

Broughton Tolbooth 1582-1829

# BROUGHTON HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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## They lived in Broughton

In recent years our community paper *Spurtle* has run a series of articles about interesting past Broughton residents. We've already republished two of these, featuring writer Robert Garioch and entertainer Arthur Lloyd. Here's another, by John Ross Maclean, on Compton Mackenzie – best known for his novel *Whisky Galore* and the film based on it.

### Profile: At home with Monty

Sir Edward Montague Compton Mackenzie ('Monty'), celebrated author, sometime actor, master-spy, founder of the *Gramophone Magazine*, Scottish Nationalist, inter alia, came to 31 Drummond Place in 1953 where he resided until his death, aged 89, in 1972. Here, in old age, he wrote no fewer than 28 books, including the monumental *My Life and Times* in 10 volumes 'or octaves'. During this time, after the death of his first wife Faith (1960), he married his beloved housekeeper Chrissie McSween from Barra, and after her sad death (1963) pledged himself to Chrissie's sister Lillian, the third Lady Mackenzie.



Both sisters are still fondly remembered locally. A neighbour, Joanna Girling, was entranced by the hens roaming Monty's garden, when invited to tea as a little girl. Undoubtedly, Chrissie from Barra introduced the poultry to Drummond Place. Many ladies frequented Lady Lillian's hairdressers salon in the basement of No. 31, happily provided by Monty for the purpose. Another neighbour, Gaby Holden, vividly recalls Chrissie's concern when a fledgling bird had fallen from a nest outside Gaby's top-floor flat in Scotland Street into the garden – an event keenly noted by several Siamese cats (Sir Compton was President of the UK Siamese Cat Association for many years). Here at No. 31, Monty stayed in bed to midday, wrote all those mellow, later books, entertained a galaxy of visitors

and friends including Evelyn Waugh, Eric Linklater, Prince Charles, Hugh MacDiarmid et al., smoked his 'sublime tobacco', and of an evening in December we may suppose sat by the fire, reached for a good malt, and with Sibelius on the gramophone, floated with the swan of Tuonela back and back to his birth in 1883, when a Queen-Empress sat on the throne. Perhaps, outside, a fine wind thrummed in the trees in the Drummond Garden. The author of the *Four Winds of Love* and *The Wind of Freedom* would have surely rejoiced, and slept well, in anticipation of pen and ink and the next page — strictly after midday.



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## Memories of East Claremont Street during the Second World War

Edinburgh historian Joyce Wallace's books include *Historic Houses of Edinburgh, Traditions of Trinity and Leith, Canonmills and Inverleith* and *Broughton McDonald Church 1785-1985*. In 2000 she gave us a talk about historic houses – including our own Gayfield House

Many thanks for sending the *Broughton History Society Newsletter* from which I am sorry to learn of the death of Mrs. Birse. Mention of the Birses' shop in Melgund Terrace revived old memories for me. During the Second World War we lived at No 52 East Claremont Street and I remember Mr. C. W. Cameron who ran the shop at 2 Melgund Terrace at that time. He was a tall man who walked with a limp and his wife was very small. In addition to being a newsagent and confectioner they managed to include a small lending library as well in their tiny shop.

The Grocers, Gordon & Deans, were on the corner at 34 East Claremont Street (now M & A Stores – Newsagent & Licensed Grocer), then Cooper & Wilson, run by Mrs Cooper and her sister as a Greengrocer at No 36 (now A Flat in Town), and Scott-Lyon the Bakers at No 38 (now P & W Plumber). I have taken the details from the 1938/39 *P.O. Directory*.

During the War we made 2 rooms in the basement of No 52 available to be used as an Air Raid Wardens' post. It was entered via the common stair and the back door, to avoid coming through the house. The wardens, wearing their tin hats, reported for duty here. In charge was Captain Black with his secretary, Mrs. Wallace (no relation) with a typewriter. She had the use



of our large kitchen to make tea for the Wardens. At that time we had a black cat and one morning we went down for breakfast and found her on an old sofa with a large litter of kittens! I think some of the Wardens took one or two but at any rate we were able to get homes for all of them!

It all seems a long time ago now.

