

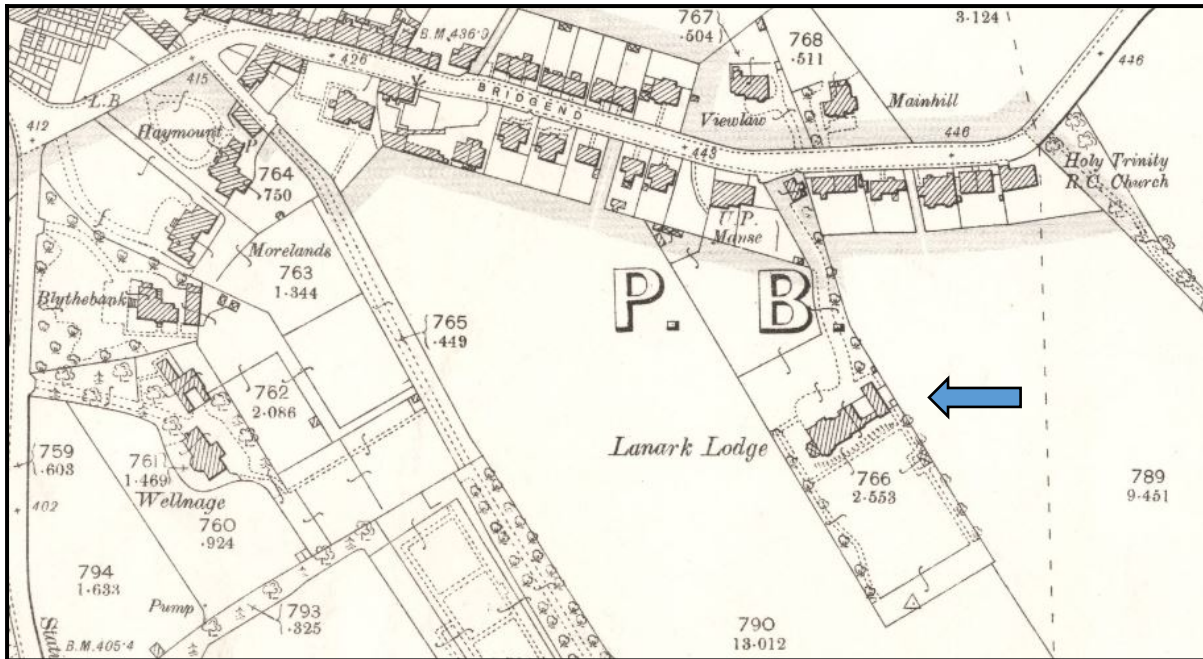
Lanark Lodge, Duns

David McLean (2021)



Introduction

British Listed Buildings dates the construction of Lanark Lodge to 1860. Although it has undergone numerous modern alterations and additions, the baronial style of the original house is still clear. As the town map below shows, it was unique among the properties built up Bridgend, Duns in the nineteenth century. While other properties were built close to the street on plots of modest size, Lanark Lodge was built on a large piece of land, with space for extensive gardens, at the end of a drive some distance from the road. It seems that privacy was at a premium. In addition, a cottage was built (probably around the same time) where the drive met the street; the gate pillars there were later rebuilt in their current locations to widen the entrance. Such gate lodges were provided to allow for the control of people visiting a property and they were often occupied by an employee such as a coachman or gardener. Lanark Lodge was home to a number of families and remained a private residence from 1860 to the late 1940s when it was purchased by Berwickshire County Council for its public health department. This article attempts to trace the story of the people who lived in the house through its domestic years.



Ordnance Survey Map, 1899 ('PB' signifies that Duns was a 'Police Burgh')

1870 : Eliza Helen Logan

Eliza (actually Elizabeth) Helen Logan was born in Chirside in 1809. The earliest evidence of her living in Lanark Lodge comes from 1870 but she, or another member of her family, must have built the Duns property, with around a dozen rooms, ten years earlier. She came from a landed family, the Logans of Loganlee and Newmains which were estates lying in the vicinity of Carnwath and Lanark - so this was surely the origin of the name 'Lanark Lodge'.

