

Foreword

It is a pleasure to welcome the publication of this book on the life and work of architect John Allan. Stirling Local History Society members are to be congratulated on their research, pulling together information from a wide range of sources to explore the life of a man who, although born elsewhere, clearly loved Stirling and enriched the cityscape through his buildings.

Architectural historians, failing to understand Allan's aims, have been deprecatory when describing his buildings as having 'characteristically weird idiosyncrasy', being 'puzzling' or 'quirkily symbolic'. A major building was described as a 'strange red brick intrusion'. Another was 'as much engineered as crafted' and others had 'enigmatically carved tablets' with 'Allan's homespun precatory appeals' or were infected by 'Baronial bacillus'.

This book is a welcome antidote to past negative views and gives us the opportunity to embrace and celebrate the work of John Allan for its originality, style and beauty.

Elspeth King

Director, Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum

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Introduction

In 1870, aged 24, John Allan moved to Stirling from his home in Fife and set up his architectural practice. This was a time of great opportunity in the ancient Royal Burgh. Egress from the Town Wall, commenced in the Georgian period, was well underway and the Burgh Reform Act of 1832 had greatly increased the size of the burgh. This had significant impact on the structure and ordinance of the town, and demand for housing for the expanding artisan and middle classes grew in this period. Improved road and river transport together with the arrival of the railway in 1848 created a Stirling populace who could travel easily to Glasgow and Edinburgh as well as to the nearby countryside, including the Trossachs.

John Allan was a remarkable man. He created some of Stirling's most unusual and striking architecture and his standing legacy is the heritage of buildings throughout the city. The crowning glory is the superb Wolf Craig at the corner of Port Street and Dumbarton Road. While some of his buildings conform to the style of the age, he is recognised as an architect who was pushing the boundaries of both architectural style and the use of new materials and techniques.

This publication is a celebration of John Allan the architect and explores other aspects of the man which are less well known. From his irascible dealings with feu superiors, to his promotion of better living conditions for his fellow man; his passion for history and the classics; his involvement in local politics and the variety of his written publications, all demonstrate the strength and depth of this fascinating man.

1 **John Allan** Reproduced courtesy of Dunfermline Carnegie Library and Galleries

2 **Bamboo cottages, Carnock, where the Allan family lived for some years.** Reproduced courtesy of Dunfermline Carnegie Library and Galleries

Early Life

John Allan was born on the 21 April 1847 in Gowkhill, Carnock, a parish west of Dunfermline in Fife. His father, William Allan, born in Strathmilgo, was a joiner to trade and later described as a *wright* in the 1861 census. His mother, Margaret Christie was born in Carnock, marrying William on the 10 July 1846.

John was the eldest of three siblings. His brother Robert, born in 1848, followed in his father's footsteps becoming a joiner and later a cabinet maker. The 1871 census shows Robert living in Anderston, Glasgow and working as a joiner. He later married and moved to Edinburgh and

set up business as a cabinetmaker. Their younger sister, Margaret, was born in 1851. She moved to Stirling with John in 1870 and, like her brother, remained unmarried.

John was well read, a man of eclectic tastes with a wide set of interests including both poetry and prose. His Rector at the Free Abbey Academy in Dunfermline, the eminent William Johnstone, had a strong educational influence on John and probably instilled his love of poetry and the classics. The interest in symbolism which proved so central to John Allan's architectural career may well have been influenced by Johnstone.



Architectural Training

During the nineteenth century, prospective young architects trained for a number of years within an established practice, gaining knowledge from experienced architects. Some would move to different practices in order to gain a range of skills. After leaving school in the early 1860s, John served an apprenticeship with architect Robert Hay (c1819-1867) whose practice was based at Abbey Park Place in Dunfermline. Hay was a surveyor to the Fifeshire Property Investment Company which helped people with limited means to build or purchase their own homes (www.scottisharchitects.org.uk). John Allan was later to become an advocate for affordable homes for the working classes so it is possible that he was influenced by Hay in these formative years.

Prominent Dunfermline architect, Andrew Scobie (c1847-1924), later Provost of Dunfermline and a life member of the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust, was also apprenticed to Robert Hay from around 1862 to 1867.

Early Career in Stirling

The death of Robert Hay in 1867 may have prompted John Allan to seek new opportunities in Stirling. Press adverts for his practice as an architect, land surveyor and landscape architect first appeared around 1870 when he was based at Seaforth, Shore Road, Stirling (*Alloa Advertiser*, 19 November 1870). He later moved to the town centre and was located at various offices in Port Street and King Street throughout his career.

In 1871, John Allan was living at Spittal Square (formerly known as Cowane's Yard) in Stirling. At one time this area at the Top of the Town, was also the home of the gentry of Stirling and now the location of the Stirling Highland Hotel. During the nineteenth century, Stirling's historic core increasingly became an area of slum deprivation where overcrowding and poor sanitation prevailed. In 1851, 22% of the population living in St Mary's Wynd were said to be of 'professional, commercial or land owning status', but only 8% of this group remained living in the Top of the Town by 1881. Many people in these higher social status groups had by then moved from the historic burgh to reside in newly developed suburbs such as King's Park (Lannon, 1983: 40-41; Hossack, 2002:11). As the socially mobile left, the old town below the Castle was in turn swollen with economic migrants from the Highlands and returning soldiers, the poor clustered in slum conditions with unemployment and disease (Durie, 2014: 82). Living in the heart of these challenging conditions must have had an impact and these first-hand experiences were to feature in Allan's later writings and his design approaches to housing both the middle and working classes.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, there was increasing concern about insanitary conditions, hygiene and public health. John Allan developed an interest in this area which grew steadily throughout his career. He sought to demonstrate how soundly structured, comfortable homes could be achieved at reasonable cost, not only to meet the needs of the growing number of aspiring middle class but also for those of more modest means. He saw the benefits to the population's health and wellbeing from better housing and living conditions, improved sanitation and ventilation in buildings and access to clean air and green spaces.

ALVA.
THE TOWN HALL.—A public meeting was held here some time ago, for the purpose of considering the present Town Hall accommodation when it was resolved upon to have an extension; and the committee was instructed to carry out the resolutions of the meeting. Tradesmen have already commenced operations in making extensive alterations and additions, from designs and plans by Mr John Allan, Architect, Stirling. The accommodation, according to the plans, will be doubled, and seating provided for upwards of 1000.

TO CONTRACTORS.
TENEMENT OF BUILDINGS IN ALLOA.
TENDERS are invited of the MASON, JOINER, SLATER, PLUMBER, PLASTER, and IRON CASTING Departments, for the Erection of a Tenement of Buildings in ALLOA for Mr Wm. Browns.
Plans and Specifications may now be seen, and lithographed Bills of Quantities obtained, at the Office of the Architect.
Tenders to be addressed to, and lodged with the Proprietor on or before Monday the 21st inst., not later than 6 P.M., sealed and marked on outside "Tender for Brown's Buildings."
JOHN ALLAN, Architect.
69 Port Street, Stirling
3rd April, 1873.

1 Advert from *Alloa Advertiser* 3 June 1871, © *Alloa Advertiser*

2 Advert from *Alloa Advertiser* 12 April 1873, © *Alloa Advertiser*

3 Advert from *Alloa Advertiser*

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Parties favouring the Subscriber with their Orders will have them punctually attended to, and Moderately Charged.

HIGH STREET,
Alloa, 18th November, 1870.

RENEWAL AND EXTENSION OF PREMISES.

B. OARMICHAEL & SONS,
DRAPERS AND CLOTHIERS,
66 AND 70 MILL STREET.

R. C. & SONS beg to intimate to the Public that during the Alteration and Rebuilding of their premises, the CLOTHIER branch of the Business will be carried on in apartments BACK FROM THE DRAPERY DEPARTMENT. Access may be had either by SHOP, No. 66, or ENTRY, No. 70

JOHN ALLAN,
ARCHITECT, LAND SURVEYOR, AND
LANDSCAPE GARDENER,
SEAFORTH, SHORE ROAD,
STIRLING.

ROBERT SCOTT,
GALASHIELS HEDDLE WORKS.

MR GEORGE MURRAY,
BACK ROW, ALVA,
Agent for the District.

80,000 SOLD IN AMERICA.

Just out, in Oroide of Gold Case,
The Wonderful
CHARM SUN DIAL and COMPASS Combined. Will denote correct time by the Sun. Post free for 18 stamps. The Trade supplied.
W. C. BODDINGTON, Notting Hill Gate, W.
Established 1856.

THE TEA WAREHOUSES.

114 ARGYLE STREET, GLASGOW.
30 NORTH BRIDGE, EDINBURGH.

GEO. BALLANTINE & SON,

on Receipt of 6s 6d in Penny
Stamps, will send a
THREE POUND CANISTER

OF
PURE CHINA TEA

of a quality that will please and save
money.

A 6 lb. CANISTER, 12s 9d.
A 10 lb. CANISTER, 21s.

SAMPLES FREE BY POST.

FINEST MIXED COFFEE, 1s 6d.



Early Commissions

There are few records of his early commissions although newspaper records suggest he was active in the Alloa area. On 3 June 1871, the *Alloa Advertiser* recorded Allan as the architect for the alteration and extension of Alva Town Hall. In April 1873, he advertised seeking tenders from various trades for the erection of tenement buildings in Alloa (*Alloa Advertiser*, 12 April, 1873).

In March 1874, he was awarded a contract to extend John Paterson and Son's tweed and carpet works at Burghmuir, Stirling at a cost of £2,000. (*Stirling Observer*, 10 March 1914). In 1899, it was sold to Messrs Graham and Morton for their cabinet making and upholstery business.

¹ **Graham and Morton's works, Burghmuir about 1900**
© Stirling Observer (Industries of Stirling and District, 1909, reprinted by Stirling Council Library Service 1998)

Architectural Apprentices

Records indicate that John Allan took on apprentices including John Lumsden (1859-1929) and William Hunter McNab (1862-1935). Both were Stirling born and attended Stirling High School.

John Lumsden was apprenticed to John Allan after leaving school. He then moved to an architect's office in Glasgow, where he was offered a partnership, but left to pursue a mercantile career, settling first in Chile and later in London. John Lumsden and his family seem to have kept in touch with John Allan and his sister Margaret for much of their lives. John Lumsden was named as the inheritor of Margaret's will, in the event that she outlived her brother John.

William Hunter McNab was articled as an apprentice to John Allan between 1877 and 1881. He then went on to work as an assistant architect with William Leiper in Glasgow and also to study at Glasgow School of Art. William Hunter McNab later became senior partner in Leiper and McNab, Architects, Glasgow and subsequently, W. Hunter McNab and Son (www.scottisharchitects.org.uk).

Rural Cottages

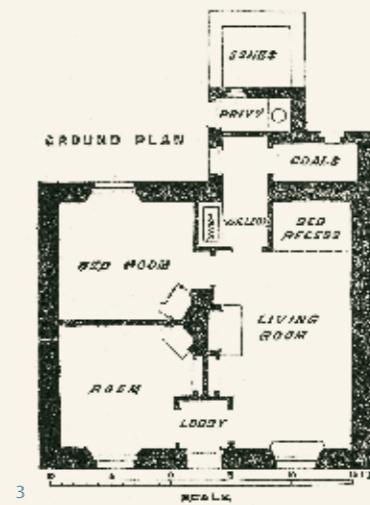
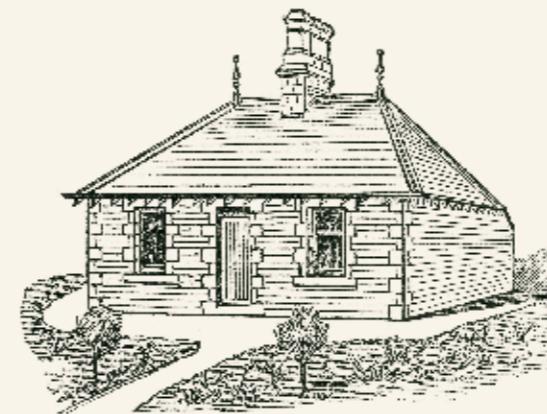
There is evidence that in John Allan's early career, he took an interest in the design of rural cottages. Perhaps this was stimulated by having been born and brought up in a rural environment. However, this interest also ties in with his wider concern for the need for good housing for the working classes.