Later, in conversation with the editor, Joyce added that when you went to the greengrocer for potatoes you could ask for a 'forpit'; but neither of us could translate

this into pounds or stones. Fortunately when I googled 'forpit', [www.edinphoto.org.uk](http://www.edinphoto.org.uk), came top of the list with an entry from George Field, now in Australia, describing how in the fifties and sixties, he had helped in his grandfather's greengrocer's shop at Gilmerton. Included in a detailed account of various aspects of the business: 'Sacks of potatoes lined one wall of the cellar and it became my lot to bag them into "forpit" lots for sale. "What is a forpit?" I hear you ask. It was an old Scottish term for a measure of potatoes, which were sold in lots one stone(14lbs), half a stone (7lbs) or a 'forpit' (3 and a half lbs). Forpit = a fourth part (of a stone).'



Bellevue and Claremont Division of Air Raid Wardens  
(tin hats on their knees)  
in Claremont Crescent Garden, early 1940s

(7lbs) or a 'forpit' (3 and a fourth part (of a stone).'  
2

## Feedback

**Alex Dow wrote to us about three articles in our last edition – on St James's Episcopal Chapel, James Grieve and entertainer Arthur Lloyd**

Regarding St James's Episcopal Church, if I recollect correctly, it housed the Edinburgh School of Baking and Confectionery for several years, before the latter moved to the Castlehill School just below the Esplanade. My father was offered a teaching post at it in Broughton Street. I think it would be about 1949, certainly after 1945 and before the School actually opened.

Although good at cake decorating, he like myself had a "lazy" eye, which caused him some difficulties, particularly on close work such as decorating cakes. As he did not accept the offer, I never had the opportunity of visiting the School.

James Grieve came to mind recently when my daughter moved to another house, with a solitary apple tree in the garden. When she mentioned that she was thinking of getting more, I suggested the 'James Grieve' variety. My father had told me about it in the early 1950s, as there was a girl named Florence Grieve from the Redbraes area in my school class. I don't know if there was any connection with James Grieve.

I was struck by the coincidence of both Arthur Lloyd and James Grieve having lived at 7 Annandale Street about 80 years apart. (Editor: Lloyd was born there in 1839 and it was Grieve's address when he died in 1924.)



*James Grieve still thrives in our cold northern gardens. The disease-resistant fruit crops well each year and produces good apple juice.*

## Chop Ham's Polonie

**Alex Dow describes how family connections developed with the exiled Polish community during World War II**

Chopin's *Polonaise* was almost a Family Anthem during WW II, apart from being played frequently on radio. 'Chop Ham's Polonie' was the name that my brother and I, unable then to pronounce the correct name, gave it. Also of course, chopped ham was one of the canned meats from the USA at the time, hence our being rather acquainted with it. Frequently in khaki cans, as was cheese.

The University of Warsaw in Exile set up a Medical School in the University of Edinburgh, New Buildings (1880s!), Teviot Place, where my brother Ian eventually worked in the Pharmacology Department. Going through the arch into the Quadrangle, turn about and look up. There is a plaque commemorating that Medical School above the arch.

As an extension to that School and to give the Polish students access to patients etc, a Ward was set aside for ill and wounded Polish soldiers in the Western General Hospital, being named after Jan Paderewski, a famous pianist and Polish patriot.

My aunt, Margaret Tait, was Ward Sister on it, so as she frequently visited us, we became familiar with the Paderewski.



Margaret Tait, 1930s



Helen and Johnnie Tant. Wedding Day 1944

Later, when Johnnie Tant started on his 44 crossings in one or t'other of the two 'Queens', he would come through from the Firth of Clyde Anchorage, 'Elsewhere' on his Record of Service, on short passes and one longer leave. As part of his tutorial practices with the 'Professor' at Methven Simpson, he would play Chopped Ham's Polonie on our piano in the sitting-room at the front of 51 Bellevue Road. Hence Ian and I became very well acquainted with it. That *Polonaise* was heard a lot during WW II, in support of the Polish population, both those still in Poland and also the various 'in Exile' for the Duration.

The piano was unusual, having an extra octave (8) keys, probably 4 at the Bass end and 4 at the treble end. Also, it had a metal frame rather than the more usual wooden frame of domestic pianos – possibly a Concert Upright. When purchased about 1934, it cost about £17/10 shillings – about eight weeks' wages at that time, so about £4,000 today.

In 1944, my parents, brother Ian and I were walking from my grandmother's house in Linlithgow out to a friend's farm on the Bo'ness Road, The Syke. About 200 yards from the farm access, we were stopped by two Polish soldiers, part of the Forth Coastal perimeter, covering D-Day. They let us pass, as they could see the access.

