

10 & 12 Mounthooly Street

It is no surprise that enterprising bakers started their businesses in what was at one time a very busy thoroughfare in Old Lerwick. Baker's Closs had no steps and was wide enough to accommodate wheeled traffic and therefore access to and from 'Da Shore'. In earlier times the street stretched from below Fort Charlotte, where there was only a narrow footpath above the cliff edge, to Miss Chalmer's Steps, which crossed the street at the South End near Stout's Court, making the Closs the main access to the waterfront.

In the late 1700s Peter Sievwright started the first bakeshop in Lerwick at the foot of Navy Lane on the south side. In 1831, following Mr Sievwright's death the previous year, the business was carried on by John Bannatyne. In 1838 he moved to a house further down the Closs and the following year he built a house and bakeshop at the bottom of the adjacent garden – 12 & 10 Mounthooly Street - the building we see today.

Six years later, in 1845, Baker's Closs was renamed Mounthooly Street and 'Da Shore' became known as Commercial Street.

By 1851 four bakers were working for Mr Bannatyne. After he retired one of his former apprentices, George Irvine, took over the business, entering into a partnership with James Sinclair and they were trading as Sinclair & Irvine in 1861. George retired after 42 years as a baker about 1883 and the business was carried on by his son John M Irvine. By 1893 it was known as Irvine & Co.

Arthur Russell, baker, was the next occupant from 1895-1898, followed by William Hall, who advertised as a 'Fancy Baker, Confectioner and Purveyor' with shops in 10 Mounthooly Street and 104 Commercial Street. In 1902 he opened new premises in Commercial Road, (presently Sandy's Taxis), and ceased trading in Mounthooly Street. With his departure, after a period of over 63 years, the building ceased to be a bakery.

In 1909 the Trustees of the late John Bannatyne sold the house and former Bakehouse and Bakery, 12 and 10 Mounthooly Street, (documented as a dwelling house with offices, cellar and garden), to Mrs Margaret Morrison. She let the house and garden to a Laurence Robertson and the cellar beneath to James Goudie, Ironmonger for use as a store. His shop at 113 Commercial Street is now the Wine Shop.

The building was then sold to Christina (Teenie) Christie in 1924. She had a Bookseller & Stationers shop on Commercial Street, presently Sweet Memories at the foot of Church Road, but relocated the business to the former bakery in 1926 after Mr Goudie vacated. She traded until 1929 when for just over a year Mrs Elizabeth Williamson ran the shop.

In 1931 Frank Williamson opened as a 'House Painter, Decorator & Signwriter, stocking the very latest paint sprayers and the most modern wallpapers'. Although the whole building changed hands again in 1940 when Thomas and Isabella Stewart bought it, Frank Williamson continued with his successful business until he retired in

1971. His brother, William, took over but retained the name and moved further up the lane to the shop beneath the Mounthooly Place flats. The firm is still in the Williamson family and has for many years been based in the former Co-op premises on North Road.

Sisters, Isabella Helen MacDowel (Ella) and Ann Eliza (Nancy) Stewart inherited the property from their parents in 1949. It remained in Stewart ownership until Nancy, a popular and respected schoolteacher, sold to Leslie Irvine in 1996 the present owner.

After Mr Williamson's departure the next tenant in the shop was Peter Black. He relocated his hairdressing salon from cramped conditions at 1 Gardie Lane, (now High Level Music) and reopened in January 1972. The new modern salon was tastefully decorated but the most striking feature was the mural painted by the young Cluness twins, Barbara and Wilma, along with Lilian Tait. The mural was later altered by an art teacher, Fiona Christie. Mr Black relocated to premises in the Old Infant School playground in 1997.

Following renovation Mr Irvine opened Lerwick Building Centre's 'In Ower Shop' during the summer of 1999 selling furniture and small household items. Accommodation for the firm's staff was provided in the house above.

The following year Mr Irvine let the shop to Jon Stone, Hairdressers.

During recent renovations Jon Stone temporarily moved further up the street but will be returning when the major refurbishment is complete. All the ovens from the former bakeshop were removed in 2011.

Douglas M Sinclair