In 1873, he won First Premium, Class 1, value £5, in a competition organised by the Royal Northern Agricultural Society (RNAS) for his design of a single cottage for agricultural labourers, for a sum of £100. (*The Building News*, 2 January 1874:24) Although the estimated cost of his prize winning plans was £104.77.9d, the Society, in making its awards 'recognised costs had probably slightly increased since they set their specification'; and the original cost framework might have been unrealistic. As one judge commented, 'No doubt huts or hovels could be built for less but a cottage with pretensions to comfort and substance in construction could not be built for under that sum'. (*Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 9 April 1873)

Poor living accommodation for farm workers was an issue.¹ In 1873, it was thought the Labourers Cottages Bill, then under consideration in Parliament, might partially resolve this rural housing problem, but the RNAS wished

this legislation to include a process for resolving potential disputes between landlords and tenant farmers regarding time scales for provision, potential sources of funding and locations on properties, where agricultural cottages might be built. Following receipt of these model cottage competition plans in April 1873, the RNAS met again in Aberdeen in late May to decide on 'action to be taken to have these labourers cottages built'.ⁱⁱ (*Dundee Courier* 31 May 1873 p3)

In 1879, John Allan was commissioned to design three farm cottages at Sauchieburn, an entailed estate situated just south of Stirling. Purchased by William Ramsay of Barnton, a banker in Edinburgh, in 1786, it subsequently passed to the Steel-Maitland family in 1866. Both the Ramsay family and the Steel-Maitlands had made various improvements to this estate, during the nineteenth century, including in 1866-67, building or improving various cottages, kennels and other estate buildings. Letters survive from this period which detail his correspondence over the construction of the cottages indicating that he was overseeing some of the work (NRS: GD 193/58/2).ⁱⁱⁱ



^{2/3} **Design for the RNAS cottage in 1873, in *Building News* 2 January 1874,** Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland



▲ Royal Gardens, © Jo Cound 2017

King's Park Suburb

Background to King's Park Suburb

By the start of the nineteenth century, development of the King's Park area as a prestigious upper middle class residential suburb in Stirling was underway. The new houses here with their generously proportioned, well-lit rooms, would be in direct contrast to the now subdivided, overcrowded, and unsanitary accommodation of the old town.

The development of the King's Park area in the late eighteenth century had faltered, but infrastructure improvements including the demolition of the Barras Yett during the 1770s and Dumbarton Road becoming a turnpike road in 1790s encouraged the feuing of plots. Construction of houses in Allan Park was underway from 1812 to 1829, alongside development on the adjacent Pitt and Melville Terraces. Architect and builder, Alexander Bowie, erected 14 of Allan Park's 22 houses in a refined manner typical of the Georgian period and echoing the style of the Edinburgh New Town (Durie, 2014).

In 1530, Robert Spittal, tailor to King James IV, (c1480-1513) set up a charitable hospice (the Nether Hospital) on the outskirts of the burgh, moving to new premises in Spittal Street around 1660 (Mair, 1990: 64). Robert Spittal

was a philanthropist who *'bequeathed lands in trust, to the Town Council, on behalf of decayed members of the Seven Incorporated Trades'* (McKean, 1985:33). It was the Spittal's Hospital Trust who held the majority of lands beyond Allan Park which would form the new suburb of King's Park. These comprised Southfield to the south-east and Spittal's Park to the north-west, separated by the road to Cambusbarrow, where Park Avenue and Park Terrace were set out either side of the tree lined avenue from the 1830s.

When feuing on the south side of Dumbarton Road began in 1836, uncertainty arose due to a proposal to develop a Stirling branch of the Forth and Clyde Canal via Bannockburn and St Ninians, and terminating in a basin at Southfield. However, insufficient subscription was raised and, as a result, the project lapsed and feuing of plots continued. Development of the King's Park area remained steady, if rather slow, but it received a significant spur in 1848 with the arrival of the Scottish Central Railway to Stirling, making the town within relatively easy reach of both Glasgow and Edinburgh by train.

By 1860, most of Albert Place had been built but the north side of Dumbarton Road remained undeveloped.

In 1858, Stirling Bowling Club reached agreement with the Spittal's Hospital Trustees for a site in Albert Place. The first match was played on 3 July 1858 and it remains the location of Stirling Bowling Club today. Development on the north side of Dumbarton Road included construction of the Allan Park Church, with the first service being held there on 20 October 1867. Many of the congregation had

moved to this new church due to a split with the Erskine Church on St John Street. The Smith Institute was built in 1874 and the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in 1878. The final development was the construction of the Albert Halls, originally the Stirling Public Hall Limited, in 1883. The houses on the north side of Dumbarton Road were built between 1875 and 1879.

▼ Extract from OS map of 1858 showing only limited development of King's Park had at this point, taken place. (OS 1:2,500 Stirlingshire sheet XVII.3.1865, Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland)





John Allan's Involvement

The development of King's Park presented John Allan with opportunities for his emerging architectural practice. The first opportunity came in 1877 when John Wood Blakey, a local solicitor and property developer, appointed John Allan as his architect for Royal Gardens. This attractive site, immediately adjacent to the former Royal Deer Park and King's Knot at the western edge of the suburb, was feued by the Spittal's Hospital Trust. Work began on the corner plot 42 Albert Place, with a large double villa designed by John Allan in the then popular Italianate style. It is notable for its impressive three-storey tower under a pyramid roof. The development continued into Royal Gardens with its unimpeded views of the King's Knot and Stirling Castle. Here the first house has a plain tower with details diminishing into the second block. The last two semi-detached houses in Royal Gardens were the work of others although of a similar design.

Also in 1877, John Allan himself acquired the feus for Lots 9 and 11 in Spittal's Park, located on Dumbarton Road. Here he designed 32 and 34 Albert Place, with number 32, Cliff Bank, becoming his own residence. These are symmetrical rock-face rubble built semi-detached houses each with a canted bay through both floors. The door pieces have an incised design and the buildings are



flanked by single storey sections which are now garages. Cliff Bank contained some unusual features including curved walls, lights incorporated into the stair treads, and an attractive stained glass cupola in the stairwell.

John Allan continued development on the north side of Dumbarton Road with 28 and 30 Albert Place (Lot 11). Number 28 was the home of local surgeon Dr John Drew, a friend and close neighbour of John Allan. Examples of small busts, used as decorative symbolic features, can be seen on several of his buildings in this area of Stirling. Most prominent are the heads of Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott on the front entrance at 28 Albert Place, with the heads of Shakespeare and Homer on the entrance of the adjoining 1 Clarendon Road. In nearby Royal Gardens, entrances feature animals and fanciful creatures such as a 'Green Man' and lions.

Soon after in 1879, he designed an attractive detached villa at 2 Park Avenue for Donald McFadyen, who acquired the feu to this building plot (Lot 6) from the Spittal's Hospital Trust on 1 March 1879. Commissions continued and in the same year he designed Abbey Craig House, which sits in the shadow of the National Wallace Monument. Here he used a Thomsonsque Italianate tower over rock-faced masonry. At the end of his career John Allan returned to Abbey Craig House and added an extension, his last recorded work.

Most of all, John Allan saw King's Park as a desirable and healthy place to live, at least for those who could afford to live there. Advertising houses and plots for sale in 'Stirling as a Health Resort', (1883) he states:

'There is, perhaps, no place in the kingdom better situated for healthy surroundings, and pleasant sites for villas, with better views of scenery, more cheerful-looking arranged suburbs, more open terraces and avenues studded with trees, dwellings delightfully positioned, orderly, and less offensive, or possessed of more public rural recreation ground than this neighbourhood.'

In 1887, John Allan designed 2 and 4 Balmoral Place, a plain two-storeyed snecked, symmetrical, semi-detached villa. Each house has a flanking screen wall to the side with a single storey wing behind. Like the houses on Royal Gardens and Dumbarton Road, the main entrance door pieces are elaborated, here with Greco-Egyptian incised detail and dwarf columns. There is an obvious similarity to Cliff Bank.

4



- 1 **Albert Place, Victoria Place, Clarendon Place and Victoria Square around 1865,** Reproduced courtesy of Stuart Campbell
- 2 **Cliff Bank, Albert Place,** © Stirling Smith Art Gallery & Museum
- 3 **Curved bay window at Cliff Bank,** Reproduced courtesy of Stuart Campbell and Colin Bayes
- 4 **Cupola at Cliff Bank,** Reproduced courtesy of Stuart Campbell and Colin Bayes

- 5 **Sculpted corbel of a lion, Royal Gardens,** © Jo Cound 2017
- 6 **Carved label stop depicting Robert Burns, Albert Place,** © Jo Cound 2017
- 7 **Carved label stop depicting Homer, Albert Place,** Reproduced courtesy of Tom Wilson
- 8 **2 Park Avenue, Stirling Observer** (McCutcheon, B., Stirling Observer 150 years ago, 1986:13)

Pushing the Boundaries: Sandholes Site

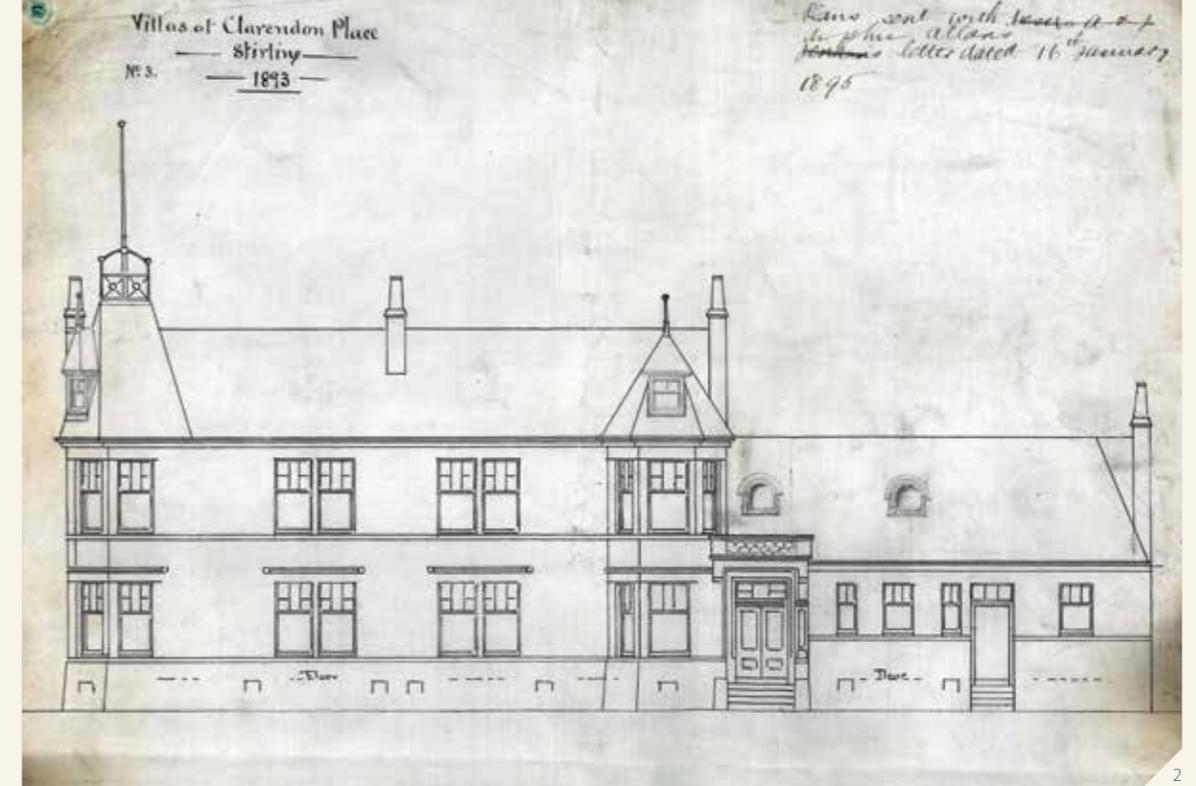
The attractiveness of King's Park can be credited to the architects, builders and owners of its buildings and to the very strict feu conditions imposed by the landowners which included restrictions on storey heights and the type of stone and slate to be used. These restrictions were a form of quality control to retain the exclusivity of the area and to discourage building for the lower middle or working class. For example, a proposal to erect 'gable to gable' housing in Victoria Place and Clarendon Place in 1861 had been rejected by the Spittal's Hospital Trust (McCutcheon, 1992:13).

The efforts of John Allan to obtain permission for his designs in King's Park during the 1880s and 1890s give a flavour of the restrictions being imposed and the sentiment of the time surrounding the design of buildings within a prestigious area. For example, his proposed use of concrete on the Victoria Place site caused controversy and led to the Town Council's involvement to settle the dispute. Trustees had raised concern about the use of concrete on both footpaths and boundary wall construction. The durability of concrete as a building material had been queried. They demanded the concrete

footpath be replaced with a Caithness pavement in line with feu conditions. However, historic records reveal John Allan's persistence in pursuit of what he felt were appropriate designs for the area.

