

**Perth :**

**The tale of one Royal Burgh and its part in the  
early struggles**

- In the 1788 general election there were only 161 voters in the whole of Perthshire.
- In 1792 , the Perth branch of the Friends of the People Association was amongst the earliest to be formed in Scotland.
- A high proportion of its 1200 members were weavers, many of whom had come from Ireland.

## Perth Guildhall: Scene of many Association meetings



- Huge numbers attended public meetings of the Association.
- At one meeting , the Friends burned an effigy of the much-hated Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War.
- At another, the crowds marched through the streets calling out to people to light up their windows in support.

## The North Inch: Scene of huge Association gatherings



- Some of the Perth radicals became involved in procuring guns and bayonets. One of their number, Robert Watt, a wine merchant, was tried and executed.
- By 1797 the new organisation seeking political reform, the 'United Scotsman', was active in the area.
- They enlisted soldiers in the cause. The whole of the Second Battalion of Perth Volunteers were allegedly members.

- In 1797, the Government introduced the 'Militia Act', empowering the Lord Lieutenants of Scotland to raise and command militia regiments in each of the areas under their jurisdiction.
- Many opposed the Act believing compulsory conscription would enable the Government to remove men from Scotland.
- The 'United Scotsman' leader in Perthshire led an armed rebellion of 16,000 men in protest at the Act.

# Castle Menzies, Weem - Target of the Radical 'Army'





- By the end of 1797 many of the active radicals in and around Perth were in jail.
- Radical action evaporated for a time in the face of ferocious repression. The focus of radical activity moved to the West of Scotland.

However, in 1832 the passing of the Reform Act led to great celebrations in Perth. This included the erection of a statue of four dolphins sprouting jets of water, embellished with reform slogans!