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EIGHTEENTH AND EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY EDINBURGH SEEDSMEN AND NURSERYMEN

PRISCILLA MINAY

AT THE END of the seventeenth century very few seedsmen and nurserymen were to be found in Scotland. One such was Hugh Wood of Hamilton, gardener to the Duke of Hamilton, who appears to have had an early nursery. According to Loudon he was 'dealing in fruit trees and numerous other garden articles, whether English, Dutch or Scotch'.¹ He certainly supplied pear trees to Sir William Bruce at Balcaskie in 1674 'at a price of 1/6d each'. Sir William was also supplied with garden seeds by a Richard Henderson, Edinburgh, on 1 April 1670, and a George Moubray, merchant of Edinburgh, in 1703.²

James Sutherland, Intendant of the Edinburgh Physic Garden, is known to have sold shrubs and trees to the Earl of Morton at Aberdour Castle. In 1691 he supplied 45 varieties of trees and shrubs, including fruit trees, e.g. 'three great wall plums, three best wall cherries', and American introductions, e.g. 'two upright three leaved ivy of Virginia, 18/-, one Robinus tree acacia of America, £1.0.0'.³ These must have been rare introductions to Scotland at this time.

Lady Grisell Hume Baillie obtained her garden seeds from Samuel Robson of Bridgend, Kelso. Unfortunately she did not detail what garden seeds were bought but in 1710 she spent £1.7.0 sterling on seeds from him, and £5.0.0 in 1713 for '34 ewe trees' from William Miller in Edinburgh. She also employed 'Wear in Hariots work' to dress the garden on 6 June 1707.⁴ Loudon instances an advertisement for the Weirs dated 1721: 'There is to be sold at John Weir's, gardener at Heriot's hospital, and at James Weir's, son to the said John, his house at Tolcross, at the end of the West Port, all sorts of garden seeds, fruit and barren

trees, and evergreens, as also flowers of the best kinds.'⁵

Probably the best known seedsman in Edinburgh at the turn of the century was 'Mr Henry Ferguson, seed merchant, at the head of Black Friar's Wynd'. In addition to his seeds and plants, he sold James Sutherland's *Hortus Medicus Edinburgensis*, published in 1683, the catalogue of the trees and plants in the Physic Garden already mentioned. It is also known that Ferguson produced a catalogue of his seeds in 1681, surely one of the earliest records of a seedsman's catalogue.⁶ Henry Ferguson does not appear in the *Register of Edinburgh Apprentices* nor the *Roll of Edinburgh Burgesses*, but there is an entry which may in a roundabout way refer to him, the entry for William Sutor, who was made 'burgess and gild brother, be right of admission by Mr Henry Fergusone, bailie, gratis, 17 May 1704'.

That he supplied a wide variety of customers can be seen from three instances among the nobility and gentry, the Duke of Hamilton, Sir John Foulis of Ravelston and one of the Maxwells of Pollok House, Glasgow. At Hamilton Palace 'vegetables were grown in substantial quantities ... from at least 1660 onwards. Each year the Duke ordered from half a pound to two pounds of Strassbourg onion seeds, and very often he supplemented this with quantities of French, Flanders and Spanish onion seed at around 7 shillings sterling a lb ... sometimes French leeks ... London leeks ... French cucumbers, Dutch parsnips and Italian celery.' He also grew turnip, beetroot, radishes, cabbages (English, Scots, Dutch, Savoy and Russian), lettuce, spinach, endives, peas, beans and asparagus.⁷

Sir John Foulis of Ravelston also patronised Ferguson, and a few entries from his account book will show that a wide variety of vegetables were grown at the turn of the century:

- 18 July 1700: to Mrs Ferguson for 2 garden knyfes 2 lib 18 sh, 2 unce onions 6 sh, 1 unce radish 3 sh, 1 unce lettuce 4 sh, in all £3 11 0d.
- 16 February 1702: to Mr Ha. Ferguson for 1/2 pund leiks 1 lib, 5 unce onions 15 sh, 4 unce beetrave 16 sh, 2 drap colleflower 12 sh, 4 drap purpie 1 sh, 2 unce radish 6 sh, 8 pund Haistines [peas] 1 lib 12 sh, 1 pund suger peas 16 sh, 2 drap indian cress 6 sh, 2 drap silesia lettuce 8 sh, 4 drap sellarie 2 sh, in all £6 14 0d.
- 26 February 1705: from Mr Harie Ferguson of seeds, 4 unce leek 1 lib, 3 unce onion 9 sh, 2 unce beetrave 8 sh, 2 unce orange caret 8 sh, 1 drop Silesia lettuce 3 sh, 1 drop coliflour 7 sh, 1 unce radish 3 sh, 2 drap purseline 1 sh, 1 drop indian cress 3 sh, 1/2 pund suger peas 7 sh, 1 unce of dutch asparagus 8 sh, and 2 apricock imps 2 lib 7 sh, non of this payed to him yet [but paid later, November 1705].

Other vegetables bought at sundry times (some of them unusual even nowadays) were cucumber, fennegreg, clarie and sybas seed.⁸

That Henry Ferguson was a literate and educated man is suggested by a letter he wrote to the laird of Pollok House which runs:⁹

My Lord

I have a line from your Lordship date the seventeen instant with an enclosed note which I have answered of the very best and freshest which I hope will give content in themselves only there is wanting some Onion seed which not being yet come in I hope shall be sent by the nixt if in anything else I can be serviceable to your Lordship pray command him who is

My Lord
you most humble
and most obedient servant
Henry Ferguson

Edinbr March 22 1703

Henry Ferguson would seem to have been a successful man; not so a near contemporary, Arthur Clephane, who became bankrupt.¹⁰ Clephane set up as a seedsman in 1706 and was admitted burghess as 'prentice to the deceased George Moubray, merchant, burghess and gild brother' – the George Moubray mentioned above. Clephane's business was probably

similar to other seedsmen's businesses of the time. He took on at least one apprentice, Andrew Bruce. His business suffered by competition from two other seedsmen and nurserymen of the day, William Miller 'at the Abbey' (Holyroodhouse), and David Dowie whose shop was near the foot of the West Bow.

He obtained seeds from seedsmen in London, e.g. William Crombie and John Turner, and also from Holland, e.g. Hoot Brunner in Rotterdam, or Isaac Brunner and John Simpson in Amsterdam. Seeds came by sea and so were sometimes ruined by salt water if they had a rough passage. They were packed in a barrel entrusted to the care of the ship's captain, and on landing were later transported by carrier to Clephane's various customers. Clephane had a large clientele and supplied addresses in the Lothians, Fife and Carse of Gowrie, the maximum distance being 50 or 60 miles from Edinburgh. Normally he seems to have received ten to twelve shipments of seeds per year from England and Holland and the value of them was usually between £420 and £540 sterling. Clephane was patronised by many of the nobility and gentry, including the well known improver Cockburn of Ormiston. Many a time he had great difficulty in getting payment from his customers and this is one of the chief reasons why he became bankrupt. He had to resort to litigation on a number of occasions to get his dues; this was a common problem of the time.

Apparently more successful was his contemporary Archibald Eagle, who was well established and advertising in the *Caledonian Mercury* by 1736. Eagle became a burghess in 1732, but he must have built up a notable business before this date as he appears in the list of members of the Honourable the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland as their official seedsman. This society was set up in 1723 and consisted of almost 300 persons from the Scottish aristocracy, gentry and professional classes, including one seedsman and one nurseryman – Eagle himself and William Boutcher, a

nurseryman specialising in trees. In the first 20 years of its existence members of the Society met at intervals in Edinburgh to discuss their problems and exchange information. The membership reads like a roll-call of the nobility and gentry of the time: 114 lords and knights, 17 senior members of the Scottish judiciary, 45 advocates (including the well known botanist James Justice), ten Writers to the Signet, four university professors, and the balance made up of doctors, merchants, booksellers and the aforementioned Eagle and Boutcher. After some years of operation with members writing to one another for advice on improvement topics, it was deemed sensible to go into print, and in 1743 the *Select Transactions* of the Society were published. It is here that one finds the list of members with Eagle's name included.

Eagle's advertisements in the press were long and detailed and like other seedsmen of the time he also sold a variety of non-gardening items. His advertisement in the *Caledonian Mercury* for 1736 runs as follows:

ARCHBALD [*sic*] Eagle, merchant in Smiths land, opposite to the head of the Black Friar Wynd, Edinburgh, and Seedsman to the Honourable Society for Improving Agriculture has newly imported a vast many kinds of exceeding fresh and good Garden and Grass Seeds, together with varieties of Tree Seeds, particularly Acorns in the greatest perfection. Such as have given him Comission may immediately call for same, and all others may be furnished at very reasonable rates. Where may be had Gardeners utensils of all sorts, also several kinds of the finest flower of Mustard, with all sorts of Falcon Graith, such as Hoods, Lures, bells, etc.

