

I Predict a Riot

(Kaiser Chiefs, 2005)

Chris Neale looks at some instances of violence on the streets of Dunfermline in the 1840s

On Wednesday 13th August, 1845 a 'brutal and furious mob assembled in the night-time, by tuck of drum, and, after assaulting the Provost of the Burgh in the most dastardly manner, and demolishing the windows of the Messrs Alexanders' warehouse in Dunfermline, these howling savages proceeded to Balmule House, the residence of Mr James Alexander (a distance of three miles), with the hellish purpose of burning the mansion, and, as was afterwards but too manifest, of taking away the life of its owner.' (1)

'We cannot detail the shame and disasters of this year [1845]. The riots of August, the plundering of shops, the wrecking of warehouses and factories, the assault on Provost Ronaldson, the visitation of the dragoons, the march on Balmule, the lawless proceedings there... all come back to our mind as a hideous nightmare.' (2)

And, from one of the victims, 'Your lordship will probably recollect an alarming case of this sort which occurred in Dunfermline in the autumn of 1845. A large multitude of discontented operatives... marched into the heart of the town armed with staves etc...I having got by accident very early notice of the movement went out to endeavour to get the mob dispersed. Unfortunately I was in the midst of it before any of the Police had time to reach the ground...I was several times knocked down by stones and

Paling Stakes, and at length was carried away from the scene of tumult insensible from severe wounds inflicted on my Head.' (3)

A shocking event recalled, even at some distance in time, in language expressive of horror and revulsion. But rioting and street-violence were by no means uncommon in Scottish burghs in the 1840s. Strikes, mass

unemployment, political unrest and popular protest in many forms had been making the authorities nervous for years. Scotland's working populations of miners, textile-workers and other trades endured brutal and squalid living conditions while facing increasing economic uncertainty. Ramshackle poor law provision and an *ad hoc*, diffident approach to law and order arrangements fostered a situation where direct action seemed, at times, the only option for desperate men and women.

But, to return to the events in Dunfermline on that August night in 1845. At the heart of the affair was the matter of wages: the

piece-rate earnings of journeyman weavers in the town's table-linen industry. As the mid-century approached, Dunfermline's textile trade was still largely organized on the putting-out

PROCLAMATION.

BY ORDER OF THE
SHERIFF, AND THE MAGISTRATES
OF THE

BURGH OF DUNFERMLINE.

REWARD OF TEN GUINEAS.

WHEREAS a number of evil disposed persons, in the course of last night, after traversing the Streets of the Burgh, to the great annoyance of the Inhabitants, assembled in *St. Margaret's Street*, and there in the most wicked and malicious manner attempted to force the Door and broke a number of Panes of Glass in the Dwelling-house of Robert Robertson, Esq. Manufacturer; and whereas such practices are not only dangerous and unlawful, but entail a heavy expense on the Community, in so far as the loss and damage thereby sustained must be paid by an Assessment of the Inhabitants,—the Sheriff and Magistrates are determined to take the promptest and most efficient measures to prevent the repetition of such outrages,—A REWARD therefore of TEN GUINEAS is hereby offered to any person who shall, within eight days from this date, lodge with the Sheriff Clerk or Town Clerk such information as shall lead to the apprehension and conviction of the perpetrators of the mischief committed last night,—and NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that the Police Officers, who are to have the assistance of the Burgh Constables and a large number of Special Constables, have instructions to be in readiness to repress and put down any future attempt at Riot, by seizing and taking into custody all persons who shall be in any way concerned therein; and who, on being apprehended, will not only be severely punished, but will be held responsible for the damage already done.

Dunfermline 1st February, 1838.

Dunfermline Monthly Advertiser.

Advertisement. There is no record of anyone claiming this (quite substantial) reward. Reproduced by permission of Fife Council libraries

system. Manufacturers, of whom there were upwards of 40 or 50 in the town, gave out commissions in the form of *webs* (lengths of yarn to be woven into specified grades and quantities of cloth) to loomshop masters or independent journeymen. A complicated structure of payment, based on an agreed Table of Prices, had been in operation for several generations. Originally these prices had the force of custom but latterly the Table was the result of fierce negotiation between the representatives of the operatives and the manufacturers. And the trend was relentlessly downwards. In 1826 the price paid for weaving 'fifty-three' grade cloth from a spindle of warp was six shillings and threepence. In 1841, however, the price was down to two shillings and ninepence.(4)

TABLE OF PRICES. 1841

COMMON AND FINE HANDS.

