Research and writing by Steve North

The History of 33 Millburn St



Early Mention of Millburn

In 1491 King James IV confirmed a burgh charter granting Thomas MacLellan of Bombie, the main laird in the area, permission for the building of a fulling mill and house on the Kirk Burn (later Millburn). This was later replaced by a corn mill and a small mill dam existed east of Kirk House. Today an 18th century two-storey corn mill, converted to a pottery, survives among a mix of houses. The Mill Burn itself is now mostly piped in the built-up area.

In 1598 the bailies and burgesses of Dumfries raided Kirkcudbright in retaliation for what they considered the injustice of some of their customs and duties on ships' cargoes being "stolen" by the port of Kirkcudbright. They were driven off by the townspeople behind the burgh defences and instead set fire to Millburn and burnt down some barns. They were later forced to make reparation.

In 1701 Janet McRobert of Milnburn was arraigned before the Kirk Session charged with making cows ill, dogs mad and with having the Devil appear in her house on regular occasions. She was accused of witchcraft but, at a time when there was increased scepticism and leniency on such charges, the Edinburgh justiciary did not feel there was sufficient evidence to conclude guilt. She was banished from the parish and went to live in Ireland. [A detailed account of this case is in "Tales of Galloway" by Alan Temperley, 2015 edition].

Towards the end of the 18th century the "Milnburn" was known as a "primitive disconnected suburb of Kirkcudbright" being beyond the Meikle Yett in High Street, the only street in the Burgh at that time. [from John Graham – The Old Harbour (Kirkcudbright Memories)].

In 1786/1788 there were 56 families in Milnburn compared with 297 in Kirkcudbright and 114 in the "country" parts of the parish. There were 104 males and 103 females in Millburn. (From "People of Kirkcudbright in 1786 and 1788 ed. Innes MacLeod).

Pigot's Directory of 1825/6 refers to a tanner, a brewer, a grocer, a cabinet maker, a publican, 2 slaters, a stone mason and 7 weavers living on "Mill Bourn". Cotton weaving is described as extensive in the town.