Like other merchants of the time Eagle took on apprentices: Patrick Drummond (1735), John Douglas (1745), Alexander Walker (1752) and Keith Reid (1758). Of these Drummond became well known in the seed business, following in his master's footsteps. Both Eagle and Drummond died in 1760 and both businesses were taken over by their wives.

Eagle married twice, firstly Elizabeth Campbell, youngest daughter of James Campbell of Burnbank (1747), and then Margaret Murray, daughter of David

Murray of Murrayshall (1751). The latter outlived him and took an apprentice, Peter Lawson, son of Charles Lawson, wright at Monzie, who became burghess in his turn 'in right of Mrs Margaret Murray, relict of Archd. Eagle, seed merchant, burghess and gild brother,' in 1786. The address of the shop varied between 'merchant in Smith's Land', 'shop in Smith's Land near the Fountain-well', and 'merchant below Bailie Fyfe's Close'. By 1780 she additionally had a nursery at Fountainbridge and was selling 'Fruit Trees ... cabbage, cauliflower, Broccoli, artichokes, selery, Asparagus etc., in their seasons'.¹¹

By 1804 the firm had become Eagle and Henderson, as Peter Lawson had gone off on his own. The Henderson part of the partnership was Alexander Henderson who had a nursery at Meadowbank Road and Jock's Lodge.¹² This was Alexander Henderson, seed merchant, who became a burghess in 1801, followed in the trade by his son Eagle Henderson who was made a burghess in 1825, by which time his father was Lord Provost.¹³ By then the firm had become Henderson & Co., at Jock's Lodge Nursery. This nursery was said by Loudon in 1822 to be 'an extensive establishment, judiciously managed'.¹⁴ A brief description of Eagle and Henderson's nursery in the mid-nineteenth century was given by Sir Daniel Wilson, its site having had a grisly history:

About half way between Edinburgh and Leith, on the west side of the [Leith] Walk, is the site of the Gallow-lee, once a rising ground ... This accursed Golgotha, however, has been literally carted away, to convert the fine sand, of which it chiefly consisted, into mortar for the builders of the New Town; and the forsaken sand-pit now blooms with the rarest exotics and the fresh tints of nursling trees, the whole ground being laid out as the nursery of Messrs Eagle and Henderson.¹⁵

To return to Patrick Drummond, Eagle's most important apprentice, his firm also had a long history. He was recommended as reliable by James Justice in his *Scots Gardiners Director* of 1754 and some issues of Justice's book include Drummond's very full and detailed catalogue of garden seeds, etc., 'imported and

sold by Patrick Drummond at his shop in the Lawnmarket, opposite the Head of Libberton's Wynd'. Drummond, apprenticed to Eagle in 1735, was recorded as 'son to deceased Patrick Drummond, tenant in Balloch in the Shyre of Perth, prentice to Archibald Eagle', and he himself became a burges in 1745. By this time he was well established as a seedsman, advertising in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* and *Caledonian Mercury* in January 1746 that he 'continues to sell all sorts of Garden, Grass and Tree seeds ... but by stoppage of shipping, has only got Home and a few things by Hand on early sowing ... Any who want catalogues may demand them at said shop.' By 1750 he was advertising 'the greatest variety of *Flower Seeds* perhaps of any in his way in Scotland having himself collected them from the most Curious in that way in and about London', and by 1753 he was additionally stocking 'Fowler's Botanical Thermometer', much recommended by James Justice in his treatises on gardening. Another specialty of Drummond's was the Scots Specific Anodyne Necklace, 1s 6d, to help children with teething.¹⁶ He claimed to be the only shop where such an item was to be bought. Drummond's advertisement added that 'if any, who have complied with the rules [supplied with the necklace] can make it appear that the child has died in teething, call at the above shop and the proprietor will return their money'; unfortunately, this did not also rejuvenate the child.

Drummond died in 1760; his widow carried on the business, advertising a printed catalogue for a shilling. She was by this time co-operating with a seedsman in London: 'A CATALOGUE OF SEEDS and HARDY PLANTS ... by JOHN WEBB, seedsman in Bridge St, Westminster. Printed and sold by the author ... and Mrs Drummond seed merchant in Edinburgh, who sells the same articles of seed in their seasons, also the trees and plants, if wanted, all at reasonable rates as can be brought from London.' By 1762 the firm had become Drummond and Co. and in the *Caledonian Mercury*

for 29 October 1763 was advertising 'the late Mr Justice's valuable and curious Collection of Auricular Polyanthus, Tulips, Hyacinth, Ranunculus, Anemonies, Iris's, etc.' By this time the firm had a nursery near Broughton Toll on the north side of Edinburgh and was advertising best fruit and forest trees, flowering shrubs, thorns, plants, etc. By December of the same year the firm, now Drummond Anderson and Whyte, was still advertising Justice's collection. They were by this time 'at the sign of the Gilded Gardener, opposite to the cross, first street below the Royal Exchange, Edinburgh', with the nursery still at Broughton.¹⁷

Drummond being deceased and Whyte having disappeared from the scene, the firm now became Robert Anderson's alone. In *Williamson's Directory* for 1775 he is given as 'seedsman, head of Craig Close'. He continued to put large and detailed advertisements into the Edinburgh newspapers, e.g. the *Courant* for 4 February 1775, where he listed among other things, quantities of trees with prices: 'Seedling Larix (Larch) two years old 16/- per 120 ditto one year old 12/- per ditto, Scots Fir, two years old, 1/8 per ditto, Spruce Firs, two years old, 5/- per ditto', and in this same advertisement he claimed that he had 'at a considerable expense and trouble, just published a LARGE PRICED CATALOGUE OF TREES, Flowers, Shrubs, Evergreens, etc, consisting of 10 pages, large octavo and as anything of this kind was never before attempted by any person in this country he hopes it will tend to the public utility'.

Robert Anderson was almost certainly a burges but as there are several candidates for that name who could qualify, it is difficult to know which one it was. What is certain is that in 1779 Anderson's daughter married Andrew Leslie, seedmerchant, who three years later was created a burges and gild brother. Anderson took Leslie into partnership and the firm continued as Anderson, Leslie & Co., seedsman 'at the Cross', with nurseries now at Broughton Park.

CATALOGUE

OF

GARDEN, GRASS, FOREIGN and NATIVE
FOREST-TREES, and FLOWER SEEDS:

A. S. O.

NURSERIES of all Kinds of FOREIGN and
NATIVE FOREST-TREES, FRUIT-
TREES, SHRUBS, EVERGREENS,
HOT-HOUSE and GREEN-HOUSE PLANTS.

WITH

THORNS, COLLIFLOWER and BROCOLI,
ASPARAGUS, LIQUORICE, and CABBAGE
PLANTS, for GARDEN or FIELD, and
GARDEN UTENSILS of all Sorts;

SOLD BY

ROBERT ANDERSON, Seedfman and Nurserferyman,

At his Shop, at the Sign of the GILDED GARDENER,
by the Crofs, North Side, Edinburgh,And at his Nurfery at Broughton-Park, near Broughton,
North Side of the City.

E D I N B U R G H :

Printed by R. FLEMING, and A. NEILL.

Fig. 1. Title page of Robert Anderson's *Catalogue*, c. 1775. (Royal Botanic Garden Library, Edinburgh.)

Edinburgh, and also at Clackmannan and Bridge Castle, Linlithgow. The *Directories* record that they moved in 1795 to the head of Jackson's Close, while Mr Leslie's house was at Broughton Park; by 1796 they had moved their shop again to the head of Fleshmarket Close.¹⁸

Returning to the year 1770, Robert Anderson's nursery at Broughton Park was extensive enough to employ about 20 gardeners and if noblemen or gentlemen wished for 'experienced gardeners of good characters' they could be supplied immediately on demand. In 1778 Anderson subscribed to two copies of fellow nurseryman William Boutcher's *Treatise on Forest Trees*, 2nd edition. In 1780 Anderson died, but the firm continued to trade under the name of

Anderson, Leslie & Co. By this time it was a very large concern, trading not only to England but also to Ireland:

By 1780 this trade was so important that the firm of Anderson, Leslie & Co. sent Mr Leslie to Dublin to stay with [Luke] Peppard for over a week to collect orders. This company had men at Ayr, Irvine, Greenock and Port Glasgow who advised them when a ship was ready to sail for Ireland and if the orders received were sufficient to fill a vessel one of the partners accompanied the trees to see them safely delivered. The Company was not, however, responsible for the plants after they left the Edinburgh nursery and the customer had to pay the cost of transport.¹⁹

In the same year, 1780, they were advertising some new introductions:

Just arrived by last convoy from London and Holland ... clover ... a new hardy kind of green brocoli seed which was never before in this country ... superior to any yet known: also a hardy sort of Turnip from Gothland ... New sort of Double Stript China Hollyhock seed ... new China pink, which was never in Britain till last year ... At their large nursery, Broughton Park, north side of Edinburgh, Fruit and Forest trees ... Scots firs ... Balm of Gilead ditto, Silver fir ditto ... Hot house and Green house Plants ... Fruiting Pines, succession ditto: with Pine Apples in season ... Orange Plants ... Grapes a dozen different sorts ... Good gardeners ... Large printed catalogues.²⁰

In 1785, they were additionally advertising from their nursery 'a great variety of flowers and flowering shrubs in pots, which may be lifted and transported at any season' – what we think of today as being a modern practice.