All Bees not exceeding 30-2.	1s 10d.
Above 30-2 and not exceeding 40-2.	2s 10d.
40-2.	2s 10d.
45-2.	2s 10d.
50-2.	2s 10d.
55-2.	2s 10d.
60-2.	2s 10d.
65-2.	2s 10d.
70-2.	2s 10d.
75-2.	2s 10d.
80-2.	2s 10d.

All Manholes exceeding 1 Design to be paid on the same as 1 Design and under, at Double Price.

For 7 and 10-2 Tread, 4-2, and 6-2, and 8-2, and 10-2, and 12-2, and 14-2, and 16-2, and 18-2, and 20-2, and 22-2, and 24-2, and 26-2, and 28-2, and 30-2, and 32-2, and 34-2, and 36-2, and 38-2, and 40-2, and 42-2, and 44-2, and 46-2, and 48-2, and 50-2, and 52-2, and 54-2, and 56-2, and 58-2, and 60-2, and 62-2, and 64-2, and 66-2, and 68-2, and 70-2, and 72-2, and 74-2, and 76-2, and 78-2, and 80-2, and 82-2, and 84-2, and 86-2, and 88-2, and 90-2, and 92-2, and 94-2, and 96-2, and 98-2, and 100-2, and 102-2, and 104-2, and 106-2, and 108-2, and 110-2, and 112-2, and 114-2, and 116-2, and 118-2, and 120-2, and 122-2, and 124-2, and 126-2, and 128-2, and 130-2, and 132-2, and 134-2, and 136-2, and 138-2, and 140-2, and 142-2, and 144-2, and 146-2, and 148-2, and 150-2, and 152-2, and 154-2, and 156-2, and 158-2, and 160-2, and 162-2, and 164-2, and 166-2, and 168-2, and 170-2, and 172-2, and 174-2, and 176-2, and 178-2, and 180-2, and 182-2, and 184-2, and 186-2, and 188-2, and 190-2, 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and painful haggling over the previously-agreed price. The second charge was that the Alexander brothers feigned charity when putting out webs at reduced prices. There was, they would claim, virtually no profit for themselves and they merely intended to offer some support to starving weavers and their families. The first charge aroused considerable resentment among the operatives who were affected but the second had them turning out of their meetings 'like angry wasps.'⁽⁷⁾

The thirteenth day of August, 1845 seemed no different to other Wednesdays that summer.⁽⁸⁾ The looms were largely silent and groups of men and youths idled around the Town Cross. Earlier that week the infantry detachment stationed in the burgh had packed up and left for new duties. Their replacements had not yet arrived. A whisper went round that it would be a good time to settle scores with the Alexanders. As darkness came down men drifted into the centre of town from outlying districts – from Baldrigeburn, the Nethertown, and from Pittencrieff. Not all of them were weavers. A drum was procured (possibly *the* drum, the legendary Nethertown Weicht which had summoned the town's inhabitants to collective mischief for generations). Pocketfuls of stones were gathered and fences were stripped to provide staves and clubs. A riot was under way, although it took a little time to get going. There was a deal of milling around the streets as the mob grew in size and confidence. The intervention of Provost Ronaldson possibly aided this as he rushed into the middle of the crowd and ordered them to disperse. The mob's response was to knock his hat off. A few – more serious – blows followed and he was led away to the sound of jeers and hisses. Heartened by this encounter the mob now had leaders and a growing resolve. They made their way to the warehouse in Canmore Street and the adjacent residence of Thomas Alexander. Disappointingly, there was no one at home but rocks were thrown and great satisfaction was taken in smashing the windows of both premises.

At this point it would have been customary to make a further circuit of the streets, smash a few more windows, easily evade the efforts of the town's small force of police and special constables to restrain them, before making their way in small groups to their homes. However, a cry was heard, 'To Balmule!' At once it was taken up by the crowd. Balmule was the small mansion, home of James Alexander, about an

hour's foot-journey to the north of Dunfermline. The mood of the mob became vengeful once more and the torchlit march to Balmule was undertaken where the Alexander family had, hours before, retired to bed.