## Flora Henderson Falcon Hall, Morningside 1851–1873

Jill Powlett-Brown of Morningside Heritage Association was our guest speaker in March 2009, her subject 'A Unique Concentration: Women in 19th-century Morningside' – we invited her to tell us more about one of the women who featured in her talk.

### Introduction

Flora Henderson was an ordinary woman who entered domestic service in the household of Alexander Falconar, in the 19th-century suburban village of Morningside, and in doing so became part of its story. Born on the West Highland peninsula of Ardnamurchan in the early 1800s, her story reflects both the woman's place at the margins of history and a process of transition from beyond those margins.

### Morningside

The suburban village of Morningside, four miles to the south of Princes Street, occupies a distinctively visible place in Scottish history, built neither from its location on the south of Edinburgh; nor from the 19th-century houses and tenements that line its streets; nor from the literary and professional men and women who had the means to holiday, and then to settle, in the 'morning side' of town from the end of the 18th century. It is built instead on a 20th-

century myth enshrined in a particular characterisation of the Morningside woman, predominantly unmarried and sniffily class conscious, living a life of genteel poverty<sup>1</sup> concealed behind her 'camphorated furs, high heels and painted lips',<sup>2</sup> lampooned by the likes of Stanley Baxter.<sup>3</sup> Behind the 20th century caricature, however, lie the realities of lives blighted by the First World War. And behind the garden walls and tenement windows lie the realities of 19th-century working women's stories.

1. Nicholson (2008) also describes the single state as 'enforced spinsterhood' – a legacy of the First World War in which so many young men were lost.
2. Paraphrased from Macleod, J *Organic meat and soor plums*. The Scotsman, Saturday 11 May 1991.
3. Baxter, Stanley and Mitchell, A (1985) Stanley Baxter's suburban shocker featuring Rosemary Morningside and the garrulous Glaswegian Mr Ballhead.

Writing in the *Third Statistical Account of Scotland* published in 1966, Forbes Macgregor (once the head teacher at Morningside School) described Morningside as being 'more than a geographical expression: it is a frame of mind, a social attitude, a form of speech', with 'a concentration of femininity unique in all Scotland'. Although this 'unique concentration' is drawn from 20th-century data (and cannot be independently validated because Macgregor did not confirm the data he used), my own analysis of the Morningside Census enumeration data for 1841 to 1891, and of data for both the national population and of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow across the same period, confirms that the proportion of females to every 100 males enumerated in Morningside across the second half of the 19th century was consistently higher.



*Falcon Hall (date and source unknown)*

Flora's place in the story of Morningside and of its 'unique concentration' may have remained beyond history, reflecting the anonymity of the place that women have historically occupied. As a member of the domestic household of the Falconar family – Morningside's First Family – for a period spanning at least 22 years, however, she has become a real and fascinating woman.

#### **Morningside's First Family**

The household to which Flora Henderson came some time between 1841 and 1851 was that of Morningside's First Family, presided over following the death of their father on 10 December 1847 by the five surviving daughters of Alexander Falconar.<sup>4</sup> At one time a Chief Secretary to the Governor of Madras, Alexander settled with his family in Edinburgh in 1811, on his retirement from colonial service. On 17 February 1814 he bought Morningside Lodge, in the heart of the village of Morningside, and nine acres of land surrounding it, from Margaret Thomson Coulter – widow of William Coulter,<sup>5</sup> retaining Thomas Hamilton<sup>6</sup> to enlarge the house and renaming it Falcon Hall.<sup>7</sup>

In keeping with the ethos of Victorian family life, Alexander kept a firm, though apparently benevolent, grip on his daughters: of the five, only his second youngest, Jessie, was allowed to marry; hers is a story of romance and tragedy that might have formed the basis of one of Susan Ferrier's novels.<sup>8</sup>

The 1851 Census of Falcon Hall records a complement of six domestic servants – a conventional number at the time for a gentleman of Alexander Falconar's wealth and social status.<sup>9</sup> As the Kitchenmaid, Flora's name appears at the end of a list led by Margaret Sinclair (Ladies Maid) William Stewart (Butler) and Jane Peacock (Cook); she is single, aged 45 and her birthplace

given as Ardnamurchan, Argyllshire. By 1861 Flora has become, as the Cook, the senior domestic servant and she remained in this role until her death on 17 August 1873.

