

DUNDEE KNOK (Clock) MAKERS

Extracted from: Old Scottish Clockmakers 1453 – 1850 by John Smith

Knok makers, were comparatively unknown in Dundee until about 1450. By 1650 there were a number working in the town and were regarded as a branch of the locksmiths trade, and this then allowed them to become members of the Hammerman Incorporation.

William Hook, a bachelor was active.

William Bisset.

David Caithness.

The following is a list of the Knokmakers of Dundee, in alphabetical order

1836

John Austen. Dundee.

1781 William Bisset. Dundee.

1787 David Caithness. Dundee

1823/1837 Alexander Cameron, High Street, Dundee.

A notice announced "Alexander Cameron begs to announce that he is fixed a Sidereal Clock and procured a Transit Instrument, divided into NPD from a workman recommended by the Astronomer Royal at Greenwich Observatory for rating chronometers and watches.

No Chronometers or watches will receive a certified rate unless the makers name and box number are engraved upon it. Those watches that are left blank or without the maker's name are generally got up as traffic upon sale or return but cannot be exported. Alexander Cameron proposes being in the English market in a few weeks and solicits orders for himself or his English connection, which may be executed direct from the different manufacturers. His friends in the North and South of Scotland will be waited upon at the usual times with a new set of patterns.

The Edinburgh Evening Courant 6th January 1828.

James Cameron, 85, Murraygate, Dundee.

1823 Cathro. Dundee

"The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty having advertised a premium of £300 for the best chronometer which should be kept at Greenwich for one year, 36 were sent thither by the principal chronometer makers in London and were kept in 1823. It was announced that if any chronometer varied 6 seconds it could not obtain a prize. At the end of the year the second best chronometer of which the variation was about 5 seconds was made by Mr Cathro, native of Dundee. Such perfection was never before attained and it justly excited the astonishment of all astronomers and of the Board of Admiralty.

1838 Alexander Constable. Dundee.

1806 William Constable. Dundee.

1812 – 1828 William Constable 7 High Street, Dundee

1795 John Crichton. Dundee.

1837 William Croll. West Port, Dundee.

Thomas Dall . Dundee.

“Lily Anderson or Dall, wife of Thomas Dall, watchmaker, Dundee served Heir Portioner General to her father Walter Anderson, Weaver, there, dated 12 August 1819. Recorded 17th August 1819

Services of Heirs.

1722 Charles Dickson. Dundee

1794 James Douglas. Dundee

1733 – 1742 Charles Farquharson. Was buried in Howff, Dundee

1847 Robert Farquharson 15 High Street Dundee.

1837 – 1840 Peter Feren 22 Reform Street Dundee.

1777 Alexander Ferguson. Dundee.

1729 Alexander Gordon. Made first clock in Brechin Town Hall.

1850 William Henderson. 32 Nethergate, Dundee.

1762 – 1795 James Ivory.

“Which day James Ivory, watchmaker in Dundee, was admitted Burgess having paid 50 merks Scots to James Disk, sometime treasurer and having now paid other 50 merks to Henry Geekie, present acting treasurer in full of his freedom.”

“The terms of this entry show that James Ivory had no previous claim to admission as a Burgess through his ancestors, and it distinctly proves that he was the first of a family of eminent men who have reflected considerable lustre on Dundee. The name seems to be a corrupt form of the Gaelic *Cognomen Iverach* and the family probably had a Highland origin, although the locality from which they sprang is merely a matter of conjecture. James Ivory rose to considerable eminence as a watchmaker, in Dundee, and was entrusted with the making of the clock for the steeple of St Andrews Church in the Cowgate. He served frequently as a Town Councillor from 1768 till 1789, and it was while acting in this capacity that his son James, the famous

mathematician, afterwards Sir James Ivory, was appointed one of the teachers in the Dundee Academy. James Ivory senior died previous to 1795.”