Woken by the cries and cheers of the crowd assembled at his gate, Alexander at once realised what was afoot. Judging – accurately, but rather ignobly – that it was his own person which was most at risk from the crowd's hostility, he fled to the rooftop in his nightshirt. Meanwhile his wife and children assembled in the drawing room to receive the mob which had by now forced its way past Alexander's servants and into the building. It was an admirably cool but somewhat bemused Mrs Alexander who sat and listened while one of the insurgents explained, with civility and at some length, the necessity of burning her home to the ground in revenge for her husband's misdeeds. Eventually the family was escorted from the building while a – rather bungled – attempt was made to set fire to the house.

By now several hours had elapsed since Provost Ronaldson had been so roughly handled in the town. A rider had been sent to the barracks at Jock's Lodge outside Edinburgh. A squadron of Dragoons had been dispatched and ferried across the Forth and were now, as dawn was breaking, proceeding at a brisk pace towards the besieged home of the Alexanders. The sound of approaching hooves and the rattle of harness immediately signaled to the mob that their night's work was at an end. Under cover of the remaining darkness they dispersed and quietly made their way over the fields and through the woods back to their own cottages.

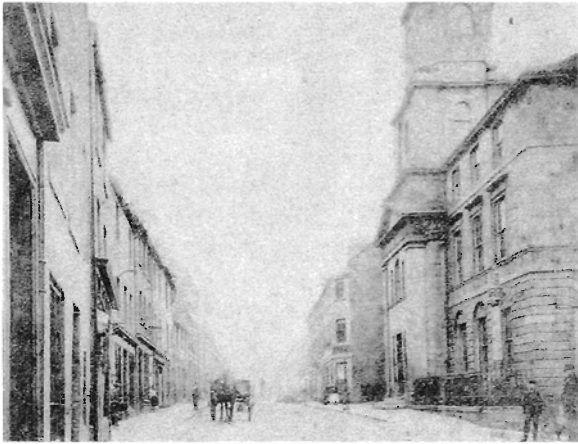
Respectable Dunfermline was appalled at the night's outrages. The subsequent investigation produced three prisoners to stand trial at the High Court in Edinburgh. John Coutts and William Smith were convicted of mobbing and rioting and sentenced to imprisonment for one year. For the additional charge of assault John Gibson was transported for seven years.

There is an interesting contrast to be found with some events which had happened in Dunfermline the previous summer. Again, the crowd, the Dunfermline 'mob', was the principal actor but this time a different kind of dynamic seems to have been in operation: different animosities and different emotions.

At the end of May, 1844 a small detachment of

infantry arrived in Dunfermline.(9) It was there to relieve the previous posting. Since the summer of 1842, when rioting and agitation had reached a scale which required the deployment of a troop of cavalry to bring order back to the town's streets, there had been a military presence in the burgh.

The detachment consisted of about 50 private soldiers, a bugler, and a sergeant of the 26th Foot. Later to become the Cameronian regiment, the 26th had most recently been in the public eye as prominent participants in the imperial adventure which became known as the First Opium War. Dunfermline's deployment was led by two middle-aged officers: the diminutive – but rather pompous – Captain Frederick Skinner and his second-in-command, Lieutenant Alexander Muirhead. The officers took apartments in the Spire Hotel, one of the most prominent buildings in the burgh. Originally built as the town's guild-hall, the hotel could not have been more central, facing on to the High Street and immediately adjacent to the Town Cross. Improvised barrack accommodation for the men was located immediately to the rear of the building with an entrance on Guildhall Street.



The Spire Hotel. c.1860s.

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The authorities in Dunfermline regarded the military presence with decidedly mixed feelings. That it was essential for public order was not doubted. Dunfermline's jail was notoriously insecure while the town's force of constables, though recently augmented, gave continuing cause for concern. Much of the problem came down to money. A cash-strapped Town Council could not bring itself to provide the resources for an effective police establishment. Revenue and fine-collecting, supervision of

public works, the inspection of licensed premises, and the supervision of scavengers were among the array of duties loaded on to the shoulders of underpaid town officers. Low salaries attracted men of correspondingly low competence. The police Commissioners were continually disappointed by the standards of sobriety, honesty, and diligence displayed by their servants. Having said this, gradual improvements were being made to the establishment and, hence, to the public order environment. Street lighting had been adjusted and enhanced, the numbers of the night patrol were augmented, and the comportment and conduct of the town's constables were subjected to a degree of regulation which ensured the maintenance of some minimal standards. By the mid-1840s Dunfermline's police were competent to deter simple law-breaking, to clear the night-streets of drunks, and to quell (minor) outbreaks of public disorder.

