

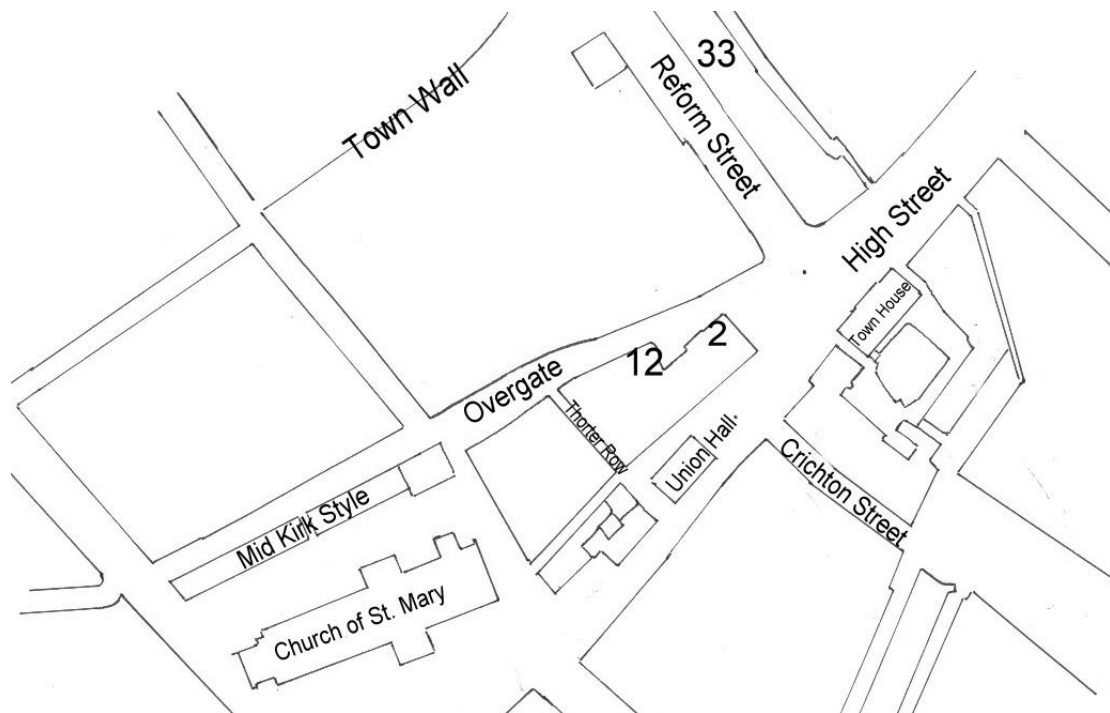
Ralph Dobson (1) Isabella McKay (2) Janet Webster.

The research for this and earlier generations of this family has been undertaken by Neil & Fiona Hendry. Photos by Doug. Soutar and from family files.

Ralph was born in Bridlington, Yorkshire in 1805 to Edmund Dobson and Nancy Winn. He was baptized at Bridlington Priory on 30 January that year. It seems possible that he grew up and completed his training as a basketmaker with the family business there before moving to Dundee.

No record has been found of a marriage of Ralph to Isabella and almost nothing is known about Isabella except that she came from Ireland and that she was probably a few years younger than Ralph. It might be reasonable to guess that they met in Dundee, rather than in Bridlington. Their first child was Helen, born in Dundee in 1826.

Ralph's name occurs for the first time in the Dundee Directory of 1834 when he is described as "Basketmaker, Overgate s". (There were no street numbers at that time and the "s" indicates that his premises were on the south side of Overgate.)



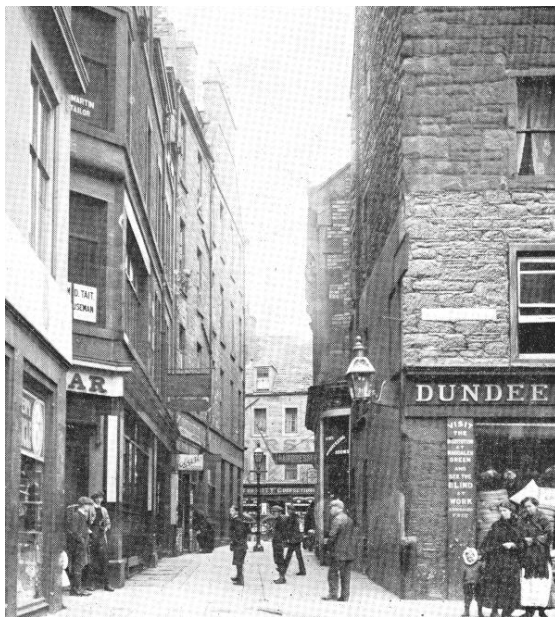
Plan of central Dundee c 1858 showing places of relevance to the Dobson family.

