

Robert Walker

By the time Robert Walker came to be tenant of Mains of Portlethen and Hillside, there had already been 5 generations of his family working the lands on or around Portlethen before him.

It was Robert Walker who first came to attention in the early part of the 19th century and began to be involved in local matters. It was not long before he was the face of authority around the community in the district of Portlethen. At this time, he was acting as the factor for Sir William Johnstone and, in later years, he would hold the same role for the Gammell family. Johnstone and the Gammells did not stay on their estate at Portlethen and would have been little known by local people. Robert Walker slipped easily into the role of laird in the landowners continued absence.

Robert Walker was not just a farmer and he had many roles in business and around the local community.

Perhaps he is most famous for being one of the earliest breeders of Aberdeenshire "polled" cattle. The first of these cattle were on his farm at the "Mains of Portlethen". There are records of these "polled" cattle dating back to 1784; the oldest animal whose date of birth was recorded in a herd book was the bull Colonel 145 whose sire was a bull bred at Portlethen. .

From 1818 onwards, a private register and a herd book was maintained at Portlethen and from then onwards more accurate historical records were available in respect of the famous Portlethen herd.

Few men did more solid work to improve this breed than Walker. For over 50 years, he was considered to be one of the leading breeders of "polled" cattle in the country and he built up and brought to a high state of perfection a choice herd of 80 to 100 herd of cattle. The main portion of his herd was dispersed after his death but his son retained

a few cattle and the family reputation for rearing fine beasts continued for as long as the farm remained in the Walker family hands.

Robert Walker reared some celebrated bulls, most notably "Fox Maule" and "Banks of the Dee", both of which were distinguished show yard animals. Of Walker's great success in the show yard, William McCombie in his "Cattle and Cattle Breeders" stated "It would be endless to attempt to sum up his victories, local, national and international; they are spread over such a large surface". In one season, the descendants of "Banks of the Dee" gained no fewer than seven first prizes and one second prize.

Interestingly, whilst Walker was famed as a breeder of black cattle, he also had a great taste for horses, which was peculiar in that he kept them of only one colour; whilst his cattle were all black, his horses were always grey. At one time he had as many as a score of these horses, each displaying more or less the same characteristics of hardiness and with well knit frames which distinguished all his stock and, which he valued, over size.

Robert Walker was one of the most prominent and successful agriculturists in the district for over half a century. As well as running farms on the estate of Portlethen, he was a practical land surveyor and estate agent, who was employed professionally in the valuation of farms and the improvement of estates and was often cited to give evidence in delicate cases of arbitration in the civil courts

Away from agriculture, Walker was an integral part of the community, being a respected kirk elder and a member of the local parochial school boards as they started to gather momentum throughout the 19th century. He was an approachable fellow who, with his honourable dealings and genial nature, earned the respect of farmhands and fisher folk as well as the landed gentry. When he passed away in the 1870s, his farms, lands, businesses were taken over by his son George J Walker who had already

been heavily involved in farming, land evaluation and the local community for many years

Obituary of Mr Robert Walker

A very wide spread feeling of regret will be caused by the announcement in our obituary today of the death of this well-known agriculturist. Mr Walker has for upwards of a year gradually succumbed under a creeping paralysis which began in his arms and then extended to other parts of his body. The deceased gentleman was one of the earliest breeders of Aberdeenshire "polled" cattle and has been one of the most prominent and successful agriculturists in the district for a period of well-nigh half a century. He was a practical land-surveyor, was very much employed professionally in the valuation of farms, the improvement of estates and was often cited to give evidence in delicate cases of arbitration in the civil courts. Mr Walker was a model farmer and many of the rising farmers of capital in this country as well as abroad are in no small measure indebted to his early training.

He was a most honourable man in all his dealings and his kindly, genial nature won for him in his old age "troops of friends" who, with his sorrowing relatives, will long feel severely his loss. Mr Walker was in his 70th year.

1872. DEATHS in the District of Providence in the County of Russell (1872)

No.	Name and Birthname, Rank or Profession, and whether Single, Married, or Widowed.	When and Where Died.	Sex.	Age.	Name, Birthname, & Rank or Profession of Father.	Name, and Maiden Surname of Mother.	Cause of Death, Duration of Disease, and Medical Attendant by whom certified.	Signature & Qualification of Informant, and Residence, if out of the House in which the Death occurred.	When and where Registered, and Signature of Registrar.
28	Robert Walker James Alexander Walker Walker Widower of Elizabeth Walker	1873, October Twenty eighth at his own home.	Male	69 years	William Walker Farmer (Dceased) Robert Walker M.D. S. P. Williamson (Dceased)	Frances as cert. by John David Foster M.D.	At his own home. (Present) (Present) Present	1873, October 28th at Providence	
29	Christine Gray Widow of George Gray Luberman	1873, November 6 at her own home	Female	60 years	George Gray Fisherman (Dceased) Louella Gray M.D. L. Gray	Chronic disease of the bowels years as cert. by John David Foster M.D. H. P. L. S. P. (Present)	at her own home (Present) Present Present	1873, November 6th at Providence at Providence at Providence at Providence at Providence at Providence at Providence at Providence	
30								187	

Attest: Wm. D. ... Registrar.