

A Retired Squatter's House 21 Chester Street

In the 1881 census for 21 Chester Street Edinburgh the head of the household was stated to be Charles Sidey a retired squatter aged 58 years; a squatter in nineteenth-century Australia being a settler who occupied a large tract of Aboriginal land in order to graze livestock. The census listed as living with him at that time his wife Allison Isabella aged 47, three daughters, one son, six servants and a visitor and her lady's maid.

On 19 June 1863 Miss Mary Walker of Coates, residing at Drumsheugh, Mr Monro of Auchenbowie and builders Arthur Colville, John Muir and John Macgibbon had petitioned the Dean of Guild Court for permission to erect a line of houses with stables and offices behind the same upon the north side of Chester Street – stances 5, 9, 13, 17, Miss Walker having a dwelling house built on stance 11. A warrant for No 7 had already been granted. Mary, the last family owner of the Walker Estate, also intended to feu the remaining stances on the north side of Chester Street, namely 1, 3, 19 and 21 to others to build on. The Petition concluded

In ignorance that any warrant was necessary for the Buildings but without the slightest intention of shewing disrespect to the Court the work has been commenced, but it is respectfully hoped that this advertency may be overlooked.

It was. The builders completed the work by 1870 and the Post Office Directory for 1871-2 lists Charles Sidey at 21 Chester Street. Previously the Sidey family consisting of parents, six daughters, three sons and seven servants had resided in 7 North Royal Circus which they probably rented.

Charles Sidey had been born in Perth, Scotland on 26 March 1823. His father Graham Sidey was born on 27 October 1796 in Methven and he died on 14 December 1880 in Perth. His mother Frances Monteith, born 6 April 1802 in Harperston Dunblane, died in 1837 in Perth. Like many Scots young Charles seems to have gone to the southern hemisphere to make his money. In Australia

he established himself in Barangaroo and Bowenfels New South Wales. He also, however, had business connections in New Zealand. A Charles Sidey merchant pioneer settler of Kaiapoi in the South Island bought land there in 1853 and established a hotel, wool store and general store. The ferry landing in Charles Street is called Sidey Quay. The first two Sidey children were born in New Zealand and later newspaper references described Charles as of Australia and New Zealand.

Charles Sidey married Allison Isabella Walker in 1854 at Wallerawang near Hartley New South Wales. Allison was the daughter of James Walker 1785-1856, born in Perth Scotland, son of a wealthy merchant. James retired as an Artillery Officer in the Royal Marines in 1822 and sailed to New South Wales in 1823. Allison's mother was Robina Ramsay Walker and Allison was born in Perth Scotland in 1834.

Charles and Allison Sidey's family comprised:

Robina Ramsay Walker born New Zealand 1855, died 24 September 1899

Frances Monteith born New Zealand 1857

James Walker born Hartley New South Wales 1858

Mary Allison born Hartley NSW 1859

Archibald James George Lyon Walker born Hartley 17 March 1861 died 16 April 1861

Charles Lyon born Hartley 1862 died 16 May 1957

Wilhemina Walker born Hartley 1863 died 19 January 1955

Allison Isabella born Hartley 1865 died 2 January 1943

George Lyon Walker born Hartley 1868 died 2 January 1950

Margaret Mabel born Midlothian 1870 died 9 April 1946

Frances Monteith Sidey married Colin Campbell on 7 June 1876 at 21 Chester Street. A daughter was born on 10 June 1877 and a son on 18 March 1879, both at 21 Chester Street.

Mary Allison Sidey married Captain H. B. Gundry March 1887 and Wilhelmina Walker Sidey married James Devonshire on 3 July 1889. James Walker Sidey married Charlotte Symes in 1895 while

Charles Lyon Sidey married Ethel Marley on 8 October 1895.

