 - William Mair, Jnr, fisherman : 24 Alex Mair, fisherman : Malvern - Richard McBain, baker : 12 - James Findlay, miller : 10 Alex Ferguson, fisherman, 10 - Mrs. Margaret Anderson : 10 - Wm A. Strathdee, slater.*

### **Barbank Street**

*1 - Peter Sutherland, Carter : 11 - Henry G. Smith, Shipmaster : 13 - William Smith, insurance agent : 15 - Annie Mair, widow : 17 - George Wood, Sailor, fisherman : 19 - Catherine Salter : 16 - James Mair, farm servant : 18 - Mrs. Gordon, widow : 20 - Mrs. Kate Priest, fishworker : 22 - Williamina McPherson, widow : 24 - George Peterkin, tailor : Rocklynne - Alex Mair, Shavie, fisherman : Parkview - Mrs. Maggie Mair.*

### **The Square**

Next door to the North of Scotland Bank was Miss Black’s shop, now home of Mrs. May Masson, selling sewing materials, knitting wools etc. She lived in the house facing the street, now Masson’s store. Riddoch’s shop was occupied by Leys the jeweller before he removed to Seafield Street. Then there were small cottages where the Masonic Hall now stands - across Cullen Street the cottage lived in by the Neish’s belonged to Findlater, retired farmer from Brodiesord - then the Town Hall used for concerts, dances, dancing classes run by Jake McKimmie and occasionally for cinema shows when the reels often broke producing much noise until they were repaired. House and shop of Mrs. Mair was Peter McWilliam’s grocery - on corner of Culbert Street was Clark the chemist and post office, opposite counters used for

## “Portsoy in my Youth” by Mrs. M.A. Williams

these - small cottage next door was demolished to build separate post office and flat for Miss Clark, postmistress, sister of the chemist. Next door was the house belonging to Imray Ross and across the close was his workshop with earthen floor where all sorts of repairs were carried out. This is now a garage for Forrest the bakers. Next is the baker's shop run by Alex Burgess with his house behind in the close - now used as a store. The house facing the street was occupied by George Mackie and family, he a butcher with W.J. Hay.

### **Miscellaneous**

The Town Hall on Seafield Street was partly paid for by a bazaar held in it after alterations in 1923/24

In the early 30's we played tennis, swam at the Brecks or Calandeer or Dunniedeich where we usually had a picnic. Sometimes we finished the picnic by having a snack of chips with either, fish, white or black puddings at Davy McKenzie's, now Mrs. Mair's shop in the Square. And later we often ate a hearty supper provided for our “gang” by my mother who must have been very long suffering. Tennis matches and tournaments featured largely in our lives as students, often finished off by a “hop” in the Institute Hall.

My mother ran the first swimming gala at the Brecks in aid of the local nursing association which was supported by weekly subscriptions of one old penny per week or 4/4 per month. She also ran one at the New Harbour and on both occasions she supplied hot soup to all entrants at the conclusion of the events. These were in 1931 and 1932. Later on in the 30's a large sale of work was held in a huge marquee outside the pavilion at the top of the public park, opened by the Countess of Seafield and her husband, and stallholders were the wives of the local shopkeepers. The proceeds went towards the cost of building the swimming pool which was the brainchild of David Leys, jeweller and watchmaker.

In 1935 along with others we took part in the local celebrations for the silver jubilee of King George V. We chose the theme, progress, decorated one of Wordie's lorries, made our costumes of “American” cloth for trousers and bodices, painted bathing caps and cardboard wings and armlets with silver paint and attached silver wings to our helmets. The driver at the back of the lorry was a Roman in toga, holding white reins attached to our arms. I acted as a figurehead with long silver skirt with blue bodice, helmet armlets and wings of silver. The man leading the horse was Joe Petrie, carter, dressed as John Bull.

### **The Wally Green**

The Wally Green was formerly known as the Bleach Green where household linen and home spun products could be spread put. It was then enclosed by a strong fence and gate. The well was known as the “Aul Wall” and was the main water supply for the town before the coming of a piped water supply from Tillynaught, some hundred or so years ago. The “Aul Wal” was in a sunk area with steps and as it was being abused by being used as a public toilet the Town Council closed it over. A further supply from the Durn Hill was brought in to supply Campbell Hospital and the higher parts of the town. It was never very satisfactory and a further supply from Bogmuchals was very much less so. Water was also got from a spout near the old bridge on the old road over the hill of Cowhythe. This is now overgrown.

### **The Old Gasworks**

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The town had a piped supply of gas from the early part of the last century. The gas works was situated at what is now the Council yard. The tall chimney was demolished about 60 years ago. The gas works was run by a company which was taken over by the Town Council. An acetylen gas company installed what was not a very successful system but it was still in use till the coming of an electricity supply from the Grampian Electricity, the forerunner of the Hydro Electric Board.

### **Industries**

Before the coming of the railways, shipping was an important industry and as Portsoy had a harbour it was very busy. Quite a number of ships belonged to the port. Probably the last of them was the “Colonel Moir” sailed by Geoge Wood (Doddie Buttery).

He and his family were said to have built this ship themselves. Connected with shipping was the Rope and Sail works at the Backgreen run latterly by Mr. Nicol. The Rope Works was destroyed by coastal erosion well within living memory. At the Backgreen, the building beside the burn with the date which appears to be 1708 was probably used as a sail loft.

Later Portsoy had an important place in the herring industry with a number of steam drifters and other boats belonging to the port. The old railway line was an extension to the old harbour.

