

James Lyell (1786-1865): The Linen Manufacturer of Newburgh
By His Distant Fourth Cousin, Michael T. Tracy

Like his father and grandfather before him, James Lyell was a linen manufacturer in Newburgh, Fife situated on the Firth of Tay. Newburgh's industries consisted of the making of linen and floor cloth, quarrying and salmon fisheries all of which have now long gone. The Lyell family history has had a long association with Newburgh dating back to the early 1700s when Alexander Lyell (1684-) and Isobel Buist (1691-) were married there in 1712 and had eight children who were all born and raised there. At least four generations of the family have resided in Newburgh.



Fig.1. Newburgh, Fife, Photograph Courtesy of Love of Scotland

James most likely learned the trade from his father, George (1752-), and inherited the business from him upon his death. Lyell met and married Margaret Haggart in 1828 and they had six children who were all born in Newburgh. The family resided on High Street where his shop was located as well. Lyell was elected as a Magistrate of Newburgh Burgh in November of 1842 and eventually rose to be the Chief Magistrate of Newburgh.¹ This then is the narrative of James Lyell, the linen manufacturer of Newburgh.

¹ *Fife Herald Newspaper*, 10 November 1842, p. 3

Early years

James Lyell was born on Thursday, 16 March 1786 at Newburgh, Newburgh Parish, Fife.² He was the third child of George Lyell, a weaver, and Christian Longlands. James Lyell was baptized on Sunday, 19 March 1786 at Newburgh Parish Church.³

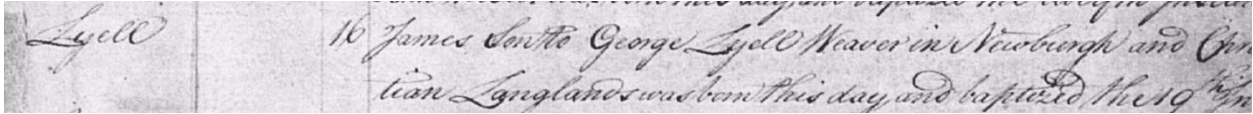


Fig.2. Baptismal Record of James Lyell, 19 March 1786, Newburgh Parish Records, Crown Copyright

The parish of Newburgh “forms the boundary of the county of Fife on the N. [North] W. [West]. The extent of the parish is inconsiderable, and its figure very irregular, one part of it being detached from the other.⁴ The town of Newburgh, consists of one street of considerable length, with small suburbs at each end, and a lane leading towards the shore from its centre. The houses, on each side of the lane, and in the suburbs, have been built within these 30 years. The town itself does not occupy more ground than it did at the end of the last century...⁵



Fig.3. Ordnance Survey Map of Newburgh, Fife, Photograph Courtesy of the National Library of Scotland

² Baptismal Record of James Lyell, 19 March 1786, Newburgh Parish Records, Old Parish Records 450/0010 0235

³ Baptismal Record of James Lyell, 19 March 1786, Newburgh Parish Records, Old Parish Records 450/0010 0235

⁴ The Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1791-1845, *Newburgh, County of Fife, OSA, Volume VIII*, 1793, p. 170

⁵ The Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1791-1845, *Newburgh, County of Fife, OSA, Volume VIII*, 1793, p. 179

The trade which occupies the greatest number of hands is that of weaving cloth. No fewer than 270 of the inhabitants are at present employed in it. The weavers of Newburgh, however, do not yet abide constantly by the loom. Accustomed from their early years, to handle the oar... they betake themselves, in considerable numbers, to sea-faring life, when the price of these kinds of cloth, which they are in the practice of weaving, falls low in the market.”⁶ Very little is known of James Lyell’s youth.