Her father was Thomas Logan, a native of Carnwath and, from 1801, minister of Chirside parish church. He and his wife, Agnes Watt of Symington, had five children - James (1805), Jane (1807), Eliza (1809), Agnes (1810) and Euphemia (1812). Eliza was only four years old when her mother died in 1813; her father died in 1838. Her brother, James Logan, also became a local minister, being inducted to the parish church at Swinton in 1833.

At the 1871 census, Eliza Logan was single and living in Lanark Lodge from 'income derived from interest of money and landowner'. She had two servants who lived in the house and a gardener who lived with his family in the gate lodge. As with most well-to-do people in those days, she supported local good causes. Even after her brother, Reverend James Logan, died in 1868, she continued her close links with the community in Swinton. For example, when the children of the Swinton Church Sunday Schools had their annual summer excursion in 1878, fourteen farmers' carts brought them over to Duns Law; before they left for home, Miss Logan entertained them all to refreshments in the grounds of Lanark Lodge.

Eliza Logan died at home at the age of 70 in September 1879, probably of a stroke - 'apoplexy' as it was then called. She had been due to attend the very first flower show organised by the recently formed Swinton Horticultural Society a few days later.

In her will, Eliza Logan left estate in both Berwickshire and Lanarkshire (investments, buildings, farms and mineral rights for coal) to the value of over £21,000; to achieve the same purchasing power today would require over £2 million. She left Lanark Lodge to a nephew, Major George Logan of the 7th Bengal Infantry; he was the son of Eliza's sister, Agnes, who happened to marry a man with the same surname, Abraham Logan of Langton parish. George Logan was also bequeathed most of the Lanark Lodge furniture although only on condition that he signed a written agreement to take good care of it! The 'Berwickshire News' reported Logan living in the house in 1881 and donating money to the Eyemouth Disaster Fund. But he died at Lucknow, India in 1883 and his trustees decided to let the property; it was rented by Sheriff George Dundas, son of the registrar general for Scotland.

1889 : Sheriff George Dundas

It is unclear exactly when Dundas became tenant but he was certainly in Lanark Lodge by 1889 and he remained there for some twelve years until 1901. At the 1891 census, we find George Smythe Dundas (aged 49), sheriff substitute of Berwickshire, living in the property with two children - Dorothy aged 8 and Robert aged 6; his wife, Georgina (aged 43), was staying at an address in Edinburgh on census day. There were four servants living in Lanark Lodge, namely a cook, table-maid, housemaid and nurse (nanny); there was also a gardener in the gate lodge. A family with two children having four or five servants to look after them was in no way unusual in the days before the Great War. As a comparison, the house in which Georgina Dundas was a guest on census day was occupied by a widow and her adult daughter; they had seven servants, including two lady's maids!

In 1901, George Dundas gave up the tenancy of Lanark Lodge when he purchased Cairnbank mansion on the eastern edge of the town. At that point, the 'Berwickshire News' reported that 'the whole household furniture of Lanark Lodge, belonging to the trustees of the late Major George Logan' was sold by Swan, the town auctioneers. This would be the same furniture which was in the house when Eliza Logan lived there and which was bequeathed to her nephew. This time, the trustees had decided to sell the house, meaning that it left the Logan family after forty years.

1901 : Ann Hamilton McKie

In Liverpool, in 1888, Ann Hamilton Kennedy (originally from Dumfriesshire) married Peter Lawrie McKie, an officer in the 91st Highlanders. His father was a landowner and there was clearly some money in the family. By the mid-1890s, we find Peter and Ann McKie as tenants of Kimmerghame House, the traditional home of the Swinton family, located a couple of miles to the south of Duns. Their daughter, Angela, was born there in 1895 by which time Peter McKie had retired from the army at the rank of lieutenant. We may presume that this was on health grounds since he died at Kimmerghame after a year of illness in 1896, only some three months after his daughter's first birthday. He was only 35. The 1901 census

shows Ann McKie, at the age of 37, still living at Kimmerghame with her daughter and six servants. By the spring of that same year, she had purchased Lanark Lodge.