The Sidey family must have come to Edinburgh after the birth of George and before that of Margaret. After residing in North Royal Circus where the 1871 census recorded him Charles bought 21 Chester Street. Although retired he maintained his business interests being, for example, a Director of the Mortgage Company of South Australia Ltd, the British and America Estates Company Ltd (to assist persons to settle as farmers in the USA and British North America), the London Board of the Royal Bank of Queensland Ltd and the Mount Usher Gold Mines. He settled, however, into Edinburgh social life, joined the Society of Antiquaries in 1875 and became a Director of the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in 1876. He also maintained connections with Perth and St Andrews, being a member of the Royal Perth Golfing Society and attending St Andrews Royal and Ancient Golf Club Ball accompanied by Miss Sidey (Robina) and Miss Mary Sidey in September 1879.

The census of 1881 illustrates the type of wealthy middle class family living in Edinburgh at that time in a large establishment of five floors. In addition to their parents the children present on 3 April comprised daughters Robina aged 26, Mary aged 21, Marjory aged 11 and son George aged 13. Visiting them were Josephine Dobie born in London and her 54 years old lady's maid born in Tunbridge Wells. The birthplaces of the household servants show how Edinburgh attracted people to work in domestic service from all over Scotland. Cook Elizabeth Keillor, aged 26 came from Forfarshire but her assistant 20 years old Marjory hailed from Tallin. Jackie Stewart housemaid, born in Perthshire was aged 34 but the laundress Margaret Ross aged 29 came from Rosshire. The 20 years old footman Daniel Banks had been born in Glasgow. The only local household servant was assistant housemaid Catherine Petrie aged 25 but she gave Leith as her place of birth – not part of Edinburgh until 1920.

Something of the lifestyle of the Sidey family can be gauged from references to them in the local newspapers. These are listed below in chronological order.

28 November 1871 Charles Sidey gives a donation of £1 and a further subscription of £1 to the opposition to the St Mary's Loch scheme

26 May 1874 Terrier (Rough Scotch) Strayed from No 21 Chester Street. Any person bringing the same to the above address will be rewarded

15 December 1874 Royal Maternity Hospital Building Fund – donation of £5

27 December 1874 Edinburgh Royal Infirmary New Buildings – donation £10

31 March 1875 New Club Ball – Mr and Mrs Sidey, Miss Sidey and Miss F Sidey

5 January 1876 Cook (experienced) Wanted where kitchen maid is kept. Apply 21 Chester Street from 1.00 to 2.00, or from 5 to 6 o'clock

21 January 1876 Charles Sidey a Director of the Royal Hospital for Sick Children

20 May 1876 Laundress (Experienced) Wanted immediately. Apply after 7.30 Evening at 21 Chester Street

9 June 1876 At 21 Chester Street Edinburgh on the 7th instant by the Rev Alexander Whyte assisted by the Rev Kenneth Moody-Stuart, Colin Campbell 91st Argyllshire Highlanders, only son of James Campbell Esq and grandson of the late Colin Campbell Esq of Jura to Frances Monteath, second daughter of Charles Sidey Esq

12 June 1877 At 21 Chester Street on the 10th inst the wife of Colin Campbell Esq 91st Highlanders of a daughter

11 July 1877 Nurse (Experienced) Wanted to take a baby for the month. Apply 21 Chester Street from 5 to 9 o'clock

6 October 1877 Housemaid wanted for the Term. Apply Mrs Sidey 21 Chester Street.

14 February 1878 Charles Sidey donation of £5 5s to University of Edinburgh extension fund

16 November 1878 National Subscription for Relief of Sufferers by the failure of the City of Glasgow Bank – donation £25

The above are from *The Scotsman*.

