

Hard Vrocht Grun Project

Loss, Return and Commemoration



MUCHALLS PEACE SIGN



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Muchalls Peace Sign

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The Muchalls Peace sign was dedicated in August 1919 to commemorate Peace Day which was held on July 19, 1919.¹ Peace Day was a controversial day of celebrations planned by the government following the signing of a peace treaty between the Allies and Germany on the 28th of June 1919.^{2,3,4} National events were held including a Victory Parade in London as well as local events organised at locations across the country.^{5,6} According to a local newspaper Muchalls celebrated Peace Day with the raising of flags and Mr Wyllie of the Muchalls Hotel invited residents to attend a concert with a small orchestra in the hall.⁷

The Peace sign is in the form of a mosaic/mural shield, 20 feet long and 26 feet wide, with the words "Peace" and "1919" and a Crown emblazoned on it. The shield was made from cement while the letters and crown were made with brown and other colours of tesserae in a mosaic style.⁸

The sign is located on a railway embankment, close to the old railway station at Muchalls, which is located in the parish of Fetteresso in the County of Kincardineshire.⁹ It would at the time have been at close to the heart of the village indicating its importance to local residents.¹⁰ The sign, though worn and requiring restoration, is still clearly visible to passing trains.^{11,12,13}

1 The Scottish War Memorials Project. Muchalls Peace 1919 mosaic. Available online: <http://warmemscot.s4.bizhat.com/warmemscot-ftopic7575.html> Last accessed 21 June 2013.

2 Ibid

3 Aftermath. Available online: <http://www.aftermathww1.com/peaceday.asp> Last accessed 24 June 2013.

4 Exploring 20th Century London. Available online: <http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/armistice-day-1918-and-peace-day-1919> Last accessed 24 June 2013.

5 Aftermath. Available online: <http://www.aftermathww1.com/peaceday.asp> Last accessed 24 June 2013.

6 Google Images. Peace Day 1919. Available online: http://www.google.co.uk/search?q=peace+day+1919&hl=en-GB&rlz=1T4GGHP_en-GBGB442GB443&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=EbzKUa3LBIKGswbo1YDACw&ved=0CDwQsAQ&biw=1778&bih=796 Last accessed 24 June 2013

7 News Article. The Mearns Leader. Stonehaven, Scotland. 04 July 1919. Page 2, col. 5.

8 News Article. The Mearns Leader. Stonehaven, Scotland. 27 August 1920. Page 3, col 6.

9 GENUKI. Kincardineshire. Available online: <http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/sct/KCD/> Last accessed 21 June 2013.

10 Banff and Buchan Arts Forum. Muchalls War/Peace Memorial. The BAAF Art in the Environment Database. Available online: <http://www.bfaf-arts.org.uk/sites/bfaf/art-in-env/artefactdetails.asp?ArtefactNum=503> Last accessed 21 June 2013.

11 The Scottish War Memorials Project. Muchalls Peace 1919 mosaic. Available online: <http://warmemscot.s4.bizhat.com/warmemscot-ftopic7575.html> Last accessed 21 June 2013.

12 Geograph. Peace Memorial, Muchalls. Available online: <http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/2294500> Last accessed 24 June 2013.

13 Newtonmore, Muchalls and Cammachmore Community Council Minutes 17 February 2010 Available online: <http://www.nmccc.org.uk/docs/minutes/NMCCCminutes100217.pdf> Last accessed 21 June 2013.

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The railway line at Muchalls in the early part of the twentieth century prior to 1925 was operated by the Caledonian Railway whilst most of the village of Muchalls and the adjacent area was owned by the Aberdeen Endowments Trust.^{14,15,16,17,18,19,20,}

The local newspaper "The Mearns Leader", in an article about the unveiling of the sign, indicates that the sign was thought by proud locals to be the first "Peace Sign" to be unveiled in Scotland and that it was purposely unveiled on the same day as the War Memorial in nearby Cookney.²¹ The article goes on to state that there was "a large gathering" at the unveiling which was presided over by a Mr Alexander Guild and the unveiling was performed by Baillie Ness of Aberdeen who stated in his address that it was:

"...peculiarly fitting that one of the first peace memorials in the country should be erected at Muchalls, because it would remind the residents, and also those people from Aberdeen who loved the place and came to visit in it each summer, how much they had to be thankful for in the peace they enjoyed, and in the removal of German aggression which had haunted most places on the North Sea."²²

The actual unveiling of the monument was performed by one of the oldest Muchalls residents a Miss Watt, who as a reward, was presented with a "handsome silver cake knife with pearl handle by a Mr George McLean. She also received a bunch of flowers from a Miss Connie Ritchie". The ceremony was followed by a luncheon at the Marine Hotel, Muchalls where a Mr W. Walker gave a toast to the Finance and Lands Committee of Aberdeen Endowments Trust. Baillie Ness and Councillor Esson apparently gave replies to the toast.²³