Isabella and Ralph had at least six children. Their third child, Robert, died in Dundee on 22 December 1836 aged two weeks, the cause being given as "debility" and their oldest, Helen died of measles a few days later on 25 December.

The 1841 census shows the remaining family living with Ralph's father, Edmond, in Thorter Row, off Overgate in Dundee:

1841 Dundee (282) book 119 page 10.

Thorter Row			
Dobson Edmond	70	Basketmaker	England
Dobson Ralph	35	Basketmaker	England
Dobson Isabella	25		Ireland
Dobson Edmond	9		N
Dobson John	7		Y
Dobson Ralph	3		Y



Thorter Row some years after the Dobsons lived there.

From the 1851 census, it can be inferred that a daughter, Mary was born in 1841 or 1842. After this, no further record of Isabella has been found and the next record of the family is on 8th Nov 1844 when Amelia Winn was born in Dundee to Ralph and Janet (Jessie) Webster. A son, James followed in 1845/6 and Ralph and Jessie (from Lundie village) married on 6th January 1849 in Dundee. The records of this event are incomplete as a contract date is given but the date of marriage is blank.

In the 1846-47 Dundee Directory, Ralph is listed as a basketmaker, living and working at 33 Reform Street then in the 1850 Directory he is a basketmaker & Cooper at 12 Overgate.

The Reform Street address (now the opticians shown alongside) is particularly interesting as this was recently built property of very high quality, which must have conferred considerable status on the occupiers. The floor is 13 feet by 50 feet and there is a damp basement, of similar size, which could have been used for making or storing baskets.



The 1851 census found them once again in Thorter Row:

1851 Dundee (282) book 80 page 10.

6 Thorter Row			
Dobson Ralph	h m 45	Basketmaker & Cooper employing 10 men	England
Webster Jessie	w m 44		Forfarshire, Lundie
Dobson John	s u 17	Basketmaker	Forfarshire, Dundee
Dobson Ralph	s u 12	scholar	Forfarshire, Dundee
Dobson Mary	d 9	scholar	Forfarshire, Dundee
Dobson Amelia	d 7	scholar	Forfarshire, Dundee
Dobson James	s 5	scholar	Forfarshire, Dundee
Dobson Helen	d 6		Forfarshire, Dundee
Boyack Thomas	serv. u 16		Forfarshire, Dundee

(Jessie's age would actually have been 25.)



Back Row, Strathmartine 2004

Over the next ten years a further five children were born, the first of these, Helen Webster (1850/51) being born in Dundee, the second, Nancy (1852/53) in Arbroath. Then George Shawforth (21 May 1855), Isabel Lindsay (10 June 1855) and David Webster (9 Sept 1860), all born in Kirkton of Strathmartine, a village to the north-east of Dundee.

By the 1861 census the entries were:

1861 Mains & Strathmartine. (307/2) book 1 page 1.

Kirkton Village

Dobson Ralph	h m	54	Basketmaker (master)	England
Dobson Janet	w m	34		Perth, Lundie
Dobson James	s u	15	Basketmaker	Forfarshire, Dundee
Dobson Helen	d u	10	scholar	Forfarshire, Dundee
Dobson Nancy	d u	8		Forfarshire Dundee
Dobson George	d u	6		Forfarshire, Strathmartine
Dobson Isabel	d u	4		Forfarshire, Strathmartine
Dobson David	s	7mo		Forfarshire, Strathmartine

2 rooms with windows.

The Dundee Directory of 1861-62 lists Ralph as a basketmaker at 2 Overgate with his home at Strathmartine. It would be interesting to know how Ralph travelled from his home to his work in Dundee. Probably he simply walked the four or five miles there and back. Occasionally, he may have taken the train from Baldragon Station on the Dundee to Newtyle Railway.



The photo on the left is taken looking from High Street into Overgate. 2 Overgate is on the corner under Monk's Tower. The photo above is taken looking in the opposite direction, from Overgate looking into High Street. Both were taken several years after the Dobsons occupied the premises.

In 1862, Jane Ann was born on 7 July at Kirkton of Strathmartine, she died the next year on 19th May. Ten-year old Nancy also died in 1863. These two deaths may have influenced Ralph and Jessie's decision to leave Strathmartine and move to Arbroath where their last child, Margaret Ann, was born on 26 April 1864.

