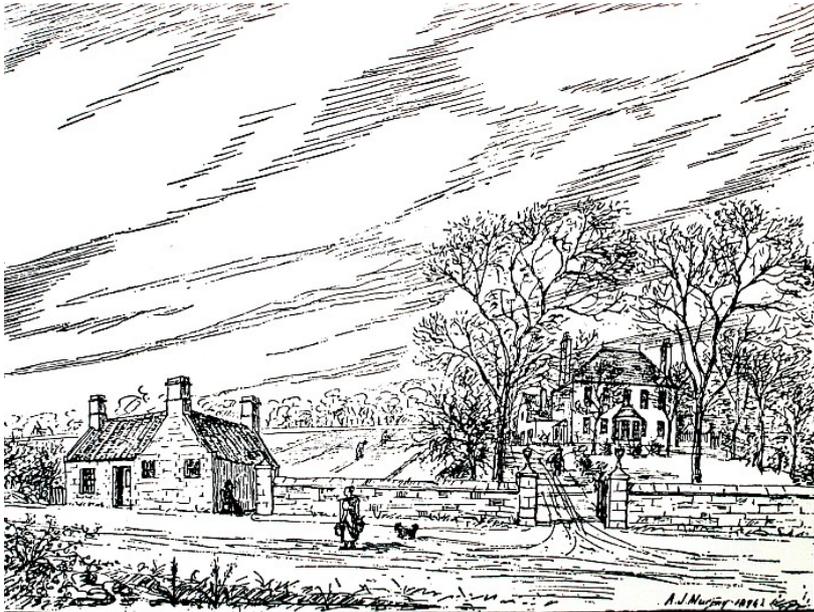


Fountainhall House – Patrick Copland’s residence



There is a long-out-of-print booklet devoted to Fountainhall House¹, not because it is of great architectural merit, though it is one of only a few Georgian private houses left in Aberdeen following the great 19th century re-build of the city. The book was published to celebrate the ownership of the property by Professor Patrick Copland (1748-1822).

Fountainhall House is now 130 Blenheim Place, butted askew to a row of 1890s closely spaced granite houses but once a nicely proportioned two-storey country house with pavilion roof and a bow porch facing the old Fountainhall Road. The first owner from the mid-eighteenth century may well have been the great grandfather of William Dyce, one of Aberdeen’s outstanding painters, but from 1773-1803 the house was definitely owned by the Drs Skene, father and son in succession, both practicing medics



and Professors of Natural History at Marischal College, in succession. Patrick Copland purchased Fountainhall House in 1803 and lived in it with his family until his death in 1822. For the following 30 years it was owned by Copland’s sons Alexander and Charles, with their mother having lifelong tenancy. After a brief spell as a manse and then a merchant’s home, the Lumsden family owned the house for some 90 years, during which time Aberdeen swept past it, almost engulfing it. The large surrounding ground that extended to what is now Desswood Place was a casualty but the house itself largely survived both as a comfortable dwelling and as a memorial to bygone days.

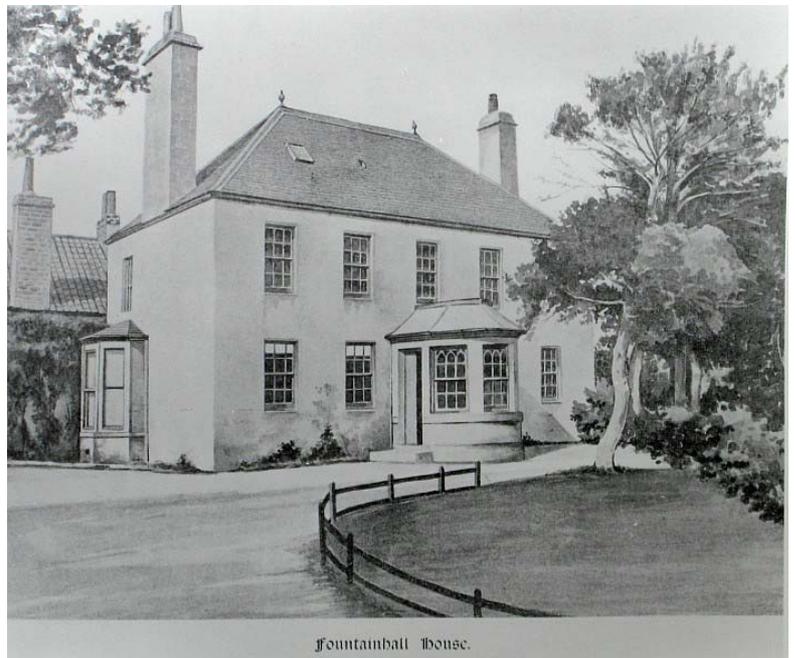
Professor Patrick Copland was locally famous and, indeed, known beyond the confines of Scotland. He was the best of the Marischal College teachers, where he practised his trade for 47 years. Outside the College, he was known for his extensive lecture course given to tradesmen over a period of 28 years and was considered a man of sound judgement who could be relied upon to give valuable advice for the benefit of the town when called on to do so. In his youth he was described as tall, handsome, always dressed in coloured clothes and one of the principal beaux in town. Notwithstanding, he was late in marrying. He came to Fountainhall House with quite a young family: Alexander (born 1788), John (born 1789), Charles (born 1791) and Mary (born 1799). It would have been a good place to grow up, away from Aberdeen's industries to the East. Copland had a taste for music and before coming to Fountainhall House used his skills as an accomplished craftsman to build himself an organ 'of large size and power' that no doubt could be heard in due course beyond the confines of the house. He was, it seemed, in adult life a quiet and unassuming man, abstemious and not given to socialising except in the company of scientific friends. His achievements both in the College and for the benefit of the town itself are described in other articles in this series.



Fountainhall House is still a private house so if you do admire it through the gates please respect the privacy of the owners.

The adjacent image shows the house before it was swept up by the 1890s expansion of the city.

John S. Reid



¹ Alexander Cruickshank "Vanishing Aberdeen", Aberdeen 1894.