By 1798 the firm had become Anderson, W. and Co., and only two years later it was taken over by Dickson and Shade.²¹ James Dickson was of the well known Kelso and Edinburgh firm of Dicksons, and Thomas Shade of the London firm of Gordon and Dermer.²² They did not stay together for long, however; James Dickson joined with his brother George to become Dickson Brothers with nurseries at Broughton Park, Bellevue, Fountainbridge and Inverleith, while Thomas Shade set up 'at the Beehive near the Cross, Edinburgh', with his nursery at Spring Gardens, Abbeyhill.

Returning to Patrick Drummond, he like his fellow burgesses took apprentices; the most important now known was William Borthwick, created a burghess 'as prentice to Patrick Drummond, 7 June 1758'. Borthwick's catalogue appears printed in some editions of James Justice's *British Gardeners Calendar* of 1759, where it occupies twelve pages. Justice recommended Borthwick's seeds as being good and reliable, as he had recommended Drummond's in his *Scots Gardiners Director* five years earlier. Justice mentions Borthwick in connection with a money loan in several of his letters to Andrew Fletcher, Lord Milton, during 1762.²³ Borthwick was a Constable of Edinburgh in 1773.²⁴

He was to be found 'at his shop first fore stair above the head of Paterson's Court, Lawnmarket', in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* on 5 January 1760, when he offered 'a fresh compleat ASSORTMENT OF GARDEN, GRASS & TREE SEEDS ... gardening utensils, a curious collection of Ranunculus and anemie roots'; all seeds were 'cheap this season, particularly onion and leek, Oak acorns are but scarce and very little beech mast to be got'. On 4 March 1760 he was additionally offering a 'large quantity of Rye grass and clover seeds ... also a neat assortment of fruit and forest trees, from some of the best nurseries about London; a very fine collection of ranunculus roots from 1/6 to 10/6 per dozen; fine auricula plants in pots at various prices', and on 18 March the same year he was offering tree seeds from North America: 'After a very quick passage a curios collection of TREE SEEDS, collected from all the different provinces and catalogues of which may be had at the above shop'; this collection particularly boasted 'New England Pines'. In 1762 Borthwick collaborated with Elizabeth Clark, widow of John Clark, seedsman, in supplying thorn trees to the Commissioners of the Forfeited Estates for their new nursery at Drummond on the estate of Perth.²⁵

By 1770 Borthwick had removed to the 'first stair above the head of the uppermost Baxter's Close,'

Lawnmarket, and in 1775 he was to be found at Bridge Street, Edinburgh (i.e. North Bridge). Borthwick seems never to have had a nursery of his own so there was no takeover by other members of the family as in the case of Eagle and Drummond. However, as another seedsman, Robert Heriot (also a surveyor), is found advertising from Bridge Street in 1785 and no more is heard of Borthwick, it is to be assumed that he had given up the business by this date, or perhaps had died.

The other nurseryman member of the already mentioned Society of Improvers was William Boutcher, son of the William Boutcher, gardener, who was created burghess 'for good services done by him to his nation' on 2 September 1726. Boutcher senior had made a petition to George Heriot's Trust for four acres of land at Clockmill in the vicinity of Comely Garden (where Boutcher junior still had the nursery). Boutcher senior appears to have been a landscape gardener and surveyor: there are various records of his laying out estates²⁶ and his son also advertised that 'he continues to undertake all kinds of garden or other ground work either at an agreed price, or a reasonable payment for his plans, attendance and direction'.²⁷ However he was chiefly a tree nurseryman and it was mainly as a tree planter that he was known. As early as 1739 Boutcher supplied Andrew Fletcher, Lord Milton, with larch seed, beech mast, hornbeam and evergreen oak and in 1747 he again supplied him with red clover, silver fir acorns, hornbeam, 'Pyraecantha' and 'mezerian'.²⁸

Boutcher was expanding his business fast enough in 1749 to ask Lord Milton for a loan in order to extend his nursery but was retracting and suggesting selling off several parts of it by the 1750s. In December 1755 a petition was made by the Heritors to the Justices of the Peace 'to widen again the main road to Edinburgh which had been encroached upon by William Boutcher, Gardener, Clockmill Park'.²⁹ In 1761 an advertisement appeared in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* for the sale of the house and some acres of ground at Comely Garden for possible building lots.³⁰

Boutcher, however, continued to have a nursery in some parts there and was still advertising his forest trees, flowering shrubs, evergreens, thorns, flowers and greenhouse plants at Comely Garden in the *Caledonian Mercury* for 19 October 1763. In *Williamson's Directory* for 1774 he appeared as 'Butcher, William, Seedsman, Abbey Hill' and continued thus in the *Directories* until 1780.

Boutcher's chief claim to fame was his *Treatise on Forest Trees*, published in 1775. He appears from the autobiographical details in this work to have spent some of his youth under the aegis of Philip Miller of the Chelsea Physic Garden, London, for he mentions him on several occasions, e.g. when writing of the cedar tree:

The late Mr Philip Miller (whose memory I shall ever revere as my worthy friend and most indulgent communicative master) ... justly observes, that [cedars] are more apt both to produce and ripen their cones in hard than mild winters: and of the English producing more and better seeds I have certain demonstrations, having from his bounty, annually received a present of a considerable quantity of his cones for above twenty years, which never failed.³¹

James Justice, the botanist and writer on gardening, always recommended Boutcher for his fig trees. In 1759 in his *British Gardener's Calendar* he wrote that 'the person who possesses the best plants of these figs is Mr William Boutcher, nurseryman and seedsman near the Abbeyhill, Edinburgh'. It was Boutcher, the knowledgeable seedsman, who was called in after Justice's death to make a valuation of his 'Flowers and flower shades', and is so named in the testament dative of 29 August 1763.³²

Boutcher's *Treatise on Forest Trees* was published by private subscription and each copy was individually signed by him.³³ In his preface Boutcher complained that, as the result of success of 'a few judicious men' in the nursery profession, 'various imposters' had started up in business knowing little or nothing about gardening. These men grew the greatest number of trees on the smallest space of ground and then sold these 'crowded half-suffocated' plants at the lowest

possible price. Boutcher's pleading against this practice was not successful: according to Sir Henry Steuart, Boutcher was 'suffered to languish unsupported for years at Comely Garden, and to die at last in obscurity and indigence'.³⁴ Sir Henry considered Boutcher to be 'one of the most candid and intelligent nurserymen in Scotland on the subject of arboriculture'.

Before he died Boutcher was working on another book and work had progressed sufficiently for a prospectus to have been circulated. The book was to be called *POMONA, or a Treatise on Fruit Trees*. The prospectus was dated Edinburgh, 1 June 1776; the price to subscribers was one guinea, 5 shillings to be paid in advance. It was originally to be published in June but this was then changed to January, and it is not clear whether publication took place at all. The prospectus contained a printed apologia in fulsome terms promoting the Herefordshire Red-streak apple for the Scots cider industry.³⁵

From advertisements in the local press it is clear what Boutcher was offering from his nursery. In 1747 he had 'Fruit and Forrest Trees, flowering shrubs, evergreens, Flower roots and above a million of Thorns from three to seven years old, all of which will be sold at the lowest rates in the country, with 5 per cent discount to those who pay ready money'. The trees he was offering were 'English and Dutch Elms, Beech, Hornbeam, Lime and Ash trees, Walnut and Chestnut, Spruce Fir, Silver Fir and Oak'. He was also selling pineapple plants 'at London Prices'.³⁶

In 1753 he was offering 'Garden Tools, Artichok, Asparagus, Cabbage and Collyflower plants' and 'several millions of Thorns', and in 1754 acorns, greenhouse plants, 'most beautiful and valuable hardy American trees' and great quantities of thorns.³⁷ The accent on thorns was due to the amount of enclosing and improvement that landowners were now undertaking and most nurserymen of the day had large stocks of them. In the 1754 advertisement we can see



Fig. 2. Engraved title page of William Boutcher's *Treatise on Forest Trees*, 1775. (Royal Botanic Garden Library, Edinburgh.)

how Boutcher went about this side of his business: 'He undertakes the planting and fully executing of Gardens and all other plantations at an agreed Price, if not exceeding 20 miles from Edinburgh, will insure the Trees planted by his Direction at 10 per cent and is at

present provided with a great Number of large Forest Trees fit for such purposes.'

In 1760 Boutcher advertised the fact that he had gone into partnership with a landscape designer, old Boutcher and Robert Robinson, 'late Draughtsman; fat

and executor of the designs of LANCELOT BROWN ... have entered a copartnership for designing, drawing, and executing all kinds of policy and gardening'. Whether anything came of this is doubtful, as we still find Boutcher advertising his vegetables and trees for the ensuing years. He appears to have died in 1780 as his nurseries 'at Heriots Work Gardens and Abbyhill' were advertised for sale on 4 October of that year together with his fruit and forest trees, etc. Boutcher's name disappears from the *Edinburgh Directory* after 1780.