But the challenges to Dunfermline's public order were often much more robust and the Town Council conceded the need to accommodate a garrison of military on a more or less permanent basis. This insurance was not cost-free. Billeting of troops on the inhabitants was an imposition traditionally resented by civilian populations. The preferred option – the provision of separate barracks and the payment of maintenance – was much more expensive. The Council's acceptance of these costs was distasteful to them on two accounts. Firstly they noticed that *their* military detachment, whose maintenance was their burden exclusively, was regularly dispatched to quell disturbances in surrounding pit-villages. Not the Town Council's responsibility. Nor did they care for the military practice of including a recruiting sergeant among their numbers which, they felt, smacked of opportunism.

There was a second reason why the Town's welcome for the military was lukewarm. And this was, 'on account of their injurious moral tendency on the youth of the town,' as one magistrate put it. No specifics were mentioned although it might be reasonable to assume that drunkenness and, possibly, swearing were the chief offences. There was little doubt of the fascination for Dunfermline's young people with the spectacle provided by this exotic presence. As Robert Laidlaw of the Spire Inn explained to Captain Skinner when he complained of being the constant object of their frank scrutiny, 'wherever there are redcoats there will be boys to look at them.' For their

part it might not be too speculative to imagine that peacekeeping postings to small, rather dull, provincial towns like Dunfermline were not greatly to the military's taste. Even less so for officers of middle age but junior rank.

On Saturday, then, 13 July, at around midnight, the usual crowd of workpeople was gathered in small groups in the High Street around the Town Cross and in front of the Spire Hotel. It was 'big pay Saturday' and the inns and spirit-sellers were turning out their crowds and the shopkeepers were putting up their shutters for the Sabbath. Lights were blazing from the first floor of the Spire where Captain Skinner and Lieutenant Muirhead were looking down on the scene below. They had been dining with some of the town's lawyers and were enjoying a glass of toddy.

For reasons best known to himself Skinner decided to clear the streets and went down the stairs and began to order the small groups who had gathered to disperse and return to their homes. At this time it was estimated that there were about 70 men and boys around the Cross. Receiving little co-operation, or attention, Skinner threatened to 'call out the guard.' At the same time an altercation broke out between Lieutenant Muirhead and Alexander McKinlay, an operative weaver. It seems that Muirhead had slapped McKinlay around the head with the scabbard of his sword whereupon McKinlay had seized the Lieutenant by the collar. As a small, rather unseemly, fracas threatened to break out, Captain Skinner called out his guard, six men and a bugler. As they lined up, with bayonets fixed, the order was given to 'charge.' Slowly advancing, the troops pressed the irate crowd back along the street. According to witnesses, the crowd 'hissed' and 'groaned' and called out, 'do you think we are Chinese?' This to Lieutenant Muirhead who, by now, had unsheathed his sword and was brandishing it at the crowd. According to Captain Skinner, they cried out, 'stone the b-g-rs!' while subjecting him, personally, to 'vile abuse.'

While these events were taking place, the young town-officer, Robert Jeffrey, appeared with another constable. With some tact Jeffrey persuaded a reluctant Skinner to withdraw his men while he and his colleague cleared the streets as usual. After some bluster, the Captain agreed and Jeffrey, with the help of a discouraging downpour of rain, dispersed the small crowd. Within half an hour the streets were quiet and empty. A small storm, in a tiny

cup, had subsided.

On the Tuesday following this incident it was Fair Day in Dunfermline. Around seven o'clock in the evening there was, once again, something of a crowd around the Cross. According to witnesses, many in the crowd were 'tipsy,'⁽¹⁰⁾ but all were agreed that it was a good-humoured gathering. Some were laughing at one of the soldiers who, befuddled with drink, was finding his way, rather uncertainly, back to the barracks. This was noticed by Captain Skinner who was on the street – once again irritated by the free and nonchalant way in which the townsfolk milled around the Cross. Taking his soldier by the elbow he led him immediately to the barrack entrance in order to remove him from the ridicule of the crowd. Unfortunately, in the act of propelling his man up the steps towards the guardroom, Skinner himself missed his footing and tumbled his length at the entrance. A crowd, mainly youths and girls, saw this and immediately began to cheer and laugh at what was, perhaps, an undignified spectacle.