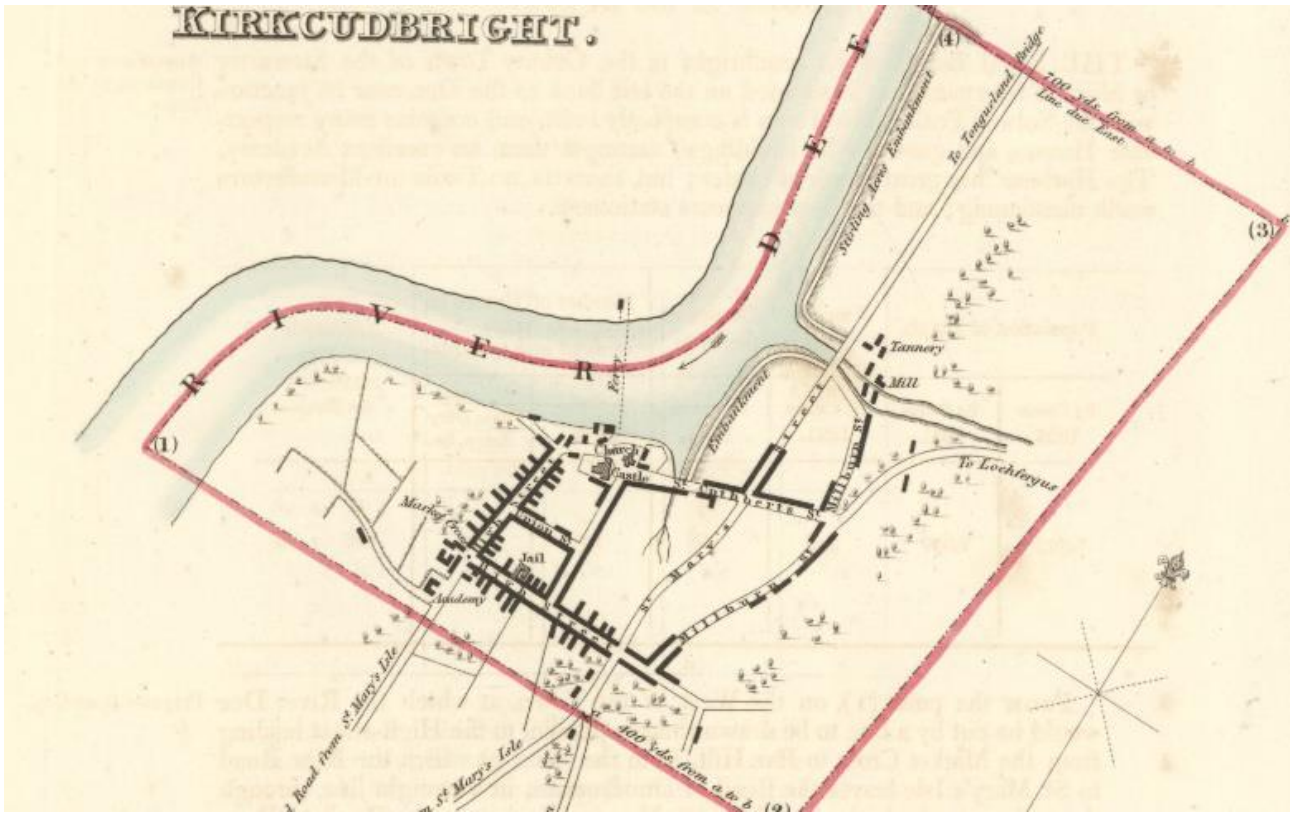
Millburn Street

The road which later became Millburn Street was originally the main road from Kirkcudbright to Tongland and Dumfries and called "The King's High Way".

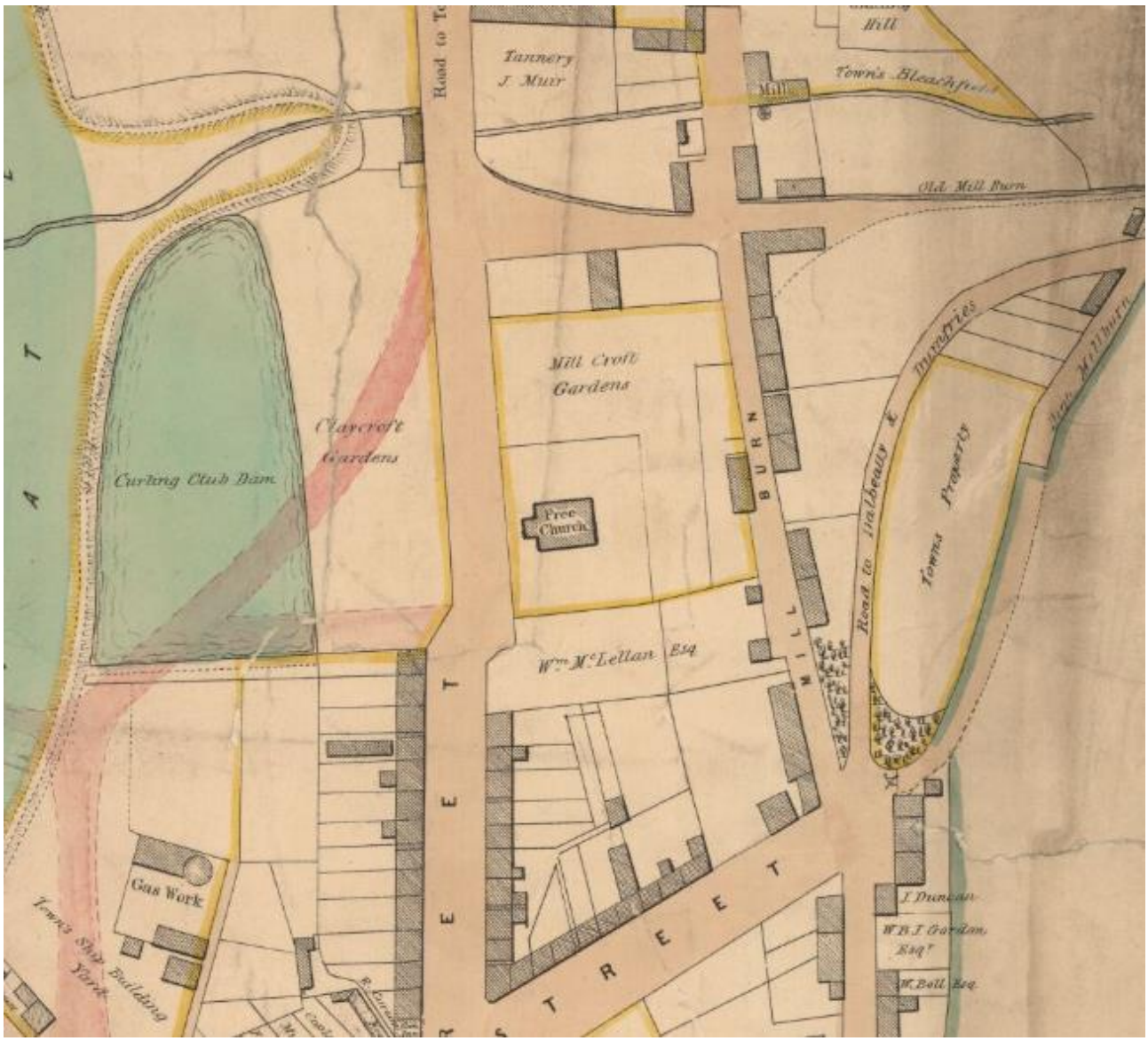
Maps from 1797,1821,1832 and 1843 all show Millburn Street (sometimes just called Mill Burn) being lined by houses on the SE side. The 1891 census refers to Millburn St as "Low Millburn" and other sources call it "Old Millburn", "Milnburn" and "Mill Bourn".