A rival nurseryman on ground adjacent to Boutcher's was William Miller, the Quaker. It would seem that there were three William Millers, the first having come from Hamilton under the aegis of the Duke of Hamilton. He married Margaret Cassie on 27 June 1680 in the house of Hew Wood of Hamilton. He was employed as a gardener at Newark and then came to Edinburgh to be a gardener at Holyrood House in 1689. By this time he was known as 'the Patriarch', the leading figure in the Scottish Quaker movement and clerk to the Quaker meetings in the city. He was followed in the post of Royal Gardener at Holyrood House by William Miller junior, who was confirmed gardener at Holyrood House by Act of the Town Council, 9 September 1719, and made burgess and gild brother in 1725. According to Sir Daniel Wilson, William Miller, younger son of "the patriarch", as he is styled in the family journal, rented the royal garden, and as a successful nurseryman and florist thrived in his life, and died leaving to his heirs such wealth and landed estate that the history of the later generations receives ample recognition in Burke's *Landed Gentry*.³⁸

This William Miller advertised in the press as William Miller, Junior. By 1753 his son was old enough to come into the business and they advertised as 'William Miller and Son in Company'. By 1757 the older man was dead and the younger son took over his father's business as another 'William Miller Junior'.

It is difficult to disentangle the various nursery records of the Millers as they are all given as 'William Miller' but it would appear that it was 'the Patriarch' who supplied Lady Grisell Baillie with yew trees in 1713,³⁹ and Lord Bute at Mount Stewart with many plants and trees including Marvel of Peru, tobacco seeds, hollies, hornbeams and vegetables in 1717-19.⁴⁰ He is said to have started advertising in the press in 1722.⁴¹ James Grant elaborated on the later fortunes of the Millers:

Craigentinnie was next acquired by purchase by William Miller, a wealthy seedsman, whose house and garden, at the foot of the south back of the Canongate, were removed only in 1859 when the site was added to the Royal Park ... His father, also William Miller, who died in 1757 in his eightieth year, had previously acquired a considerable portion of what is now called the Craigentinnie estate, or the lands of Philliside, and others near the sea. He left £20,000 in cash, by which Craigentinnie proper was acquired by his son William. He was well known as a citizen of Edinburgh by the name of 'the auld Quaker', as he belonged to the Society of Friends and was ever foremost in all works of charity and benevolence.⁴²

The Millers lived at St Anne's Yard, Holyrood, latterly known as 'the Holyrood Dairy', and advertised their goods as from 'the Abbey'. The trials and tribulations of seedsmen awaiting payment for their accounts can be seen in the Graham of Airth papers, where the Millers were kept waiting for eight years before their bill was paid.⁴³ Over the years 1760 to 1790 the gardens were supplied with a wide range of goods, from vegetables, e.g. 'prickly spinage', 'Field Turnep', 'cowcumber', 'skirrets' and 'scorzoner', to implements, e.g. 'garden sheers', 'pruning Knife', '1 garden hammer', '2 mouse traps', and flowers, e.g. 'Sweet William, chinese Hollyhock, French Marigold, yellow lupins, Double balsam, china asters'. Seeds for improvements of the field were also bought: in 1760, 24 pounds of 'best red clover' was supplied which, together with vegetables, came to £4.4.0.

A typical advertisement for the Millers is that for 18 January 1753, in the *Caledonian Mercury*:

WILLIAM MILLER and Son in Company, at the foot of the Horse Wynd, near the Abbey, Edinburgh, have just now brought both from

London and some of the properest places abroad, great varieties of garden seeds, grass seeds, and flower seeds (being but few kinds of Tree seeds to be had, which owing ... to the last cold and wet season) gardeners utensils ... Collection of Fruit Trees, both from their own propagating and from some of the Nurseries about London.

In the year 1765 a Society for Importation of Foreign Seeds was formed in Edinburgh under the leadership of Dr John Hope,⁴⁴ and William Miller was the seedsman chosen to distribute the finds. The collector was John Wright, resident in Quebec, who advertised thus in 1766:

JOHN WRIGHT late Gardener to his Excellency General Murray of Quebec now settled there as gardener and collector of seeds, will upon the most reasonable terms serve the curious with the seeds of the trees, shrubs, flowers etc which grow in Canada. Without presumption he can assure the public he is well qualified for this work, having for these last two years been employed in searching and collecting the seeds of everything curious or useful for persons of great distinction, both at London and Paris and sent home great quantities of these to the noblemen and gentlemen of the Society at Edinburgh instituted there for facilitating the importation of every useful and ornamental vegetables. NB Commissions will be taken in by Mr Miller, Seedsman at his nursery garden near the Abbey.⁴⁵

Miller himself advertised at the beginning of the following year that 'he has likeways just now arrived at London, from Quebec, a fine parcel of the largest and best Canada Tree-seeds of 27 sorts, all gathered and collected for him by John Wright, which he expects home by first ship'. However, the seeds did not arrive intact, as can be seen from another advertisement later in March: 'We are informed that in the Collection from Canada Tree Seeds from Quebec and Lake Ontario imported by Mr Miller at the Abbey several of them have been damaged through the tediousness of the voyage, but that the public may not be disappointed ... he has proper hands employed in picking them being determined to vend home but what are fresh and good of their kind'.⁴⁶ That Miller himself grew some of the seeds can be seen by the advertisement for 21 January 1775 offering 'Scarlet Canada Oak trees, etc, all to be sold by him as usual'.

Cox in his *History of Gardening in Scotland* gives a list of the seeds imported in 1768, and suggests that Ayrshire roses may have originated in rose seed sent from Quebec.⁴⁷

Another nurseryman who kept the nursery business in the family was David Dowie, with his son-in-law John Richmond. Dowie was created burgess 'be right of wife Margaret, daughter to John Weier [Weir] gardiner, burgess and gild brother' in 1731, and in 1758 Richmond married 'Mary, daughter to David Dowie, land surveyor, in New Greyfriars parish'. A year later Richmond was made burgess and gild brother 'by right of wife Mary, daughter to David Dowie'. These relationships are mirrored in the firm's development.

Dowie is not found advertising in the press until 1750 but we hear of him in 1738 when he supplied James Duke of Atholl with 100 'larix trees' (larch) half 2 feet in height and the other half between 3 and 4 feet high.⁴⁸ By 1750 Dowie was advertising from 'his shop at the Foot of the West Bow' where he had 'catalogues of the seeds and trees'. An interesting sidelight is cast on Dowie in a report made by James McNab to the Commissioners for the Forfeited Estates, in which he described Dowie as 'a nurseryman who proffeseth to be possessed with a Spirit of improvement'. In McNab's opinion Dowie charged far too high a price for his thorns: 'He never sold 1000 thorn quicks under ten shillings price per thousand' whereas McNab himself had planted out his seedlings at 3s 6d per thousand.⁴⁹ Sure enough, in 1754 Dowie was offering 'the very best Thorns for Hedging found and five years old once removed [transplanted] at 10s per thousand'; his nurseries at the time were 'in Livingston Yards, a little within the West-Port'.⁵⁰

By 1760 Dowie had taken his son-in-law into partnership, but this state of affairs did not last for long. Richmond opened up on his own as John Richmond and Company, and David Dowie took his own son in with him, advertising as 'David and Adam Dowie'

with their shop at the east end of the Grassmarket, south side.⁵¹ Richmond now had the shop 'near the foot of the Westbow, west side'. His ground was at the nursery midway between Leith and Edinburgh and he offered a 'large printed catalogue of his seeds, trees, shrubs etc to be had at his shop gratis'.⁵² Richmond was listed as a Constable in *Williamson's Directory* for 1773 with oversight of the area from 'the laigh council door, to Libberton's wynd, east side, including the north side of the cowgate from the foot of the back stairs to Libberton's wynd'.

In 1780 David Richmond, son to John, was made burghess and gild brother and he appears to have taken over the business. Anderson suggests that the firm of David Richmond was wound up in February 1801: 'The trustees offered for sale the nursery stock from ... Quarry-Holes Nursery Park about the middle of Leith Walk. One Skirving seems to have acquired the Quarry-holes nursery by 1813'.⁵³ The Quarry Holes nursery was four acres on the right hand side of Leith Walk adjoining the quarry. It is not known whether David Richmond opened up again after the sale of the business.

Before turning to the Dicksons, one of the most prominent families in the nursery trade spanning the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, mention must be made of a few lesser nurserymen and seedsmen who were active in and around Edinburgh in the middle to latter part of the eighteenth century.