There is evidence of there having been a linen industry at one time. Stone built troughs discovered in the older part of the cemetery were thought to be tanks for steeping lint which was part of the process of making linen.

Regarding the herring fishing, several curers had their headquarters here. Prominent amongst them, the Sutherlands. Mr. Peter Sutherland was Provost for a period and his brother Mr. J.E. Sutherland was MP for the former constituency of Elgin Burghs.

The Meal Mill, now closed, was partly powered by water from the Loch. The engineering firm of MacDonald Brothers in part of the building now used as a Tattie Shed was quite important. At one time their agricultural machinery was sent to many overseas countries. They employed quite a number of men and gave many a young lad a start in engineering as did Wright Brothers at the Boyne Mills, makers of threshing mills.

There were many local tradesmen :- 2 blacksmiths ; 2 masons ; 2 slaters ; 3 joiners ; 1 cartwright ; 1 cabinet-maker ; 4 tailors ; 4 bakers ; 6 grocers ; 3 cobblers ; 2 cycle agents - one of whom was Imray Ross, who was also the local handyman ; 2 saddlers, Willie Rhind and a Mr. Duguid. There were numerous wee shoppies, and ladies dressmakers and milliners. It is believed that there was also a nailmaker where nails could be collected on a shovel, hot from the forge.

Before the building of the parish school about 100 years or so ago anyone who wanted education for their children sent them to schools of a semi-private sort. One such school was owned by a Mr. Philip but was empty when pigs were being loaded at the harbour. There was also a few dame schools.

Portsoy was a more lively place in the past. There was a Brass Band and a Pipe Band, a Choral Society and two Dramatic Societies. Two football teams, Thistle, the senior team played on the field in front of Durn House and could take on such stalwarts as Buckie Thistle

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and Elgin City without making a fool of themselves. They also did well in the Huntly and District League and the Banffshire and Aberdeenshire Cups. We had five kirks. - the Catholic, The Aul Kirk, the UF, the UP, (this last is now the Town Hall) and St. John’s Episcopal.

Portsoy at one time had a weekly newspaper of its own called “The Banffshire Reporter” also known as “Tammy” after its founder who was Thomas Edward (*Thomas Anderson was the founder*) This was discontinued during the 1914 war. (*continued up till 1921*)

Childhood games which had their seasons were :- Bools (marbles) - one game consisted of a ring or square drawn on the ground. Each player put one bool in the ring. Every one who knocked a bool got it. Kypie consisted of three small holes made in the ground and the bools were propelled into the holes. At Fordyce Academy the local boys had a peculiar game - a hole was dug in the ground and the bools were covered with earth. The players proceeded to knock out the bools with a larger bool. It must have been a profitable game for the sellers of the marbles as the playground was littered with broken bools. Another game was Tops. These were formed with a groove near the top end. A whip was made with a piece of wood and string and the string was wound round the groove. The game was to get the top spinning and keep it going, whipping it along. A favourite place to play this game was the part of Aird Street near the school. There were also girds. These were obtained from the blacksmith and consisted of an iron ring which was propelled along either by a piece of wood or by a specially made cleek. Home made kites were also much in fashion and they were formed by of two pieces of cane and a length of string and covered with brown paper which was much more used in the shops than now. A long length of string was required for control and the boys vied with each other as to who could obtain the greatest height. This depended on the length of the string and the wealth of the owner.

### **Swimming Pool**

An attempt to provide for swimmers had been made for a long time at the site of the present pool at Sandy Pots. Only a piece of concrete pavement was all that remained of the men’s bathing area. A later project at the “Breeks” was in existence. This was largely established by Mr. McRobie a merchant in the town. Later Mr. McHattie, a retired London river policeman and a native of Portsoy raised the question of a swimming pool. At first he tried the Town Council, but as there was great opposition to putting the cost on the rates, this came to nothing. Mr. McHattie then tried some business and professional people in the town, and a Swimming Pool Committee was formed and they at last got it going. An outer sea wall was built with the necessary piping and valves. Mr. McRobie allowed the ladies dressing hut from the “Breeks” to be moved to the new pool and two small huts were bought as the pool had to be emptied of sand every year, this proved too much for the Committee and the project was abandoned. It was decided that the huts be sold. Mr. McRobie however objected to the old hut being sold and it was left. Mr. McHattie was not to be beaten. He succeeded in having a Swimming Club formed and found helpers in the late Danny Sutherland and the late Mr. McLeod, a solicitor in the town, and other enthusiasts. The Council then began to take an interest. The path along the top of the Braes was upgraded and surfaced later. The present roadway was improved. The Committee, by means of various projects and the keenness of the members managed to have the present tearoom building and the toilet block erected. Later Banff and Buchan District Council have given a great deal of help with the place.

## **Durn House**

Durn House was the mansion house of the Durn Estate. It is understood that the original Durn House was burned down by Cumberland’s soldiers during the Jacobite Rebellion. A similar fate befell an Episcopal Chapel nearby. The Communion cup of the same was rescued by a woman member of the Congregation and is now in the possession of St. John’s Episcopal Church, Portsoy.

In an old copy of Debrett’s Peerage dated 1894 under Baronets is mentioned the Dunbar creation of 1697 of Durn, Banffshire, Sir Drummond Miles Dunbar, 7th. Baronet born 1845.

*(Note - Some of the streets were not completed, presumably because Mrs. Williams was not acquainted with those that lived there.*

*In these circumstances entries from the 1927 Valuation Roll have been entered where necessary - F. Pirie)*