Map of 1797 by John Ainslie



Plan of 1832 by John Thomson.



John Wood's map of 1843

Three houses on the street (numbers 9, 15/17 and 19) are formally "listed" by Historic Environment Scotland – all category C. They are late 18th to early 19th century terraced houses with 2 storeys and dormer-less attics, 3 bays, central doors, sash windows and slate roofs. At some point part of Millburn Street was renamed Waterloo Street after the battle but this name did not last long.

In 1853 the Historical Gazetteer of Scotland said "Millburn-street has a sort of suburban or village character, and is sometimes spoken of, though incorrectly, as if it were not compact with the town".

The Kirkcudbright Conservation Area Character Appraisal (Dec 2014) describes the street as:

"altogether more irregular and vernacular in character. It is lined by a variety of houses mostly of two storeys interspersed with some single storey and attic houses. The 18th century mill is to the northern end of the street. The street rises and falls being set as it is on the higher rising ground to the east of the town centre. This change in levels affords shortened views along the street and emphasises the rooflines and roof-scape of chimney stacks and cans."



Low Millburn from c1900 and 2024





How old is No 33?

No 33 was built in (or soon after) 1794 by John McCachie [later McKeachie] or, more probably, his son, also John. It has remained substantially unaltered since at least 1854.

The title deeds for no 33 refer to a feu charter (recorded 19 August 1794) from the Bailies of Kirkcudbright to John McCachie and his heirs of subjects in Kirkcudbright including:

- that John McCachie shall build “a good dwellinghouse” in line with the front of Andrew McClellan’s houses
- that said John McCachie pay Andrew McClellan half the expenses of the Gavel [gable end] between the two properties, leaving 2 feet each for a common entry.
- the dwellinghouse to have sash windows at the front and be slate roofed
- there should be no outstairs, dunghill or any other nuisances
- John McCachie shall make a good hedge or fence around the whole marches of the feu

The first map to clearly show No 33 is the 1:10560 Ordnance Survey map of 1854 (surveyed1850) – see next page. This shows nos 33 and 35 as one house with the same layout as today (but with a partial rear close between the houses).

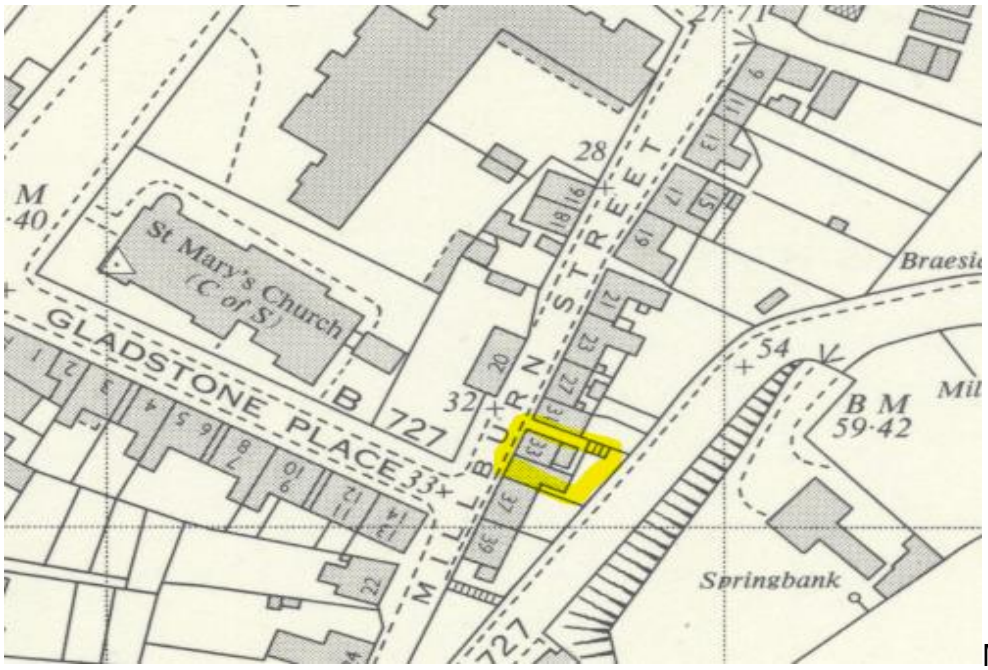
The same layout is shown on the OS 1:2,500 map of 1893, the OS 25” map of 1908 and the OS 1:2500 of 1967. In all these nos 33 and 35 are shown as separate units. The partial rear close must have disappeared after 1967.