Firstly, there was Elizabeth Campbell Clark who took over her husband's business for a while after he died, 'relict of John Clark, late Seedsman in the West Bow, Edinburgh', offering the usual garden, grass, tree and flower seeds, fruit trees, forest trees and flowering shrubs 'proper for this climate from the best nurseries about London'.⁵⁴ John Clark seems to have specialised in fruit trees for in February 1760 he advertised 'a large collection of all kinds of fruit trees, such as apricots and peaches, nectrons [*sic*], apples, pears, plumbs and brider cherries', all from nurseries around London.⁵⁵

The firm supplied seedling thorns to the Commissioners for the Forfeited Estates in 1762, the year of John Clark's death. Elizabeth Clark supplied more trees – thorns, beeches, oaks and elms – as well as garden utensils and tools to the Commissioners in 1765. In 1767 she was advertising in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* as having a nursery in Edinburgh (locality not named) and one outside the town at Pinkie, Musselburgh. However, Mrs Clark must have found carrying on a business too onerous and, unlike her contemporary Mrs Eagle, she retired in 1770. Her announcement explained that she 'takes this opportunity of returning her grateful thanks ... as she has now given over business. She begs leave to recommend William Borthwick, Seedsman, Lawnmarket, Edinburgh. Such of her friends as are pleased to favour him for the future of their orders, will not only greatly oblige, but do her a *real service*.'⁵⁶

Another seedsman was Patrick Tod who was created burghess in 1735, and operated a seedsman's business in the 1750s. In 1750 itself he was offering the usual garden and grass seeds 'from London and Holland' and he particularly featured 'garden spades, and other utensils made by Benjamin Snellson, Smith from London who works now at Pilrig Avenue betwixt Edinburgh and Leith.'⁵⁷ By 1753 the firm had become Patrick Tod, Thomas Mutter and Co. with their shop at the 'back of main Guard, Edinburgh'; but the next year produced the following advertisement:

THOMAS MUTTER and MICHAEL BRUCE in Company, who continue to sell at their shop in Wilkie's land, behind the city Guard ... NB As the above shop formerly belonged to Mr Patrick Tod who has given over business in their Favours some time ago, so they hope all who formerly dealt with him will continue their Favours to them, and they shall be served as formerly.⁵⁸

Thomas Mutter was created burghess and gild brother in 1751 and Michael Bruce in due course became burghess 'as prentice to Thomas Mutter, merchant, 9 August 1758'. However, Patrick Tod was not off the scene for long; he appears to have re-invested himself

into his business 'back of the City Guard', for we find him advertising again in 1757 as though Mutter and Bruce had never existed.⁵⁹

Another intrepid widow carrying on her husband's business was Mrs Hamilton, relict of William Hamilton. He may have been the William Hamilton who was made burghess and gild brother gratis by Act of Council on 24 November 1742, and possibly the same man as William Hamilton, bailie of Edinburgh from 1746. Certainly this William Hamilton supplied the Countess of Hopetoun with 'roots and Seeds' and 'flowers and earthen pots', and even spent six months overseeing the flower garden, which cost £2.15.0 in 1748. Quite large sums were spent as can be seen by the following two accounts:

3 March 1750: Money Debursed by Baillie Hamilton for the flower garden in the year 1749, per account, £22.2.9.

25 January 1751: Baillie Hamilton account of Flowers, Roots, Plants pots, etc. in the year 1750, £25.2.0.⁶⁰

The accounts run to 1754 but Bailie Hamilton had already died, for by 1750 Mrs Hamilton was advertising herself as 'relict of William Hamilton seed-merchant at her shop in the West-Bow, the first turn on your left hand as you go up at the sign of the GARDNER'. Mrs Hamilton continued at the same address and in 1757 her advertisement was decorated by a charming little engraving of a gardener holding a rake and spade, based no doubt on the gardener outside her shop. The plants available included bulbs flowering in water glasses. She makes no mention of having a nursery, so she may have been purely a seedsman.⁶¹

Active at the same time was James Gordon, chiefly a florist, who lived in Fountainbridge a little outside the Edinburgh of those days. He was said by Loudon to have had one of the first tree nurseries in Scotland, which would suggest he should be put on a par with William Boutcher. Certainly in 1757 his establishment was commodious, as he advertised having a summer house in his garden large enough to live in. This was

extra to his own house which was also being let: 'For Particulars enquire of the Proprietor James Gordon at the house, who continues to sell Garden Seeds, Flower Seeds and Flowering Shrubs, etc.'⁶² In 1758 he published: 'A CATALOGUE OF SHRUBS and FLOWERS, sold by James Gordon, Nursery seedsman and Florist at Fountainbridge near Edinburgh. In this list are many curious Plants not to be had in any Collection for Sale in Scotland: and it is proposed to augment the Collection with as many foreign Plants as can be naturalized to this climate.' This seems to have been the beginning of the practice of giving as many species and varieties as possible in a nurseryman's list, including ones not currently being grown but which could no doubt be procured if requested, perhaps from as far away as London.

Gordon's advertisements are different from the other horticultural advertisers in that his accent is on flowering shrubs and roses. These he sold in lots: 'He sells common flowering shrubs at £1.5s per 100, gives about 30 different kinds, and even of these there are several varieties, especially among the roses and honeysuckles.'⁶³ By 1767 he was even more organised:

[He] has classed his SHRUBS in five different classes ... forty varieties at 10s per hundred, sixty varieties at £1 per hundred, above one hundred varieties at £1.10s per hundred ... as he has a general catalogue of the whole printed without prices, he has taken down these ... lists in his shop-book which may be seen by any Person ... or such at a distance who want to see the lists themselves ... may have them by directing a letter to him ... post paid ... it is further hoped they will mention where are their carriers quarters in Edinburgh.⁶⁴

This was almost a mail order method of buying. Another advertisement for the same year gives an inkling of how he practised. He announced that he had moved his shrubs and roses and explained that:

By this transplanting them, they are kept back in their springing, so may be planted with safety for a few weeks to come, and April being the proper season for Evergreen Trees and Shrubs the following may be had ... stone crop-tree ... yellow flowered Indian Sage trees of



MRS HAMILTON, at her shop in the West-bow, first turn on the left hand going up, at the sign of the gardiner, has just now imported an assortment of fresh GARDENSEEDS, GRASS SEEDS, sundry sorts of FLOWER SEEDS, and TREE SEEDS, particularly very good BEECH-MAST, all of last year's sowing. ANEMONIE's and RANUNCULUS roots, either com-

mon or fine kinds may be had at the same shop.

* * * As also, a choice collection of double blue white and rose coloured hyacinthus's, polyantho's and narcissus's blowing in water glasses: Likewise continues to sell all sorts of garden utensils, green and white split pease, anise, caraway and coriander seeds, seeds for birds, &c.—Such as please to favour her with their orders, may depend on punctual service, and charged at the lowest prices.

N. B. Any who want collyflower, cabbage, asparagus plants, &c. may be served at the lowest prices.

Fig. 3. Advertisement by Mrs Hamilton, from the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 27 January 1757. (*Edinburgh City Libraries*.)

Cistus or Rock-rose two kinds ... Also a collection of the finest kind of Roses, consisting of above 30 varieties at a guinea and a half the

collection ... Fruit and Barren trees, Bulbous and fibrous rooted flowers and Green house plants, with Garden Grass and Fir seeds.⁶⁵

In 1774 Gordon published a compilation, *The Planters, Florists and Gardeners Pocket Dictionary, being a practical Collection from the most approved Authors in the English Language, relating to the above Three Parts of Gardening, founded on Experience, worthy of Notice, and adapted to the Climate of Scotland*. The book, printed in Edinburgh for the author, is dedicated 'to the operative gardeners in Scotland'. The entries in the work are all alphabetical. Some are surprisingly long; the entry for cabbage occupies six pages in all, that for apple trees four, and just over seven for 'Enemies to Gardening', of which men and women are given as one! Thieving from gardens must have been a common practice, for Gordon inveighs against the perpetrators of such crimes in no uncertain terms: 'Yet how many vexed hearts has the gardener got from this enemy, by their pulling rare flowers which he was proud of showing, or had a design of saving seed from, and so getting in a stock of the same; or even his choice fruits. This is a most dishonest practice.'⁶⁶

Gordon includes a number of American species and, as he mentions the scheme for importation of foreign seeds, he may well have been a subscriber. Writing of the Chinquapin or dwarf Virginian chestnut he adds:

It is not to be doubted that it will be more common in a few years seeing so many noblemen and gentlemen have entered into a Society and employed proper hands to collect in their seasons, the various seeds of our late acquisitions abroad, and to pack them carefully ... Such a scheme merits the appreciation and encouragement not only of persons of taste in that way, but even of all who wish well to their country ... This scheme is conducted by Dr Hope, professor of Botany at Edinburgh, and is well concerted in all its parts, printed lists being given to all the subscribers along with their seeds, expressing their soils, situations, and heights abroad, their time of blowing [flowering] and colours of their flowers, etc.⁶⁷

Gordon's book must have been of great value and use to his contemporaries. However, he does not appear to have lived for much longer. His son, also James, was apprenticed to William Davidson, cooper,

for six years in 1782 and by this time Gordon was dead, given as the 'late James, Nurseryman at Fountainbridge'. What happened to his nursery is not clear and it may have been taken over by some other nurseryman: Mrs Eagle had a nursery at Fountainbridge and may have enlarged her acreage on Gordon's death.