5 March 1879 Mrs Sidey 21 Chester Street Stall III Bazaar in aid of the Institute Building Fund of the Edinburgh Young Women's Christian Association to be held in the Music Hall 14, 15 March 1879

Edinburgh Evening News

18 March 1879 on 16th inst at 21 Chester Street the wife of Colin Campbell Esq of Jura of a son

The Scotsman

26 September 1879 St Andrews Royal and Ancient Golf Club Ball – Mr Charles Sidey, Miss Sidey, Miss Mary Sidey

Dundee Advertiser

Mr Sidey is named as a member of the Royal Perth Golfing Society in *Dundee Courier* 15 October 1880, 12 April 1888 and in the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* 24 October 1878, 10 October 1880, 14 April 1881

20 March 1880 House and Laundry Maid wanted for Small Family in Country. Apply 21 Chester Street

9 June 1880 Cook (Experienced) Wanted immediately for West Highlands. Must have good recommendation. Apply 21 Chester Street

7 May 1880 Charles Sidey (formerly of Australia) a director of the Mortgage Company of South Australia

30 June 1880 Charles Sidey Esq 21 Chester Street (formerly of New Zealand and Australia) Director of the British and America Estates Company Ltd (to assist persons to settle as farmers in the US and British North America)

14 October 1880 Charles Sidey a Director of the Northern Investment Company of New Zealand

1 October 1881 Grand National Bazaar Royal Blind School -
Treasurers include Charles Sidey Esq 21 Chester Street and
stallholders Mrs Sidey

10 November 1881 Stallholders and receivers of work for above
include Mrs Sidey 21 Chester Street

16 December 1881 Royal Blind Asylum and School Bazaar include
Mrs Sidey a stallholder Mr Charles Sidey on platform at opening

8 January 1882 Royal Edinburgh Hospital for Sick Children – Mrs
Sidey among those receiving subscriptions

9 February 1882 Caledonian United Services Club Ball Charles
Lyon Sidey present

24 March 1882 Mrs Sidey Royal Hospital for Sick Children appeal

26 January 1883 Caledonian United Services Ball- Mina Sidey and
Mary Sidey

23 April 1884 Regimental Ball by the Gordon Highlanders Mr and
Mrs Sidey and the Misses Sidey

25 February 1885 Nurse wanted for Ayr. Apply 21 Chester Street
from 12 to 2 or 5 to 8 o'clock

4 April 1885 Kitchenmaid wanted. Apply 21 Chester Street
between 8 and 9 pm.

The Scotsman

10 June 1885 Mr Charles Sidey late of Sydney presented by Lord
Carrington to the Prince of Wales at a levee held yesterday at St
James Palace

Morning Post

20 August 1886 Mr Sidey present at the Queen's visit to the Royal
Blind Asylum.

Edinburgh Evening News

2 November 1886 Marriage arranged between Mary daughter of
Charles Sidey Esq 18 Queengate-place (late of Sydney) and
Captain H. B. Gundry Royal Artillery

Liverpool Mercury

30 January 1888 First meeting for the season of the St Bernard's Habitation (No 1888) was held lately in Webster's Hall Hamilton Place Stockbridge. Mr and Mrs Charles Sidey present. (Branch of the Conservative Primrose League)

Morning Post

Mr and Mrs Sidey must have moved to Queensgate Place SW London sometime in 1886.

3 July 1889 Wilhelmina Walker Sidey 4th daughter of Charles Sidey 18 Queen's Gate Place SW married James Devonshire 3 July

The Times

21 June 1892 Mr Charles Sidey London who last year resided at Charterhall has taken Paxton House

Berwickshire News and General Advertiser

30 May 1895 Marriage arranged between Mr James Walker oldest son of Mr Charles Sidey 23 Harrington Gardens and Charlotte Louisa youngest daughter of the late Mr Arthur Rowley Symes of Balleyley Co Wicklow

8 October 1895 Marriage Mr Charles Lyon Sidey second son of Mr Charles Sidey 23 Harrington Gardens and Miss Ethel Priscilla Morley

Morning Post

Death 26 September 1899 At North Berwick on 24 September Robina (Ruby) Ramsay Walker, the dearly loved eldest daughter of Charles and Allison Sidey 23 Harrington Gardens London

Scotsman

The Post Office Directories for 21 Chester Street for 1886-7, 1887-8, 1888-9 and 1889-90 list Colonel Malcolm CBRE. However he must have leased the property from Sidey.