Her time in Duns, however, was to be marked by one of the greatest tragedies ever to occur in the town. She had employed a man called John Newbigging as a coachman while she lived at Kimmerghame. As well as driving his employer around, his job would have been to feed, groom and exercise the horses. She clearly valued his service since he also came to Duns when she bought Lanark Lodge; Newbigging and his family moved into the gate lodge at the end of the drive. By 1903, at the age of 31, he had a wife and four daughters of five years of age and under - Maggie, Mary, Jane and Helen.

His wife, Margaret (aged 27) was the daughter of William White, the Eyemouth School Board Officer and, in April of 1903, she took the children to stay with him for a few days. When her husband John came to collect them on the Sunday afternoon, she was concerned that he seemed unwell and had been suffering from insomnia. A local doctor prescribed a sedative medicine on the Monday and he seemed better by the following day.

By mid-morning on the Wednesday, the Lanark Lodge gardener, Peter Paterson, was concerned that John Newbigging had failed to appear for his work and nobody seemed around at the cottage. He went for Newbigging's brother who lived in Currie Street; he broke into the house and found the entire family dead. John Newbigging had killed them all and then committed suicide; all their throats had been cut with a razor. The funeral cortege started for Duns new cemetery at 6am on the Saturday morning in an attempt to allow the Newbiggings' relatives to pass through quieter streets. Ann McKie happened to be away from home in the south of England at the time of the tragedy.



The gate cottage on Bridgend, today known as 'Viewlaw Lodge'

She was still living in Lanark Lodge in 1913 but must have left Duns within the next couple of years. She later remarried, becoming the Countess von Linden! She suffered her own personal tragedy in 1926 when her daughter (now Mrs Angela George) was swept overboard from a wrecked private yacht during a hurricane off Funchal, Madeira and was drowned together with her host and most if not all of the crew. Ann, Countess von Linden, died at Tunbridge Wells in 1940.

1915 : Thomas Kerr Brown

The next tenure of Lanark Lodge would turn out to be its shortest. Thomas Kerr Brown was a grocer and wine merchant in the Market Place for over 50 years, having taken over his father's business which had been founded in 1819. He was chairman of Duns School Board, a member of the Parish Council and on the board of the Duns Gaslight Company. He had a long and distinguished association with the local Volunteers. Clearly seen as a pillar of the community, Brown was appointed as an honorary sheriff substitute at Duns in 1910.

He retired from business that same year, vacated his house and shop in the Market Place and went to live in Black Bull Street. He soon took the opportunity of travelling to Austin, Texas to visit his brother, James Gordon Brown. In 1911, he made the same journey again and, this time, his brother came back to Scotland with him. In the 1915 valuation roll, Thomas Kerr Brown is shown as tenant and occupier of Lanark Lodge but it seems that he and his brother (both bachelors) then decided to purchase the property. Brown's brother, James, returned to the United States, perhaps with the intention of winding up his affairs there before a permanent return to Scotland. If so, it never happened. James Gordon Brown died in Austin, Texas in March 1916.

Within two months, Thomas Kerr Brown was also dead. He had been unwell for some time and, in May 1916, decided to take a short break to Crieff in hopes that the change might do him good. He travelled with a friend who was the postmaster in Duns. The friend found Brown lying dead in his room at the age of 73. In July, the local auctioneers were back at work, this time selling the furniture 'belonging to the late T Kerr Brown, Lanark Lodge'.

1916 : James Macfarlane

If Thomas Kerr Brown's tenure at Lanark Lodge was the shortest, that of James Macfarlane is the most frustrating in the scarcity of evidence. The 1915 valuation roll shows Macfarlane as tenant of Mayfield Farm, near Reston. His purchase of Lanark Lodge in 1916 may have been associated with his retirement. He was clearly a motoring enthusiast, selling a Ford touring car 'in good running order' in 1916 and a 'perfect' Wolseley in 1917; shortly afterwards, he was looking to purchase a touring Ford again.

The time of the Macfarlanes at Lanark Lodge was mainly characterised by their regular adverts in the 'Berwickshire News' seeking staff. Whether help was hard to come by or whether the Macfarlanes were not the best of employers, we will never know. But, over their six years in the house, they were regularly looking for housemaids, cooks, grooms and gardeners. The adverts often stated that there were 'three in the family', implying that the work would not be too demanding. In 1921, they decided that, instead of paying someone to manage the garden, they could perhaps make money from it. They offered the garden and tomato house, together with the cottage, to let. They were taken up on the offer by a man called Redpath who was soon describing himself as a 'market grower' at Lanark Lodge.