Map of 1854



Map of 1893



Map of 1967

The census of 1901 describes no 33 as having 6 rooms with one or more windows (5 in1911) with no 35 having only 2 so there may have been some internal changes to layout.

The red brickwork at the back of the house could be old, since, to save costs, similar brickwork was used in internal walls, chimney heads and at the back of many houses in Kirkcudbright. The Dalbeattie (or Munches) Brickworks was a major local supplier operating from c 1848 to the 1950s using local clay and imported coal. Dalbeattie bricks are often marked with “Dbt” or “George Shaw”. There was also a brick-works in Kirkcudbright.

Who owned No 33?

No 33 was owned by four generations of the McCachie/McKeachie family from 1794 to 1947, when it was sold to the long-term tenant.

The feu charter of 1794 refers to the right to build a house passing to John McCachie.

Valuation rolls from 1859 show that James McKeachie, mason, was proprietor of many properties on High St, St Mary’s St, Castle St etc and three properties (unnumbered) in Millburn Street. In the censuses of 1841 and 1851 James is described as a “house builder”. He came from a family of masons (see below).

From 1872 onwards, James’s three daughters, Misses Elizabeth (b1829) and Agnes McKeachie (b1832) and Mrs Mary Wishart (b1830) were co-proprietors of many properties in in St Mary’s St etc and three properties (unnumbered) in Millburn Street. E and A McKeachie, spinsters, and Mrs Mary Wishart are then specifically mentioned as the proprietors of nos 33 and 35 Millburn Street in the 1894 valuations. They would then have been c65, 64 and 62 years old. Mary had married Thomas Wishart – a shipbuilder. She died in Montrose in 1898. Agnes McKeachie died in ?? and Elizabeth in 1912.

The sole proprietor from 1912-1940 was Mary Margaret Wishart, the daughter of Mary Wishart. In the 1911 census she was living at 98 High St (a big house with 9 rooms with windows), aged 49, with her brother (a retired manufacturing chemist)) and a servant. She was born in Port Glasgow. In 1940 she is described as a spinster of 110-112 High St and was proprietor of many properties in High St, Millburn St etc.

Mary M Wishart died in 1942 aged 80. There was then a disposition from the Trustees of her estate to Lawrence Collins, recorded October 1947. Common entry to the rear was retained for owners to the south ie no 35.

We bought it in 2004 from Mr Andrew and Mrs Susanne McGreevy who had bought it in April 2002.

The McKeachie Family

McKeachie is a long-established name in the Kirkcudbright/Creetown/Tongland/Wigtown areas. It originates from the Irish clan MacGeachie and is pronounced locally as "Mckiyachy."

In 1786, the Minister of Kirkcudbright parish, Rev Dr Robert Muter (1834-1820) collated a "visitation list" for his parish – basically a simple census. In Millburn he listed John McCeaughy and spouse + 1 son. (From "People of Kirkcudbright in 1786 and 1788 ed. Innes MacLeod).

Rev Muter's census of 1786 was later supplemented by John Underwood, his successor as Minister from 1843 to 1878, who accumulated notes on former parishioners. One entry refers to:
"John McKeachie, son of John McCachie, weaver, Shillinghill, could work as a Slater and joiner also saved money, bought Bogrough now Deeside for £800 from Rev Mr Gillespie, Minister of Kells, and became a Bailie of Burgh. Father of John McKeachie, Mason (weaver) also a Bailie". Bailies were the local burgh magistrates.

So, there is a possible McKeachie line of:

- **John McCachie** (?-?) weaver of Shillinghill. **Granted the feu to no 33 in 1794**. John McCachie married Elizabeth Murdoch at Kirkcudbright in May 1745.
  "In presence of John Gordon present Baillie in Kirkcudbright John McCachie and Elizabeth Murdoch both in this parish gave up their names to be publicly proclaimed in order to marriage. James McCachie Milner Standing Cautioner for the man and John Wilson Shoe-maker for the woman".