Edward Donald Malcolm of Poltalloch 1837-1930 was a distinguished soldier and after retirement from the army he

became an administrator appointed to various government posts. Reports of his death and funeral appeared in the *Scotsman* of 21 and 25 March 1930. There are several references to him in that newspaper when he resided in 21 Chester Street.

19 January 1886 Banquet to the Rt Hon J. H. A. MacDonald
...Committee includes Colonel Malcolm CBRE 21 Chester Street
10 October 1887 Colonel Malcolm speaking at the annual meeting
of the 1st Mid-Lothian Rifle Volunteers in the Drill Hall Leith Walk
5 February 1890 Royal Repository Game and Produce – Mrs E
Malcolm 21 Chester Street
22 February 1890 Royal Repository for the Sale of Gentlewomen's
work. Stall holders include Mrs E Malcolm 21 Chester Street

There are no Post Office Directory entries for 1890-1 and 1891-2.
1892-3 lists Andrew Thomson to whom Charles Sidey sold the
property.

Andrew Thomson was a timber merchant of Thomson, Mitchell
and Co., 9 South St Andrew St and Granton Harbour, Telegraph
'Thomson', Telephones 12 Edinburgh, 802 Granton. Andrew
Thomson died on 31 May 1893 leaving a personal estate of over
£66,000. His wife Martha was born in 1843, the daughter of
William Wilson of Bannockburn. She died on 22 October 1914.
The Thomson family had been living in 15 Inverleith Place when
recorded in both 1881 and 1891 censuses. In 1881 Andrew
Thomson, a timber merchant born in Alloa was aged 43; his wife
being 38. At that time their family consisted of:

Janet aged 8

Martha aged 5

William aged 3

Ernest aged 4 months.

By the 1891 census Alan (8) Evelyn (6) and Ruth (5) had been
added to the list although Janet was missing. Two servants were
recorded – Cook Helen Preston born in Borthwick and Alexa
Campbell laundry maid from Invernesshire.

The 1901 census of 31 March for 21 Chester Street cites the following occupants:

Martha Thomson Widow 58 born Stirling Bannockburn

Martha M Thomson Daughter Single 25 Medical Student born Midlothian Edinburgh

Alan G Thomson Son Single 18 Student born Midlothian Edinburgh

Ruth M Thomson Daughter Single 15 Scholar born Midlothian Edinburgh

Grace L Thomson Visitor Widow 68 born Lanark

Grace G Thomson Visitor Single 34 born Clackmanan Alloa

Jane Adam Servant Cook, Single 33 born Midlothian Edinburgh

Margaret Brown Servant Laundrymaid Single 34 born Shetland Drumrossness

Margaret Anderson Servant Tablemaid Single 39 born Dumfries Langholm

Agnes C McLagen Servant Housemaid Single 26 born Perth Kinlour

Jane A McIntosh Servant Housemaid Single 25 born Moray Granton-on-Spey

There are a number of newspaper references to the family.

21 November 1873 Andrew Thomson timber merchant has resigned from the Alloa Harbour Trustees

5 February 1891 Andrew Thomson timber merchant elected a director of the Clydesdale Bank (Limited)

The Scotsman

18 August 1893 Registration of the Trust Disposition and codicil of Mr Andrew Thomson timber merchant of Edinburgh who died on 31 May 1893 – value of personal estate over £66,000 – Mrs Martha Wilson or Thomson, widow, Alexander Thomson and Mitchell Thomson the brothers, Alexander Wilson and Miss Eliza Liddell Thomson the daughter, the executors nominate.

York Herald (and various other English papers)

24 June 1895 John Guthrie Smith - Died in the house of his sister-in-law Mrs Andrew Thomson, No 21 Chester Street at half-past eleven o'clock on Saturday night (Heart attack) Married in 1866 Miss Janet Wingate Thomson only daughter of Mr Andrew Thomson, Seafield Alloa.

