

Trinity Lodge, Duns and the Brown Family

David McLean (2023)



Trinity Lodge, sometimes known as Trinity House

Introduction

It is probably best to begin by trying to explain the name. Map evidence shows that the road which today leads southwards out of Duns towards Coldstream (Station Road) was only built at some point between 1812 and 1821. Before this, the road to Coldstream lay farther east – in fact, along the line of what today is the lane leading to Trinity Lodge. When Dunse was granted its charter in 1490, making it a burgh of barony, one of the town's rights was to hold an annual fair and it was set on the Monday after the celebration of Trinity. This fair was supposedly held on land beside that old road leading south and so the townspeople would have talked of the 'Trinity fair' and, it is claimed, this explains why that part of the town came to be called 'Trinity'. While it is impossible to properly evidence this claim, it seems logical enough. The naming of 'Trinity Lodge', built in that area, is therefore equally logical although it appears not to have had that name when it was built. Today, the property is category C listed and is sometimes known as 'Trinity House', a designation also found occasionally in historical sources.



Trinity Lane, the old road south out of Dunse

Building Trinity Lodge

The Berwickshire News of 22 April 1879 contained a report covering the sudden death of Major W Hope Smith of Cruikshields near Bunkle. The report informs us that

“Major Smith was the eldest son of the late Admiral Smith who built Trinity House, Dunse, which, during his occupancy of it, was known as the Anchorage.”

This Admiral Smith was, in fact, Rear-Admiral Andrew Smith who was born in Edinburgh in 1763. He entered the Royal Navy in 1779 and saw extensive action in both Europe and the Caribbean on a variety of ships. His family were certainly living in Dunse towards the end of the century since the birth of one of his children in 1796 is recorded in Church of Scotland records for Dunse parish. Research also shows that Andrew Smith was in command of the Berwick district of the Sea Fencibles between 1807 and 1810; this was a kind of ‘naval home guard’ set up along the English coast during the French Wars. His naval duties took him to Greenock in 1810 and so it is possible that Smith and his family left Dunse around that time. From the above, we can reasonably place Andrew Smith in Dunse between the 1790s and 1810 and so the ‘Anchorage’ (later, Trinity Lodge) with its stable block was most probably built during those years. Andrew Smith was promoted to Rear-Admiral in 1821 and died suddenly in Edinburgh in 1831 at the age of 69.

Trinity Lodge and Major Alexander Brown

From 1824, perhaps earlier, Trinity Lodge became home to a few generations of the extended Brown family, originally of Longformacus, a family which came to be associated with the East Indies (now Malaysia) and Penang in particular. That connection began with David Brown who was born in 1776 and studied law at Edinburgh University. In 1800, he went out to Penang as a business partner of James Scott, another borders man. When Scott died in 1808, David Brown took over his estate and became the largest landowner in Penang, growing a variety of spices, especially nutmeg and pepper; this was a highly profitable business although it required patience waiting for new plantations to mature. David Brown also built a substantial house in the colony in 1812 and was married to three, possibly four native wives. Brown died on board a ship in the East Indies in 1825; his name lives on today, not least in the renowned 'David Brown's Restaurant and Tea Terraces' on Penang.

In John Wood's 1824 map of Dunse, 'Trinity Lodge' is named and annotated as being the property of 'Major Brown'. This was Major Alexander Brown, brother of the above David Brown. There is a family tree at the end of this paper. Alexander Brown also came to be associated with the East Indies but not working on the spice estates; he served with the East India Company, eventually reaching the rank of major in the Bombay Native Infantry.

Alexander Brown may have left the East India Company by the time he purchased Trinity Lodge and he may have been responsible for changing its name from the Anchorage. At the 1841 census he was recorded as 'independent' (that is, of independent means) and, ten years later, he was listed as 'Major EIC half pay', signifying retirement.



Major Alexander Brown, painted in 1850 by William Watson (National Galleries of Scotland)

New Generations of the Brown Family at Trinity Lodge

At the 1851 census, there were four members of the extended Brown family living in Trinity Lodge - Major Alexander Brown (age 72) and his wife Margaret (age 64) together with their two nieces, Margaret Stuart Brown (age 28) and Madalina Brown (age 25). The two sisters were the daughters of Alexander's brother, David, and were born in the 1820s in Penang.



Penang, Straits Settlement, East Indies, birthplace of Margaret and Madalina Brown

Major Alexander Brown of Trinity Lodge died in 1858, leaving his wife and two nieces living in the property, usually with three servants. Margaret, widow of Alexander Brown, died four years after her husband in 1862. There is no evidence of Alexander and Margaret Brown having had any children. Trinity Lodge now became both the home and property of their nieces, Margaret Stuart Brown and Madalina Brown, neither of whom ever married. They stayed in Trinity Lodge for many years and the 'Misses Brown' featured regularly in the Berwickshire News for their support of charitable causes or attendance at town events. Census records typically described them as being 'landowners, income derived from interest of money'. Indeed, they inherited not just Trinity Lodge but two other properties – Todlaw House (on Station Road opposite Southfield) which was rented out and a house in Bridgend which was put to use for at least fifty years as the dwelling for various Trinity Lodge gardeners.

Madalina Brown died at Trinity Lodge at the age of 65 in 1891. For whatever reason, no information relating to Trinity can be found in the 1901 census but, at the 1911 census, her surviving sister, Margaret Stuart Brown (age 88), was still living there, now with a new set of relatives from the Brown family. They were her two grand-nieces, Elizabeth Waller Cameron (age 41) and Amelia Nisbet Cameron (age 39), both living on private means. Their great-grandfather was David Brown who first took over the spice estates in the Penang colony. Again, the family tree at the end of this paper will help.