Extract form the Roll of Eminent Burgesses of Dundee. 22 September 1767.

1795 – 1825 Thomas Ivory.

“Thomas Ivory, watchmaker, Dundee, was admitted Burgess 6th July 1795 by the privilege of the deceased James Ivory, his father”. Thomas Ivory was the third son of James Ivory, watchmaker, and for a considerable time followed the same occupation as his father. His talent as a draughtsman led him to abandon this calling early in the nineteenth century and to take up the art of engraving, and he is believed to have been the first native engraver in Dundee. He executed illustrations for an engraving for *Rollin’s Ancient History*, published in Dundee by Francis Ray in 1800. His best known work was a set of copy lines prepared for teaching handwriting published in 1811, and long used as a model in the Dundee schools. He made the education of the youth of Dundee his special study, and it was largely owing to his trenchant letters signed *Parens* in the newspapers of the period that important reforms were accomplished in the scholastic system with the burgh. He died circa 1825. His son, Lord Ivory of Session, was admitted burgess on 21st November 1816, and another son, William Ivory, writer, Dundee was enrolled on the 6th April 1818.

From the roll of Eminent Burgesses of Dundee.

1553 – 1576 David Kay, Dundee.

1863 Henry Kerr, Dundee.

The Royal Scottish Society of Arts, made five donations and bequests the *Reid and Auld Bequest* is the only one in Scotland left exclusively for the encouragement of the science of horology and one of its prize winners was Henry Kerr. “To Henry Kerr, clock and Watchmaker, Dundee, for the ingenuity displayed in the two new Gravity Escapements invented by him and exhibited to the Society 13th April 1863, a grant of five sovereigns out of the *Reid and Auld Bequest*”.

1790 Edward Livingston. Dundee.

1828 Thomas Low 204 Overgate, Dundee.

1809 - 1837 John Lundie. High Street, Dundee

1806 David Manson. Dundee

1600 – 1650 David Ramsay, Dundee and London.

This maker, celebrated in his day being clockmaker to His Majesty King James VI of Scotland and 1st of England, also has the further honour of being introduced by Sir Walter Scott as a character *The Fortunes of Nigel*.

Considerable licence has been taken by Sir Walter, in history of David Ramsay as will be seen by the extracts following from the “Calendar of State Papers” which does not warrant the somewhat lowly position he is made to fill.

His picture of him as being of an old man with a tall, thin, lathy skeleton extending his lean jaws into an alarming grin, hardly portrays the kind of man who was promoted to be a Page of the Royal Bedchamber. One naturally associates such an appointment as being occupied by men who were suited in every respect to the honourable posts they were called to fill, and not men whose peculiarities, as posed by Sir Walter, would make it an impossibility for any such position to carry it out.

Where he learned the Craft has not been recorded, but Dundee is credited as being the town from which he came. In the *Notes of Dundee Public Clocks*, mention is made of the family of Ramsay, who for a long period had the contract and care of the town clocks, and it is believed that David Ramsay was either a member of this family or closely related to them.

In all probability he learned the art in France, as the specimens of his work, which are now preserved in the British and South Kensington Museums, bear out. One significant fact, warranting the assumption that he worked abroad, is afforded by the watch preserved in the South Kensington Museum, which was engraved on the hinged covers of the front and back, the enunciation and the nativity. This needless to say, would not have been the case had it been made in Scotland, the reaction of everything savouring of popery would have made it a difficult matter to dispose of in that period.

The watch in the British Museum has the period 1600 – 1610 assigned as the date of its manufacture, while this one, and another supposed to have belonged to James I, have each inscribed on them *David Ramsay Scotus, me fecit*, a designation which would have been otherwise if he had made them in a particular town in Scotland.

We assume that he returned from his foreign sojourn, and making his way to London, direct had specimens of his handiwork submitted for inspection by the king, who, was no doubt glad to have such a capable craftsman near him, took him under his patronage.

