

Interview with the late Garnet McFarlane, former member of Coupar Angus Town Council, 3rd April 2005

Until local government reorganisation in 1975 Perth City was a single domain and Perth County covered all the places outside.

Coupar Angus Town Council had complete control over the town, including local rates. Planning was run by the Dean of Guild Court – a committee of the Town Council.

The Provost was elected by the Town Council. He was ex-officio (meaning he had no vote). He was a member of the Dean of Guild.

The Town Council was voluntary, except for the professionals – the Town Clark, Burgh Prosecutor and Burgh Surveyor.

The Town Council was elected by a show of hands at a public meeting held at the Town Hall.

Positions

The Dean of Guild Court – in effect the planning department of the Town Council – gave planning consents. It did the job done now by the planning department of the district council.

The allotment of council housing was discussed by the whole of the Town Council. First choice went to people who had worked in the town or lived there, although the arrival of Smedleys forced the Town Council to allow housing for the influx of workers.

Town and Police Clerk

There was a sergeant and a constable. Also, there was a Burgh Police Court, which dealt with minor offences. Cases were tried by the Provost and two Bailiffs (latterly magistrates or JPs). They could jail people for up to 14 days, at first in cells at the back of the police station, but later in Perth Jail. The court moved to Perth District Court after regionalisation.

Garnet was a Junior Bailiff, later a junior magistrate and finally a JP.

Burgh Chamberlain and Collector

Local rates were guided by him (he was a solicitor from Blairgowrie)

Burgh Prosecutor

He was the local equivalent of the procurator fiscal. He prosecuted cases brought by the police. The police effectively ran the court. Gary was one of the 2 bailiffs.

Medical Officer of Health

He was based in Perth County Council (now the A. K. Bell library). He was responsible for the health of the community.

Burgh Surveyor

He was the equivalent of the Perth County surveyor

County Council Representative

Each burgh and each area outside the burghs (i.e. areas of the country) sent a representative to the County Council. They *were* the County Council.

Local Education Advancement Committee Representative

This represented the school.

Perth & Kinross Small Burghs Association Representative

Committees

Provosts covered all general subjects, including indiscretions by the councillors.

Cleaning, drainage and public health committee

This was responsible for scaffies. One bin lorry did the whole town and Woodside. Rubbish was dumped near Burrelton station.

Property and Housing Committee

‘Property’ referred to the Town Hall, and ‘Housing’ referred to all the council housing. The Housing Committee discussed tenants of council houses. The Town Council was non-political, i.e. it had no affiliation to any political party policies.

Also, it overlooked housing development, i.e. made sure plans were followed, under guidance from the Burgh Surveyor.

Procedure for a planning application

1. Application to Town Clerk
2. Housing Committee
3. Dean of Guild Court – here it would be passed or not
4. Approval or not by County Council

The Town Council built the Sidlaw development, Princes Croft, Middlehills, Strathmore Avenue and Davidson Crescent using money from the County. Local builders were used.

Development Committee

The conversion of Smedleys into the chicken factory was one of their jobs – the drains had to be altered. The Town Council sent an investigative team to Hern Bay to study how it was done.

Parks Committee

This was responsible for things like overhanging trees etc, but not the cemetery, which was the responsibility of the County Council.

Burgh Road, lighting and paving

The Town Council had 6 employees and a foreman. They handled everything – scaffies, street sweepers and any menial jobs. Bins were emptied twice a week.

Municipal Gardens Committee

Council house gardens were looked after.