At around the same time Lieutenant Muirhead was emerging from the Spire Hotel and attempting to make his way to the barracks – a distance of some 40 yards. In this he was frustrated as the crowd turned their shoulders to him and refused to make way. A mild, but rather infuriating, affront to military dignity. Jeers and name-calling from the crowd led Muirhead in no doubt that he was being repaid for his behaviour on the Saturday night.

Determined to restore military authority to the situation, Skinner ordered his sentry to parade, with sloped arms, in front of the barracks. The crowd fell back, allowing the sentry space to march unhindered. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Muirhead, who was within shouting distance of the barracks, called out for assistance and about half a dozen soldiers, with fixed bayonets, were able to clear a space in front of the hotel and around the Cross.

Witness reports of individual events do, of course, vary. William Campbell, a baker in the town, described wrestling a bayonet from a corporal who had threatened 'to run him through.' As John Livingstone, the Superintendent of Dunfermline's police, was making his way to the scene he was advised to hurry because 'Lieutenant Muirhead was chasing the people with his drawn sword.' Alexander Donaldson, a slater, was reported to

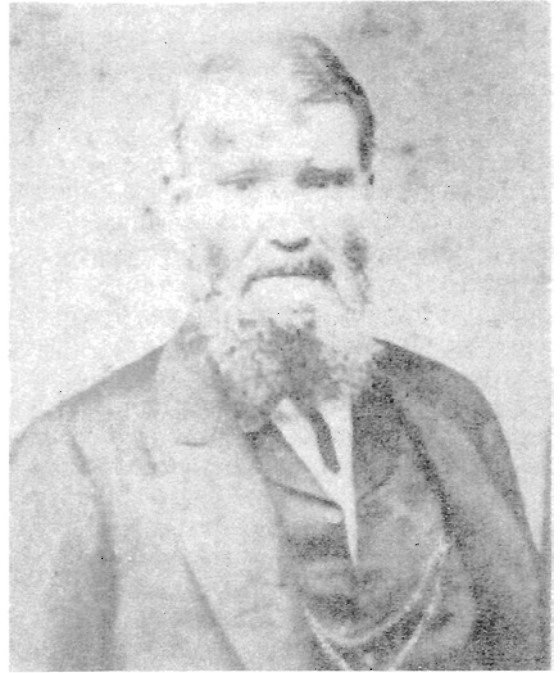
have approached the officers and their men, shaking his fist in their faces and calling them 'southern b-g-rs, and other offensive names.'

Whatever the precise sequence or nature of events, the undoubted confusion and general sense of turmoil which was developing had the effect of drawing larger and larger crowds to the scene. Clearly panicking or, at least, at a high level of excitement, Captain Skinner ordered his bugler to summon his entire force. The bugle-sound, of course, attracted even more of the population. In the course of around 20 minutes a situation where there were less than 200 people gathered at the Cross while a solitary sentry stood guard unmolested at the barracks-steps had been transformed into one where 40 soldiers in two ranks, with bayonets fixed and muskets loaded, stood facing a hostile crowd of around 1500 inhabitants.

At this point, with the situation finely poised and calling for the attention of cool heads, Skinner and Muirhead elected for pantomime. While Lieutenant Muirhead marched before the crowd brandishing his sword, Captain Skinner produced a small, printed volume from about his person and pretended to peruse it. As he later explained, he was trying to convey to the crowd that he intended to read the Riot Act.(11) Though his book contained no such text his thought was that it might 'intimidate' the crowd.

Perhaps it was fortunate that, at this stage, the officers were joined by the civilian authorities. The Town Clerk, the Procurator Fiscal, and what was virtually the whole of Dunfermline's police force were now at Skinner and Muirhead's side – aghast at the situation which confronted them. Almost pleading, they advised the officers to withdraw their men immediately before real mischief took place. But now Skinner's pride was hurt. 'Do you mean, sir, to dictate to me and my men?' Perhaps he would take instructions from a magistrate? 'If you don't find a magistrate for me in two minutes I shall read the Riot Act myself, for I know my duty and I shall do it too...do you think I am to be insulted by a set of blackguards?' Somewhat contradicting himself, he continued, 'if the police force of Dunfermline are not sufficiently strong to be efficient and if the inhabitants are not kept back from annoying the military, he would take his men back to Edinburgh and leave the town to its fate...if such a thing as this occurred in London these blackguards would immediately have been taken hold of.'