John Allan designed a number of houses on what was known as the 'Sandholes' site. This area, as the name suggests, had been worked for sand and then backfilled creating ground conditions potentially unsuitable for building. The first two buildings he designed here, located at the junction of Victoria Place and Park Avenue, were probably built around 1888. About six years later, he also built adjacent flats here (Aitken, Cunningham and McCutcheon, 1998:43). These buildings were demolished in the late twentieth century.

In 1893, John Allan purchased a feu of ground in this area from the Spittal's Hospital Trust for a fee of £12 per imperial acre (*Falkirk Herald*, 9 September 1893) and in 1895 he designed an inventively bayed and dormered two-storey building at the corner of Park Avenue and Clarendon Place. Inclusion of dormers in the steep roof breached the feu conditions and led to disputes between himself and the Spittal's Hospital Trust.

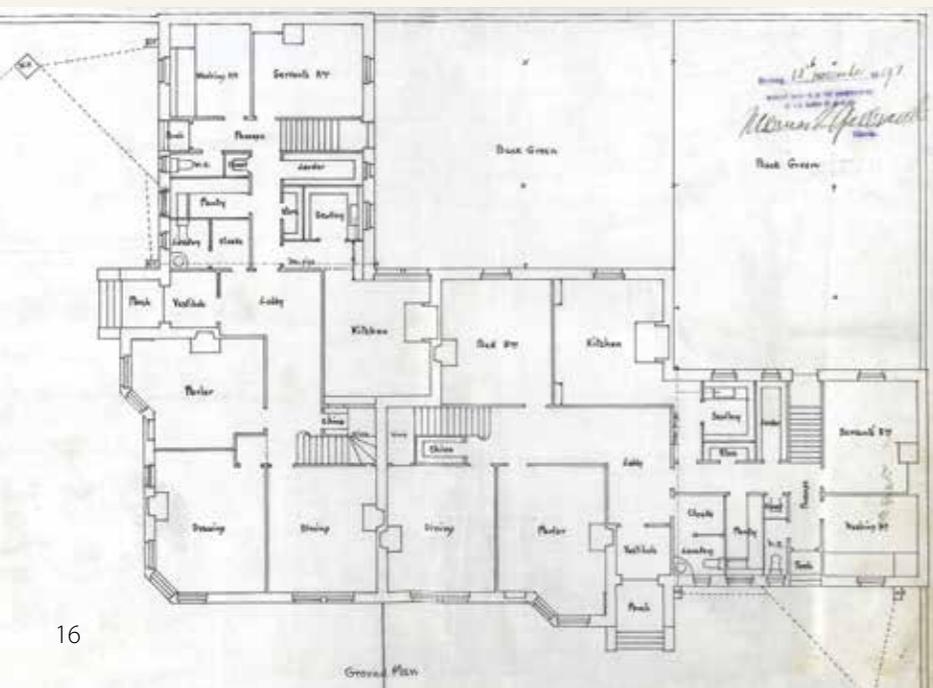


John Allan's designs became the subject of repeated press coverage between 1893 and 1895, particularly in relation to his plans for Lots 74 and 78 Spittal Park.

On 21 June 1893, the *Stirling Observer* reported 'Mr Allan was in the act of putting dormer windows' on his buildings on Victoria Place, which 'were expressly prohibited by the title'. In response, John Allan replied 'that he understood windows of an ornamental design were usually permitted, and that what was being proposed was not an unreasonable interpretation of what the design implied'. Clearly these windows were not shown in the plans. Differences of opinion occurred amongst the Patrons, with Baillie Forrest stating, 'any deviation here was in complete accord with the surroundings' and that 'others had been allowed to do the same'. It was also suggested the dormers would be 'a great decoration on the upper part of the house'. By a majority of five to four, the committee allowed the dormers to remain.

A few weeks later on 23 August 1893, a headline in the same newspaper read, 'The objectionable dormer windows in Victoria Place - Proceedings to be taken against Mr Allan'. In future it said, Mr Allan 'should respect feu conditions or legal action might be taken to compel him to conform to the orders of the Council'. On 20 September 1893, another *Stirling Observer* headline simply read, 'Mr Allan Again'. The clerk stated there were to be no dormer windows on the roof at 74 Spittal Park and his plans were not sanctioned.

1/2 **Dean of Guild Court plans for Lot 78 Spittal Park (1893) and Villas at Clarendon Place (1893 and revised 1895). These plans, for the same building, show how the designs were amended over time due to the ongoing discussions about whether dormers would be permitted.** Reproduced courtesy of Stirling Council Archives.



▲ Above
Corner of Park Avenue / Clarendon Place,
 Reproduced courtesy of Tom Wilson

◀ Left
Ground floor plan drawing design for
Clarendon Place, 1893,
 Reproduced courtesy of Stirling Council Archives

A letter from John Allan was printed in which he apologised for delay in his response, but claimed the approved plans were 'not finished' when submitted and stressed he was not trying to take liberties with the Trustees, but felt the introduction of dormer windows was in 'strict harmony with the general terms of the plan and were permitted on roofs having a steep pitch' and 'in line with treatments to the best houses in the immediate area'.

On 25 October 1893 the headline read, 'End of the dormer window case - The case against John Allan had been settled and the action withdrawn'. Mr Allan had agreed to pay the £6.10s expenses of the Spittal's Hospital Trust. In brackets was added 'NB - the dormer windows are to be allowed to remain'.

On 17 January 1894, under the headline 'A Divided Committee', this same newspaper reported Mr Allan's architectural plans were once again before the Council. A number of objections had been made by local residents, including to the roof dormers, in relation to 'the line of the buildings in Park Terrace', also to the height of the proposed offices. Mr Gourlay, supporting the plans, pointed out a stable could be seen in line with the buildings opposite and asked if this 'Was not worse than a dormer window?' It was pointed out that Mr Allan had taken up a great many feus in the area and they 'were sure he would build a beautiful house'. Some sympathy was expressed for Mr Allan. Reference was also made to the feu conditions being out of date and 'preventing individuality in architecture'. Others however felt 'It was the old story of having taken off a feu under certain conditions, and wishing to be allowed to do something different'. The matter was referred to the Town Council for consideration, with a suggestion made that Mr Allan might be invited to appear, but the option remained of taking back the feu if Mr Allan did not agree with the feu conditions.

On 21 February 1894, the *Stirling Observer* reported, 'Mr Allan's Plans - Still unsatisfactory'. At a planning meeting John Allan had stated he would do away with the dormer windows. Speaking for the Committee, Bailie Forest said, 'Mr Allan should put a house down in accordance with articles of roup'.

John Allan entered public life in November 1894, standing for the Cowane Street Ward. The two retiring Councillors in this Ward, David Bain and J W Small, both desired re-election. John Allan also put his name forward. Mr Bain and Mr Small simply asked the electors to vote for them but Mr Allan added to his campaign literature the slogan, 'The candidate who will encourage work'. John Allan was elected a Councillor, finishing second to David Bain (*Stirling Observer* 7 November and 5 December 1894).

On 21 November 1894, the *Stirling Observer* carried a headline, 'The Council's Building Regulations - Mr Allan and his feu charter'. One of John Allan's first actions as a Councillor was to propose the passing of his plans in respect of Lot 78 Spittal Park. During a rather heated Council meeting, some objections were raised to Mr Allan proposing and presenting his own case. After making his points Mr Allan left and Council members debated his proposal. Further considerations of the case by the Trustees took place in December 1894 and again in January and February 1895. In the November 1894 meeting it emerged John Allan felt he was being singled out and penalised by an additional restrictive clause recently added to the feu charter for Lot 78. The Town Clerk said this clause had been added to this Lot, in a prime location, to prevent future potential abuses of feu conditions. As the feu was subject to public roup, the Town Clerk could not know in advance that Mr Allan would be the person to take it up. It emerged that John Allan had not been aware of this new clause until recently advised of it by the Town Clerk, a Mr Jenkins having signed the original feu agreement. It was also recognised that many buildings 'all over the place' had dormer windows and that the Trust's feu conditions required to be reviewed (*Stirling Observer* 5 December 1894; 23 January 1895). On 20 February 1895, the *Stirling Observer* reported, 'The dormer windows again - Victory at last for Mr Allan'.

John Allan's persistence therefore paid off and he successfully built these houses with dormer windows.





Experimental Style

55 Baker Street (1890)

So far, John Allan had made a fine contribution to the growing townscape of Stirling, designing a number of attractive stone buildings but nothing out of the ordinary. This was to change in 1890 with his first building in brick, 55 Baker Street. Until the opening of Murray Place in 1842, Baker Street formed part of the main route through Stirling. It was tightly developed with fairly uniform three-storey stone-built tenements stretching to above Bank Street where the gardens are today. In the middle of this uniformity and traditional Scottish streetscape, he designed a four-storey two-bay, Old English Tudor style corner tenement incorporating a public house on the ground floor, The Stirling Arms. This name is still recorded on a plaque above the door. With its brick arched windows at first floor, a broad bay corbeled at second floor, and a jettied top storey in black and white half timbering under barge boarded gables, it is a truly extraordinary conception in the context of Stirling at the time.



This building demonstrated the virtues of using brick. It is clear from his writings that Allan saw advantages in this as a clean, modern material with a regular form which allowed the development of cavity walling to reduce the possibility of the transmission of dampness to the interior of the building.

1 55 Baker Street, © Jo Cound 2017

2 View of gable of 55 Baker Street, © Jo Cound 2017

Batterflats (1893-95)

"The lands of Batterflat, with house and buildings", advertised for sale in the *Glasgow Herald* on 25 January 1893 as being 'admirably adapted to feuing' with an upset price of £1500. At that point the site consisted of six acres rented to market gardener, Thomas Young, as fruit growing grounds and dairy premises. The site was bought by Patrick Drummond, a partner in William Drummond & Sons, seed merchants of Stirling and Dublin. He became a pioneer

motorist and motorcyclist (*The Sunday Post*, 15 September 1935). The family were well known in Stirling as his father, Peter Drummond, had withdrawn from the family seed business to concentrate on publishing religious tracts. The Drummond Tract Depot promoted observance of the Sabbath and printed leaflets to encourage religious observance and abstinence from alcohol.

▼ Batterflats, © Elspeth King, "Old Stirling" 2009 and Stenlake Publishing Ltd.





Patrick Drummond commissioned John Allan to design a house for this site. His success in 1890 with 55 Baker Street must have encouraged his further experimentation with brick and Tudor styling. For Stirling in 1893, the design plan for this new villa was 'considered to be unique' as it would be built in an 'English Arts and Crafts style with brick and timber' and 'have about the largest windows in the district' (Stirling Observer, 9th August 1893). Gifford & Walker (2002:754), describe Batterflats as:

‘hard-edged towered Tudor. Under gabled and piended red-tiled roofs, the black-and-white upper storey and attic are half-timbered and roughcast but it is Ruabon bricks below, elaborated with much decorative cast detailing around canted bays, mullioned and transomed windows, balustrading and porch, that seem to make the building as much engineered as crafted.’

The interior of the building was also decorative in style with elaborate chimney pieces, timber panelling and leaded glass panels. This mansion house was later occupied by Mrs McGregor, widow of John McGregor, a wealthy timber merchant from Rangoon. She gifted Batterflats to the Church of Scotland as a Deaconess Rest Home. In 1954, it was acquired by Stirling Council and became a residential home for elderly people. More recently Batterflats was again sold and converted into private housing and flats. It remains an outstanding example of his villa designs.

Interestingly, a few years later John Allan's former apprentice William Hunter McNab, in partnership with William Leiper, designed Deroran. Later renamed Endrick Lodge, this is an attractive Arts and Crafts style mansion with lodge house in secluded grounds, situated near Batterflats, on Polmaise Road.

1 **Aerial view of the complex roof, Batterflats,**
© Aeropixel Scotland Ltd

2/7 **Examples of decorative stained glass windows, artistic wood panelling and metalwork features, retained and conserved in No. 1 Batterflats House**

8/9 **The Batterflats façade is a rich combination of brick and terracotta,** © SCHAT



Monuments and Other Designs

Dugald Buchanan Monument, Strathyre

In 1882, Allan was asked to design a monument in memory of Dugald Buchanan, Gaelic poet and religious scholar. Attempts to raise funds for this memorial had begun in 1873. Prominent among fundraisers was Mr Ferguson of Raploch, a native of Balquidder. The aim was to construct an elaborate fountain in the poet's memory and erect it in a prominent location in Strathyre to draw public attention to the life and works of Buchanan.