Not yet mentioned are several other seedsmen and nurserymen in and around Edinburgh in the latter part of the eighteenth century. An outstanding one was Joseph Archibald who was made burghess in 1786, and whose shop, already open in 1780, was at 88 Chapel Street, Nicholson Park, with his nursery at Lauriston (where Archibald Place commemorates his name). Archibald, like Gordon, was also an author, and in the usual manner of the day chose a somewhat verbose title: *The Botanist's and Nurseryman's Companion containing the species and varieties of most trees, shrubs, flowers, fruit and herbs, native and exotic presently cultivated in Britain. Also, garden and flower seeds; with their generic, specific and English names, arranged alphabetically. According to Linnaeus*. The work was dedicated to David Stewart Moncrieff, a lawyer famous for the fruits grown in his greenhouses at Moredun. Other names include: John Sinclair, prentice to David Dowie, whose shop was at the foot of the West Bow in 1780, followed by his son James, made burghess in 1815; Robert Whyte, prentice to Patrick Drummond in 1758 and advertising in the *Courant* in February 1770; James Williamson, admitted burghess and gild brother 'in right of wife Helen, daughter of James Richmond' in 1804, one of the Williamsons who had a nursery between Ferry Road and the Water of Leith on the site of the present crematorium.⁶⁸

But the giants in the trade were certainly the Dicksons: originating in Hassendeanburn, they soon established themselves in Edinburgh and beyond as a major force in the seed and nursery trade. It is very difficult to unravel the various strands of the

Dickson family, but an attempt will be made. One of the clearest pictures of the ramifications of the family appears in Loudon's *Aboretum et Fruticetum Britannicum*:

The most considerable of these [nurseries] was that of old Mr Dickson, at Hassendeanburn in Teviotdale. This nursery, we are told by the present proprietors, Messrs Archibald Dickson and Co, was founded in 1729. From it sprang, in 1767, the nursery of Messrs Dickson now Dickson and Turnbull at Perth; and subsequently, another brother of the Hassendeanburn family, Walter Dickson, began the house of Dickson & Co of Edinburgh, now Dicksons and Shankley, in connection with Mr James Dickson, who was no relative of the family. It then appears that Mr Robert Dickson of Hassendeanburn was the father of the commercial forest tree nurseries in Scotland, the three nurseries established by him and his two brothers being still the most extensive in that country. Mr Archibald Dickson, the present chief of the firm at Hassendeanburn, and at Hawick, to whom we are indebted for the above information, states in his letter of March 24 1835 that he is now bringing up some of the fifth generation to the trade.⁶⁹

Another witness wrote in 1850 that 'one of the largest nurseries for trees and shrubs within this kingdom was established in 1729 at Hassendean in Minto Parish by Mr Dickson, who left his establishment to his children. They have extended it to Hawick, to Leith, and to Perth; and they supply plants not only for domestic improvement but for foreign export.'⁷⁰ Wight wrote after having visited the Hawick nursery in 1782: 'It appears clear to me that the great demand made from all quarters of the country, from England, the Isle of Man, and from Ireland, for Dickson's thorns, forest-trees and fruit-trees is on account of the quality of them, a moderate price, and an exact attention to fulfill orders faithfully.'⁷¹

The father of the business was Robert Dickson, who died in 1744.⁷² His son Archibald continued the business, and his son James founded the Perth nurseries. By 1785 the firm had extended to Edinburgh. James and Walter Dickson set up together and advertised their business: 'Nursery, seedsmen and Florists at their shop, Shakespeare Square, New Town, Edinburgh ... and at their NURSERY middle of Leith

Walk, they sell all sorts of fruit and forest trees, evergreens, flowering shrubs, hot-house, green-house ...'⁷³ This James Dickson is presumed to be the person not related to the family. According to an article in *The Book of Old Edinburgh Club*,⁷⁴ the firm was founded in 1782 by James Dickson under the name of Dicksons and Company. Certainly his son Walter bought the estate of Redbraes for a nursery in 1818, but the Walter mentioned in the advertisement above was, according to Loudon, a scion of the Hassendeanburn family.

What is certain is that there were two major Dickson companies which consolidated their operations during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and both operated in Edinburgh. James and Walter Dickson may have first traded under the name of Dickson and Fair, as this firm was operating in 1789 at the Leith Walk nurseries, having for sale all kinds of forest trees, including larch and oak, stone, cluster and Weymouth pines.⁷⁵ However, by 1792 the firm had become Dickson & Co. as catalogues of this date have survived.⁷⁶ The 1806 *Edinburgh Directory* gives Dickson & Co. as being 'nursery, seedsmen and florists, 2 Shakespeare Square', with the addition in 1810 of 'nurseries, Leith Walk and Blandfield'; 1818 finds them at 1 Leith Street, Terrace, and 1819 'shops east end of Princes St, and 1 Waterloo Place'. By 1820 there was an additional nursery in 'Redbraes' and in 1823 they added 'Dean Bank'.

By 1822, when Loudon was writing his *Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, the establishment had become 'the Leith Walk Nursery, Messrs Dickson and Shankley, a respectable establishment of nearly 50 years standing, in which every description of nursery article is propagated according to demand and the whole kept in excellent order and neatness'. According again to Loudon, Thomas Dickson 'of the firm of Messrs Dickson and Co., nurserymen, Leith Walk, Edinburgh', who died in 1816, was the author

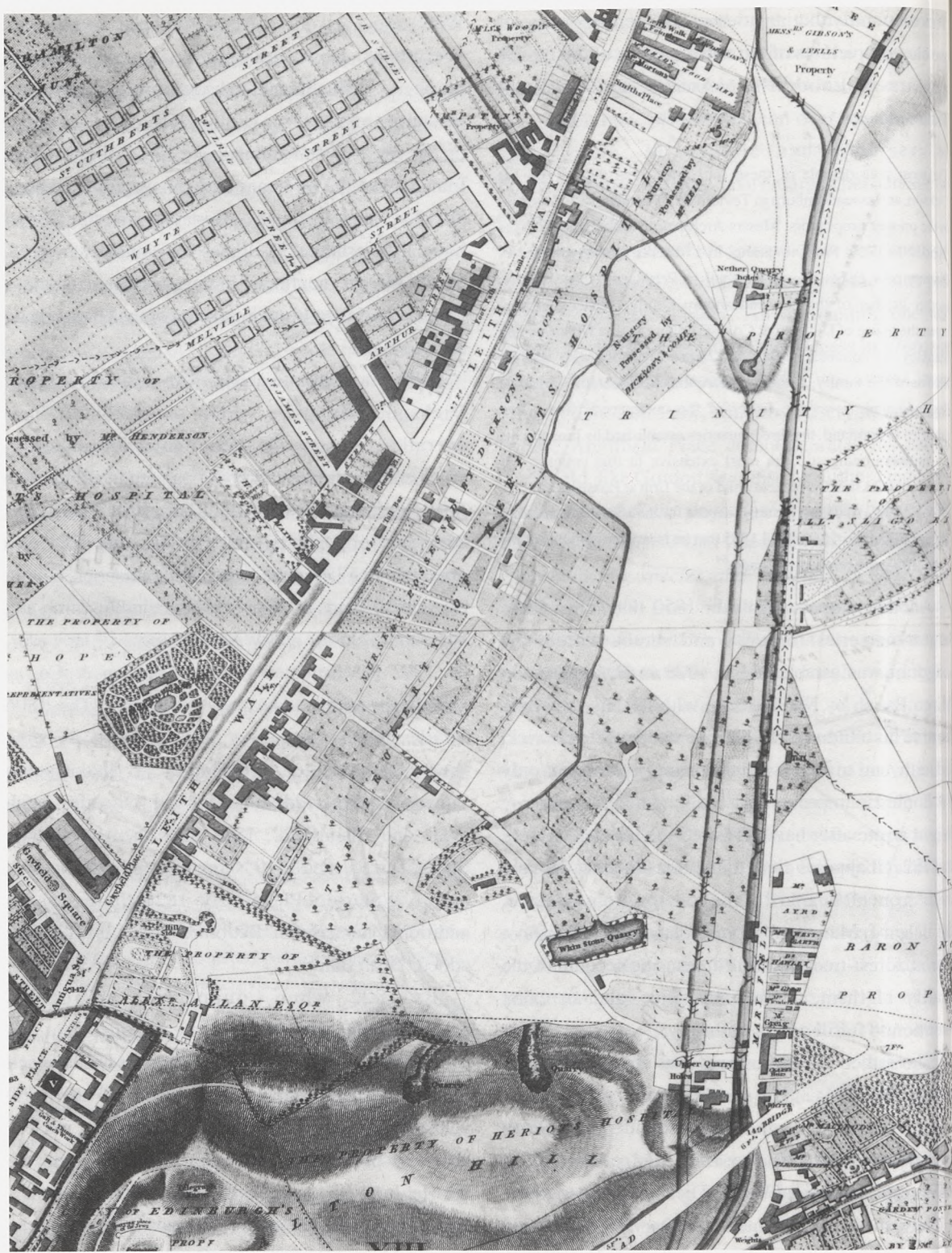


Fig. 4. Part of Kirkwood's plan, 1817. Much of the land between Leith Walk and Easter Road is occupied by the nurseries of Dickson and Co. and other nurserymen; the Botanic Garden is to the west of Leith Walk. (RCAHMS.)

in 1810 of 'Observations on the Disease in the Potatoe generally called the Curl'.⁷⁷

Cox mentions a Dickson & Co. catalogue of 1794, which he maintains was purely a list.⁷⁸ In their preface Dickson & Co. wrote: 'We by no means pretend to be in possession of all the plants mentioned in this catalogue; perhaps no Botanic Garden in Europe can boast of such a treasure; notwithstanding, we are determined to increase our collection and make it as complete as possible, to supply the demands of the public.' Their later catalogue of 1827 was amazing for the number of varieties it boasted, e.g. 46 asters, 24 dahlias, 58 narcissus, 146 named varieties of apples, the same of pears and 194 of gooseberries.