26 June 1895 Smith – At 21 Chester Street Edinburgh on 22nd instant John Guthrie Smith, advocate, sheriff of Aberdeen, Kincardineshire and Banff. Friends desirous of attending the funeral will please meet in the chapel at Warriston Cemetery today (Wednesday) at half-past three o'clock. Flowers respectfully declined.

The Scotsman

8 January 1896 Courant Fund for Destitute Children – Mrs Thomson 21 Chester Street £1, Young Folks 21 Chester Street 10s.

2 April 1897 An Alloa merchant's will – Mr Andrew Mitchell merchant Alloa - lengthy will which includes – to the children of his deceased nephew Mr Andrew Thomson, timber merchant Edinburgh, alive at his (the deceased 's death), equally among them.....£1500

17 July 1897 Cob, 15 hands high wanted to hire for two months, must be quiet and steady in harness and also accustomed to saddle. Apply 21 Chester Street

4 August 1897 Courant Fund Mrs Thomson £1

11 December 1907 Society of Writers to his Majesty's Signet – the following gentlemen have been admitted ...Alan Graham Thomson 21 Chester Street

13 December 1908 Fancy Dress Ball – Mr A. Graham Thomson 21 Chester Street 'Pierrot', white with black pompoms and usual headgear.

29 April 1911 Laundrymaid (good) May 28th wage £22 to £24. Apply evenings (except Saturday) 21 Chester Street.

24 October 1914 Thomson – At 21 Chester Street Edinburgh on the 22nd inst, Martha, widow of Andrew Thomson and daughter of the late William Wilson Bannockburn aged 71. Funeral on Monday

at 2.30 pm. Friends please accept this (the only) intimation and invitation. (No flowers by request).

4 November 1914 Cook general wanted for small house: two kept. Apply evenings 21 Chester Street.

14 January 1915 Cook-General (experienced) for flat; two ladies. Apply evenings 21 Chester Street.

The Scotsman

30 January 1915 Sale to be held on Wednesday 10th February within 21 Chester Street – substantial household furniture and other effects.

A separate advertisement listed the ‘substantial household furniture and other effects (a residue)’ for sale. These included a mahogany dining table, mahogany three tier and circular dumb waiters, Chesterfield sofas, a cottage piano, a French cylinder front writing desk, mantel and carriage clocks, mirrors, Dresden candelabra and candlesticks, Oriental vases, iron French beds, Doulton jardinières and pedestals, furnishing of maids’ rooms and kitchen, letter copying press, refrigerator, china dinner service, dessert, breakfast, tea and coffee ware, Turkey, Axminster and Brussels carpets and much else.

The Scotsman

1915 Application to the Dean of Guild Court from Miss Janet Mitchell Thomson and Lieutenant Colonel Claude Ogilvie Thomson RN both residing at No 21 Chester Street the surviving assumed Trustees of the late Andrew Thomson acting under his Trust Disposition and Settlement 10 February 1876 and along with two relative codicils registered in Books of Council and Session 15 June 1893

Increase daylight size of five Dormer windows for better lighting and ventilation of rooms and (2) to instal Dinner Service Lift from basement to attic flat

27 March 1915 Notice of removal St Denis 14 Drumsheugh Gardens Edinburgh Private School for Girls will remove in April to

larger premises at 21 Chester Street. Prospectus on application.
Principal Miss Bourdass
The Scotsman

St Denis School occupied 21 Chester Street until 1932. There is a separate history under *Women of the West End*. On 12 June 1931 Janet Mitchell Thomson and Captain Evelyn Claude Ogilvie Thomson sold 21 Chester Street to Maybel Margarita Benvie Principal of St Denis for £2,600.