The crowd's animosity was now directed particularly at the Captain. As his sergeant reported later, they were calling him 'a b-g-r, and a short-arsed b-g-r, and such like vulgar names.' The crowd cheered as one of their leaders, the shoemaker, Thomas Morrison,(12) approached the conferring officials. Rather adding fuel to the situation, he declared it 'a great hardship that the public should be driven off the streets by these crackbrained fellows. Why,' he demanded of the Superintendent of the Police, 'do you not cram these two drunken b-g-rs [Skinner and Muirhead] into the black hole?'



Thomas Morrison jnr. c.1870, a shoemaker with a radical background. His father had given him his Chartist beliefs. In later years his views mellowed and he devoted most of his life to Dunfermline's municipal politics.

Interestingly, he was an uncle of Andrew Carnegie who was (to the point of tedium) fond of alluding to his family's radical and republican background. Reproduced by permission of Fife Council libraries.

There seemed to be no end to the Captain's trials. 'I see now I am to be insulted by a journeyman cobbler!' Morrison's assertion of his interest – as an elected Police Commissioner – had no effect. 'I will not hold consultation with a d—d shoemaker.' Morrison, persuaded to leave the scene by the Town Clerk and the Superintendent, insisted, as he recalled later, on the last word, 'I laughed and said – in the hearing of the Captain – that I wished to have nothing to do with such a

trifling-looking, red-coated monkey.'

But it was not the last word of course. Almost the last people to arrive on the scene were the Baillies David Birrell and Thomas Russell. Captain Skinner considered that his dignity and honour would remain intact if he placed himself under the order of these magistrates. To the scorn of the crowd he commanded his troops to shoulder arms and, with Lieutenant Muirhead, he marched them the 50 yards back into the barracks. The lack of any continuing spectacle seemed to subdue the crowd as the two magistrates, accompanied by the town's constables, walked around the area surrounding the Cross, quietly persuading the townspeople to return home. Within an hour the streets were empty and quiet – quieter in fact than would have been usual on a Fair Day at that time.

And so a line was drawn under another lively episode on Dunfermline's streets. There were many of these during the 1840s – of varying levels of violence and seriousness. The 'March to Balmule' in 1845 showed why a permanent garrison of troops remained necessary to subdue the effects of the undercurrent of restless discontent among Dunfermline's inhabitants which persisted throughout much of the decade. The events of Fair Day in July, 1844 showed that, on this occasion, the conduct of the military could, by itself, cause major disruption.

Dragoons were despatched to Dunfermline on many occasions throughout the 1840s. Sometimes the cause was street violence which was frankly criminal – with ensuing prosecutions for looting or assault. Yet great demonstrations were held – in support of Reform or against the Corn Laws – where, despite the apprehensions of the authorities, large assemblies and marches generated widespread excitement but virtually no antisocial activity at all. In spite of the mob's readiness to swarm on to the streets, the strikes and demonstrations, the instances of attempted arson and physical assault, the violent speeches, and the presence of soldiers with loaded muskets, Dunfermline's unruly decade was notable for one thing: no one was killed.

As a kind of last hurrah to these turbulent times, the summer of 1850 produced an outbreak of fighting and brawling at a time when it had seemed to the authorities that Dunfermline had at last become a more pacific, more law-abiding place. As the Sheriff-substitute wrote, wearily

calling once more for the assistance of dragoons, 'the operatives here are again at their old tricks after a long repose.'(13) The cause this time was the widespread animosity felt towards Dunfermline's growing Irish population. As usual, the Irish were suspected of undercutting wages – in the collieries and at the loom. The violence was bitter and, contrasting with events of the previous decade, there was a fatality: a young weaver died from his injuries after a severe beating.



Illustration by William Thomson. From Daniel Thomson, *The Weavers' Craft* (Paisley, 1903).

Dunfermline weavers – looking decidedly *unriotous*. By this time Dunfermline was sentimental about its handloom weaving past.

