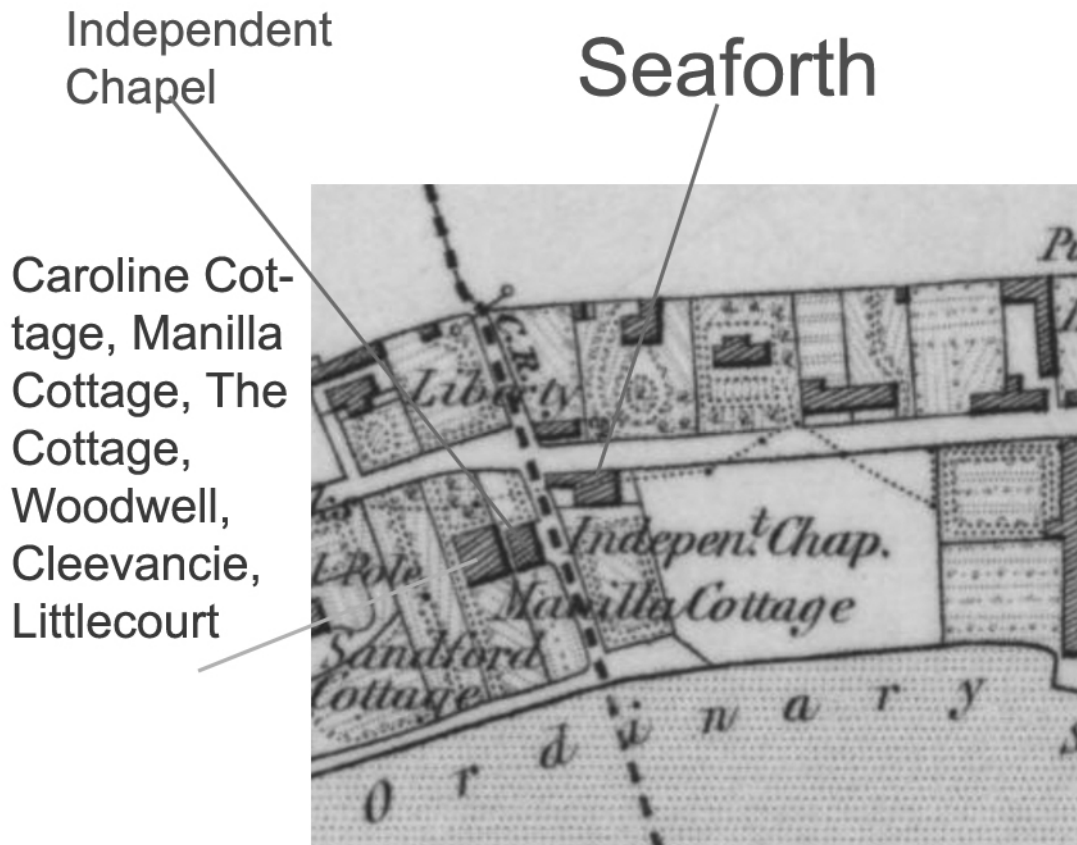




Seaforth Links Place Elie

This house sits on the eastern side of what we know now as Telford Wynd and to put it into context this is the OS map of 1853 (below) which shows the houses we will be talking about.



We are not certain when Seaforth was built but its structure is mainly sandstone so is likely to be pre 1850 and we have a record that it was on the VR from 1855 onwards.

Looking at the map, Manilla Cottage (otherwise Carolina/e Cottage) was owned by Capt. Randall of Coastguard fame. By 1865 Seaforth was owned by a Margaret Telfourd. Now the spelling here is

82	Caroline Cottage, Elie	Captain A Randall R.A. Elie	Rev. John Hutchison
83	Houses Elie	Do	
84	House & Garden Elie	The Heirs of the late D. Berwick Elie	Mrs Telfourd
85	House & Garden Elie	Mrs William Overstone Elie	

interesting because as you know the wynd down to the beach there is called Telfer Wynd. We have a theory that the wynd may well have been named after her and the spelling is erroneous. Thereafter between 1875 and 1905 or so it was owned by Thomas Chapman an auctioneer in Edinburgh and Alan Provan has a theory that Chapman Place was named after him. Anyway, it was then purchased in or about 1908 by Gerard Alexander Moncrieff and it is he we wish to concentrate on. He was a close friend of Sydney and Noel Reekie as we shall see and much of what is known about him comes from Sydney Reekie's website.