An image of John Allan's design for this memorial was printed in the *Dundee Advertiser* 27 June 1882. However, a later press report in the *Dundee Advertiser* 14 July 1883,



indicates a drinking fountain had been erected instead, designed by ex-Bailie William Barclay monument sculptor of Stirling and built by Mr Davidson, Mr Barclay's colleague. It is unclear whether funding constraints led to the original design being modified or if part of John Allan's design was included in the final, less elaborate, structure. Contrast his 1882 design:

'Starting on a circular base the body of the fabric takes an octagonal form, by which it grows into a corbeled square battlement. Over the centre of the battlement rises a staff, guarded by supports from the four corners. The pole terminates on a wind indicator with the points of the compass. The balcony cornice terminates at the corners on carved grotesque figures required for carrying off the water from the balcony floor.' (*Dundee Advertiser*, 27 June 1882)

With a description of the later 1883 finished structure:

'thick Gothic finial of sandstone with inset columns of grey and pink granite and four small fountain bowls. Three granite panels carving quotations and commemorative inscriptions to Dugald Buchanan (1716-68) HE WAS A TRUE POET/ AN ELOQUENT MAN AND/ MIGHTY IN THE SCRIPTURES.' (Gifford & Walker, 2002:764)



1 John Allan's proposed design of the Dugald Buchanan Monument, Strathyre (*Dundee Advertiser* 27 June 1882)

2 Dugald Buchanan Monument, Strathyre, © SCHAT

3 Beheading stone, © Robin Mair

The Beheading Stone, Gowan's Hill

John Allan had many interests including antiquities and history. He was an active member of the Stirling Natural History and Archaeological Society (SNHAAS) together with his friend Dr John Drew. The Beheading Stone is found on Gowan's Hill near to Stirling Castle and was used, as the name suggests, for executions. Concerned about vandalism and damage to this historic relic, Dr John Drew made a proposal for it to be protected. In 1887, John Allan designed the base and enclosure with a plaque which states, 'Erected at the instance of the Stirling Natural History and Archaeological Society 1887'.



Churches

John Allan was a man with deep religious beliefs and was a member of the Church of the Holy Rude. His Church commissions were limited in number but records note involvement in 1889 in the refurbishment of the North Parish Church in Murray Place, Stirling. This church, built in 1842, was designed by architect John Henderson.^{iv} In 1889, John Allan, supervised the execution of the designs for refurbishing and renovation of this building. John William Small, architect was also involved in this renovation and church refurbishment project, under the supervision of John Allan (www.scottisharchitects.org.uk).

The connections with his home county of Fife remained strong and in 1893, he undertook renovation work on the Church in the village of Carnock where he was born. Renovations included provision of new lighting, heating and reseating. Following the Arts and Crafts style, some of the light fittings were supplied by Liberty of London and featured leaded stained glass. In addition, he added a small church hall which is still standing today.

Stirling Public Library

In 1901, John Allan's design came second in the architectural competition for the new Stirling Public Library, for which Andrew Carnegie was contributing £6,000 towards building costs. Mr H. Ramsay Taylor of Messrs Lessels and Taylor Edinburgh submitted the winning plans, with John Allan gaining an award of 30 guineas for his design plans. Third place went to Messrs MacLuckie and Walker, Stirling with an award of 20 guineas. (*Dundee Courier*, 19 January 1901)

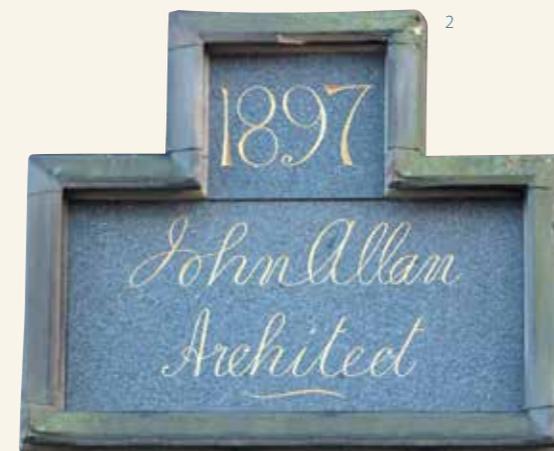


Radical and Reforming Design

The Wolf Craig

The year 1897 saw the construction of John Allan's most famous and prominent building in Stirling, the Wolf Craig at the corner of Port Street and Dumbarton Road.¹ This building was constructed as a grocer's emporium for the firm of Robertson & MacFarlane. On 3 October 1897, the *Stirling Observer* recorded, 'At the corner of Port Street and Dumbarton Road considerable improvement will be effected by the substitution of a handsome block of shops, with two storeys of dwelling houses above, by Mr Parlan MacFarlane, grocer'.

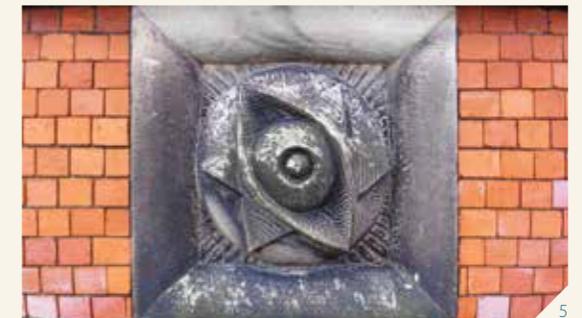
The Wolf Craig building undoubtedly represents John Allan at his best. It is an extraordinary inventive and highly decorative building. Sweeping around the street corner are five stories of Welsh Ruabon brickwork below a lead covered 'cup and saucer' dome. The building even had its own electricity generator, the first retail building in Stirling to be lit by electricity. As the *Stirling Observer* of 22 May 1898 records:



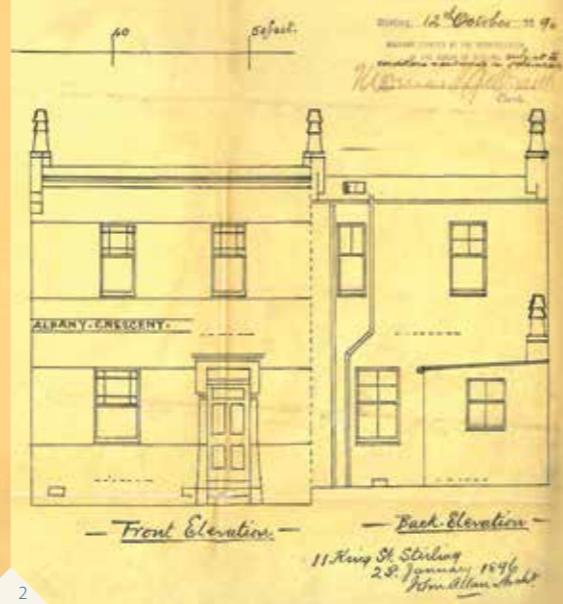
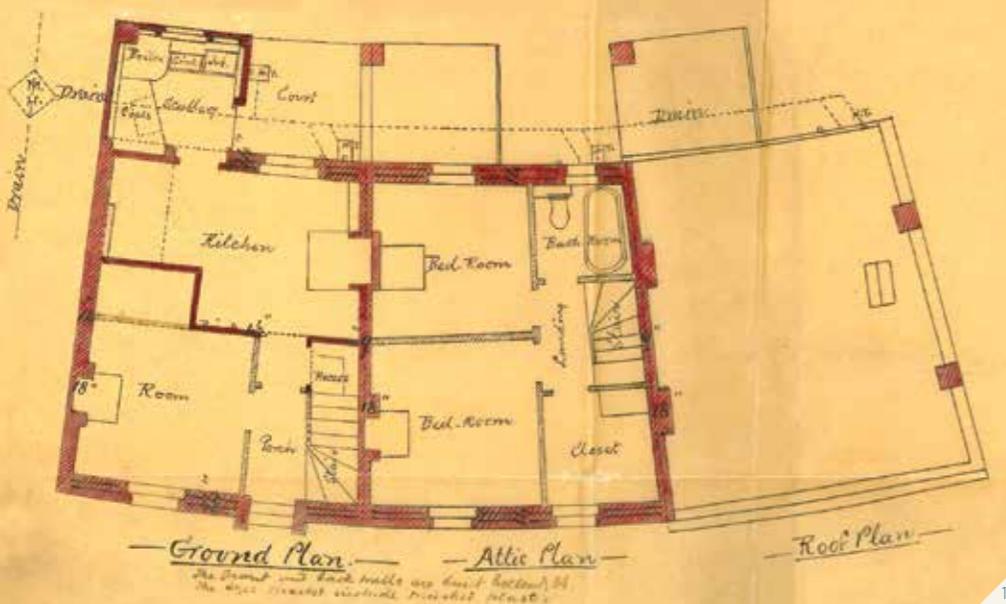
'The enterprising councillor (MacFarlane) has had his new and commanding premises at the corner of Dumbarton Road and Port Street illuminated nightly for an hour or two by means of electricity, and the spectacle has been witnessed by interested groups of citizens, even as during the day the holiday-makers from Glasgow, Edinburgh and other places, have been seen standing open-eyed and sometimes open-mouthed, gazing up at the highly ornamented –medieval –modern-looking structure.'

Not only is this building of extraordinary external design, it made extensive use of steel. The first steel-framed building in Scotland may have been the Scotsman building, Edinburgh by Dunn and Findlay in 1899 although use of steel was being incorporated into Scottish buildings in the 1880s (Jackson, 1998). After 1905 its use was widespread. Although Wolf Craig is not believed to be a full steel frame, it once again shows that John Allan was at the cutting edge of materials and design. No wonder he was proud to put his name on it.

Three years after the completion of the Wolf Craig building, rival grocer D. & J. MacEwen commissioned Stirling architect Ebenezer Simpson (1854-1934) to design a grocery directly opposite John Allan's design. The contrast between the two buildings, on opposite corners of the street, is striking, with MacEwen's building constructed in a traditional blond sandstone in a Classical style.



- 1 **Wolf Craig**, © SCHT
- 2 **John Allan name plaque, Wolf Craig**, © SCHT
- 3 **Panel of coloured tiles, Wolf Craig**, © SCHT
- 4 **Panel incorporating a sculpture of the wolf**, © SCHT
- 5 **Panel depicting the sun and moon, Wolf Craig**, © SCHT



56 Main Street, Doune

Around 1900, John Allan produced another radical design, this time for a modest townhouse in the historic market town of Doune for Daniel MacFarlane. Once again, it was an extraordinary addition to the streetscape. A tall, flat-roofed frontage of three super-imposed tri-partite windows and dated 1900 with an inset incised tablet.

- 1/2 Dean of Guild Court plans for design of houses at Albany Crescent, Reproduced courtesy of Stirling Council Archives
- 3 Dean of Guild Court plans for Main Street, Doune, Reproduced courtesy of Stirling Council Archives

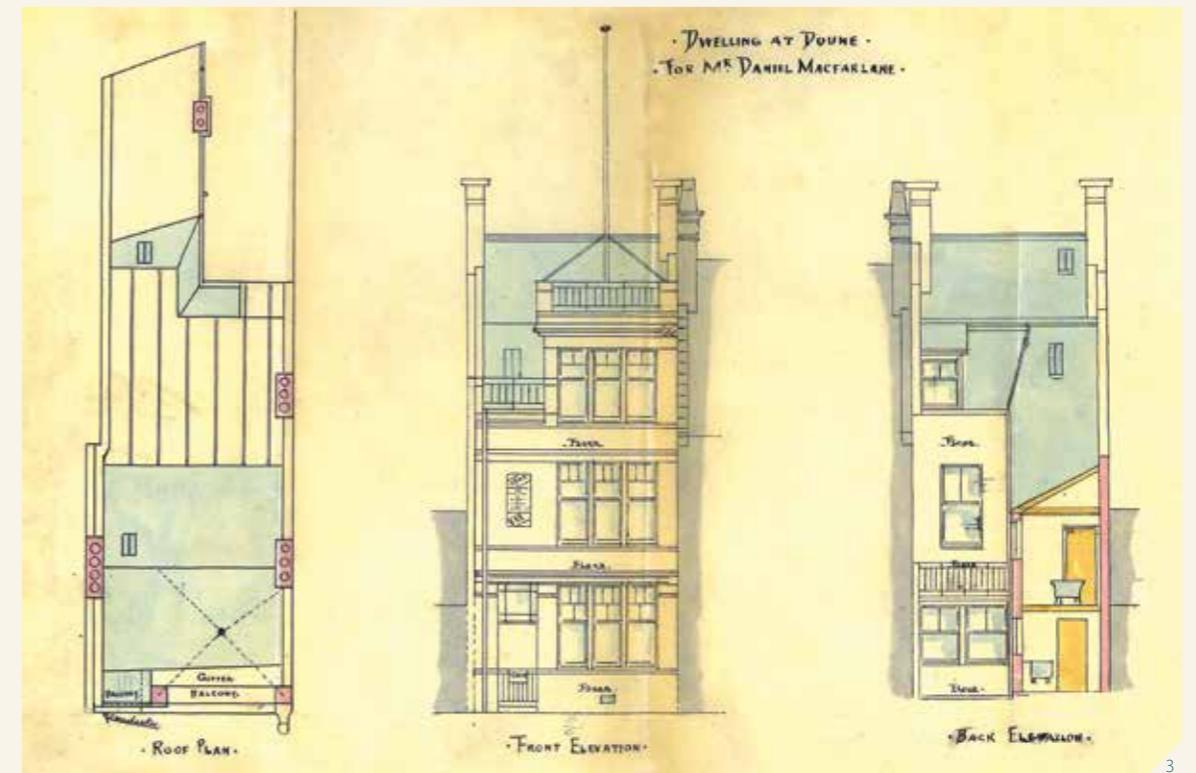
Albany Crescent

One of Allan's experiments in construction followed the year after Wolf Craig in 1898. Albany Crescent was located the junction of Gowanhill Road and Callander Road. Surviving records including Dean of Guild Court plans give an insight into both the construction and the issues he faced in trying to get approval for this development. These were houses designed to be much more affordable than his King's Park villas and fit with his ideas of housing for the working classes.