Marriage and Family life

Margaret Haggart was born in March of 1798 in Dysart Parish.⁷ Later, along with her family, she moved to Leslie Parish. James Lyell met her and they soon began dating. They were married on Saturday, 18 October 1828 at Newburgh Parish.⁸

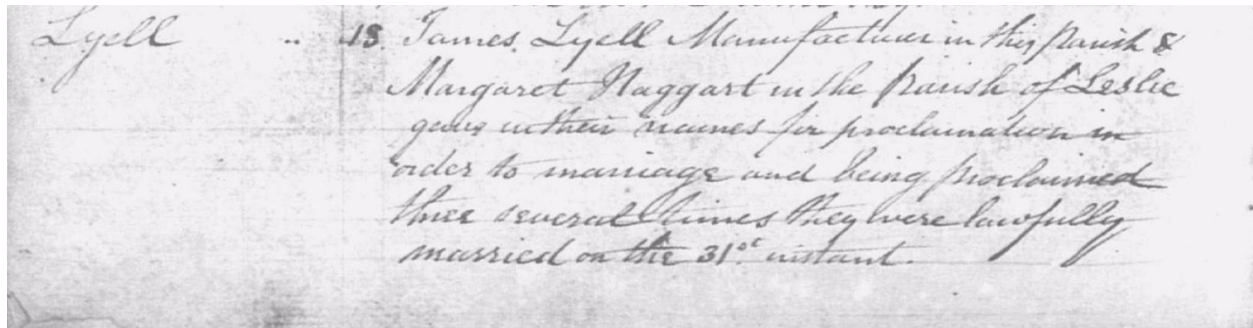


Fig.4. Marriage Record of James Lyell, 18 October 1828, Newburgh Parish Records, Crown Copyright

The couple had six children who were all born in Newburgh. They were:

Barbara baptized on Sunday, 5 June 1831⁹ and died on Wednesday, 11 May 1842;
Christian baptized on Sunday, 12 May 1833¹⁰ and died on Saturday, 27 August 1859;¹¹
George baptized on Sunday, 30 November 1834¹² and did on Wednesday, 20 January 1910;¹³
Andrew born on Friday, 14 October 1836¹⁴ and died on Saturday, 18 December 1897;¹⁵
Margaret baptized on Sunday, 7 April 1839¹⁶ and died in 1875;¹⁷
Ann baptized on Sunday, 4 April 1841.¹⁸

⁶ The Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1791-1845, *Newburgh, County of Fife, OSA, Volume VIII*, 1793, p. 180

⁷ Baptismal Record of Margaret Haggart, 18 March 1798, Dysart Parish Records, Old Parish Records 426/040 0325

⁸ Marriage Record of James Lyell, 18 October 1828, Newburgh Parish Records, Old Parish Records 450/0020 0234

⁹ Baptismal Record of Barbara Lyell, 5 June 1831, Newburgh Parish Records, Old Parish Records 450/0020 0058

¹⁰ Baptismal Record of Christian Lyell, 12 May 1833, Newburgh Parish Records, Old Parish Records 450/0020 0067

¹¹ *Greenock Advertiser Newspaper*, Obituary Notice of Christian Black, 15 November 1859, p. 2

¹² Baptismal Record of George Lyell, 30 November 1834, Newburgh Parish Records, Old Parish Records 450/0020 0074

¹³ Australia, Victoria, Index to Probate Registers, 1841-1989, database with images, Family Search, 2016

¹⁴ Baptismal Record of Andrew Lyell, 23 October 1836, Newburgh Parish Records, Old Parish Records 450/0020 0087

¹⁵ Death Record of Andrew Lyell, 18 December 1897, Australia Death Index, 1787-1985. Ancestry.com. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010

¹⁶ Baptismal Record of Margaret Lyell, 7 April 1839, Newburgh Parish Records, Old Parish Records 450/0020 0101

¹⁷ Death Record of Margaret Lawson, 1875, Newburgh Parish Records, Statutory Deaths 450/0000 0023

¹⁸ Baptismal Record of Ann Lyell, 4 April 1841, Newburgh Parish Records, Old Parish Records 450/0020 0115