1878-1950

Gerard Alexander Moncrieff or "Monty" as he was known, was born in St Andrews in 1878. His father, Sir Alexander Moncrieff, had invented a gun carriage for ordnance for which he received a grant from the army of £15,000 (value today £2.5m), a very substantial sum. He succeeded to the family estate of Barnhill and then purchased Bandirren both in Perthshire. Gerard was his second son to his wife Harriet Rimington-Wilson. His father was in the Regular Army.

Gerard was educated at Eton and Winchester and studied law at Cambridge and eventually was called to the Bar as a barrister. He was also a member of the Stock Exchange and then became a partner in a merchant banking firm "Boulton Bros.". He was well connected in the city and obviously wealthy, but Boulton Bros. came a cropper in the mid 1920s after certain questionable dealings with the Allied Simla Bank in India and as a result he, along with three other directors, stood trial in the Old Bailey accused of fraud. In 1926 he and the other directors were acquitted but because of the failure of Boulton Bros. he and his fellow directors were made bankrupt. Monty eventually got his discharge in 1928. At the time of his discharge it was said that the directors had become bankrupt more as a result of misfortune than any questionable dealings. At that time a number of banks in India got into difficulties.

Throughout this time he had served as a director on the board of General Accident Assurance company in Perth, whose chairman was Sir Francis Norrie-Miller (pictured right) of whom more later, among others, and his bankruptcy appeared not to have interfered with that. It is of some significance that in 1920 he is also registered as owning the property known as The Cottage in Liberty. This property was on the other side of Telfer Wynd from Seaforth. He therefore owned both properties either side of Telfer Wynd.



Sir Francis Norrie-Miller

Having been made bankrupt in 1926 or so one would have thought that both these properties would fall into the hands of his trustee in bankruptcy. But Monty was a bit more astute than that. He must have anticipated his bankruptcy so the next owner of Seaforth appears to have been his younger brother Duncan Moncrieff.

After his discharge in 1928 he devoted time to entrepreneurial activities, was director of a number of companies including Angus Milling Company Ltd. and Elie Hotel Ltd. He spent a long time latterly living Elie and Bandirran in Perthshire. He is known to have lived in Seaforth.

The house on the other side of that Wynd, which is now known as Little Court, also has an interesting connection the Moncrieff family. In 1920 he also owned this house, then called the Cottage. Obviously since he was going bankrupt and rather than lose that house too he transferred it to the marriage contract trustees of one of his sisters, Maud, who was married to a

clergyman, Harold Van Cooten, and he retired to Elie and lived in what was then known as Woodwell (earlier the Cottage) and then latterly Little Court. This property, the Cottage, in 1925 had been purchased by the long-time chairman of General Accident Sir Francis Norrie-Miller. It was then named Cleevancie, mirroring the estate of Cleve in Perthshire that Sir Francis owned. Van Cooten died in 1933 and it seems that Monty acquired back the property via a vehicle called the Braganza¹ Syndicate Ltd. Who were all involved in this syndicate we do not know but he and the other members set out refurbishing and dividing the property and renaming it Little Court into separate units as it stands today.

To indulge in complete speculation, we know that at the time of his bankruptcy or perhaps shortly before in 1925 he was the owner of both The Cottage and Seaforth - both sides of Telfer Wynd. He is also shown as owning property at 1 and 2 Allan Place – later his brother owned No.1. The 1925 valuation roll (post or concurrent with his bankruptcy) shows that the Cottage is then owned by the marriage contract trustees of the Van Hootens and Seaforth by Duncan Moncrieff his brother.

Now whether he managed to transfer these properties prior to his bankruptcy or whether he managed to get his family to purchase these properties from the trustee we don't know, but it certainly looks as if he had managed to preserve some of his assets to enable him to re-acquire them after his discharge. By 1935 Seaforth is still in his brother's name and the Cottage is in the name of the Braganza Syndicate, who eventually developed Little Court. Monty had also swapped No 1 Allan Place with his brother for No 2 Allan Place.

In addition to the above he invested in setting up FENCO Ltd. which was announced in the newspapers in dramatic fashion.