These were advanced houses for their time, the living room, kitchen and scullery on the ground floor and two bedrooms, closet and bathroom at first floor. They had flat roofs and notably, were to be constructed with cavity brick walls, a very early use of this type of construction. It was the 1920s before this was a widely adopted method.

John Allan's proposed construction was not without controversy and various amendments were required before approval was obtained. On 12 October 1896, the plans were finally recommended by a vote of five to four, subject to a further undertaking from the architect that the hollow front and back walls be thoroughly tied together with sufficiently large bricks to extend through the walls from front to back in one length in continuous courses on every sixth course of brickwork. The ties were to be arranged so that the course of them would be immediately under the joists. Clearly there was a nervousness on behalf of the authorities with this early example of cavity construction and once again, John Allan was ahead of his time.

On 24 March 1897, John Allan advertised in the *Stirling Observer*, 'comfortable self-contained dwellings' to let, in Albany Crescent 'containing three rooms, kitchen, scullery, bathroom'. Albany Crescent was demolished in 1965.



Technical Innovations and Social Reform

John Allan's Philosophy

By 1900, concern was growing nationally about the poor housing conditions of the working class. The *Housing the Working Class Act* pt.1, (1890 and 1913) attempted to address this issue, but housing for the working classes was not planned in the same manner as homes for the middle classes. While the middle classes lived in purpose-built villas with associated spacious grounds and open space, the lower classes tended to live in crowded conditions in old and poor housing stock which gave landlords maximum rental return. There was a lack of light, ventilation and sanitation in the Old Town of Stirling (Hossack, 2002:34). Housing conditions in other parts of the town also caused concern. By 1900, 'piggeries near Castlehill had been removed, but rubbish was laid out between dwelling houses, emptied slops on top of street grilles'. (*Stirling Journal*, 24 January 1896:5). The death rate in Stirling in 1908 was 19.5 per thousand, compared to Glasgow's 18.8 and Falkirk's 15.0, also within Broad Street it was particularly bad at 24.3 per thousand, (Mair, 1990:215.)

The population of Stirling was also increasing. In 1913, 32.8% of the town's population were living two or more to one room, an increase of 12.5% in ten years. (*Stirling Journal*, 18 September 1913:2; Hossack, 2002:21). Overcrowding became worse after 1904 due to the opening of two new collieries at Bandeath and Polmaise. Initially, no housing was provided for the new colliery workers and they were forced to look for cheap accommodation in the town. Later, under the *Housing, Town Planning Act* of 1909, Stirling Council demanded that the mine owners take responsibility for housing their workers and 233 of these mining families were eventually rehoused at Millhall and Fallin. (Mair, 1990:214-15)

John Allan attempted to improve this situation by incorporating modern housing standards and sanitation concepts into his tenement designs, for example at Quakerfield in Bannockburn (1901) and at Bridgehaugh (1911).

55 Baker St was constructed on the site of an older public house, The Crossed Guns Tavern. There were 65 pubs in Stirling at this time, including seven in Broad Street, seven in St. Mary's Wynd and twelve in Baker Street. Many people in this area of the town lived in a 'dingy world of poverty' in unsanitary, grossly overcrowded conditions in old, closely built, tenements with buildings in a poor state of repair (Mair, 1990:180). John Allan was appalled by the conditions and the prevalence of public houses stating in his own publication *Practical Guide to Healthy Houses* (1883:19):

'Let not foul air and uninhabitable houses co-operate with other agencies in driving people to the public house.'

He continued throughout his career to advocate better housing. Writing in the *Stirling Observer*, 17 January 1914, he stated:

'In every town and city there are extreme instances of congestion, even in Stirling. Under my immediate observation there are dwellings in Stirling, where in these days of cruelty to animals is forbidden, no one would house a dog, or a horse, if he wished to maintain its health. Fancy infants born, dying, and bred up under such conditions.'

The *Stirling Observer* (13 January 1914) reported that the previous December, John Allan had written to the Royal Commission on Housing, enclosing a copy of his article on *Workmen's Dwellings, in reference to Housing and Town Planning Acts*, expressing concern about the extreme congestion caused by high density housing in some Scottish cities and towns including Glasgow and Stirling and about the slow pace of improvement. Closely built housing and back to back tenements had increased in recent years, but no provision was made to regulate the environment. Overcrowding in slums conditions often acted as breeding grounds for ignorance and disease. Better town planning was required, with 'domestic education' considered, when 'building new housing or altering old ones'. It was 'absurd' he said, in his *Workmen's Dwellings* article (p1) to 'preach temperance, soberness and charity to dwellers in insanitary homes' without trying to help them by practical ways and means. Through Town Planning and financial investment in housing building, improvements could be brought about gradually, even single or two apartment houses should be self-contained with their own with provision of WCs, baths, tubs and sinks. Making his case for improved Town Planning in Stirling, John Allan added,

'It is a mistake to allow certain slum property to be repaired, but should be cleared out. In Baker Street, Bow Street and St. Mary's Wynd of Stirling there is considerable congestion of population. A scheme has been put forward for St. Mary's Wynd, which is making rather slow progress. The fault of this scheme is that St. Mary's Wynd is to be widened and building repeated as at present on each side; whereas, the east side should be left entirely open as recreation ground for children and to let in sun and fresh air. To block this street on the east and south sides is to shut off sunlight, and not to carry out the spirit of town planning. -- this scheme should be entirely recast on proper lines.'

In later decades, these slum properties were demolished and the area largely redeveloped including the formation of a small park between Spittal Street and Baker Street creating an open recreation ground and letting in fresh air.

Many of the building and sanitation reforms John Allan implemented were new, including building materials and techniques to enable provision of clean water supplies to households. He was also concerned with reducing the risk of fire and felt that concrete was an effective material for this purpose. To avoid dampness, he advocated the use of brick cavity walling and use of glazed or coloured brick with the use of asphalt or a preparation of silicate and soda and chloride of calcium for damp-proofing. He expressed concern about diseases associated with bad hygiene and foul or contaminated water so encouraged the use of traps and vented drainage systems and self-cleansing velocities, by use of selected gradients. John Allan also had an awareness of poisonous building materials like lead piping and lead paint although unaware of the problems which would be later associated with asbestos.

In *Workmen's Dwellings*, he promoted better town planning and building control and also an increase in Friendly Society type insurance schemes to enable people of more limited means to purchase their homes, rather than paying high rents, an idea which Dunfermline architect Robert Hay had previously promoted in the 1860s.

Both his writings and his designs convey the fact that John Allan was a man of strong convictions when it came to improving housing standards. Throughout his career he was an advocate for those living in slums conditions, whether urban or rural and he exercised his opinion through publication, correspondence in newspapers and radical designs to create debate and discussion.



Tenement Designs

Later in his career, John Allan designed a number of tenements. These gave him an opportunity to incorporate his creative design flair, combining his desire to use technological advances with improved layouts to make better homes.

Mona Place

He designed the tenement Mona Place at 25 Newhouse in 1897. It is a three-storey building in a style, including the high windows, that is recognisably John Allan, confirmed by the stylised version of his name below the chimney. The construction appears to be predominantly brick built with a rock-faced rubble facade.

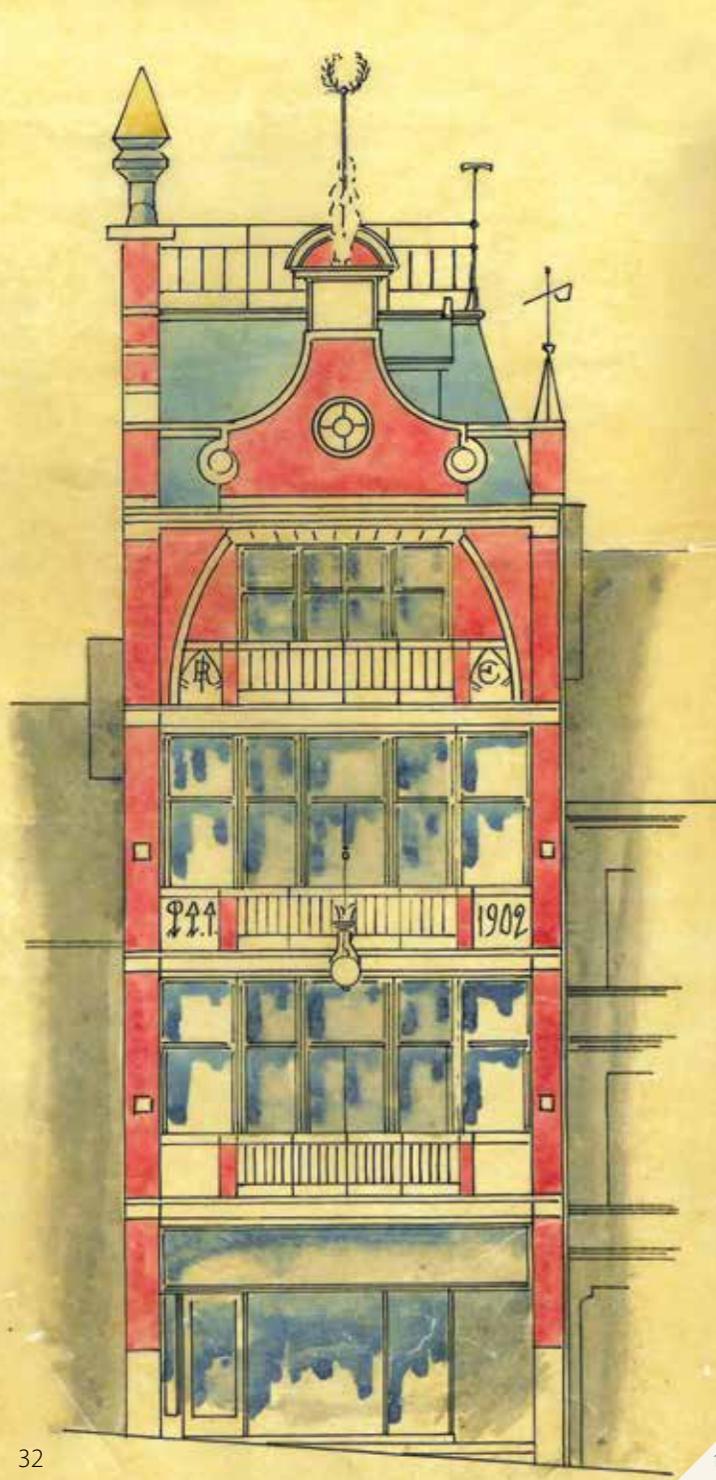
Quakerfield, Bannockburn

In 1901, John Allan designed Taylor's Buildings at Quakerfield, Bannockburn. It was a handsome and symmetrical block with four shops and an office on the ground floor and two storeys of flats above. At the rear were shared toilets and wash-houses with ornamental gardens. Surviving Dean of Guild plans also show that there was a 'Keeper's House' for a resident caretaker. These buildings have been demolished.



