

The Rebel Grocer of Earlsferry

When it was reported that the Queen was visiting Anstruther in 1950 she was invited to stop off on her way westwards at Elie to meet local dignitaries and the villagers. The town council proclaimed a public holiday, and that shops and businesses should be closed in her honour and the villages strewn with appropriate patriotic bunting to welcome the Queen on her short "pitstop". The locals were enthralled that royalty should deign to visit and even stop in the venerable village. The villagers decided to enter into the spirit of the occasion wholeheartedly - with one exception. The Queen duly stopped outside the church to rapturous acclaim where a large crowd had gathered and was presented with a Sunday putter by the Provost Mr Rennie. Her Majesty had a pitstop and thence onwards to Balcarres, where she would stay the night. A great welcome was experienced by Royalty but with one exception



Alexander Low was a grocer in Earlsferry. He had the last shop on the north side of the Earlsferry High Street. He made a point of it being known that he was open for business that day and that he certainly was not celebrating the occasion in common with the rest of the villagers. When asked about this independent stand and protest he explained that Royalty visiting the East Neuk of Fife should be required to visit Royal Burghs (as Earlsferry was) to acknowledge their importance and superiority over mere police Burghs (as Elie was) with no regal connection. He resolutely stood outside his shop on the appointed day in splendid isolation since everyone else was in Elie to welcome the Queen. Another example of the independence of mind of the Ferrymen.
(Graham Johnston Dec 25)