The other great Dickson establishment was Dickson Brothers. They started in 1801 when James Dickson and Thomas Shade took over the firm of Anderson, Leslie & Co. Shade subsequently departed to found his own business in 1806 and that year saw the last entry for him in the Edinburgh *Directory*,

'Dickson and Shade, seed merchants, High St'. From 1807 we find instead 'Dickson, James and George, nursery, seedsmen & florists, 4 South St Andrew Street, nursery Broughton Park' (the original Drummond, Anderson and Whyte nursery of 1767).⁷⁹ Subsequently they were at 5 and then 10 South St Andrew Street; in the 1817 *Directory* they became Dicksons Brothers, with nurseries at Broughton Park and Belleville (*sic*). In 1822 they had the 'Adelphi seed warehouse, 10 St Andrew Street, nurseries Broughton Park, Bellevue and Adelphi nursery, Inverleith road to Trinity'.

Loudon describes the nursery in 1822 as 'the Broughton or Adelphi nursery (from the Greek – a brother), Messrs Dicksons, brothers, an extensive establishment of ten or twelve years' standing, kept in good order'.⁸⁰ George Dickson must have died in 1825 as a catalogue exists for the 'sale of nursery implements, bulbous roots and seeds, drawers, counters, hardware, double desk, iron safe, etc. to be

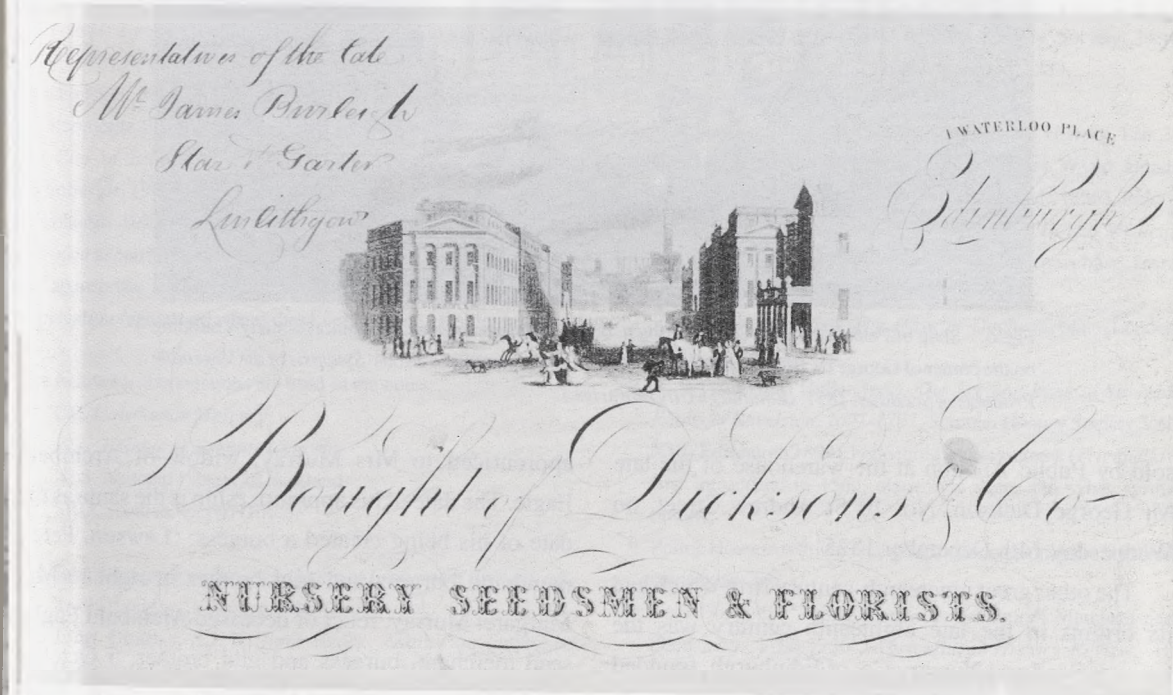


Fig. 5. Billhead of Dicksons & Co., 1 Waterloo Place, 1850; the name of the firm is displayed on the facade below the columns. Engraved by Lizars. (From the collection of Denholm T. Reid.)



Fig. 6. Shop of Peter Lawson & Son, Seedsmen, below the Highland and Agricultural Society's building on the corner of George IV Bridge and Victoria Street. Frontispiece to Lawsons' *Synopsis of the Vegetable Products of Scotland*, 1851. (Edinburgh City Libraries.)

sold by Public Auction at the warehouse of the late Mr George Dickson, No. 10 St Andrew Street, on Wednesday 14th December 1825'.⁸¹

The other great nineteenth-century firm which had its origins in the late eighteenth century was the Lawson Seed and Nursery Co. of Edinburgh, founded in 1770 and not dissolved until 1883. It was founded by Peter Lawson, who, as mentioned above, was

apprenticed to Mrs Murray, widow of Archibald Eagle. The date of his apprenticeship is the same as the date of his being created a burgher: 'Lawson, Peter merchant, burgher and gild brother in right to Mr Margaret Murray, relict of deceased Archibald Eagle seed merchant, burgher and gild brother, 5 October 1786.' Between 1789 and 1796 Lawson was operating from Blair Street.⁸² In 1798 advertisements made

reference to owning nurseries at Peebles as well as at Windlestrawlee, Granton Road, Edinburgh. In 1805 in the *Edinburgh Advertiser* the firm was offering to supply gardeners.

After Peter Lawson died in 1820 the firm continued to be called Peter Lawson & Co., although it was his son Charles (1794-1873) had taken over. Charles became a burgess 'in right of father, Peter Lawson, merchant, 21 October 1825'. The firm prospered and various catalogues survive both in Britain and America.⁸³ Their address by the early 1840s was at

George IV Bridge, where they were official seedsmen to the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, with which they shared a building. In 1838 Loudon wrote that 'in Scotland, Mr Lawson of Edinburgh is most assiduous in collecting trees and

shrubs both at home and abroad; and he has commenced an arboretum, which already contains a collection of pines and firs not surpassed by any in Britain'.⁸⁴ Hadfield states that the firm received the first consignment of Lawson's cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*) in 1854, collected by a William Murray of the Oregon Association. The seed came from the Sacramento River in California. At this time the firm of Lawson also had an address in London at Southwark Bridge.⁸⁵ Despite the firm being dissolved in 1883 the name continued and it was reconstituted later as a wholesale seed house for farm and garden seeds.⁸⁶

Thus it can be seen that many of the great nineteenth- and twentieth-century nurseries in Edinburgh had their origins in the eighteenth century.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Information on many Edinburgh seedsmen and nurserymen can be found in the volumes published by the Scottish Record Society: *Roll of Edinburgh Burgesses and Guild-Brethren, 1701-1760*; 1761-1841; 2 vols, edited by Charles B. Boog Watson (Edinburgh 1930, 1933); *Register of Edinburgh Apprentices, 1701-1755*, edited by Charles B. Boog Watson (Edinburgh 1929), 1756-1800, edited by Marguerite Wood (Edinburgh 1963); *Register of Marriages for the City of Edinburgh, 1701-1750*, edited by Henry Paton (Edinburgh 1908), 1751-1800, edited by Francis J. Grant (Edinburgh 1922). Detailed references to these sources are not provided as entries in each are alphabetical and the context indicates the appropriate volume. Abbreviations have been expanded and punctuation regularised where these volumes are cited in the text.

The following abbreviations are used in the notes:

- CM, *Caledonian Mercury*
 EEC, *Edinburgh Evening Courant*
 NLS, National Library of Scotland
 SRO, Scottish Record Office.