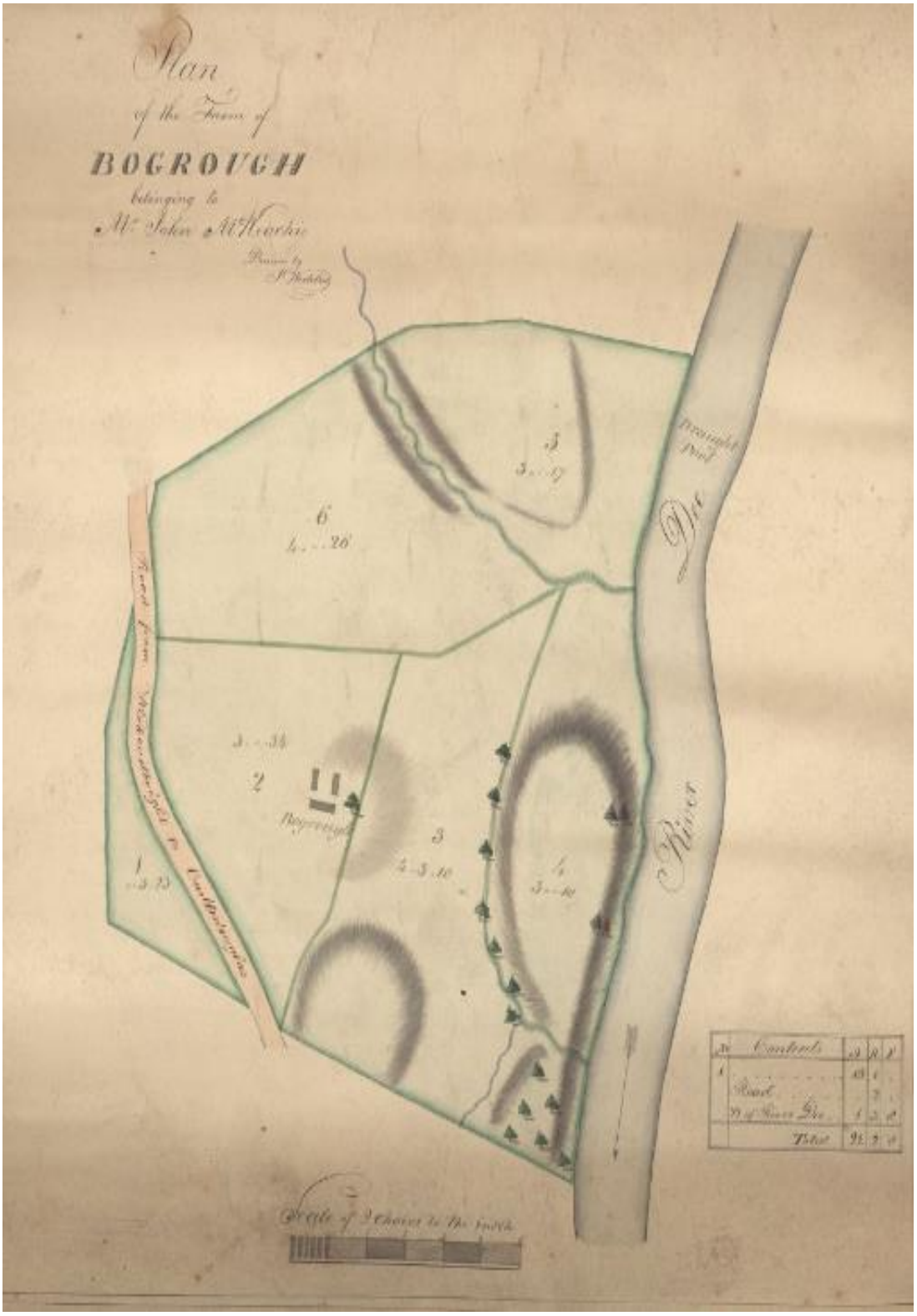
  James McKeachie, lawful son of John McCachie and Elizabeth Murdoch was baptised in Kirkcudbright in 1752 and his brother John in 1759.

- **John McKeachie** (1759 - 1831?), slater and joiner, Bailie of Burgh, property owner and **probably the builder of no 33.** He appears in the Parish register as John, lawful son born to John McKeachie, weaver, and Elizabeth Murdoch at "Milnburn" and baptised in April 8th 1759. In Buittle kirkyard there is a monument erected by John McKeachie, mason, Kirkcudbright, in memory of Janet Murdoch, his aunt, who died in Corsencairn, 1777 aged 72 years. The 1790 and 1806 stent (rates) rolls for Kirkcudbright list a John McKeachie, mason.

  Underwood's reference above shows that this John was very successful, gathering a significant portfolio of property. His acquisition of the farm of Bogrough is shown on a plan of c1800 by John Wedelin and extended to 21 acres, 2 roods and 8 falls (old Scottish land units). John's ownership extended over half the river Dee for c13 chains (c300m), including the Draught Pool where draught nets could be used to catch salmon and sea trout.

  Bogrough lay on the road from Kirkcudbright to Castle Douglas in Tongland. John built a new house shown as "Deeside" on OS maps surveyed from 1848-50 to 1946. In 1819 "Bogrough - now called Deeside" was listed in the Land Tax roll for Tongland at £10 and in 1855 the "Farm of Deeside" was valued at £21.

Circa 1921 a new country house was built on the site as a fishing lodge for the Nielson family and this is now a Category B listed building. At some stage the house also reverted to something like its original name, Bogra House.