June 1948 - ELIE'S FIRST FACTORY

At a luncheon held in the Marine Hotel, Elie, on Tuesday, to mark the opening of the newly formed Fife Engineering Co. Ltd.'s Fenco Works at Elie. Lord Sempill, who performed the opening ceremony. Provost Rennie, when interviewed, said he welcomed the new development. "We could do with many other light industries like this. The town has depended too long on holiday letting and golf club making." Miss Isobel Scott-Moncrieff, Elie, pressed the button and the machines in the factory came to life, driven by an all-electric plant. Mr Wm. Halley, Dunfermline, works manager, hopes the factory will be in production very soon. Water taps, valves for pumping installations and scarab burners for oil firing will be the principal products. The two items last mentioned were designed by Mr E. C. Bowden-Smith, uncle of P. J. H. Bowden-Smith. Associated with him in the venture are Mr. S. Reekie and Mr J. Grammer.*

*Sydney, aka Scott, Reekie - Tom Reekie's son.

According to Sydney, at the end of WWII Moncrieff owned a commercial automobile garage in Williamsburgh and it was remodelled to include offices and a manufacturing floor. We think this maybe in error because at that time the property there was owned by Elie Hotel Company (of

¹ *Braganza is the family name of the Portuguese Royal Family which had a connection therefore with Madeira where Monty used to winter and where he had substantial business interests.*

which Monty was a director) who had used it as a stables and was used by the Polish paratroopers to garage and maintain their vehicles.



The site of Fenco in Ferry Road.

Sydney Reekie (Tom Reekie the golf professional's son) wrote:

"The location of Elie is maybe the last place you'd think of to start up an engineering business that required heavy cast iron and brass castings to be obtained and shipped long distances, both in and out. Fenco's location was good in one respect in that all of the machinery's connected electric motors required 440 volt 3 phase AC power and the village's main line incoming power to the high voltage step down transformer was located just a few steps from Fenco. Fenco manufacture[d] a line of "Scarab" oil firing burners and "Ismailia" non-return

penstock valves. [The] Fenco venture was short lived as it had not yet become self-sustaining when Moncreiff died on the island of Madeira [1950]. Fenco's orders for burners and valves ceased and the company wound up. At a sale of the entire contents of Fenco that consisted of heavy manufacturing machinery, a man who was a machine tool scout for the Israeli government chartered a plane to fly him from London to Edinburgh and back. From Edinburgh he hired a taxi to bring him to Elie. After a brief look at Fenco's machinery he announced, "I'll take everything." The many tons of machinery were crated and shipped to Tel Aviv in Israel where the Israelis were starting to build big guns and tanks and were tooling up for the possibility of a war breaking out in which they might have to defend themselves."



An electric 'Peter Pan Scotch Oats' monkey automaton, by Fife Engineering Ltd.
The two seated monkeys, one holding a 'PETER PAN Scotch Oats' flag (detached), wearing striped pyjamas, dressing gowns and tartan bonnets, with moving heads and arms taking it turns to spoon porridge, the base with metal plaque reading 'Manufactured by The Fife Engineering Co. Ltd. Fenco House Elie-Fife Scotland', wired for electricity (with operating instructions label) and complete with original wooden crate with attached Angus Milling Company label reading 'Mechanical Monkey, Norwich Co-operative Soc. Ltd. Grocery Warehouse, St. Stephens Square, Norwich'.

Size 47cm high x 54cm wide x 17.5cm deep.

On a lighter note the above advertisement for Peter Pan Porridge Oats featured a mechanical set of monkeys which was built by Fenco. One similar device manufactured by FENCO came up for

auction a few years ago. Peter Pan Porridge Oats were produced by Angus Milling Company, of which Monty was a Director.

Monty died unmarried and childless and left an estate of some £80,000 which equates to about £2.5m (2026). His bequests were highlighted by a clause in his will which required his trustees to give a sum of 5/- shillings to each and every pupil on their birthday at Elie school – 2026 value £11.

Post Script – When Little Court was being developed and sold off, the description of the units in the conveyance described the southern boundary as the wall beside the beach. It is, of course, the position that the beachside proprietors initially had their southern boundary described as the mean high water mark of the beach. The result of this is that the area of the beach immediately fronting Little Court is still owned by the Reekies – Sydney and his brother Noel – both now deceased. Scott (Sydney) Reekie told us some time ago that he retained it for the benefit of the village and also to enable beach huts to be placed there without permission of the beach side proprietor. He indicated to the History Society before his death that he wished that piece of beach to be open for any use of the village.



Graham Johnston March 2026