Scotsman references to Evelyn Thomson are:

7 July 1916 Battle of Jutland Bank described - Lieutenant Commander Evelyn C.O. Thomson in action

1 January 1925 Evelyn C. O. Thomson DSO promoted to Captain

22 September 1926 Takes over 9th Destroyer

11 November 1926 Temporary command of reserve

29 February 1932 Takes over St Vincent training establishment for boys at Gosport Hants - had commanded Seventh Destroyer Flotilla in reserve at Port Edgar in June 1926 and in December of that year the command of the Third Flotilla in the Keppell then he was temporarily transferred from the Mediterranean to the China station. He subsequently served in the China station as the Captain in charge of the Singapore Naval Base from September 1929 for two years.

4 May 1938 Commanding Officer coast of Scotland – accompanies King and Queen on visit. He was promoted to Rear Admiral on 1 January 1936.

28 May 1938, 28 June 1939 Rear Admiral

Evelyn Thomson survived the First World War. His brother did not.

Scotsman references to Alan Graham Thomson

13 October 1917 Reported missing Lt (Temp Capt) Royal Scots. Writer to the Signet, partner in firm of Mitchell and Baxer South Charlotte Street. He is a son of the late Mr Andrew Thomson 21 Chester Street and is married to a daughter of the late Mr Robert

Weir, an ex Master of the Edinburgh Merchant Company. Born in 1882 he was educated at Edinburgh Academy, being Dux of the school in 1900. He played in the school Rugby fifteen and the cricket eleven and won the mile and the steeplechase in 1900. On leaving the Academy he proceeded to Oxford where he graduated BA. He has been at the front for a year and hopes are entertained that he is a prisoner of war.

7 August 1918 Confirmed as killed on 26 September 1917. He obtained a commission in a Territorial Battalion of the Royal Scots in July 1915 and went to the front in October 1916. He fell in a gallant attempt to straighten the line held by his battalion, leading his company in a determined charge against a superior enemy force. He was 35 years of age.

25 May 1925 A marriage will shortly take place between Henry son of Henry Boddington JP Pownall Hall Wilmslow Cheshire and Alice daughter of the late Robert Weir Edinburgh and widow of Alan Graham Thomson WS Edinburgh.

Maybel Margarita Benvie

See *Women of the West End* for the occupancy of St Denis School.

In 1932 Maybel Benvie sold the property to James Black Cameron who argued that as there was no sale for properties of the size of 21 Chester Street, the house should be converted to flats.

8 February 1933

Petition of James Black Cameron to subdivide 21 Chester Street into four flatted dwelling-houses – providing new entry to upper floor by slapping through the window the ground floor at Manor Place; flooring over the stairwell at the first flat and forming two rooms where floored; throwing out the roof so as to remove the coomb ceilings in two principal rooms

Walker Trust Historic Archive

19 April 1933 Petition to the Dean of Guild Court

John Alastair Bruce Esq MBChB 10 Manor Place – to make interior alterations of the partition walls.... and to introduce a main

(wooden) staircase uniting the Basement and Street Floors to form one House the existing (stone) stair to be maintained as a service stair....

Plan requires to show how the flue is to be carried through the upper flats for new fireplace at bedroom on ground floor.

City Archives

Dr Bruce lived in the ground and basement flat and had his medical consulting room on the ground floor.

26 April 1933

21 Chester Street, James Black Cameron WS – to alter the roof and balustrade railing – remove existing sloping roof constructed of wood and slates. Remove certain portions of the existing stone balustrading and build up with new 4½” artificial stone with 4½” brick backing and 4½” inner wall to carry extended roof timbers and minor alterations to the inside of the house all on top flat – petitioner is the proprietor of the top flat; underneath flat belongs to Miss Frances Merritt Blair. Flat roof is to be covered with zinc, continuation of present roof and lead gutter at back of stone blocking course

Walker Trust Historic Archive

27 April 1933

Top floor A M Watson Plan James B. Cameron – shows maid’s room

City Archives

Miss Jane Fleming purchased Flat 1 in July 1933. Miss Frances Blair occupied Flat 2 and James Black Cameron was the proprietor of Flat 3