John Wedelin's map of Bogrough c1800



OS map surveyed 1848-50 showing Deeside (formerly Bogrough)

Parish registers record that a John McKeachie died “of apoplexy” (ie stroke) at “Milnburn” in 1831 aged 74 and that when the wife of a John McKeachie died “of old age” (aged 69) in January 1827 she had been residing at “Milnburn”.

- **John McKeachie** (c1781- before 1851?) mason (weaver), Bailie.
  The 1841 census has a John McKeachie (aged 60), linen hand loom weaver, living on Millburn Street with three girls – Euphemia (15), Mary (9) and Janet (5). John is not in the 1851 census. Euphemia was proprietor of three properties in Millburn Street in 1855 (occupying one of them)

- **James McKeachie** (c1791- 1860) builder, shipowner, landlord to 99 tenants, share-holder in a gas company and Bailie. Possibly the brother of John above.

There are several early references to other McKeachie’s living at Millburn in Kirkcudbright, probably all close relatives:

- The Kirkcudbright burgh stent rolls for 1779, 1790 and 1806 all list a Robert McKeachie, weaver. James McKeachie, another weaver, is listed in 1790.

- Pigot's Directory of 1825/6 lists a T McKeachie and son, stone masons at Mill Bourn. Could this be a mistake for J McKeachie (the two Johns above)?
- Parish registers record that William McKeachie died "of apoplexy" (aged 69) in December 1827. He had been residing at "Milnburn".

James McKeachie – Quite a man!

James McKeachie was born in Kirkcudbright c1791 and later became a landlord in Millburn Street etc. On the registration of his death, his father is given as John, a builder. His mother was Agnes, nee Herries.

James McKeachie married Mary Copland (b1801) of Dunrod Mill (a late 18th century corn mill towards Dundrennan) in Kirkcudbright in July 1827. He is described in Rev Underwood's notes as a Bailie and mason and is also described in the censuses of 1841 and 1851 as a house builder, employing 2 men and living at 71 High Street. A map of Kirkcudbright by John Wood in 1843 shows a house belonging to J. H. McKeachie on High Street – where number 94 and McKeachie's Close now stand.

Pigot's Directory of 1837 also refers to James living on the High Street and he is listed as both a stone mason and a ship owner. Shares in ships were often acquired by merchants, farmers etc at this time – usually totalling 64 shares per ship. The main trade was around the Solway between Kirkcudbright, Dumfries, Whitehaven and Glasgow bringing in coal, slate, lime etc and exporting grain and livestock.

The Shipping Registers for Kirkcudbright 1824-1841 have 4 records of ships owned by James McKeachie:

Date :	04/00/1825 [Previously registered in Dumfries in 1821]
Ship_Name :	Wherry **MARY AND JEAN** Master: McKEACHIE, James
Owners :	McKEACHIE, James of Kirkcudbright, Mason 40 shares. CARSON, Robert of Kirkcudbright, Joiner 24 shares.
History :	Built at Kelton in Co. of Dumfries 1819 and registered there 14 Aug. 1821. 05 June 1826 - the Certificate of Registry of the A/M vessel having been long lost, proof of this loss was transmitted to the Board of Customs at Leith who allowed the vessel to be re-registered.
Length :	29 9/12ft Breadth: 9 4/12ft Burthen: 10 28/94 tons. Depth of hold: 4ft 7 ins.
Other_Description :	Running bowsprit. One deck, 2 masts. Jink sterned, carvel built. No galleries, no figurehead.

Date :	05/00/1826
Ship_Name :	Wherry **MARY AND JEAN** Master: CLEMENT, Hugh
Owners :	McKEACHIE, James of Kircudbright, Mason 64 shares.
History :	Built at Kelton, Co. of Dumfries 1819, registered at Kirkcudbright 04 April. 1825.
Length :	29 9/12ft Breadth: 9 4/12ft Burthen: 10 28/94 tons. Depth of hold: 4ft 7 ins.
Later_Masters :	STANHOPE, John has now become Master 30 Aug. 1826. McLEAN, John has now become Master 19 Jan. 1827. BAILL, Thomas has now become Master 19 April 1834. BENNET, Alexander has now become Master.

Other_Description :	Running bowsprit. One deck, 2 masts. Round stern, carvel built. No galleries, no figurehead
Date :	29/00/1841
Ship_Name :	Sloop **JAMES** Master: McKNIGHT, Samuel
Owners :	McKEACHIE, James of Kirkcudbright, Builder 64 shares out of 64.
History :	Built at Kirkcudbright 1791, registered at Kirkcudbright 22 Feb. 1841. 05 June 1844 - vessel broken up and Cert of Registry cancelled.
Length :	48 6/10ft Breadth: 15ft Burthen: 39 6/35 tons Depth of hold: 7ft 3ins.
Other_Description :	One deck, one mast. Running bowsprit. Square stern, carvel built. No galleries, no figurehead.