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But there were to be no more lapses. Life in the burgh was changing rapidly. Ill-lit streets patrolled by less than reliable town-officers were replaced by an efficient lighting system and the beginnings of a modern police force. The coming of the railways (strongly supported by the Town Council) meant that, if it should become necessary, military reinforcements were more readily to hand than via a cross-country gallop and a ferry-ride across the Forth estuary. Perhaps most significantly of all, as the weavers were herded into the new factories, the old physicality and directness about the relations of the inhabitants – with each other, and with their

employers and social superiors - seemed to cease. New social and economic disciplines brought many changes to the working population of Dunfermline. And it is possible that the abandonment of their older traditions of asserting their collective strength was one of these.

References:

- (1) *An Inquiry into the policy and practical effects of the Table of Prices*. By a Rate-payer. (Dunfermline, 1848), p9.
- (2) Daniel Thomson, *The Weavers' Craft* (Paisley, 1903), p336.
- (3) *Letter*, 7 February, 1848. James Ronaldson, Provost of Dunfermline, to the Lord Advocate: NAS, AD 58/75.
- (4) Peter Chalmers, *Historical and statistical account of Dunfermline* (Edinburgh, 1844), p378.
- (5) Thomson, *op cit.*, p329.
- (6) Alexander Stewart, *Reminiscences of Dunfermline*, 2nd edition (Edinburgh, 1889), p208.
- (7) Ratepayer's Inquiry, 1848, p8.
- (8) The narrative of the events of this day is largely based on trial precognitions and other papers: NAS, AD/14/45/145, JC 26/1845/480.
- (9) This account is constructed from Town Council letter books, Police Commission minutes, and precognitions taken by Dunfermline Magistrates 17 and 19 July, 1844. (Dunfermline Carnegie Library, .

Local History Collection).

(10) Drink was a feature in all witness accounts of events in the town. By and large the rule seemed to be that the witness himself and his friends may have taken drink but only in moderation. Others were 'drunk' or 'very excited.' Thus William Beveridge on his friends Skinner and Muirhead, 'not in the slightest degree intoxicated. Five or six glasses of wine and a tumbler of toddy...in short they were perfectly sober.'

(11) With its strange ritual of reading a prescribed text the Riot Act was as often evoked for its semi-magical effects as it was implemented as a serious crowd control measure. Certainly, on this occasion, the Act was mentioned by both the authorities and the crowd at almost every turn of events. At no time was a correct version of the text present or easily available for use.

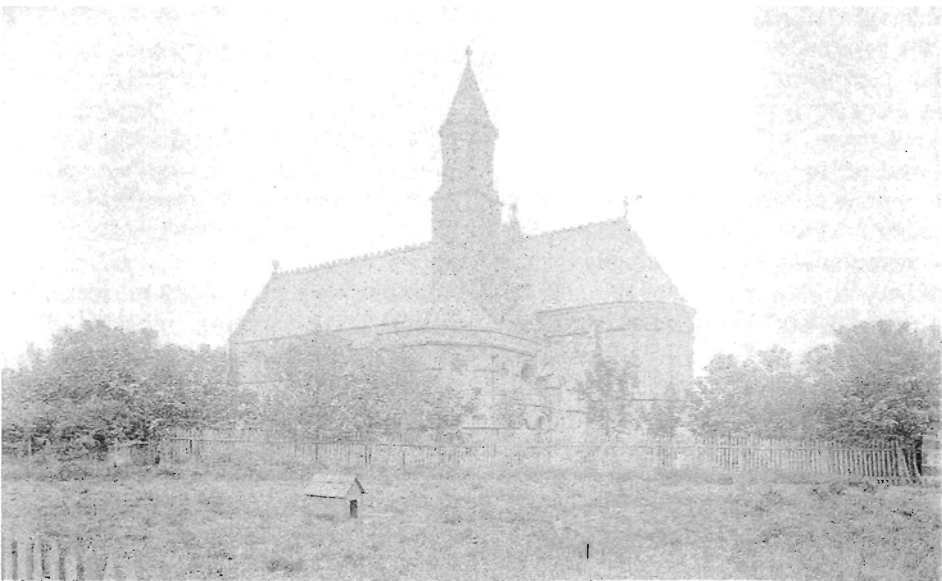
(12) Thomas Morrison (1803-1876) had the distinction of being one of two Dunfermline inhabitants who had briefly faced the charge of Sedition, brought by the authorities during the Chartist agitation of a few years earlier.

(13) *Letter*, 25 June. 1850: NAS AD58/75.

Chris Neale is a librarian in Fife. He has had a keen interest in history since University days, and contributed an article on Dunfermline to a previous issue of *Scottish Local History*.



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