14 KC 412/43. Valuation Roll. Fetteresso, Kincardine.1920-21. Pages 123. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

15 KC 412/43. Valuation Roll. Muchalls, Fetteresso, Kincardine.1920-21.Pages 117-120. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

16 KC6/5/1. Stonehaven District Committee Minute Book 1890-1920. Page 503.Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

17 KC 412/48 Valuation Roll. Muchalls, Fetteresso, Kincardine. 1925-26.Pages 115-118. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

18 KC 412/43. Valuation Roll. Muchalls, Fetteresso, Kincardine. 1920-21. Page 121. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

19 KC 412/43. Valuation Roll. Fetteresso, Kincardine.1920-21. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

20 KC 412/53. Valuation Roll. Muchalls, Fetteresso, Kincardine. Pages 125-128. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

21 News Article. The Mearns Leader. Stonehaven, Scotland. 27 August 1920. Page 3, col 6.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

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There is no direct reference in the Mearns Leader article regarding who commissioned or paid for the sign. There is also no reference to the sign in local Stonehaven District Minutes which indicates that the railway, the Aberdeen Endowments Trust and or private citizens or groups probably commissioned the sign.^{24,25,26} A review of Muchalls Estate Papers for the period held by the Aberdeenshire Archives did not make any reference to the Peace Sign.^{27,28,29,30}

However, a review of the Aberdeen Endowments Trust Minute Book for 1919 reveals that the Land and Finance Committee, referenced in the Mearns Leader article, was approached by a Mr William Scorgie, a Solicitor and Hon. Secretary of the Peace Memorial Committee, who requested permission from the Trustees to:

“...erect a memorial tablet of bright red bricks on the slope of the mound adjoining the railway station”³¹

The Trustees approved the request unanimously on the understanding that:

“...the best quality of bricks is used and that the privilege is granted during the pleasure of the Trustees and further that the whole work is carried out to their satisfaction”³²

The decision to approve the application was also noted in detail in an Aberdeen Journal newspaper article.³³

Further review of the Aberdeen Endowment Trust Minute Book indicated that Baillie Ness and Councillor Esson were Trustees of the Land and Finance Committee which explains why they were invited to the unveiling of the monument.³⁴ It also indicates that the Aberdeen Endowment Trust did not contribute to the cost of the memorial because an application for a donation to the Cookney War Memorial was turned down because it was:

“...not within the powers of the Trustees to grant a donation towards the proposed memorial fund”.³⁵

24 KC6/5/7. County of Kincardine. Stonehaven District Committee Cash Book. 1914-1925. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

25 KC6/5/1. Stonehaven District Committee Minute Book 1890-1920. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

26 KC6/5/2. Stonehaven District Committee Minute Book. No 2. 1920-1930. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

27 Muchalls Estate Papers. Bundle 93. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

28 Muchalls Estate Papers. Bundle 96. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

29 Muchalls Estate Papers. Bundle 99. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

30 Muchalls Estate Papers. Bundle 100. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

31 Aberdeen Endowment Trust. Minute Book 1919. Pages 55-56. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

32 Ibid.

33 British Newspapers. 1710-1965. News Article. Aberdeen Journal. Aberdeen, Scotland. 25 September 1919. Page 3, col5.

34 Aberdeen Endowment Trust. Minute Book 1919. Page 55. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

35 Aberdeen Endowment Trust. Minute Book 1919. Page 19. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

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It would appear from a Mearns Leader article from December 1920 that funds for the memorial were raised, at least in part, by holding local events.³⁶

A review of the 1919-20 respective Valuation roll for the Muchalls area revealed more information about participants in the unveiling ceremony. Miss Watt was probably one of two sisters who ran the local post office whilst Connie Ritchie was possibly the daughter of David Ritchie, 17 Devanha Gardens East, Aberdeen who were also tenants of a house, no. 20, in Strathanro, which is a village within the Muchalls area close to the Monument.^{37,38}

Mr George McLean, who was also referenced in the fundraising article, was listed as living at 199 Forest Avenue, Aberdeen but was also a tenant of no. 9 Strathanro whilst Mr Alexander Guild resided at 30 Elmfield Avenue, Aberdeen but was also a tenant at no. 27 Strathanro.^{39,40}

Lastly Mr William Walker is listed on the Valuation Roll as a Superintendent Engineer living at Commercial Road, Aberdeen but having a tenancy at 26 Strathanro and Mr William Scorgie is listed as a tenant of no. 23 Srathanro.^{41,42}

It is important to note that all of the tenants of Strathanro rented from Aberdeen Endowments Trust who owned many properties in the Muchalls area.⁴³

Although Memorial Committee Papers have not yet been identified it was possible to confirm that Mr Scorgie, a Councillor representing the St. Machar Ward in Aberdeen, had a legal practice in Aberdeen at 25 Union Street prior to his premature death in 1921.^{44,45,46,47,48} Possibly the Memorial Committee papers may, therefore, be archived with his practice papers.