All that remains to be said is that James Macfarlane sold the property in 1922 and died two years later in Norfolk.

1922 : Thomas Allan Swan

Thomas Swan was the elder son of William Bertram Swan, one of two brothers who founded the Duns and Reston livestock mart business of 'RG & WB Swan, Auctioneers' around 1870. Born in 1879, he was educated at 'Duns Academy' (probably just a senior class in the local school) and George Watson's College. As soon as he was capable, he was involved in the family business; when it passed to the next generation in 1907, Thomas Swan became one of three partners, the others being his brother Nichol Allan Swan and George Hogarth, related to the Swan family through marriage. As well as being a partner in the auctioneering business, Thomas Swan was tenant farmer at Whitsome Laws (where he lived before 1922) and Rulesmains, just outside Duns. He had interests in golf and curling.

He purchased Lanark Lodge in the spring of 1922. In 1925, he was appointed to Duns Town Council to fill a vacancy. At the time, he was described as 'one of the best known businessmen in the Border Counties' as well as having 'large interests in agriculture as an extensive farmer'. In 1926, he contested the Council seat in an election, came top of the poll and was created a bailie (deputy provost). In 1927, he received the ultimate accolade when he was chosen to be Provost of Duns Town Council, a post he held until his death. He also served on both the Parish Council and Berwickshire County Council.

Thomas Swan lived for only a few more years. His health declined in 1930 and treatment in an Edinburgh nursing home for cirrhosis of the liver failed. He died at home in Lanark Lodge at the age of 51 in November 1930, leaving a widow and young son, William, who would have been about 13 years of age.

Thomas Swan's wife, Agnes Alexandra Helen Swan, was the daughter of William Laidlaw, proprietor of the Cumledge blanket mills near Preston; the family home was in Duns, at Hillside on Teindhillgreen. Agnes Swan remained at Lanark Lodge for almost twenty years after her husband's death. She suffered a second personal loss when her son was killed during the Second World War. William Allan Laidlaw Swan was described as an 'insurance inspector'. When the war started, he was a Territorial officer in the Royal Engineers but he transferred to the RAF. He was sent to the Middle East and then flew out to North Africa in March 1943. In November of that year, as a Flying Officer, William Swan set off in a

Ventura aircraft for a 150-mile flight over the Mediterranean Sea. The aircraft never arrived and no trace of it or its crew was ever found. In 1944, William Swan, unmarried, was officially presumed dead as a result of air operations in North Africa at the age of 27. His mother, Agnes Swan, died in Edinburgh at the age of 93 in 1977.



Probably the original gate pillar finials on either side of the modern entrance

1948 : Berwickshire County Council

Agnes Swan had left Lanark Lodge by the later 1940s and, with her departure, the house ceased to be a home. In 1948, the property was acquired by Berwickshire County Council to house the staff of its public health department and underwent alterations, including the eradication of some dry rot. In a sense, the character of the house had been changing for some considerable time. As we saw at the beginning, the property was unusual in having been built so far from the road and on such an extensive site. But this became, for its twentieth-century owners, a negative factor - Lanark Lodge was eventually surrounded by 'council housing' which increasingly compromised its privacy. As far back as 1938, Agnes Swan was appealing against the rates valuation for the property on the grounds that new houses had been built right up against her boundary. 'Small boys' were causing damage in the garden. She even claimed that the house had become impossible to sell.

In the early 1950s, there was considerable debate around providing a new mortuary for the area since the existing one at Whitchester hospital at the bottom of Bridgend had become unsuitable. Some thought that a new mortuary might be built in the kitchen garden at Lanark Lodge or the stable there might be converted. However, the Medical Officer's negative opinion eventually held sway - nobody would want a mortuary in the middle of a housing estate.



Lanark Lodge has continued its public health role over the past seventy years and operates today as a day care centre, owned by Scottish Borders Council, providing support for people over the age of 18 with a learning disability.

The information in this article has been researched from numerous newspapers of the time (but especially the 'Berwickshire News') and from public records - census; valuation rolls; wills and testaments; and birth, marriage and death records.

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