

Stevenson Street

Named after Hugh and John Stevenson's Oban's founding fathers

Much of Oban's development can be attributed to Hugh and John Stevenson who were tenants of Dunstaffnage. They arrived in Oban in the mid 1700s and did much to develop and improve the village.

The Stevensons owned a ship building business, which provided employment for 12 ship's carpenters, 10 coopers and 2 brewers. As merchants they dealt in wool, oak-bark, fish, and other produce of the neighbourhood.

In 1792 the Duke of Argyll's Factor reported that there were 28 vessels registered in Oban, 12 of which belonged to Hugh and John Stevenson. Tonnage of these 12 was 720t; one of them was employed in foreign trade, the rest in the coasting and fishing business.

Hugh Stevenson also operated a public house which he ran until 1785. Although the exact location is not known it was on Dunstaffnage's land and is likely to have been where McPhee's Estate agents is situated. The accommodation was probably very basic as a traveller in 1785 described it as 'a public house of the very worst sort'.

The Stevensons were also instrumental in establishing the masonic lodge which was formed in 1791.

In 1793 they established a brewery, which in 1794 became the Oban distillery.

In 1804, The Captain of Dunstaffnage granted the first feus in Oban and many were taken by the Stevensons. Hugh Stevenson, Merchant feued the land at 1,2,3 George Street, (roughly where Waterstones and MacPhee's Estate Agents are located) Stevenson Terrace and ground at Thomas Park where the Rockfield Centre stands.

John Stevenson, Merchant lived at 7 Stafford Street and Hugh Stevenson Junior, a tanner feued 1-4 Argyll Street and ground east of Tweedale Street.

Following his death of his father Hugh in 1820, Thomas Stevenson took over the distillery but a series of unsuccessful business investments forced him into bankruptcy on 21st March 1829 with debts of over £8,000. His assets which included the distillery, the unfinished Caledonian Hotel on George Street, the slate islands of Belhahua, a house in Oban called Boglehall with the garden ground attached and his house at no.1 George Street (MacPhee's Estate Agents) were put up for sale.

The house was described as having 5 bedrooms, kitchen, parlour, laundry and servants accommodation. Behind the house was a stable, a byre for 15 cows, a gig house and a cart house. Attached to the house was a large shop and office. The house also had a garden and grounds which extended as far as the land where the Free Church is built. Included in the

sale was Thomas's Park which covered the area where the Caledonian Hotel now stands adjacent to the bleaching green. The whole property was advertised for sale at £1400.

His eldest son John bought the distillery, the unfinished Caledonian Hotel and the house where Thomas continued to stay.

Thomas Stevenson was against the building of the Free Church on the hill above his land. He was a member of the Church of Scotland and believed that members of the Free Church deliberately chose the site with the sole purpose of annoying him!