The Linen Manufacturer

As stated previously, James likely learned the trade from his father, George (1752-) and inherited the business from him upon his death. The linen shop was located on High Street in Newburgh. The property is described as being situated on “the north side of High Street of Newburgh... and consisting of two substantial dwelling houses of two storeys each, fronting the street. Also, two closes of houses occupied as dwelling houses, weaving shops and manufacturing premises. Also, about an imperial acre of garden and orchards, planted with fruit trees of the best kinds, in full bearing.”¹⁹



Fig.5. Old High Street, Newburgh, Fife, Photograph Courtesy of the Fife Family History Society

As early as 1833, James Lyell was listed as a linen manufacturer at Newburgh.²⁰ He is also listed in the *1837 Pignot and Company's National Commercial Directory of Scotland*.²¹

¹⁹ *Fife Herald Newspaper*, 20 September 1849, p. 1

²⁰ Sasine Deed of James Lyell, 28 September 1833, Newburgh Burgh Sasines, 1813-1926 (B54/2 Series), National Archives of Scotland, Volume 3, Folio 188

²¹ *Pignot and Co.'s National Commercial Directory of Scotland*. London: J. Pignot and Co., 1837, p. 409

BOOT & SHOE MAKERS.

Bell Robert | Findlayson Robt.
Dall James | Heggie Andrew
Duncan John | Henderson James
Fenwick Andrw. | Lang Robert

CORN MERCHANTS.

Gould William
Nicol George
Thomson David
Thomson George

FIRE, &c. OFFICE AGENTS.

CALEDONIAN, James Wilkie [son
FORFAR & PERTHSHIRE, Thos. Ander-
HERCULES, Stephen Williamson
SCOTTISH EQUITABLE, Ts. Anderson

FLESHERS.

Blyth John D.
M'Ween Donald
Scott Thomas

GROGERS & SPIRIT DEALRS.

Anderson Thos. | Pearson William
Ballingall James | Sharp J. M.
Ferguson Wm. | Souter Mrs.
Fisher James | Speedie William
Hepburn D. W. | Wallace Thomas
Hutton William | Wilkie James
Millar William | Williamson An-
Milne Thomas | drew

IRONMONGERS.

Hepburn D. W. (& grocer)
Sharp J. M. (and seedsman)

**LINEN & WOOLLEN DRAPRS
AND HABERDASHERS.**

Anderson Thomas (& stamp office)
Fisher James
Morgan R. and G.
Williamson Andrew

MANUFACTURERS & AGENTS.

Anderson William and Sons
Anderson William, jun.

Byers William
Clark William and John
Fisher James
Lyall Alexander
Lyell James
Lyell Thomas
Wilkie James, jun.
Wilson Thomas

SURGEONS.

Lyell John
Smith Robert

TAILORS.

Blyth James | Stewart John
Bruce James | Sunter James
Forbes John | Wilson James
Fotheringham, Jas.

TIMBER MERCHANTS.

Mount James
Ower and Cairncross

VINTNERS & SPIRIT DEALRS.

Boyd John (the | Laing Andrew
George Inn) | Martin Joseph
Brabner Mrs. | Melville Andw.
Clow Thomas | Melville Henry
Haley Thomas | Mitchell William
Henderson Mrs. | Pearson William
Higgie Robert | Reddie Mrs.
Hood James | Robertson James
Hutton Edward | Speedie M.

WATCH & CLOCK MAKERS.

Beveridge Robert
Clark Robert
Grant Alexander

WRIGHTS.

Allum H. M. | Robinson David
Kiddie James | Walker James
M'Allam Hugh | Walker Peter
Marshall James | Wallace Hugh

WRITERS.

Todd George
Williamson David

Miscellaneous.