4. Answers to such questions as to how, why and when Flora arrived in Edinburgh are not to be found directly from the official records. The 1841 enumeration of Tobermory includes the household of John Henderson (aged 40), Farmer, including Flora (aged 35); marital status was not recorded in 1841, so this Flora could be John's wife or a sister. Another entry in the 1841 Census records a 30-year old Flora Henderson lodging in the household of the widowed Mrs Blair and her 15-year old son, in Craigs Close, off Edinburgh's High Street; if this is Flora, the reason for her move to Edinburgh may lie in Smout's carefully balanced but graphic description of the 19th-century Highland clearances (1997)
5. As Lord Provost of Edinburgh between 1808 and 1810, William Coulter laid the foundation stone of the 'first proper asylum for the insane' – now the Royal Edinburgh Hospital.
6. Thomas Hamilton's work includes the Royal College of Physicians, in Edinburgh's Queen Street, and the Assembly Rooms at Ayr.
7. Although Falcon Hall is now lost, and few illustrations remain, Rock (1984, p. 42) has described it – perhaps a little unkindly – as an 'amusing conceit'. The family retained ownership until the death of Margaret, the last of the five sisters, on 1 December 1887. The house was demolished in 1903 but its name is perpetuated in the street names – Falcon Road, Gardens, Avenue.
8. Susan Ferrier, sometimes described as Scotland's Jane Austen, lived at East Morningside House with her widowed father between 1798 and 1829.
9. Horn (1986, pp. 19–20) suggests that where the professional classes (doctors, clergy, bankers and 'the more substantial businessmen') would keep three servants or thereabouts, the 'more favourably placed' household would have a servant complement of around seven.

### Who is Flora?

Flora's presence within the pages of the three Morningside enumerations in which she forms an integral part of the Falconar household marks a new chapter in a personal life story. It does not provide definitive answers as to how or why this 45-year-old woman came to be in domestic service in 1851, or remained in service with the Falconars for more than 20 years, but it does provide a route through to her family background and to what happened to her after 1871.

So, what was her family background? What became of her after 1871? What relationship – if any – is there between her and Mary Henderson from Argyllshire, working as a Scullerymaid at Falcon Hall in 1861? What relationship is there between Flora and Catherine Henderson, aged 27, born in Glasgow and enumerated as a domestic servant in the Falcon Hall household in 1871?

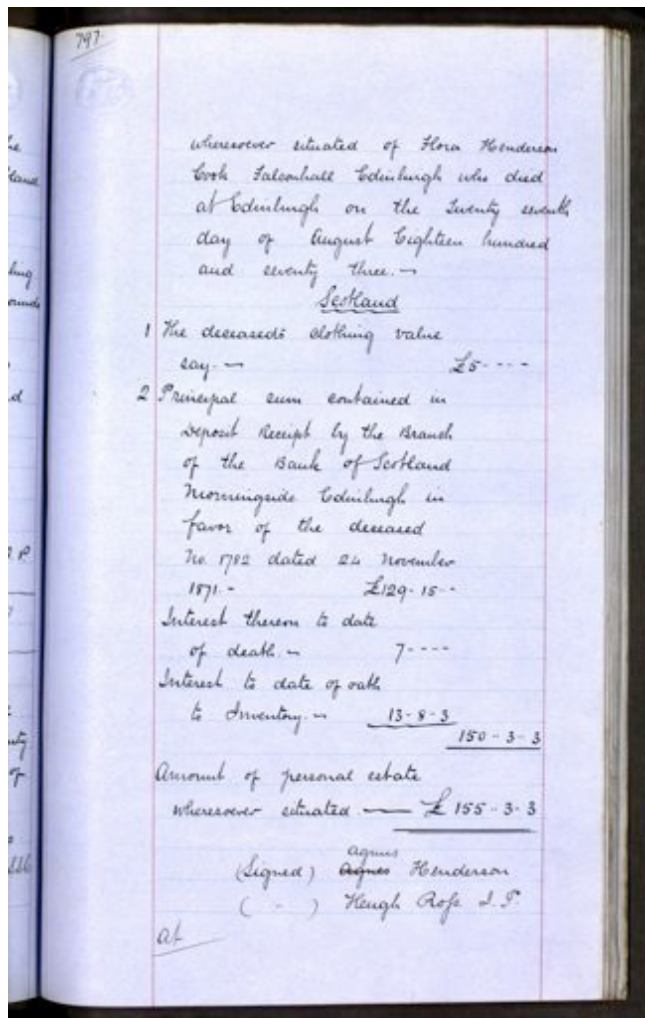
I began the search for the threads of Flora's life with its ending, and in doing so learned a fundamental research lesson. Flora is recorded as the Cook at Falcon Hall in both the 1861 and 1871 Census enumerations, but by 1881 her name has disappeared. Although it is not particularly surprising given her social status, there is no record of her burial in the Edinburgh cemeteries.<sup>10</sup> Those without the resources to pay for a burial and a memorial of their last resting place were usually interred in a communal burial plot (George Bell, Director of Bereavement Services at Edinburgh's Mortonhall Crematorium, personal communication), and it must be assumed that the nest egg that emerges later in this account of her story was not known about at the time of her death.