36 News Article. The Mearns Leader. Stonehaven, Scotland. 24 December 1920. Page 4, col 3.

37 KC 412/. Valuation Roll. Muchalls, Fetteresso, Kincardine.1919-20.Page 119, Row 259. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

38 KC 412/. Valuation Roll. Muchalls, Fetteresso, Kincardine.1919-20.Page 119, Row 272. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

39 KC 412/. Valuation Roll. Muchalls, Fetteresso, Kincardine.1919-20.Page 119, Row 262. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

40 KC 412/. Valuation Roll. Muchalls, Fetteresso, Kincardine.1919-20.Page 119, Row 271. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

41 KC 412/. Valuation Roll. Muchalls, Fetteresso, Kincardine.1919-20.Page 119, Row 280. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

42 KC 412/. Valuation Roll. Muchalls, Fetteresso, Kincardine.1919-20.Page 119, Row 277. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

43 KC 412/. Valuation Roll. Muchalls, Fetteresso, Kincardine.1919-20. Available at Aberdeenshire Archives, Aberdeen.

44 The Edinburgh Gazette. 22 August 1916. Available online: <http://www.edinburgh-gazette.co.uk/issues/12975/pages/1486/page.pdf>

45 Deaths, Scotland. Rubislaw, Aberdeen. 168/03. 05 January 1921. SCORGIE, William. GROS Data 168/03 0013. Available online: <http://www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk> Last accessed 21 August 2013.

46 Will. SC1/36/184. Aberdeen Sheriff Court. 1921. SCORGIE, William. Available online: <http://www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk> Last accessed 21 August 2013.

47 Wills Inventory. SC1/36/184. Aberdeen Sheriff Court. 1921. SCORGIE, William. Available online: <http://www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk> Last accessed 21 August 2013.

48 British Newspapers. 1710-1965. News Article. Aberdeen Journal. Aberdeen, Scotland. 10 January 1921. Page 3, col. 6. Available online: <http://www.findmypast.co.uk> Last accessed 21 August 2013.

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An Aberdeen Journal article published on the 23rd of August 1920, which also reported on the unveiling of the Memorial, states that the Memorial was designed by a Mr Clark who was Superintendent of Duthie Park in nearby Aberdeen.⁴⁹ It also states that the Memorial was created by a company called Messrs Sellar and Co (builders) a company based at 116-120 John Street, Aberdeen.⁵⁰

Messrs Sellar and Co (builders) were listed in the 1910-11 and 1911-12 Aberdeen Post Office Directories respectively as Plasterers, Cement Merchants, Caustic Tile Layers, Mantelpiece and Granite Merchants.^{51,52} The latter directory reference also lists members of staff connected to the firm including John Sellar, the owner of the company, living at 4 Louisville Avenue, Aberdeen and James Clark 21 Elm Place, Aberdeen.^{53,54} Further review of records indicates that Sellar and Co. were in business through the war, with John Sellar owning a number of properties on John Street.^{55,56}

The Aberdeen Journal article also indicates the great degree of support giving locally to the project and, in particular, indicates thanks were given to Mr Travers, of the Coastguard Station and his staff for flag decorations for the memorial.⁵⁷

49 British Newspapers. 1710-1965. News Article. Aberdeen Journal. Aberdeen, Scotland. 23 August 1920. Page 5, col. 5. Available online: <http://www.findmypast.co.uk> Last accessed 21 August 2013.

50 Ibid.

51 National Library of Scotland. Aberdeen Post Office Directory 1910-11. Sellar & Co. p. 424. Available online: <http://www.nls.uk/> Last accessed 21 June 2013.

52 National Library of Scotland. Aberdeen Post Office Directory 1911-12. Sellar & Co. p. 429. Available online: <http://www.nls.uk/> Last accessed 21 June 2013.

53 National Library of Scotland. Aberdeen Post Office Directory 1911-12. Sellar & Co. p. 684. Available online: <http://www.nls.uk/> Last accessed 21 June 2013.

54 National Library of Scotland. Aberdeen Post Office Directory 1911-12. CLARK, James. p. 198. Available online: <http://www.nls.uk/> Last accessed 21 June 2013.

55 1915 Valuation Roll. Aberdeen. SELLER, John. VR 86 76/1126 and VR 86 76/47. Available online: <http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk> Last accessed 21 June 2013.

56 Mapping the Practice of Sculpture in Britain and Ireland http://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/view/reference.php?id=msib6_1240408713 Last accessed 21 June 2013.

57 British Newspapers. 1710-1965. News Article. Aberdeen Journal. Aberdeen, Scotland. 23 August 1920. Page 5, col. 5. Available online: <http://www.findmypast.co.uk> Last accessed 21 August 2013.

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