- 1 Front elevation, Mona Place, © Jo Cound 2017
- 2 Chimney, Mona Place with date stone, © Jo Cound 2017
- 3 Dean of Guild Court plans for Quakerfield, 1901, Reproduced courtesy of Stirling Council Archives

. FRONT ELEVATION.



29-31 Friars Street

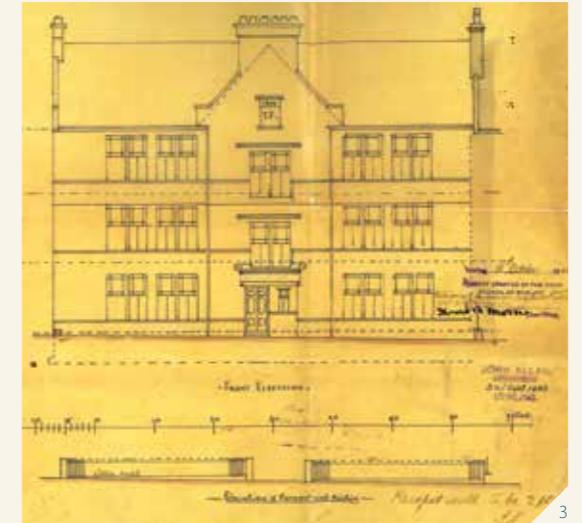
In the heart of the old burgh, John Allan returned to his favoured red brick in the design of a tenement and shop for J. B. Richardson in 1902. Its distinctive narrow façade, like Wolf Craig built in Welsh Ruabon brick climbs four tall stories. The concave balconies on the upper floors give it a Continental feel together with the scrolled Dutch gable. On the façade are six incised panels, two of granite and the other four of sandstone. Like its predecessor in Baker Street, this design creates a statement amongst the traditional buildings at the heart of Stirling's commercial centre.



2

Spittalmyre

In 1907, John Allan designed Spittalmyre in Wallace Street, a beautiful symmetrical three-storey tenement with the initials of the builder Thomas Ferguson recorded on the front and the stylised form of the architect's name on the gable. Each of the six flats had a parlour and bathroom. The building expresses Allan's fondness for particular window patterns with the use of margin panes in the upper sashes.



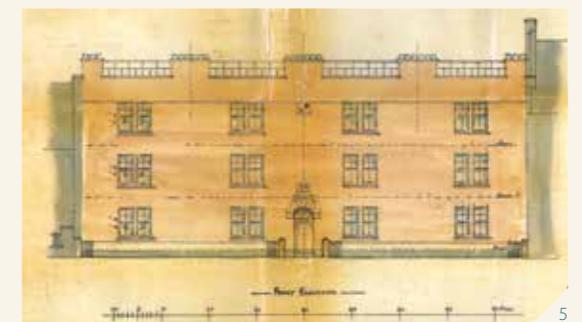
3

Bridgehaugh

The last tenement to be designed by John Allan was at Bridgehaugh located a few yards from the Old Stirling Bridge. It was accessed through a passageway to the rear (rather than a common close), leading to a stair structure giving access to open walkways. The building is attractively symmetrical in design under a flat roof and the panels on the front record the name 'Brighae' with above that 'AF 1911' and at the very top a stylised form of the architect's name. A plain and rather austere design, the building was, like Albany Crescent, designed to be affordable. There were 4 separate flats on each of the three floors, upper flats having a balcony. Importantly, at the rear were shared toilet, bath and wash-house facilities to ensure all had access to sanitary provision.

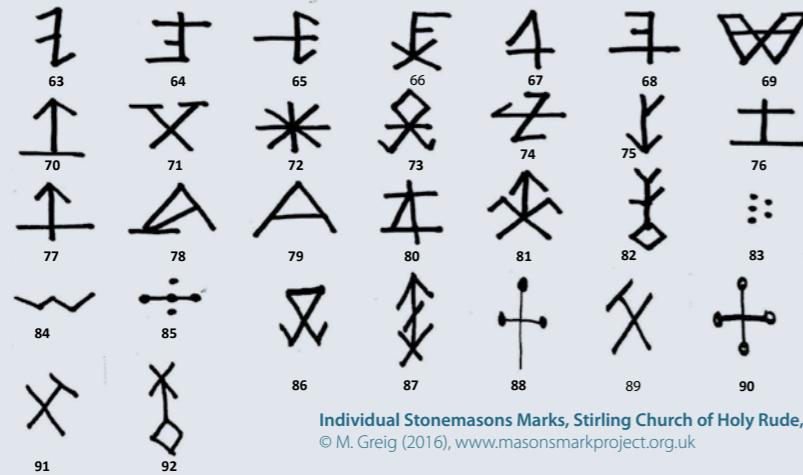


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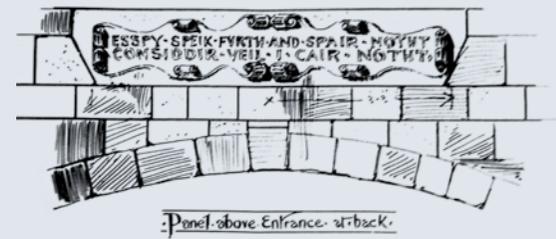
- 1 **Dean of Guild Court plan, Friars Street, 1902,**
Reproduced courtesy of Stirling Council Archives
- 2 **Façade of Friars Street,** © Jo Cound 2017
- 3 **Dean of Guild Court plan, Spittalmyre, Wallace Street, 1907,**
Reproduced courtesy of Stirling Council Archives
- 4 **Bridgehaugh,** © Robin Mair
- 5 **Dean of Guild Court drawing for Bridgehaugh.**
Reproduced courtesy of Stirling Council Archives



Individual Stonemasons Marks, Stirling Church of Holy Rude, © M. Greig (2016), www.masonsmarkproject.org.uk



Eighteenth century merchant marks, Stirling Old Town cemetery John William Small. © The Campbell collection.



Esspy speik furth and spair notht
Considdir veil I cair notht

See, speak forth and spare not
Consider well, I care not

Panel above rear entrance(exit) arch, Mars Wark. John William Small. "Old Stirling" 1897: R. Shearer & Son in 1897: Reproduced courtesy of the Campbell collection. See also Fleming, J.S.: "Ancient Castles & Mansions of the Stirling Nobility":1902: p76.

Signatures, Symbols and Mottos

Date stones incorporating the initials of building owners were not uncommon, especially on early Scottish buildings. Marriage lintels, for example, were used to commemorate the date and initials of betrothed couples. John Allan frequently incorporated the building owner's initials but he also included his own signature together with other mysterious symbols and mottos. In this way he developed his own language adding to the individuality expressed in the buildings he designed.

He took seriously the idea of connecting symbols with art and religion and wrote articles on this subject. Allan

stamped his particular personality on his buildings through both their architecture and their decoration in a way that is quite unique. He used symbolism to express his professional identity and to distinguish his work from that of other local architects. He was not alone in doing so, but it might have contributed to him being variously described as a maverick and idiosyncratic.

"Symbols are art, and religion their essence ranging from the early flint and stone circle into the sumptuous modern cathedral." (Transaction of SNAAS, 1913:29)

Signatures and Symbols

Many artists, architects, archaeologists and religious scholars in the late nineteenth century were interested in symbolism, as developed in ancient cultures and tried to explain the meaning behind forms, shapes and colours. John Allan's first written work appeared in 1883, with the bulk of publications from 1895 onwards, and he often made reference to symbolism. This interest in antiquities must have inspired him to distinguish his work, in a similar manner of earlier masons and merchants. From about 1895, he started including symbolism and mottos on his buildings.

John Allan greatly admired the work of Sir Robert Rowand Anderson (1834-1921), in particular his exterior and interior design of the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Stirling in 1875. Anderson was a leading member of the Traditional Movement in Scottish architecture, which flourished in the later nineteenth century. This Movement took varying forms, but aimed to reform what was seen as a 'laissez faire' approach to architecture of the mid-nineteenth century. Traditionalists rejected 'aggressive modernism' in favour of greater coherence and simplicity in design. Through a collaboration between architects and crafts people, such as masons, sculptors and cabinet makers, they aimed to achieve a more harmonious 'unity of the arts' (Glendinning M. MacInnes, R. and McKenzie, A., 1996: 333-335).

Examples of John Allan's interest in this traditional, often innovative and complex, approach can be seen in some of the exteriors and interiors of the buildings he designed, such as his own home Cliffbank and Batterflats. He also recommended Anderson supervise the work of John William Small (1851-1911) at the Church of the Holy Rude in 1896^{vi}. Small was a fellow architect, and interior woodwork specialist, with whom he had worked within 1889 on the renovation of the North Church. At the Church of the Holy Rude, many examples of symbolism and decorative features are found including masons' marks which may have proved inspirational. In 1897, John William Small produced a carefully detailed book on *Old Stirling* in which he recorded in scale drawings, important architectural features in various parts of Stirling Castle, Mar's Walk, the Church of the Holy Rude, and other historic buildings in Stirling's old town and preserving a record of some of Stirling's lost heritage^{vii}.

The books, articles and talks by John Allan indicate a fascination with the significance of shapes stating that the most perfect symbols were the circle, square, and equilateral triangle combining all the principles of geometry.

- 1 Date plaque at Park Avenue with John Allan's initials, © SCHT
- 2 John Allan signature and date, Mona Place, © Jo Cound 2017





His first use of symbols is believed to be in 1895 at 8 Park Avenue where he incorporated a square date stone with the letters 'JA' set within a circle. The signing of his buildings continued for the rest of his career. It is not clear where this idea came from but in 'Cracks in Flutorm', John includes an image he found in an old grave stone in Carnock kirkyard showing a mason's mark, said to be associated with Free Masonry and 'belonging to a time when merchants, craftsmen and traders, dispersed themselves over the world, with their privileges and mysteries'. In its simplest form it is the use of symbols to represent himself rather than using his full signature. This is used in the only photograph available of John Allan (see page 4) and examples on buildings at Mona Place (1897), Spittalmyre (1907) and Bridgehaugh (1911). In this way he developed his own language adding to the individuality expressed in the buildings he designed. At his most expressive and elaborate is the Wolf Craig building where he makes extensive use of all manner of symbols.

Wolf Craig and Friars Street

The building which epitomises Allan's love of symbolism is Wolf Craig. Here, a total of nine square panels offer curious shapes, designs and symbols. Some panels have proved difficult to decipher, such as the square with coloured tiles of different shapes. Others are clearer, such as the swirling rope which forms the letters, 'R' and 'M' for Robertson and MacFarlane, owners of the building. Another depicts the Castle Rock and Stirling Bridge with two keys. The archer panel may be a reference to Diana, the Huntress who is referred to in a number of his writings including *Monastery Days and Archery*.

Five years later in 1902, he once again used symbolism on his tenement design in Friars Street. The Dutch gable incorporates two subtly carved stones representing the prehistoric cup and ring mark on a stone in King's Park, and the consecration mark of the Church of the Holy Rude. These ancient symbolic marks have spiritual significance and reflect his attempt to incorporate local historic references in his architecture.

Mottos

Incised tablets have been used since the Ancient Civilisations of Greece and Rome. Particularly good examples survive in the Netherlands where they are known as 'De Gevelstenen' with many colourful examples found on buildings in Amsterdam. Decorative depictions date to the sixteenth century and sometimes incorporate mottos and scripture similar to those adopted by John Allan.

Tablets and date stones were also used to mark when a building was constructed or to mark its benefactor. On a tablet at 54 Spittal Street it states it was 'foundit for support of the puir' by Robert Spittal, tailor to King James IV in 1530. The layout, where words are not made to fit on one line, was also used by John Allan to good effect in his motto tablets.

The first motto was used on the Wolf Craig building in 1897 noting the local legend of the wolf saving the people of Stirling by howling to alert sentries of arriving Viking raiders.

*Here in auld days
The wolf roam'd
In a hole of the rock
In ambush lay*

A notable anti-establishment panel is found at 56 Main Street, Doune which is believed to be a reference to the Boer War. He was therefore not afraid to use the buildings and his clients to express his concerns about wider political issues.