The following extract from the *Calendar of State Papers* shows his progress: 25th November 1613. Grant to David Ramsay, clockmaker extraordinary. of a pension of £50 per annum.

1616 "Warrant to pay David Ramsay, clockmaker £234. 10s. due to him for the purchase and repair of clocks for the King."

1618. "Grant to David Ramsay of the office of Chief Clockmaker to the King with fees and allowances for workmanship."

27 July 1619. "Grant to David Ramsay, the King's Clockmaker, born in Scotland of Denization." (in Latin)

13TH March 1622 "Warrant to pay David Ramsay, clockmaker £113 for work for the late Prince Henry and for watches and clocks for the King."

30th September 1622. "Warrant to pay £232.15s to David Ramsay, the King's clockmaker, for repairing clocks at Theobalds, Oatlands and Westminster and for making a chime of bells adjoining to the clock at Theobalds."

25th January 1626. Warrant to pay David Ramsay, for coins to be given by the King at the close of his Coronation.

17th March 1627. "Warrant to pay David Ramsay, Page of the Bedchamber, and clockmaker £441.3s 4d. for work done for his late majesty, and £358.16s.8d in lieu of diet and bouche of court"

10th July 1628. "Warrant to pay to David Ramsay £415. for clocks and other necessities delivered for the King's service."

1632 "Warrant to pay David Ramsay, clockmaker on his bills for one year £219."

These authentic notices give in a marked degree the esteem and patronage bestowed on him by his royal patrons, and these along with the specimens of his skill that were in existence yet, show him to have been not only a capable craftsman but a good businessman as well. This is emphasised by the fact that on the foundation of the Clockmakers' Company of London, by Royal Charter on 22nd August 1631 David Ramsay was appointed by this charter the first master to hold office.

He died about 1650, but his age has not been recorded.

1599 – 1646 Patrick, John and Sylvester Ramsay, Dundee.

1853 – James Rattray, listed in 1853/4 Dundee Directory as watchmaker & jeweller at 44 High Street. By 1880 they were listed at 32 Nethergate. At this time one of the family, James Rattray, lived at Craigiebank Place

1806 George Robertson. Dundee.

1785 James Robertson. Dundee.

1828 Charles Ross. Broughty Ferry.

1820 David Rough. Hill Town, Dundee.

1837 James Rule. 44 High Street, Dundee.

1811 Colin Salmon. Dundee.

1776 Andrew Scott. Dundee.

1850 David Scott. 73, High Street, Dundee.

1837 Frederick Scott 3 Overgate, Dundee.

1819 Robert Scott Watchmaker (*found in Guildry Minute Book*)

1820 William Scott. 69, Overgate, Dundee.

1722 Thomas Small. Dundee.

1718 – 1742 Alexander Smith .Dundee. Maker of Clock for the new Town House 1735 for the sum of £150. The wheels were made of brass and the clock was a thirty hour clock.

1850 A.P. Smith. Reform Street, Dundee.

Pre 1687 Ibraham Smith

1687 George Smith,

1718 Alexander Smith, Son to George. Deacon of Hammerman Craft of Dundee

1739 Alexander Smith, Dundee Deacon of Hammerman Craft. Was also a Pewterer and Cutler.

1742 James Smith. Dundee.

1668 William Smith. Dundee.

1749 George Speed. Dundee.

1748 David Watson. Dundee.

1689 Thomas Webster. Dundee.

1853 – 1868 Wehrle (Daniel & Company). Dundee.

1844 Peter Whytock. Overgate, Dundee.

1844 F..J. Wilde. Murraygate, Dundee.

1824 James Williamson. Dundee.

1828 Archibald Young. Murraygate, Dundee.

1828 James Young. Wellgate, Dundee.

1850 John G. Young. Murraygate, Dundee.

1850 Thomas Young. Wellgate Dundee.

1805 – 1843 William Young. High Street, Dundee.