The “James” was bought by James McKeachie in 1841 but had also been registered in Kirkcudbright in 1804, 1825 and 1836 under other owners. When sold at a roup in the Selkirk Arms in 1832 it was described as “the well-known sloop “James” of Kirkcudbright carries 64 tons upon an easy draught of water”.

Date :	11/00/1841
Ship_Name :	Sloop **JANE** Master: LOCKERBY, Gordon
Owners :	McKEACHIE, James of Kirkcudbright, Mason 32 shares. GRIEVE, John of Kirkcudbright, Baker 32 shares.
History :	Built at Bowness in Co Cumberland 1808, registered at Dumfries 19 Oct. 1825.
Length :	41 6/10ft Breadth: 13 6/10ft Burthen: 31 1531/3500 tons Depth of hold: 7ft
Other_Description :	One deck, one mast. Running bowsprit. Square stern, carvel built. No galleries, no figurehead. Also registered in Dumfries in 1816, 1825, 1842, 1848 and 1855. It was not owned by James McKeachie in 1848 and was destroyed by fire at Bute in November 1869.

The “Jane” was one of 8 ships of that name to have used Kirkcudbright over the years.

James McKeachie’s name also appears in other accounts of Kirkcudbright life in the mid-19th century. When the Kirkcudbright Parochial Board (responsible for Poor Relief) was formed one of its first tasks was to carry out an assessment of the ‘Lands & Heritages’ valuation and ‘Means & Substance’ valuation of all Parish residents. On 17th April 1848, a hearing was heard to decide on numerous appeals against the valuations. James McKeachie had been “charged on houses on £200 and on Means & Substance £40”. He was relieved from paying on Means & Substance owing to his paying Interest on debt on his property exceeding £40.

In the 1848-51 Ordnance Survey Name Book of Kirkcudbright, James McKeachie is one of the sources regarding the naming of Shelling Hill or Shillinghill (“A small eminence near the Corn Mill of Kirkcudbright where in former times they brought the Corn from the Mill to be winnowed, a process here called Shelling”) and a nearby cottage (“in middling repair”) of the same name which he owned.

In 1855 James is recorded in the Land Valuation rolls as “occupier” of the “farm of Deeside” in Tongland though the proprietor is given as the Heirs of John McKeachie (his father).

An incident involving James McKeachie is also mentioned in the Rev Underwood's annotated notes:

"a man named Robertson, a bookbinder, lived in Corbet's close and kept possession of the house till he was forced out of it. Bailie Keachie bought the ground on which the house stood (Bailie McKnight on a winter morning mustered a party led by Bailie McKeachie, Wm Niven, Burgh Officer and others, who pulled down the house about the ears of an old man, the bookbinder. He raised an action in the court of session which I as agent for Bailie McKeachie assisted by some of my friends got compromised by paying nearly £100 - bailie McKeachie's act was most reckless, he was not worth powder and shot. Bailie McKeachie was living fast at the time"). The reference to "I" suggests that this took place when Rev Underwood was in Kirkcudbright (1843 to 1878) so it is probably James McKeachie who is referred to.

James died of "water in pericardium" in Kirkcudbright in February 1860, aged 70, and was buried in St Cuthbert's churchyard. His daughters Elizabeth and Agnes were Executrees of his substantial estate. The inventory of his personal estate, which described him as a builder residing in Kirkcudbright, listed:

- Cash in the house (+ interest)	£79 18s 7d
- Household furniture and plenishing, body clothes and effects	£123 10s
- Half yearly rents of house property in the burgh of Kirkcudbright (due at Whitsunday) by 94 named tenants (inc interest)	£149 9s 11d
- Five shares in the Kirkcudbright Gas Light Co	£25
- Half yearly rents of house property in Kirkcudbright (due at Whitsunday) belonging to Mrs Mary McKeachie, spouse of the deceased, "and of which he enjoyed the rents as courtesy." Five named tenants.	£21 7s
- Propation [?] to date of death and interest to date of inventory.	£13 6s 8d
	£391 5s 2d

Presumably there was also the capital value of the rented properties and his house in High Street. These fixed assets would normally be automatically inherited by the eldest male heir – but it's not clear who inherited in this case.

James had clearly been a very significant figure in the town being a builder, shipowner, landlord to 99 tenants, shareholder in a gas company and Bailie of the Burgh. McKeachie's Close by 96 High Street was named after him and was later drawn by Jessie M King.











Five Miniatures of the McKeachie Family

Watercolours by John Faed (1819-1902). Believed to have been painted around 1836 and now in the Kirkcudbright Gallery. They have been described as “astonishingly mature work for a 16-year old”. Faed was born and died in nearby Gatehouse and became a well-known portrait artist, exhibiting at the Royal Scottish Academy and Royal Academy – one of the first Kircudbright artists.