*Let Justice Truth Honor
And Respect
For others rights
Be wrought
Into every part
Of
Our empire*

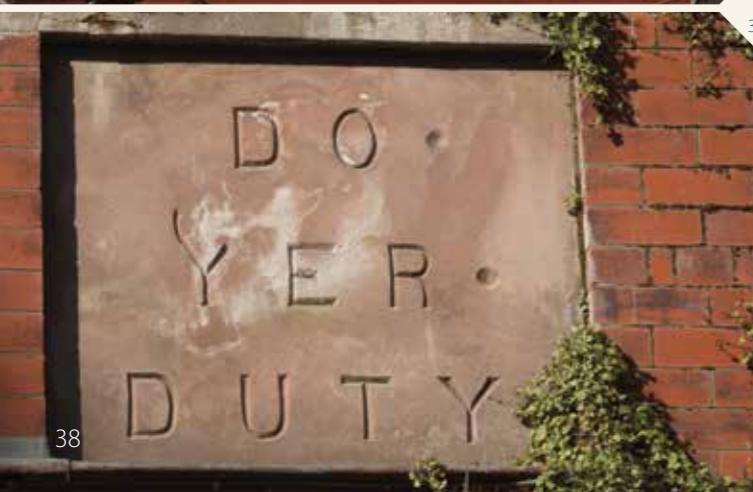


In Friars Street the panels are briefer with statements of 'Honor Principle' and 'Do Yer Duty'. The strangest is perhaps at John Allan's final commission 30 Spittal Street. This quirky building erected around 1913 has a prominent use of exposed steel beams. The façade includes a panel with the date and at the bottom, a stylised version of his name. The text states:

*As thoht is fre
Hud veil yer tung
I advis the*

- 1 Friars Street panel, © Jo Cound 2017
- 2 Friars Street gable with carved symbols, © Jo Cound 2017
- 3 Wolf Craig panels, © SCHAT
- 4 Plaque to Robert Spittal, 1530, Spittal Street, © SCHAT





Albany Crescent

The most famous of Allan's panels is from the now demolished Albany Crescent built in 1898. Originating from Shakespeare, the motto is:

*What E'er Thou Art
Act well they part*

David Oman McKay (1873-1970) saw the panel as he walked through Stirling feeling homesick when on Church missionary work in Scotland in the late 1890s. The panel, with its 'Magic Square', inspired him to such an extent that when Albany Crescent was demolished in 1965, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints purchased the panel and transported it to Salt Lake City. It is now located in their Church History Museum. David O McKay became President of the Church in 1951.

The Magic Square, a form of symbolism referred to in Allan's publication, *Carnock, Ancient and Modern*, (1895:25) referring to the work of the Reverend John Row, parish minister at Carnock. He claimed it was a previous custom of 'worthy divines' in the past to ward off evil spirits by means of a magic square or circle as a talisman. 'The peculiarity of a Magic Square is', John said, that it 'can be read in in any direction—east, west, south north or angle-wise and the cumulative numbers always add up to 18- every day and place and time'.

The meaning in each shape is still unclear and probably relates to early forms of religious symbolism, but the message in the stone implies that 'if the equation changes the outcome is different'.

There was a second stone on the building of a Lion Rampant with an axe, which may represent James I and the beheading of the Duke of Albany and his relatives. The panel was inscribed with

We arise on sondry wys

This appears to have been taken from the 'Friars Tale' in Chaucer's medieval Canterbury Tales.



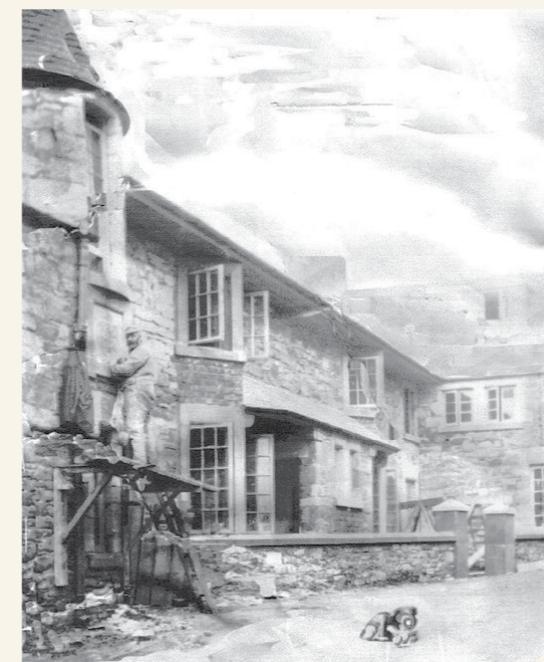
1 Panel on building façade 30 Spittal Street, © SCHAT

2/3 Friars Street panels, © Jo Cound 2017

4 Carved limestone tablets from Albany Crescent found in demolition contractor's yard Banknock, after demolition of the building by Alexander Moffat. The magic square stone seen on left, was purchased for £30 by Philip D. Jensen President of the North Scottish Mission and shipped to Mission headquarters in Salt Lake City, USA. This photograph showing Mr and Mrs Moffat, was taken by Philip D. Jensen in 1965. Reproduced courtesy of Mandy Watson and the Church of Jesus Christ and the Latter Day Saints

5 Albany Crescent in 1964, photograph by Jeff Mix. The lion rampant tablet can be seen on the wall on the right and the magic square on the upper wall of the adjoining building on the left. Reproduced courtesy of Mandy Watson and the Church of Jesus Christ and the Latter Day Saints.

6 James Innes, stonemason carving a plaque on a new building in Doune (1894), courtesy of James.



The stonemason in the image undertook a number of stone carving commissions for John Allan, around this period, but it is not known if he, or some else, undertook the carving work for the Albany Crescent tablets. James Innes and Sons have been stonemasons in Doune for over 150 years. The James Innes in the image is the great, great grandfather of the current James Innes. James Innes and Sons are carving copies of the Albany Crescent tablets at present for the Stirling Smith Museum.

Model Cottages and Architectural Competitions

“Beautiful forms are no more expensive to build than ugly ones.”

(Transactions of SNHAAS, 1913, 59)

Through his publications, articles and lectures together with architectural competitions, John Allan continuously raised his profile and found a voice to encourage reform of the poor living standards for many people in Scotland. This had been true at the start of his career with the rural cottage design and also towards the end of his practice.

In May 1904, John Allan was listed among the exhibitors at an exhibition held in St Margaret's Hall, Dunfermline organised by the Dunfermline Carnegie Trust to promote interest in housing reform and improvement of civic and social art generally. A large number of plans of public institutions, garden cities, libraries and schools throughout the UK were entered. Among the exhibits were plans of model houses for the working class. John Allan was

named prominently among the list of exhibitors, in addition to architects from London, Edinburgh, Glasgow and other parts of Scotland. (*Dunfermline Saturday Press*, 7 May 1904)

The Glasgow Building Exhibition opened at the Glasgow Zoo on 20 September 1913 with over 60 firms exhibiting a variety of products including building materials, gas and electric lighting, fire resistant flooring, damp-proof roofing and bathroom fittings.

John Allan's innovative and flexible design for a model cottage was chosen as an exhibit at the event, under the title *'What can be done for £250 - Cottage designed by Mr John Allan, Architect, Stirling'*. The exhibited Model Cottage designed by John Allan was constructed by Alexander Logie, of Stirling and Messrs MacFarlane, wrights, Glasgow.

It was described (*Stirling Journal*, 2 October 1913) as being *designed for single double or continuous dwellings with back gardens, with or without front plots'* and was a total of 7,742 cubic feet. Accommodation included a lobby, two rooms, a bathroom and scullery. The property was to be furnished and was described as being *'lined with alderwood, is washed in simple colour as healthier than papered walls and the exterior treated with brick and harl in the Scotch style'*. The important element was that the cottage was intended to be affordable and is described as designed to *'illustrate simplicity of working and the cost in accordance with its situation, will be moderate to suit the majority and to aid working people having a stake in the country'*.



Design for the Model Cottage,
© Stirling Observer 1913

John Allan 1847-1922

John Allan has been described as having an idiosyncratic style, but when you strip his buildings of their mottos and symbolism, the basic architecture is sound and of its time. He does not appear to have been influenced by any one style of architecture but understood and appreciated they belonged to the time, culture and traditions of the period in which they took place. He was open to inclusion of both earlier and new ideas in his own architecture, whilst also demonstrating his own dash of style and innovation, using modern materials, technology and construction. His attitude towards architects and architecture are best summed up in his own words taken from his talk to the SLHAAS in June 1887:

‘A wise man gathers up the fragments of the past, not that he may repeat them, but that he may infuse into them the new life of the present. A real artist does not require to repeat or follow anyone, and his work possesses more than is seen; the composition tells its own story.’

He died on 21 February 1922 aged 75 at his house, Cliff Bank, in Dumbarton Road of a suspected cardiac failure. His sister Margaret, died just a week later on 2 March 1922 of a cerebral haemorrhage aged 70, also at the house where they had lived together since it was built

in 1878. It seems that neither had been married. Their brother, Robert, died a few years later on 30 July 1926 in Seton Place, Edinburgh. Robert was described as a retired cabinetmaker and was married with children.

The house, Cliff Bank, was sold by public roup on 4 April 1922 to Mr Henry Smith of Edinburgh for a price of £1,015 (*The Scotsman*, 5 April 1922). The estate of John and Margaret was inherited by John Lumsden^{viii} of Aucklands, Auckland Road, London who was specified as the only recipient in the event of Margaret surviving her brother John. The Last Will and Testament of Margaret Allan was dated 20 July 1918 but there is no known will for John Allan (SC67/40/41 Stirling Sheriff Court).

In his Obituary in the *Stirling Sentinel* he is described as *‘a man of original ideas’*. This statement sums up John Allan as a man who was both brave in his architecture but also in his life where he developed new ideas in order to improve housing for working class people. He was a man of principle whose legacy of standing buildings in Stirling represent a career of brave innovation and design.

‘He was a man of original ideas, and in the buildings he designed and erected in Stirling, his individuality is marked.’

(Obituary in the *Stirling Sentinel* of 21 February 1922)

Books and Articles by John Allan

John Allan was a prolific author of books and articles. Many articles were published in the Journal of the Stirling Natural History and Archaeological Society (SNHAAS) of which he was an active member for many years. He was Auditor for SNHAAS around 1887 until his death in 1922 and a member of SNHAAS Council in 1886. The Stirling Field Club was the original name for SNHAAS and was formed on 11th Feb 1878, with the name change on 7th Nov 1882. It would appear that the Stirling Field Club continued as a form of a Historic Rambling Club. John Allan was Club Vice-President at his death in 1922 and organised and guided several Club outings.

Chronological list of published materials

1884. *Practical Guide on "healthy houses" and Sanitary Reform*. Simpkin, Marshall.

June 1887. 'Art Ancient and Modern'. *Stirling Natural History and Archaeological Society*, Vol 9 p66.

April 1889. 'Archery'. *Stirling Natural History and Archaeological Society* Vol 11 p44.

1895. *Carnock Ancient and Modern and Village Life. By a Native*. Dunfermline: Dunfermline Press.

30 July & 6 Aug 1895. 'Tour in Switzerland by a Citizen of Stirling'. *Stirling Sentinel*.

11 & 18 Aug 1896. 'Circular Tour Through Ireland and Wales, Via Larne and Holyhead'. By a resident of the Rock. *Stirling Sentinel*

26 July & 2 Aug 1898. 'Tour up the Rhine'. *Stirling Sentinel*.

1899. *Cracks Wi Flutorm Anent the Kingdom of Fife*. Dunfermline (Companion to The Days of the Monasteries.)

January 1904. 'The Borestone of the Field of Bannockburn (and the advisability of their annexation by the Burgh of Stirling' *Stirling Natural History and Archaeological Society Vol 26 Reprinted from Stirling Journal & Advertiser* 1904.

Aug- Sept 1906. *Balinhard or Poetical Sketches, by an Old Pupil of his Schoolmaster*. Dunfermline Press.

1907. *Carnock and it's Thorn Tree Cross, Suggested Restoration by J/A Arch*. Dunfermline Press.

24th Aug 1907. *Keep Tae The Richt. Poem suggested by a walk through the Carnegie Park, Dunfermline*.

September 1902 - May 1907. 'The Days of the Monasteries and Latter Days of Stirling, being conversations with Dick, Tom and Harry'. Reprint of articles from the *Stirling Sentinel*. Cook and Wylie. Dedicated to his sister, Margaret Allan.

1908. *Address to an Auld Whalebone Umbrella*.

31 Aug & 7 September 1909. 'The Borestone of Bannockburn and its Symbol' Paper prepared for the Larbert and District Rambling Club by John Allan, Architect, Stirling and read at the Borestone on 28 August 1909. Reprinted from *Stirling Sentinel*.