Byers William, agent for Neil, Black and
Co. of London
Clark Robert, painter and glazier
Crail Henry, reed maker
Dunn William, hair dresser
Gray Peter, tinsmith
Hav John, ship builder
Millar David, glass and china dealer
Munro Thomas, saddler
Scott John, cooper
Smart John, turner
White David, candle maker
Wilson David, brewer
Wood James, bookseller

PLACES OF WORSHIP.

ESTABLISHED CHURCH, Newburgh
—Rev. John Anderson
ESTABLISHED CHURCH, Abdie—
Rev. Lawrence Miller
ESTABLISHED CHURCH, Balmerino
—Rev. John Thomson
ESTABLISHED CHURCH, Creich—
Rev. Alexander Lawson
UNITED SECESSION CHAPEL, New-
burgh—Rev. John Johnson

CARRIERS.

To AUCHTERMUCHTY, J. and P.
Cameron, every Tuesday.
To CUPAR FIFE, Mrs. Long, every
Wednesday and Saturday.
To EDINBURGH, — Fowler, every
Monday
To EDINBURGH and GLASGOW, —
Cameron, every Saturday.
To PERTH, Robert Heggie, every Mon-
day and Wednesday.

Fig.6. 1837 Pignot and Co.'s National Commercial Directory of Scotland listing James Lyell under Manufacturers & Agents

By 1849, the linen industry was already in decline in such places as Newburgh. Indeed, this was evident for the Lyell family as they were having trouble making ends meet as their business was apparently bankrupt. The *Fife Herald Newspaper* of Thursday, 23 August 1849 stated: "creditors of James Lyell, cloth manufacturer in Newburgh [will] meet in the George's Inn, there, 5th September, one o'clock."²² The outcome was later obvious in that Lyell lost his linen manufacturing business and a public rouse [sale] was scheduled for Tuesday, 2 October 1849 of his property as this notice illustrates.²³

²² *Fife Herald Newspaper*, 23 August 1849, p. 2

²³ *Fife Herald Newspaper*, 20 September 1849, p. 1

HERITABLE PROPERTY IN THE BURGH OF NEWBURGH FOR SALE.

**To be Sold by Public Roup, within the GEORGE INN,
NEWBURGH, on TUESDAY the 2d day of October next, at
One o'Clock Afternoon,**

THAT Extensive and Valuable PROPERTY, situated on the north side of the High Street of Newburgh, belonging to the Sequestrated Estate of Mr JAMES LYELL, Cloth Manufacturer, and consisting of Two Substantial Dwelling-Houses of Two Storeys each, fronting the street. Also, Two Closets of Houses, occupied as Dwelling-Houses, Weaving Shops, and Manufacturing Premises. Also, about an Imperial Acre of Gardens and Orchards, planted with Fruit Trees of the best kinds, in full bearing. Entry at Martinmas next.

For farther particulars apply to Mr THOMAS ANDERSON, Banker, Newburgh, the Trustees on Mr Lyell's Sequestrated Estate; or Messrs W. & G. PAGAN, Writers in Cupar-Fife.

At same time there will be Sold, Five Shares of the Capital Stock of the Newburgh Gas Light Company.

Apply as above.

Newburgh, 19th September 1849.

Fig.7. Notice of the Public Roup (Sale) of the Property of James Lyell, Fife Herald Newspaper, 20 September 1849, Page 1

There is evidence that Lyell continued to reside at his residence until at least 1855²⁴ however, by 1861 he has moved to a residence on Clinton Street.²⁵

²⁴ 1855 Scotland Valuation Roll for Newburgh, Fife, Scotland (VR00600001/44)

²⁵ 1861 Scotland Census for Newburgh, Fife, Scotland; Enumeration District 2, Page 22, Lines 22-25