The possibility of Flora having retired and returned to her birthplace was strengthened with the discovery, through an online search of the 1881 Census of Ardnamurchan (www.scotlandspeople.com) of an entry for a 77-year-old Flora Henderson, 'Formerly Domestic Servant'. The slight discrepancy in the age<sup>11</sup> can be regarded as an example of the need to look upon accuracy of enumeration with a healthy scepticism, as

Wrigley (1972) and others have emphasised, and I was therefore content that this 1881 Ardnamurchan entry was Flora, retired now from her lengthy employment in the Falconar household and returned to her family roots in the north.

10. Burial records are held at Mortonhall Crematorium

11. Flora's age is recorded in 1851 as 45; in 1861 as 55; but in 1871 as only 60. On the basis that the 1851 and 1861 entries are more likely to be accurate than the 1871 entry, she would have been 75 in 1881.



And a life story might have been mistold. I had not considered the possibility that Flora might have a Will or Testament, let alone an Inventory of any assets at the time of her death.<sup>12</sup> Quite by chance, however, as is so often the way with these things, an Inventory came to light through [www.scottishdocuments.com](http://www.scottishdocuments.com).<sup>13</sup> From this document came confirmation that Flora had died at Falcon Hall on 27 August 1873.<sup>14</sup> And this document also proved to be the key that unlocked further information about her death and about her origins.

From Flora's Death Certificate (Document number 558) registered in the District of Newington on 30 August 1873 and signed by Dr George Beilby, MD, who lived in and practised from 1 Falcon Cottage (beside the entrance gates of Falcon Hall) between 1842 and 1896, she succumbed to an 'Obscure and apparently complicated disease. There was evidently gastric renal disease and inflated dropsical swelling'<sup>15</sup> which had been present for two years. She had, however, been 'laid aside from work for only a few weeks'. So Flora had died apparently still in service to the surviving Falconar sisters, and given her length of service I was disappointed that they do not appear to have given her a recordable burial.

In addition to establishing how, when and where Flora met her end, the Death Certificate resolves further issues of kin linkage, both within the domestic servant complement at Falcon Hall and in confirming the background from which she came. The 27-year old Catherine, enumerated as a Scullerymaid at the Hall in 1871, is named on Flora's Death Certificate as the 'informant' and as her niece. The inclusion of her parents' names, and her father's occupation, on the same Certificate, confirms her agricultural background: her father was Hugh Henderson, Farmer, and her mother Catherine McGilvray Henderson.

From these reassuring certainties, locating Flora's origins in the Argyllshire peninsula of Ardnamurchan and the ending of her story at Falcon Hall in Morningside, the narrative becomes more opaque. The Inventory included in her Testament is signed at Tobermory on 17 October 1877 'In presence of ... Angus Henderson Blacksmith Tobermory Executor of the deceased ...'. From his own Death Certificate, Angus may well have been Flora's brother, but because the name of his mother (Flora Henderson McGilvray) is recorded slightly differently from that of Flora's mother (Catherine McGilvray Henderson), two factors prevent an unequivocal confirmation of their kinship: first, the name Henderson appears with bewildering frequency in the 19th-century Censuses of the Parish of Ardnamurchan; second, the use of a different Christian name on the Death Certificate may mean no more than that Catherine was known within the family as Flora, and that this was the only name by which Angus's son, John, who is the informant to his father's death, might have known his grandmother.

12. A Testament is described by the National Archives of Scotland (NAS) (<http://www.nas.gov.uk/guides/wills.asp>) as 'the collective term used to describe all the documents relating to the executry of a deceased person'. There is no indication from the [www.scottishdocuments.com](http://www.scottishdocuments.com) site of a Will recorded for Flora.