- 1 John Claudius Loudon, *Arboretum et Fruticetum Britannicum*, 8 vols (London 1838), I, p. 104.
- 2 John Dunbar, *Sir William Bruce*, exhibition catalogue (Edinburgh 1970), pp. 11, 16.
- 3 M. R. Apted, *Aberdour Castle* (Ministry of Public Buildings and Works 1967), pp. 34-35, Account of the Earl of Morton

to Mr James Sutherland, Master of the Physic Garden at Edinburgh.

- 4 Robert Scott-Moncrieff (ed.), *The Household Book of Lady Grisell Baillie, 1692-1733*, Scottish History Society, New Series, Vol. I (Edinburgh 1911), pp. 17, 251, 253.
- 5 Loudon, *Arboretum Britannicum*, I, p. 104.
- 6 National Register of Archives, Architectural History, List 3, 'Ferguson, Henry, Seedsman, Blackfriars Wynd Head, Catalogue of Seeds, 1681', NRA List Tweedale 13563. Reid's *The Scots Gard'ner*, 1683, and Sutherland's *Hortus Medicus Edinburgensis*, 1683, were available for purchase from Ferguson. Information from Dr John Harvey.
- 7 Rosalind K. Marshall, *The Days of Duchess Anne* (London 1973), pp. 52-55.
- 8 A. W. Cornelius Hallen (ed.), *The Account Book of Sir John Foulis of Ravelston, 1671-1707*, Scottish History Society Vol. XVI (Edinburgh 1894). Fennegreg was fenugreek (*Trigonella*), first introduced in 1562; clarie was sage; and sybas spring onions.
- 9 Pollok House Archives (Glasgow); letter on exhibition at Pollok some years ago.
- 10 Tom Donnelly, 'Arthur Clephane, Edinburgh Merchant and Seedsman, 1706-1730', *Agricultural History Review*, 18 (1970), pp. 151-160. Information from Dr John Harvey.
- 11 EEC, 31 January 1770; Peter Williamson, *Williamson's Directory for the City of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh 1776); CM,

- 11 November 1780; information from Miss Phyllis Hamilton.
- 12 Mark L. Anderson, *A History of Scottish Forestry*, 2 vols (London 1967), II, p. 212.
- 13 [Marguerite Wood], *The Lord Provosts of Edinburgh, 1296-1932* (Edinburgh 1932), pp. 106-107.
- 14 John Claudius Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (London 1822), p. 1250.
- 15 Daniel Wilson, *Memorials of Edinburgh in the Olden Time*, 2 vols (Edinburgh 1848), II, p. 135.
- 16 See Anne Pratt, *Flowering Plants, Grasses, Sedges and Ferns of Great Britain*, 4 vols (London 1891), vol. I-14 *Paeonia*, pp. 21-22: the author noted that anodyne necklaces of beads made from peony roots were still worn by village children.
- 17 *EEC*, 7 January 1767.
- 18 For description of a trade token issued by Anderson, Leslie & Co., see G. R. Dalgleish, 'Two Robert Adam Buildings illustrated on Edinburgh Trade Tokens', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, New Series, I (1991), pp. 28-33.
- 19 Eileen McCracken, 'Irish Nurserymen and Seedsmen, 1740-1800', *Quarterly Journal of Forestry*, 59 (1965), pp. 131-139.
- 20 *EEC*, 8 April 1780.
- 21 *EEC*, 17 December 1798; Anderson, *Scottish Forestry*, II, p. 213.
- 22 The famous James Gordon of the Mile End Nurseries, London.
- 23 NLS, Saltoun Papers, SB 97, 1762.
- 24 *Williamson's Directory*, 1773.
- 25 SRO, Forfeited Estates Papers, E 777/207/1-6, E 777/206/1-2.
- 26 Including Inverary and Mavisbank.
- 27 *CM*, 19 October 1763.
- 28 Mezerian is *Daphne mezereon*.
- 29 Edinburgh Town Council Minutes.
- 30 *EEC*, 13 April 1761.
- 31 William Boutcher, *A Treatise on Forest Trees* (Edinburgh 1775), p. 149.
- 32 James Justice, *British Gardener's Calendar* (Edinburgh, 1759), p. 112; SRO, Edinburgh Testaments, vol. 119, part 2, Testament of James Justice (of Justice Hall), 2 September 1763.
- 33 Two nurserymen subscribers from England were Stanley Joyce of Newcastle upon Tyne and Messrs Williamson & Co., London.
- 34 Sir Henry Steuart, *The Planter's Guide* (Edinburgh 1828), p. 356.
- 35 NLS, Graham of Airth Papers, MS. 10885, ff. 169-172. Graham subscribed to one copy of this printed prospectus which occupies several printed pages.
- 36 *CM*, 3 November 1747.
- 37 *CM*, 12 February 1753; *EEC*, 14 January 1754.
- 38 Wilson, *Memorials of Edinburgh*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Edinburgh 1891) II, p. 121.
- 39 See note 5.
- 40 Information from the Archivist, Bute Muniment Room (no other source cited on press-cutting seen by the author).
- 41 Anderson, *Scottish Forestry*, I, p. 599.
- 42 James Grant, *Old and New Edinburgh*, 3 vols (London 1880-83), III, p. 138.
- 43 NLS, Graham of Airth Papers, MS. 10885, ff. 126-138. Eight years of accumulation came to £22.6.7 sterling.
- 44 E. H. M. Cox, *A History of Gardening in Scotland* (London 1935), p. 115.
- 45 *EEC*, 8 March 1766.
- 46 *EEC*, 3 January, 23 March 1767.
- 47 Cox, *Gardening in Scotland*, appendix B, p. 212.
- 48 Anderson, *Scottish Forestry*, I, p. 601.
- 49 SRO, Exchequer, Forfeited Estates (1745), 1745-1820, letters E 727/56/1-5, from James McNab, gardener, offering his services to the Commissioners for carrying out the enclosure of land and other improvements on the estates; the second letter mentions Mr Dowie, nurseryman in Edinburgh.
- 50 *CM*, 3 January 1754.
- 51 *EEC*, 7 February 1767.
- 52 *EEC*, 10 and 24 January 1767.
- 53 Anderson, *Scottish Forestry*, II, p. 213.
- 54 *EEC*, 7 January 1767.
- 55 *EEC*, 7 February 1760.
- 56 *EEC*, 12 February 1770.
- 57 *EEC*, 23 January 1750.
- 58 *EEC*, 15 January 1754.
- 59 *EEC*, 19 March 1757.
- 60 Accompt Book of Anne, Countess of Hopetoun, 1742-57 (information from Robin Hill, Huntly House Museum, from the archives at Hopetoun).
- 61 *EEC*, 27 January 1750, 27 January 1757. The little engraving of the gardener was later used by Joseph Archibald whose nurseries were at Lauriston. A trade sign of a gardener, possibly the original of the engraving, is housed in the Royal Museum of Scotland, Queen Street, Edinburgh.
- 62 *EEC*, 17 February 1757.
- 63 *EEC*, 8 March 1760.
- 64 *EEC*, 5 January 1767.
- 65 *EEC*, 28 March 1767.
- 66 James Gordon, *The Planters Dictionary* (Edinburgh 1774) p. 339. Gordon also published a catalogue of shrubs and flowers in 1758 (Edinburgh Room, Edinburgh City Libraries).
- 67 Gordon, *Planters Dictionary*, entry for the chestnut. In 1763 Dr John Hope was also instrumental in removing the Botanic Garden to ground on the west side of Leith Walk on a site later known as Haddington Place.
- 68 John Russell, 'Bonnington: its Lands and Mansions', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, 19 (1933), p. 180.

- 69 Loudon, *Arboretum Britannicum*, I, p. 105.
- 70 James Wilson, *Annals of Hawick, 1214-1814* (Edinburgh 1850), p. 138.
- 71 Andrew Wight, *Present State of Husbandry in Scotland*, 4 vols (Edinburgh 1778-84), IV, part 2, p. 605.
- 72 NLS, Dickson's Day Book, MS. 3554, p. 169; 'My father died February 20, 1744' (other deaths in the family are also recorded).
- 73 *EEC*, 2 March 1785.
- 74 Russell, 'Bonnington', note 68, p. 171.
- 75 Anderson, *Scottish Forestry*, I, p. 603.
- 76 Information from Dr John Harvey.
- 77 Loudon, *Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, p. 1284; *Memoirs of the Caledonian Horticultural Society*, I (1814), pp. 49-59.
- 78 Cox, *Gardening in Scotland*, p. 166.
- 79 See note 17.
- 80 Loudon, *Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, p. 1250.
- 81 Copy in Edinburgh Room, Edinburgh City Libraries.
- 82 Anderson, *Scottish Forestry*, I, p. 603; II, p. 212.
- 83 Information from Dr John Harvey.
- 84 Loudon, *Arboretum Britannicum*, I, pp. 131-132.
- 85 Miles Hadfield, *A History of British Gardening* (London 1969), p. 334.
- 86 Cox, *Gardening in Scotland*, pp. 169-171. When Lawson's Windlestrawlee Nursery was wound up 20 million trees were sold.