Description of Subject, with Distinctive Name or Locality	Proprietor	Tenant Occupier	Gross yearly Rent		Estimated Annual Value		Remarks	
			Money	Grain	Money	Grain		
		not forwarded	£ 17	10	-	7	10	
121. House & Garden	James Lyell Manufacturer	W. D. Lyell Lyell	2	-	-	-	-	
House & Garden	do	David Hanna Hanna	2	10	-	-	-	
Wood Shop	do	Thomas Jackson Jackson	3	-	-	-	-	
House & Garden	do	William Morrison Macdon	4	10	-	-	-	
do do	do	Nicola & Agnes do & Ag. Mathew	4	-	-	-	-	
House	do	Charles Hoff Hoff	3	-	-	-	-	
House & Garden	do	William Christie Christie	3	-	-	-	-	
House	do	Mr. Lacroix Lacroix	1	10	-	-	-	
House & Garden	do	John Laing Van Laing	1	6	-	-	-	
House	do	George Stewart Stewart	1	10	-	-	-	
House & Garden	do	Wm. Mc Laren Mc Laren	2	-	-	-	-	
House & Garden	do	James Mitchell Mitchell	2	15	-	-	-	
House & Garden	do	L. M. Spence	1	10	-	-	-	
House & Garden	do	George Thomson	1	10	-	-	-	
House & Garden	do	John Gordon	1	10	-	-	-	
			£ 50	6	-	7	10	187-16.

Fig.8. 1855 Scotland Valuation Roll for James Lyell, Newburgh, Fife

Margaret Lyell, his wife, began working as a dressmaker and is listed as such in 1861.²⁶

MILLINERS & DRESSMAKERS
 Anderson Ann, Newburgh
 Lyell Mrs. —, Newburgh
 Pitkethly Jess, Newburgh

Fig.9. 1861 Slater's Royal National Commercial Directory and Topography of Scotland listing Margaret Lyell, Page 587, Photograph Courtesy of the National Library of Scotland

The Census Records

According to the 1841 Scotland Census for Newburgh, Fife, Scotland, James Lyell is listed as being 50 [sic] years of age and working as a manufacturer; his wife, Margaret is 40 years of age with the following children: Barbara age 10; Christian age 8; George age 6; Andrew age 4; Margaret age 2; and Ann age 2 months.²⁷

²⁶ 1861 Slater's Royal National Commercial Directory and Topography of Scotland. London: Isaac Slater, 1861, p. 587

²⁷ 1841 Scotland Census for Newburgh, Fife, Scotland; Enumeration District 4; Page 8

James Lyell	50	Manuf ^r	4
Margaret D ^o	40		4
Barbara D ^o	10		4
Christian D ^o	8		4
George D ^o	6		4
Ann D ^o	4		4
Margaret D ^o	2		4
Ann D ^o	2 months		4

Fig.10. 1841 Scotland Census for Newburgh, Fife, Scotland listing James Lyell and Family

The 1851 Scotland Census for Newburgh listed James Lyell as residing on High Street, age given as 64 years of age and working as a linen manufacturer and Justice of the Peace; his wife, Margaret, is 52 years of age with the following children: George age 16 and working as a printer and bookbinder apprentice; Margaret age 12 and attending school; Ann age 10 and attending school; and Christian age 17 and working as a dressmaker.²⁸

we High Street James Lyell	Head	64	manuf ^r of linen Justice of the Peace	20
Margaret D ^o	Wife	52		20
George D ^o	Son	16	Printer & Bookbinder	20
Margaret D ^o	Daughter	12	Scholar	20
Ann D ^o	Daughter	10	Scholar	20
Christian D ^o	Daughter	17	Dressmaker	20

Fig.11. 1851 Scotland Census for Newburgh, Fife, Scotland listing James Lyell and Family

According to the 1861 Scotland Census for Newburgh, James Lyell is now 75 years of age and is a retired linen manufacturer; his wife, Margaret is 62 years of age and their daughter, Margaret is 22 years of age and working as a dressmaker, with the family residing on Clinton Street.²⁹

