

1990 saw the Centenary of the oldest Legal name in Orkney still extant, however the firm is much older than its name - 2004 saw the 150th anniversary of the firm. It is now 118 years since the name Drever & Heddle was first applied to the Firm and 154 years since the firm began.

The firm was founded in 1854, the year in which The Orcadian was established. In that year P S Heddle set up Practice as a Law Agent in Kirkwall. The son of a Farmer, he was born in Kirkwall in 1825 and, after serving his apprenticeship there under B M Ranken, the then Procurator Fiscal, he moved South first to Dundee, then to Edinburgh where he studied Law and qualified. Seven years after his return to Kirkwall he was appointed Town Clerk, and in 1878 he became the first Agent for the Bank of Scotland in Kirkwall. The Bank Agency was established in the building Heddle had occupied with his Law Office since 1869, the former Town House of the Balfours of Elwick, now the premises of Woolworths.

P S Heddle died at his home at the Farm of Gaitnip in September 1884. On the day of his funeral as mark of respect all places of business in Kirkwall closed and the ships in harbour flew their flags at half mast.

Although he had for a time been in partnership with A J Gold, son of the Earl of Zetland's Chamberlain, at the time of his death P S Heddle ran the whole business himself. His son, W J Heddle, being only an apprentice, could not take over the Firm. W P Drever did so, the firm becoming known as Heddle and Drever. W J Heddle went south to Edinburgh to qualify, and returned to become Junior Partner to Drever in 1888, which position was reflected in the change of name to Drever & Heddle in 1890.

W P Drever, the son of a Sea Captain, was born in Kirkwall and was apprenticed there to William Cowper before going to Edinburgh in 1869. There he spent a year in the office of the Town Clerk, Sir James Marwick who was a native of Kirkwall. He then spent 4 years engaged in Court work and conveyancing with Messrs J A Campbell & Lamond CS, before rejoining Sir James Marwick on the latter's appointment as Town Clerk of Glasgow. There W P Drever spent ten years in practice and in part-time study at the University before his return to Orkney. Mr Drever was a student of all things Norse, and contributed articles on udal law to various legal journals/journals and encyclopaedias. He purchased the estate of Rapness in Westray, and lived in Buttquoy House, Kirkwall. He died aged 75 in 1924.

W J Heddle succeeded to his father's old office of Town Clerk in 1902. During his period of office, he succeeded in establishing a maintenance fund for St Magnus Cathedral from the bequest of Sheriff Thoms and in the 1920s successfully resisted the claims of the Church of Scotland to own the building. By the time of his retrieval from business in 1945, W J Heddle had been for 61 years joint agent for the Bank of Scotland, for 57 years a partner of the firm and for 43 years Town Clerk of Kirkwall. His record of public service was honoured by his being presented with the Freedom of the Burgh of Kirkwall in 1948. He died at the age of 87 in 1952.

After Mr Heddle retired, the Firm was carried on by William Davie. Mr Davie had been an apprentice with the Firm, and after qualifying in Edinburgh he returned to become an Assistant in 1920 and became Junior Partner in 1937. On his death in 1950 his junior partner, Francis McGinn took over the firm. Mr McGinn had been sole partner of the Firm of Drever & Cormack and, on his joining Drever & Heddle early in 1950, the two Firms had been amalgamated. Mr McGinn continued the business under the latter name and was, in addition, Procurator Fiscal for the County of Orkney. For a number of years in the 1950s he was in partnership with J T Black.

The last partner of Drever & Heddle to be agent for the Bank of Scotland had been W J Heddle and for some years before his retriial the Bank office had been in separate premises. 1958 however saw the Firm and Bank in the same building once again, when Drever & Heddle moved to the premises it occupies today at 56a Albert Street.

History came full circle again when, on the death of Mr McGinn in 1972, the present Senior Partner, P L Tulloch found himself in the position W J Heddle had been in almost a century before. Mr Tulloch had been Mr McGinn's apprentice but was not yet fully qualified. Mr David A Smith of Shepherd & Wedderburn, Writers to the Signet, Edinburgh came north to maintain the continuity of the firm and in February 1974 Drever & Heddle merged with Shepherd & Wedderburn. The old name remained on the letterheading however in 1980 the Kirkwall practice, whilst retaining an association with Shepherd & Wedderburn in Edinburgh, became the independent firm of Shepherd & Wedderburn, Drever & Heddle, W.S.

On 1st April 1993 the Firm name reverted back to Drever & Heddle with three partners: P L Tulloch, R R Shaw and W Graham Sutherland. They were joined by an associate, Paul Sutherland.

By 1996 Eleanor Johnston, a Law Clerk, retired from the Firm after serving the Legal Profession in Orkney for over 42 years.

In 1998 our present Senior Partner, Archie Millar, joined the Firm. He was joined by a Trainee, Michael Scott who went on to become a partner in the firm before leaving in early 2007.

P L Tulloch retired in 2002 and R R Shaw became a consultant.

W Graham Sutherland, who had been practicing on his own for some time re-joined the firm in 2005.

In 2006 it was decided that it was time to expand and Drever & Heddle took over the long established Thurso firm of Macpherson & Co upon the retirement of Gilian and Findlay MacPherson. In January 2008 Eric Baijal joined to be based in the Thurso office and to strengthen our provision of litigation services. At the same time the firm name in Thurso was changed to Drever & Heddle.

The current Partners are Archie Millar, Graham Sutherland and Eric Baijal.