In 1867 Slaters Directory listed Ralph as a basketmaker at 22 Market Place Arbroath. Market Place is to the right of the white building (Formerly the Police Station.) in the picture below, while Gravesend is to the left.



On 4 January 1870 George died of scarlatina, aged fourteen. The remaining members of the family are shown in the 1871 census:

1871 Arbroath (272) book 8 page 22.

Gravesend, Arbroath. (no number given).

Dobson Ralph	h m 65	Basketmaker employing	England
Webster Jannet	w m 45	1 man	Forfarshire, Lundie
Dobson James	s u 28	Basketmaker ditto.	Forfarshire, Dundee
Dobson, Ellen	d u 20		Forfarshire, Dundee
Dobson, Isabella	d u 13		Forfarshire, Strathmartine
Dobson, David	d u 10		Forfarshire, Arbroath

2 rooms with windows.

The low building on the left of the photo above is now 11 Gravesend. On the nearside of this is a fairly narrow access lane and the next building was the police station. Is it possible that 9 Gravesend at one time gave access to houses at the back of the shops in Market Place and was the family living in the back shop? No Sasines in the name of Dobson have been found in the area.

1881 Arbroath (272) book 8 page 21.

9 Gravesend.

Dobson Ralph	h m 76	Basketmaker	Yorkshire, Bridlington.
Dobson Janet	w m 56	Wife	Perthshire, Lundie.
Dobson John	s m 47	Basketmaker	Forfarshire, Dundee.
Dobson Isabella	d u 23	Flax mill worker	Forfarshire, Strathmartine.
Dobson Maggie	d u 17	Pupil teacher	Forfarshire, Arbroath.

Three rooms with windows.

Ralph died 17 Dec 1882 at Gravesend, Arbroath aged 77 of old age, debility & heart disease and Jessie died 8 Feb 1887 at 14 Abbott Street St Vigeans aged 52 of congestion of the lungs. Both are buried in Arbroath cemetery but no gravestone exists.

1859 Map including Gravesend, Arbroath at:

<http://maps.nls.uk/townplans/view/?sid=74415128&mid=arbroath>



Gravesend/Applegate junction taken from Park Street (where Burnside Mills were) up Applegate. Gravesend is to the right. Taken c1920.

Some information about Ralph Dobson's children

John married Agnes Robertson either 11 June or 21 September 1862 at Mains & Strathmartine. They had Edmund b 18 December 1863, Robert b 8 September 1865, Barbara b 4 July 1868, Mary b 28 August 1870 (Mary married Charles Jackson) and Margaret b 17 April 1873. All were born in Dundee. John died in the West Poor House, Dundee on 22 April 1905 the cause being given as senile decay. He had been a basketmaker and his address in 1881 was 9 Gravesend, Arbroath.

Ralph married Mary Taylor in Dundee on 1 August 1863. They had four children, Isabella b 22 March 1863, Ralph b 25 January 1865, Georgina Reid b 7 Apr 1869 and Robert Taylor b 2 Apr 1871 d 1874 all Dundee. Ralph Jnr. Married and had a son, Frank who died in Buffalo, having been married to Agnes Reid.

Amelia Winn married John McHardy in Dundee on 25th November 1864.

James married Margaret Clark Lewer, the daughter of an Arbroath Inn Keeper on 17 April 1871 according to the forms of the Free Church in Market Place Hotel, Arbroath. He was a basketmaker in 1861 and was living at 9 Gravesend Arbroath in

1871 and 1881. They had: George b 1871/72 in Arbroath, Jane b 25 May 78 at 38 Market Street, Galashiels and James Lewer b 4 May 1880 at 11 Gravesend, Arbroath.

Helen Webster married Robert Whitelaw Laing, a baker, on 8 October 1890 at Arbroath. She died at 12 Witchden Road, Brechin of phthisis.

Isabella, or Isabel or Easie as she was latterly known never married. She worked as a book-keeper in a yard warehouse (1880) and in a flax mill (1881). In her later years she was in service to her younger sister, Margaret. She died aged 75 on 15 December 1932 at 41 Hill Street, Arbroath. Isabella had two children, James b 2 Nov 1880 and George b 7 Dec 1881. George, a seaman and later a reeler in a flaxmill, married Jessie Christie in Arbroath on 31 December 1904. (See separate drop line chart.)

Margaret Ann became a pupil teacher and later married a Dr. Anderson who possibly had been a seafarer before becoming a doctor.