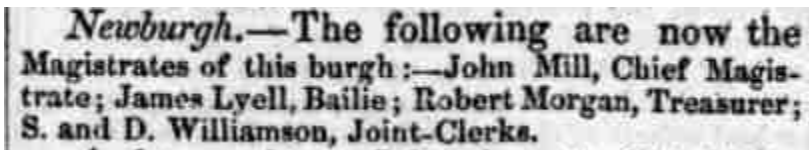
126 Clinton St	1	James Lyell	Head	75	Retired Linen Manufacturer	20	Newburgh	5
		Margaret D ^o	Wife	62		20	Dygart	
		Margaret D ^o	Daughter	22	Dress-Maker	20	Newburgh	

Fig.12. 1861 Scotland Census for Newburgh, Fife, Scotland listing James Lyell and Family

²⁸ 1851 Scotland Census for Newburgh, Fife, Scotland; Enumeration District 5, Page 29, Lines 5-10
²⁹ 1861 Scotland Census for Newburgh, Fife, Scotland; Enumeration District 2, Page 22, Lines 22-24

A Magistrate

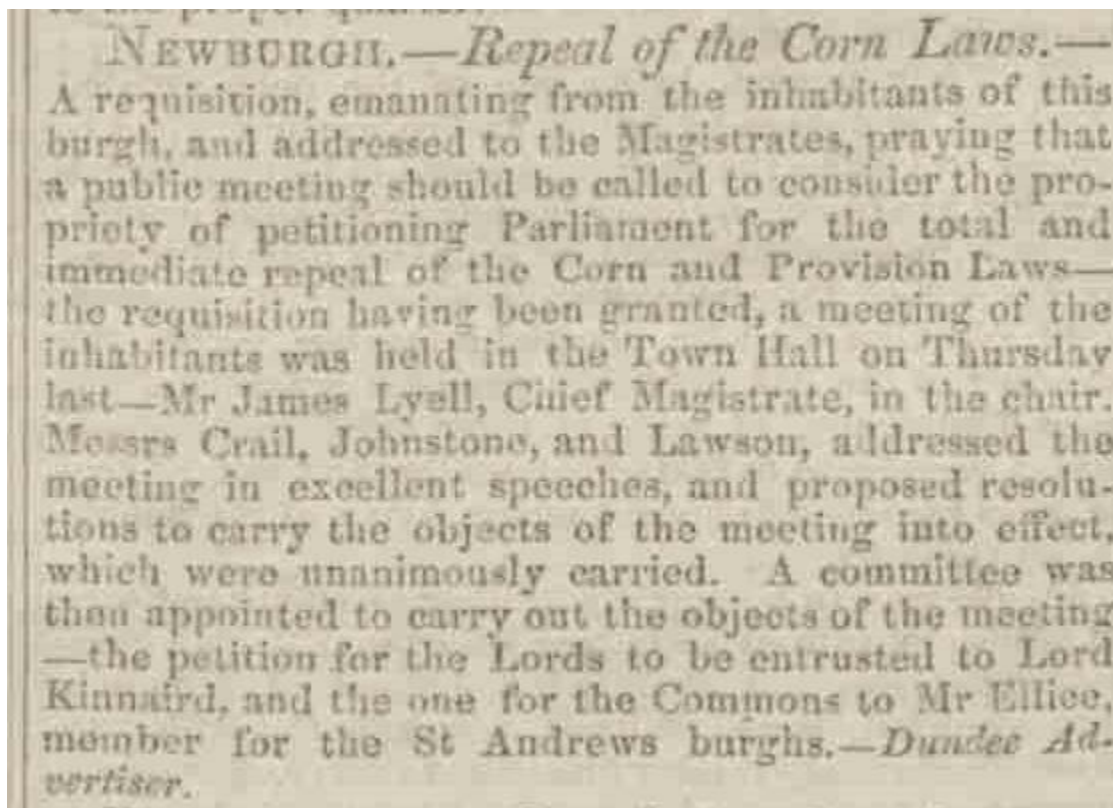
In November of 1842, James Lyell was elected as a Magistrate representing Newburgh.³⁰



Newburgh.—The following are now the Magistrates of this burgh:—John Mill, Chief Magistrate; James Lyell, Bailie; Robert Morgan, Treasurer; S. and D. Williamson, Joint-Clerks.