1913. *Hymn of Peace*, a poem written by J/A as a celebration of the building of The Temple of Peace at the Hague. This was opened on 28 August 1913.

18 Nov 1913. 'The Historical Development of Architecture Ancient and Modern and some of its Incidental Customs'. SNHAAS Vol 36. This was J/A's longest talk to the SNHAAS and goes into great detail about ancient and modern architecture. It illustrates his immense knowledge and passion for architecture and also includes several references to symbolism and its uses. In his conclusion John Allan acknowledges his indebtedness to all those whose works he has consulted and spoken with on this subject over the past 40 plus years.

1915. 'Cambuskenneth Abbey and Monastery, with Buildings Shown as Reconstructed'. Scott, Learmouth and Allan, (*Stirling Journal*) written for the Stirling Field Club.

June 1918. 'Straws From Many Sheaves', special Red Cross Week, Stirlingshire Branch. A small booklet which includes a John Allan inscription, which had been used on the building he erected in Doune in 1900, bearing the words, 'Let justice, truth, honour and respect for others rights be wrought into every part of our empire'. This inscription might have related to public sentiments at time as the Boer War was in full conflict in 1900. This might explain its inclusion in the Red Cross book towards the end of the Great War.

17 June 1920. 'Stirling Field Club; Visit to Dunfermline' reprinted from *Stirling Journal* by Scott, Learmouth and Allan.

Undated. *Workmen's Dwellings, in reference to Housing and Town Planning Acts and How to Capitalise rents in the Erection of Dwellings*.

John Allan and Andrew Carnegie

John Allan mentions Andrew Carnegie in several of his publications perhaps as a result of the Dunfermline connection between them. In '*Hymn of Peace*', John Allan refers to Balinhard, this is Andrew Carnegie, with Balinhard being another name for Clan Carnegie. In 'Balinhard or Poetical Sketches a dedication', Carnegie's name is explicitly mentioned (p31, p44) plus, '*more light*' seems to chime with Carnegie's '*let there be light*' a biblical motto above his libraries. '*And there among the host I saw /Hero of 'More Light', stand Balinhard*. (p34.)

John Allan was a member of the European Unity (Peace) League and as such received a letter from Carnegie on 10th March 1914 stating that if his project for A National Park for Bannockburn ever took form and subscriptions were received, he will gladly add his name to the list.

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Aberdeen Press & Journal

9 April 1873.

3 January 1872. P6

Alloa Advertiser

12 April 1873 Advertisement.

Building News

2 January 1874. P24

26 September 1913

Caledonian Mercury

5 October 1866.

Dundee Courier

31 May 1873. P3

19 January 1901

Dunfermline Saturday Press

10 August 1867. Advertisements.

7 May 1904

Falkirk Herald

8 February 1884 Advertisement

15 March 1884 Advertisement

9 September 1893

Stirling Journal and Advertiser

24 January 1896. P5

2 October 1913

Stirling Sentinel

21 February 1922. 'Obituary of John Allan'

Stirling Observer

23 February 1922. 'Obituary of John Allan'

Stirling Observer

21 June 1893

23 August 1893

20 September 1893

17 January 1894

21 February 1894

7 November 1894

21 November 1894

5 December 1894

23 January 1895

25 October 1893

24 March 1897. Advertisement

3 October 1897

22 May 1898

17 January 1914

10 March 1914

12 March 1929 (obituary John Lumsden)

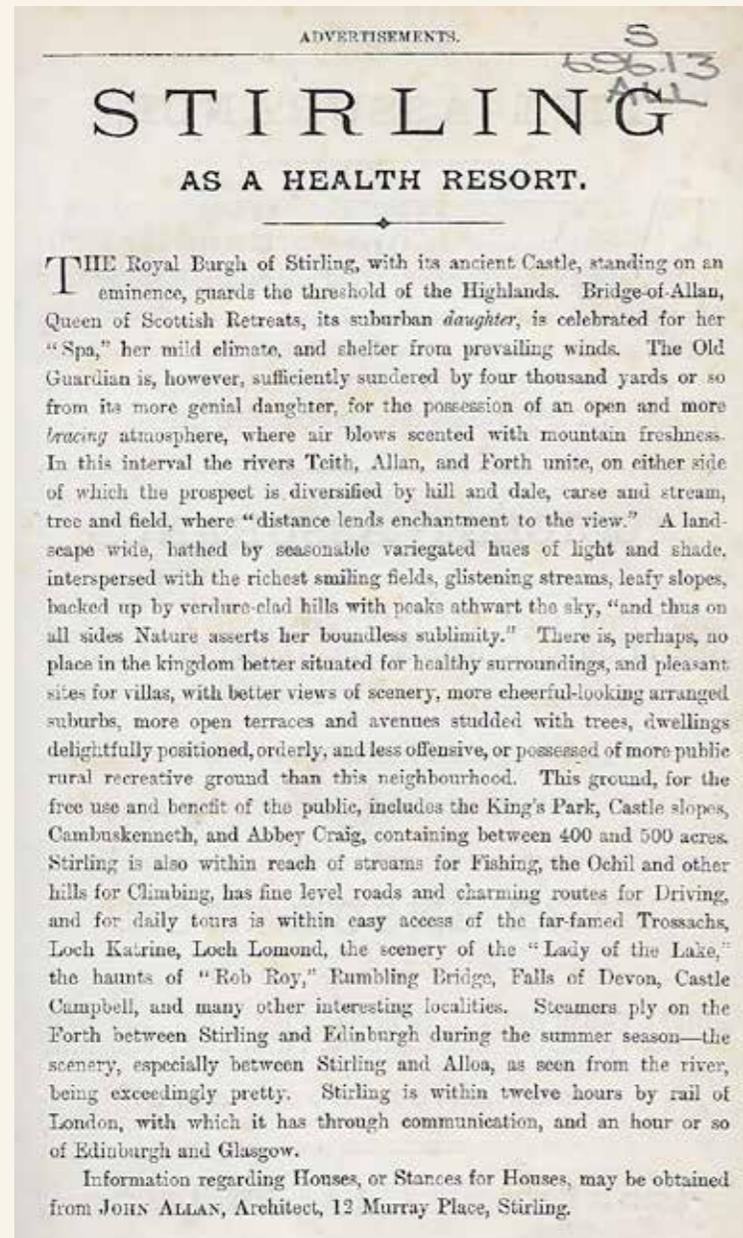
29 October 1929 'Generous gift to Stirling Royal Infirmary: Legacy of £4,000'

Stirling Natural History and Archaeological Society Transactions

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www.scottisharchitects.org.uk



John Allan's advert Stirling as a Health Resort in forward to his book *Practical Guide on Housing and Sanitary Reform*: Simpkin, Marshall & Co. 1884.

Notes

- i Changes in agricultural practices during eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the mechanisation of some farming techniques and the growth in the size of farms led many farm workers to leave country districts in favour of better opportunities elsewhere. The RNAS saw provision of higher wages and better living accommodation for the farm labourer and his family as a partial answer to help reverse this trend.
Farm workers cottages were very basic with bothies located in farm steadings where two to six single men might share very sparse accommodation with little in the way of domestic comforts. This problem related in part, to the traditional practice in Scotland of using Hiring Fairs to recruit or retain farm workers, on short but fixed term contracts. This created a temporary relationship between employer and employee and insufficient consideration being given to the need to improve farm worker accommodation. (*Caledonian Mercury* 5 October 1866)
- ii Inexpensive farm cottage designs were already available in pattern books as illustrated by R.W. Dickson in *Practical Agriculture* (1806). It was estimated in Kincardineshire in 1810 that a cottage constructed with stone and lime with a slate roof would cost £25-£30; stone and lime with imported timer roof : £15-£20; stone and clay with thatched roof : £4-£5. But although 'wind proof and very warm' cheapness was often 'achieved at the cost of longevity' of the dwelling. (Historic Scotland Technical Note 6, 1996, p33; MacCannell, D., 2011, pp196-7).
- iii For more details of correspondence between architect, estate agent and builder, regarding design and construction of these farm cottages on Sauchieburn Estate, see NRS:GD 193/58/2.
- iv The North Church, built in 1842 and one of three churches in Murray Place, had a turbulent history. In 1843, it's minister the Rev Alexander Beith and other Stirling ministers, broke away from the established church during the Disruption. Most of Dr Beith's congregation left with him. The North Church building was retained by the Church of Scotland, but this church's dissenting congregation raised funds to build the South Free Church, designed by the Hays of Liverpool in 1851-53, located opposite the North Church (*The Scotsman*, 30 May 1842; *Stirling Observer* 9 January 1847; *Liverpool Mail*, 18 October 1851:4).
- v A few years prior to construction of the new Wolf Craig building, John Allan had designed alterations to Robertson & MacFarlane's existing premises in Port Street. According to the *Stirling Journal* (9 June 1893) alteration work was well underway and the interior of this building now covered a total area over 20,000 feet, including the ground floor, with galleries on the first and second floors, an upper loft and high level platform. The 'dwelling houses occupying the area over the shop had a railed parterre, hung on concrete combined with iron'. This arrangement of space, at a high level, provided 'commodious laundry accommodation' making the flatted area self-contained. On the ground floor were tramways, despatch, loading platform and hoist surmounted by a cupola, admitting light to the whole place. The various shop goods were arranged in a manner enabling labour saving use of space. The office, situated slightly above ground level to overlook all departments had 'speaking tubes, a cash railway for retail transactions' and there was gas lighting. (p5).
- vi Between 1896-97 under supervision of Sir Robert Rowand Anderson, architect, John William Small undertook restorative work on the Moir Leckie vault in the Church of the Holy Rude, West Church. (Dictionary of Scottish Architects: DSA Buildings/Design Report (25th October, 2017).
- vii John William Small established the North British Art Furniture Works in Stirling around 1886/7. At its peak this business employed about 30 craftsmen. (Dictionary of Scottish Architects: Building Report (25th October, 2017.)
- viii An obituary to John Lumsden appeared in the *Stirling Observer* (12th March 1929) which briefly outlined his career in Santiago, Chile and London after leaving his home town of Stirling. On (29th October 1929) the *Stirling Observer* also reported that in his will, John Lumsden had left a very generous gift of £3564, which with deposit receipt interest amounted to £4,000, to be given at his widow's discretion to the Stirling Royal Infirmary and used to buy beds and a cot.

Gazetteer of Buildings

The table below lists those buildings known (or strongly considered to be) the work of John Allan whilst in sole practice.

1871	Town Hall (extension), Alva	Demolished
1873	Paterson Factory (extension), Burghmuir, Stirling	Demolished
1875-77	Swiss Ville, 30 Albert Place, Stirling	Extant
1877	42 Albert Place and 1-9 Royal Gardens, Stirling	Extant
1878	Cliff Bank, 32-34 Albert Place, Stirling	Extant
1878	28 Albert Place (with 1 Clarendon Road), Stirling	Extant
1879	Farm cottages, Sauchieburn Estate, Stirlingshire	Extant
1879	2 Park Avenue, Stirling	Extant
1879	Abbey Craig House, Hillfoots Road, Causewayhead	Extant
1882	Dugald Buchanan Memorial (design), Strathyre	Extant
1887	2-4 Balmoral Place, Stirling	Extant
1887	Pedestal and enclosure for Beheading Stone, Gowan Hill, Stirling	Extant
1887	Bush Tavern, 55-57 Port Street, Stirling	Extant
1888	Park Avenue / Victoria Place (and poss. 1894)	Demolished
1889	North Church, Stirling (supervised execution of refurnishing and renovation)	Demolished
1890	55 Baker Street, Stirling	Extant
1893	Carnock Parish Church (church hall extension and renovation of church)	Extant
1893-95	Batterflats, Polmaise Road, Stirling	Extant
1895	8 Park Avenue (Billiards Room building), Stirling	Extant
1895	Park Avenue / Clarendon Place, Stirling	Extant
1897	Wolf Craig, 1 Dumbarton Road, Stirling	Extant
1897	Mona Place, 25 Newhouse, Stirling	Extant
1898	Albany Crescent, Stirling. Except Magic Square carved stone tablet	Demolished
1900	56 Main Street, Doune	Extant
1901	Taylor's Buildings, Quakerfield, Bannockburn	Demolished
1902	29-31 Friars Street, Stirling	Extant
1907	Spittalmyre, Wallace Street, Stirling	Extant
1908	Abbey Craig Park House (Tower), Hillfoots Road, Causewayhead	Extant
1911	Bridgehae, 3-5 Bridgehaugh Road, Stirling	Extant
1913?:	Auction rooms, 30 Spittal Street, Stirling. Converted	Extant