

Henry Hoggan



This plain grave marker near the northeast corner of the northern graveyard marks the resting place of Henry Hoggan, a very unpleasant character.

As a boy the local author, Daniel Thomson, lived in the St Leonard's area near Henry Hoggan and remembered him and his family very well. Hoggan owned and ran a licensed grocery in the Foregate, at the top of Bothwell Place, on the spot where the railway viaduct now crosses the road. Thomson mentions his 'rich and fruitful garden', which can be seen on the 1854 Ordnance Survey map of the area. He also owned property in nearby Priors Lane.



1854 Ordnance Survey map

Thomson remembered him about 1840 'strutting about with a black walking stick and in the hat, short vest and wide, flowing coat of that period'. His first wife was a Darling. His second wife was Nellie Cargill from Kinross and they 'were keen by any means to make money'. Hoggan's grocery was what was known as a truck or Tammy shop, which supplied goods on credit to workers who could produce a 'line' from an employer with whom the shopkeeper had a specific agreement. In this case the employer was George Birrel whose linen manufactory at the foot of the New Row gave work to some 30 hand-loom weavers. His

clerk, William Templeman, had a truck arrangement with Hoggan and issued lines to his workers and their wives which they could exchange in Hoggan's shop for food, drink and clothing. Truck shops were notorious for charging high prices and the system often led families into ruinous debt. 'Many a poor woman and ragged bairn cursed the Tammy grocers and their ways.'

What was worse, was the 'club' for selling whisky to the weavers that Templeman and Hoggan set up between them. At the fortnightly pay-day 'the house...rang with the ribald songs of the weavers till the small hours of the morning, while pleading mothers and starving children waited outside, shivering in the cold night air. The scenes I have seen when a boy of six or seven years will never be blotted from my memory'.

The Hoggans had three sons, Henry, Jock and Jamie, and two daughters, Mary who died in her twenties, and Betty. According to Thomson the children were well-educated and the sons were taught the weaving trade. The family 'lived in a style of florid grandeur and scorned the children and wives of the poor weavers that supported them',

Henry Hoggan died on 1 August 1854 and in spite of his rapacity his testament shows that he had not amassed all that much in the way of money.

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| Cash in the house | £10 11s |
| Household furniture, groceries and effects in his house and shop | £14 14/8d |
| Silver watch | £1 |
| Half a year's rent of a loom factory (In Bothwell Place, see below) | £9 10s |
| Owed by William Finlay manufacturer | £12 |

Total £47 15/8d

Even multiplied by 30 to approximate to present-day values this only amounts to about £1220 – hardly a fortune. The money would have been divided among the younger children but the property and business was inherited by his eldest son Henry, then aged about 37, who 'soon managed to run through the whole – melted in drink'. Thomson says that Henry dissipated his inheritance within three years, but the local press tells the story of a rather more protracted decline.

In October 1860 the shop, garden and loom factory in Bothwell place were sold, although Henry retained some property because when the railway was built in 1864 his premises there were repaired to provide stabling for the contractors' horses. By that time he was running a public house in Bothwell Place, for which he applied for a liquor licence. The influx of navvies who were building the railway probably boosted his profits for a while, but two years he was finally ruined. In October 1866 it was advertised in the press that 'All parties having claims against Henry Hoggan, lately spirit dealer in Dunfermline, are requested to lodge the same with Mr Robert Lawrie, builder, Crossford, Trustee for his creditors, or with Mr Henry Bardner writer Dunfermline.' Henry Hoggan died in 1873.

The second son, Jock, 'proved a miserable waif' who was 'drinking hard in 1842. He continued a sot and weardless, senseless, blear-eyed body until he married Mary Hutchinson, when he became a lazy, lounging, louse-harboursing spectacle and continued so till he died....he got a family and his poor wife worked to keep them living'. He died in December 1897 aged 78 in the house of his daughter in Music Hall Lane. He had been minding his grandchild while the parents were at work and collapsed as he chatted to his son-in-law on his return home.

According to Thomson, Jamie 'was a beastly, drunken bully'. Betty had married a man called Grieve and at the beginning of the 20th century was still alive, but in misery.