Fig.13. Lyell elected as a Newburgh Magistrate, *Fife Herald Newspaper*, 10 November 1842, Page 3

By 1846, Lyell was appointed as Chief Magistrate and according to the *Fife Herald Newspaper* dated Thursday, 12 February 1846 he addressed the issue of the Repeal of the Corn Laws which is reproduced below.³¹



NEWBURGH.—*Repeal of the Corn Laws.*—A requisition, emanating from the inhabitants of this burgh, and addressed to the Magistrates, praying that a public meeting should be called to consider the propriety of petitioning Parliament for the total and immediate repeal of the Corn and Provision Laws—the requisition having been granted, a meeting of the inhabitants was held in the Town Hall on Thursday last—Mr James Lyell, Chief Magistrate, in the chair. Messrs Crail, Johnstone, and Lawson, addressed the meeting in excellent speeches, and proposed resolutions to carry the objects of the meeting into effect, which were unanimously carried. A committee was then appointed to carry out the objects of the meeting—the petition for the Lords to be entrusted to Lord Kinnaird, and the one for the Commons to Mr Ellice, member for the St Andrews burghs.—*Dundee Advertiser.*

Fig.14. Repeal of the Corn Laws, *Fife Herald Newspaper*, 12 February 1846, Page 3

³⁰ *Fife Herald Newspaper*, 10 November 1842, p. 3

³¹ *Fife Herald Newspaper*, 12 February 1846, p. 3

Death of James Lyell

James Lyell died on Thursday, 25 May 1865 of chronic bronchitis at the age of 79 in Newburgh.³²

21	James Lyell	1865 May	M	79	George Lyell, Lincolnton	Chronic Bronchitis Emphysema	at Newburgh	1865 May 25 th
	Lincolnton	Proctor, J. P.			Dr. George Christian Lyell	Interment in humane medicine		
	Margaret Lyell	at Newburgh			M. S. Langlands	in Chest		
	Margaret Lyell	Newburgh			Deceased	in Chest		James Miller Registrar

Fig.15. Death Record of James Lyell, 25 May 1865, Crown Copyright

His obituary notice read "At Clinton Street, Newburgh, on the 25th ult., Mr. James Lyell, formerly Chief Magistrate of the burgh."³³ He was buried in the Newburgh Parish Churchyard. His wife, Margaret Lyell, lived a decade after him and died in 1875 at the age of 76 and is buried in the Newburgh Parish Churchyard.³⁴

³² Death Record of James Lyell, 25 May 1865, Newburgh Parish Records, Statutory Deaths 450/0000 0021

³³ *Fife Herald Newspaper*, 1 June 1865, p. 3

³⁴ Death Record of Margaret Lyell, 1875, Newburgh Parish Records, Statutory Deaths 450/0000 0014

With James Lyell's long family history dating back to the early 1700s in Newburgh, he inherited his father's linen business upon his death and carried the business into the mid-nineteenth century. Unfortunately, with the decline of the linen industry around the same period of time, he was the last family member to own and operate a linen manufacturing business in Newburgh.

James married Margaret Haggart in 1828 and they had six children. None of his two sons followed him into the family business; instead, they left the area and relocated to Australia to find their own economic opportunity. James Lyell was elected Magistrate of Newburgh in November of 1842 and rose to be the Chief Magistrate serving in that position until after the year of 1851. Newburgh can be quite proud of one of its own. James Lyell is warmly commemorated here in grateful esteem and recognition by his distant fourth cousin, Michael T. Tracy. This work is dedicated to the Memory of James Lyell.

Memoratus in aeternum (Forever Remembered)

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