James McKeachie and his daughters were owners of 33 Millburn Street until 1912. Their family were owners from when it was built (c1794) until 1947.

Who lived at No 33?

Four generations of the Collins family (mainly hawkers and rag dealers) were tenants/occupiers (and latterly owners) of no 33 from c1855 to at least 1958.

The house was probably lived in initially by members of the McKeachie family who built it.

Larry or Lawrence Collins was a tenant of James McKeachie in Millburn St in 1855 paying £5 pa. He remained a tenant there from 1859 to 1871 but at times he only paid £2 10s rent, implying a shared tenancy. He is described as a "general hawker" or "general dealer."

In the 1861 and 1871 censuses he is listed as Larunce Collans and Lawrence Callan respectively and he was born in Ireland. His son Peter was born in Armagh so he may have originated from there too. There are no Collins/Collans/Callans in the 1941 and 1851 censuses for Kirkcudbright so it appears that they came from Ireland between 1851 and 1855 (possibly linked to the Irish Potato Famine from 1845 to 1852?).

In 1861 Lawrence was living in Millburn Street with his son Peter and a daughter Ann, aged 16, a domestic servant born in Ireland. They had 2 rooms with windows. In 1871 "Larunce" was living with his son Peter and a "home servant", Ann McGinnes 16, born in Stranraer. By that time, they only had one room with a window.

Lawrence died of kidney disease/retention of urine in Millburn Street in 1872 aged 76 years. He was the widower of Elizabeth Dun and his father was described as a farmer. His mother was "unknown". The informant of his death was his illiterate son John.

Peter Collins is listed in valuation rolls as a tenant of Misses Elizabeth and Agnes McKeachie and Mrs Mary Wishart from 1872 when he tenanted two properties on Millburn St for £3 and £5 pa. This may have been nos 33 and 35. Peter was tenant/occupier specifically of no 33 from 1894-1904 paying £5 pa.

Peter first appears in the census entries in 1861 (as Peter Callan), born in Ireland/Armagh. Entries for his birth year vary from c1829 to 1833.

He was variously described as a "labourer", a "hawker", "general dealer (rags)", a "dealer in rags" and as a "dealer (hawker)" working on his own account from home. In the Post Office Directory for 1878 he is described as an "earthenware and rag dealer" living at "Old Millburn". When his son James married in 1901, he was described as a "soft goods dealer".

Peter married Catherine nee McMillan sometime after 1871 and had 8 children, all born in Kirkcudbright. He died of cardiac failure in August 1905.

Catherine Collins, Peter's widow, was the occupier of no 33 from 1906 to 1918, living with two adult sons and a granddaughter. No professions are given. The granddaughter was born in Glasgow. Their house had 5 rooms with one or more windows. Catherine died aged 75 of pyelitis (kidney problems) in April 1927 when she had been living at Church Place, Kirkcudbright.

James Collins (Catherine's son, born c1875) was the tenant of no 33 from 1919. The Postal Directory of the Kirkcudbright area for 1921/2 lists him as assistant miller of 33 Millburn Street. In 1940 James was still tenant of no 33 paying £17 10s pa. He was a warehouseman.

James Collins married Sarah Ann Kane in June 1901 in St Joseph's RC Church in Milton, Glasgow where he was working as a journeyman house painter. Sarah (born c1875) was a domestic servant in 116 High Street, Kirkcudbright and her father, John, had been a railway surfaceman.

In 1911, James and Sarah lived in a two-room tenement in Grove St, Cowcaddens, Glasgow with 3 children – John (7), Lawrence (6) and Katie (2). The children and their mother were all born in Glasgow. James was then working as a table varnisher in a sugar manufacturer.

James, a widower, died in Kirkcudbright Cottage Hospital in January1958 after a stroke, aged 83. His usual residence was given as no 33 Millburn Street. His profession was given as house painter (retired). He'd been listed as an apprentice painter in the census of 1881 when he was 16.

Lawrence Collins (James' son) bought no 33 in 1947. He died in 1990 in Castle Douglas.

However, there seems to have been a period from c 1901 -1905 when the Collins and McClunes may have swopped houses between nos 33 and 35.

When Peter Collins died in August 1905 his residence was given as no 35 Millburn St. The 1901 census also gives Peter Collins (60), his wife Catherine (47) and six children as occupiers of no 35.

In the1901 census, the occupier of no 33 is given as Robert McClune (44), a slater, with his wife Jane (39) and 4 sons, the eldest an apprentice plasterer. All were born in Kirkcudbright except Jane who was born in Kirkpatrick Durham. The valuation rolls for 1905 also show Robert as the tenant of no 33. He was tenant of no 35 in 1902 and William McClune, mason, was tenant there in 1900-1 and 1903-4.

Steve North & Jane Groves
Research by Steve North