Amelia Nisbet Cameron was, in fact, born in Trinity Lodge in 1871. Her father, Daniel Cameron, was minister of Heriot parish in Midlothian but he died at the age of 32 of tuberculosis, a common cause of death at the time, before Amelia was born. His wife, Elizabeth, was left with her eighteen-month-old daughter (Elizabeth Waller Cameron) while

half way through her second pregnancy. She went to live with her two aunts in Trinity Lodge to await the birth of her second child. Subsequently, in 1875, Elizabeth Cameron (age 32) remarried; her second husband was William George Dunlop (age 29) who also had associations with the East Indies trade. This second marriage lasted only a few years, however, when Elizabeth Dunlop died in Edinburgh at the age of 36 in 1879 of a disease of the spleen.

Sisters Elizabeth Waller Cameron and Amelia Nisbet Cameron therefore lost their mother at the ages of 9 and 7 respectively. At the 1891 census (when they were 21 and 19), they were staying with a great-aunt who rented Nisbet House south of Duns but Berwickshire News reports show that, certainly by 1901, they were living with Margaret Stuart Brown (another great-aunt) in Trinity Lodge. As we have seen, they were confirmed there in the 1911 census.

Margaret Stuart Brown died in 1913 having reached the age of 91. She left estate worth around £5000 (including shares in rubber companies in the Far East) which would have a purchasing power today of some £500,000. Sisters Elizabeth and Amelia Cameron continued to live in Trinity Lodge but not as outright owners of the property; they were life-renters of the house under arrangements administered by solicitors J & D W B Tait WS in Kelso who, incidentally, were also related to the Brown family. The same arrangement seems to have applied to the other two properties, Todlaw and the house in Bridgend. So, the sisters would have lived comfortably enough although, having life-rent rights, they could not sell the properties or bequeath them on death. It has not been possible to find any will and testament information to determine on whose behalf the Kelso solicitors administered the Duns properties.

Like the Misses Brown before them, the Misses Cameron featured regularly in the local newspaper for their support of good causes. A particular highlight was the 'Trinity Concert' which they organised in the drawing room of Trinity Lodge in 1915. This was a song recital given by Ian Alexander, a baritone of the Brighton Music Festival, who accompanied himself at the piano. The concert raised money to support the comforts fund for troops in the KOSB.

Amelia Cameron (usually known as Amy) was a talented amateur photographer. Her near neighbour was Doctor John MacWatt of Morelands, a highly respected country physician and renowned botanist. When MacWatt published his book 'The Primulas of Europe' in 1923, he asked Amy Cameron to take plant photographs. Almost fifty of these pictures were used to illustrate the book, eight of them being hand-coloured by Amy. In his preface, MacWatt acknowledged 'the generous way in which she has expended time and labour in the photographs which add so greatly to the value of the book'. In fact, Amy Cameron was a keen gardener herself and, like John MacWatt, had a special interest in alpine plants of which she had an extensive knowledge.

Amy also contributed the photographs for her sister Elizabeth's book entitled 'The Valley of the Silent Loch', published by James Lewis of Selkirk in the 1920s. The sisters clearly had a long interest in and, indeed, love for St Mary's Loch and the Yarrow Valley in Selkirkshire and Elizabeth Cameron's book covers the history and landscape of the area. It was dedicated 'to MSB', presumably in memory of her great-aunt, Margaret Stuart Brown. At the 1921 census, Amy and Elizabeth were staying in Capper Cottage, Yarrow, close to the loch. They are the only people listed at the house – perhaps they had rented it as a holiday retreat.



One of Amy Cameron's hand-coloured photographs in 'The Primulas of Europe'

Amelia Cameron died in an Edinburgh nursing home after an appendicitis operation, aged 59, in 1931, leaving her sister Elizabeth in Trinity Lodge. Elizabeth remained as life-renter of the three Duns properties until the valuation roll of 1940 which shows that she had then become the proprietor (owner). In the early 1940s, the house in Bridgend was still being used to accommodate a Trinity Lodge gardener but Todlaw House was sold to Philip Frederick Hood Wilson who had rented the property since 1926; he was a corn factor, one of the Wilsons of The Knoll.

Elizabeth Waller Cameron of Trinity Lodge died in Queen Mary Nursing Home in Edinburgh in 1955 at the age of 85. Oddly, her death was not registered by a relative but by the doctor who confirmed the cause of death. Her death certificate contains two errors, giving her age as 88 instead of 85 and stating that her mother's maiden surname was Dowling when it was Brown (Dowling was one of her mother's middle names). The Berwick Advertiser carried an obituary which described her as a 'much respected and highly esteemed citizen of the County Town', always keen to help others in her own quiet way. She had been involved with the Girl Guides and Brownies, serving at one time as Brown Owl. She took a deep interest in the British Legion and had presented them with a new flag. At her death in 1955, Trinity Lodge had been in the possession or occupation of various members of the Brown family for at least 130 years.

The information in this paper has been researched from various newspapers of the time (especially the Berwickshire News) and from public records – census; valuation rolls; wills and testaments; and birth, marriage and death records

David McLean (2023)

Brown (Trinity Lodge, Duns) Family Tree

The Brown family of Longformacus was very extensive and included many members who were born and/or died in the East Indies (Malaysia). This family tree is therefore restricted to persons relevant to the history of Trinity Lodge.