13. An Inventory forms part of an individual testament, and may also include (in the minority of cases, according to the NAS) a Will. Because Scotland has historically been a 'relatively poor country' (NAS), few Scots left testaments. In a charming piece of descriptive prose, the NAS indicates 'Where there is a will, the document was known as a "testament testamentar" (the equivalent of English probate). If there was no will, it was called a "testament dative" (the equivalent of English letters of administration)'.

14. Inventory SC70/1/185, registered at Edinburgh Sheriff Court 29 October 1877.

15. Found in the records of the General Register Office of Scotland (GROS).



19th Century Morningside from Craighouse

A further complication in the unequivocal establishment of a kin relationship between Flora and Angus lies in the variations in their recorded ages in the Census and in their Death Certificates, a circumstance that may have arisen from the circumstances at least of Flora's birth. Prior to 1 January 1855, when a standardised civil registration system came into being in Scotland, the only record of births, marriages and deaths in Scotland was through the Established Church of Scotland; the quality and the detail of the information given in these records was variable, but it is known that illegitimate births frequently went unrecorded in the Parish Records (OPRs) although they may be noted, with the father's details, in Kirk Session minutes. Children born and baptised prior to their parents' marriage were, however, often registered only in their mother's name, and it is not therefore impossible that the precise details of Flora's birth were concealed not only from the Kirk Session but also from Flora and from the rest of her family. Even if a complete picture does not emerge from these pieces of her life, the Inventory also provides a glimpse behind the scenes of her time in Morningside.

That Flora comes across as a prudent, and probably a pragmatic, woman seems likely not only from her length of service at Falcon Hall but also from her ability to save a substantial sum of money during the course of her employment. In this respect she fits with Milne's 1870 description of domestic servants as 'the most numerous class of depositors in the Savings Banks', and indeed she died a relatively wealthy woman by 19th-century standards, leaving a personal estate amounting to £155-3-3, contained within a deposit account opened at the Morningside branch of the Bank of Scotland on 24 November 1871. The Inventory referred to earlier is made up of the 'Principal sum' of £129-15, with 'Interest thereon to date of death – £7.00' and a further amount of interest amounting to £13-8-3 which accumulated in the four years between her death on 27 August 1873 and the swearing of the 'oath of Inventory on 17 October 1877. The poignant little entry that details her only worldly possessions as being 'clothing value say £5' serves as a reminder of the place she occupied; and a further poignancy comes with the thought that the savings that might have enabled her final resting place to be recorded appear not to have come to light for some years after her death.

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#### Summary

This brief narrative of a hidden life revealed almost by chance, although it brings Flora to a kind of visibility, retains its enigmatic quality. And this is its charm. There is no way of knowing why she came to Edinburgh, or to Morningside, although the presence in a neighbouring (albeit more modest) household to Falcon Hall of another Ardnamurchan woman, Mary Cunningham, a contemporary of Flora at 50 years of age, offers a tentative link; did they know each other back in the northwest peninsula area? Were both women known to, and recommended by, a church minister who had served in the Ardnamurchan parish?

Although it has been possible to confirm one of only two potential direct kin linkages with Flora Henderson during her time at Falcon Hall, other possible connections, both of kin and of place of origin, suggest the operation of family and friend networks that enabled kin and neighbours to gain employment in Victorian households. And they testify to some persistence of employment amongst the servant complement over the years that may reflect the Falconar sisters as considerate employers. That Flora's years of service within the Falcon Hall household, and that at least one member of her immediate family was in service with her during her time with the Falconars, serves as an indication that she made a life of some sort through her years of employment. As the senior member of the domestic household for at least 10 years, it is not improbable that she gained the trust of her employers, and not implausible that this also gave her a place within the wider Morningside community.

One of the temptations in researching a life such as Flora's is the allure of the next clue. In setting the boundaries within which Flora's narrative is located here, I am conscious that there remain questions that might have been resolved. In the final analysis, however, it is the resistance of that temptation to follow the next clue that respects and preserves the mystery of who Flora really was, and presents her story within the context of the Morningside story. From the dryness of the Census record a real woman has emerged, reflecting on the realities of the Morningside woman's life – whether in the 19th or the 20th century. The incompleteness of that reality in itself has become the fascination; it is not, as Winterson (1985) writes, 'the whole story, but ... we make of [it] what we will ... It's all there but hard to find the beginning and impossible to fathom the end'.

The reality of Flora's story is that it is not the whole story, but that through making of it what we will her ordinary life has been given a certain visibility. Hers is just one story, reflecting the many stories to be told in dispelling the myths of the woman's place at the margins of history.

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