

# The Names Behind The Streets: John Murray Drive

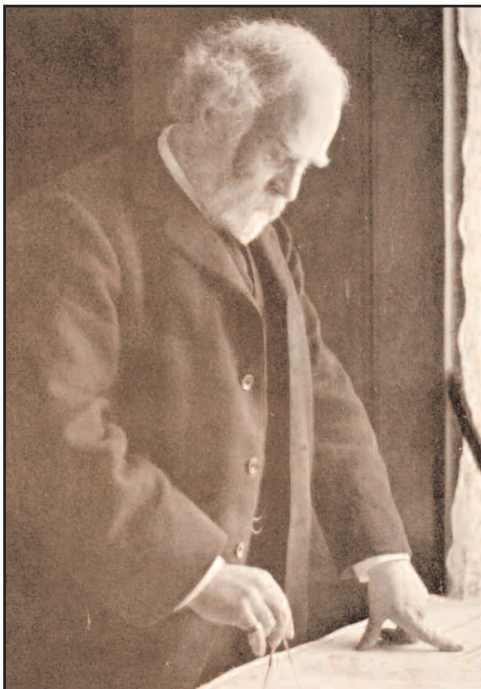
BY ALLAN BROWN

What's the connection between the US Space Shuttle and Bridge of Allan? To find the answer, we must go back to 1841, when a John Murray was born in Canada, to parents of Scottish descent.

In their article for *The Forth Naturalist and Historian* Roy and Cathy Sexton and Ken Mackay tell us: "John came to Bridge of Allan to complete his education at the home of his maternal grandfather, John Macfarlane. It was the grounding he received at the High School of Stirling and as curator of his grandfather's museum that set him on the path to become one of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century's most distinguished explorer-scientists".

John Macfarlane had been a merchant and made his fortune in Glasgow and Manchester. Although born in Stirling, he chose to live in Bridge of Allan. At his own expense he built and stocked the Natural History Museum for which John Murray was curator. After Macfarlane's death a new Museum Hall (the one presently being converted to flats) was built from funds he had bequeathed.

John Murray eventually entered Edinburgh University to study medicine. But perhaps to seek adventure, he joined a whaling ship as surgeon for a seven month voyage to the Arctic. When he returned he studied zoology and geology, and in 1872 he joined the *HMS Challenger* expedition, a voyage which would last four years and circumnavigate the globe.



Sir John Murray

The link with Bridge of Allan happened in 1982, when the United States produced a new Space Shuttle, the *Challenger*, named after *HMS Challenger* nearly a century before. Where the *HMS Challenger* expedition was a resounding success, the US *Challenger* flights ended in tragedy in 1986, with the vehicle exploding shortly after take-off, killing all on board.

*HMS Challenger* had almost 144 miles of sounding rope on board, along with another 12 miles of wire to haul up samples. During its four-year 69,000 nautical mile voyage every continent was visited. Bathymetric surveys (important for the new telegraph cables being laid) were produced, including the one in the illustration above. Nearly 500 deep sea soundings were carried out and almost 5,000 new species of marine life discovered.

John Murray's role was to catalogue and supervise all of the expedition's reports. His conclusions were of great importance to the development of marine biology and he is recognised as the "father" of oceanography.

In all 50 volumes were produced to record the findings, which weren't all totally scientific. They included reports of the people encountered, including the horrific story of King Thackery of Fiji. He was converted to Christianity, but had earlier cut out a victim's tongue. He then proceeded to eat it in his victim's presence, before eating the rest of him. We are unable to report on how this meal was cooked - perhaps tartare was preferred.

Murray had a good friend in Laurence Pullar (of the famous Pullar family of Perth and Bridge of Allan). It was Pullar who funded *The Bathymetrical Survey of the Fresh Water Lochs of Scotland*, the first comprehensive examination of the depths and nature of Scottish lochs. Over 10 years 60,000 soundings were taken of all the



John Murray named this Pacific trench or 'deep' off the coast of Chile after his friend John Bartholomew, the famous Edinburgh cartographer.

major Scottish lochs, some 562 in total, resulting in the first detailed charts of all their depths. Fred Pullar, Laurence's son, tragically drowned in the early years of the survey.

John George Bartholomew, a friend of Murray's, was the cartographic publisher for the project. Bartholomew's relief shading was widely acclaimed internationally, and his maps are still used today.

In 1914 Murray was returning to his home, Challenger Lodge, in Wardie, Edinburgh, after a visit to Glasgow. His daughter was driving and the car failed to take a bend near Kirkliston and overturned. Murray was killed instantly.

His obituary appeared world-wide, the *New York Times* devoting a full column to his life. He was truly an outstanding figure in the field of science in general and oceanography in particular.

We cannot begin to do justice to John Murray's outstanding achievements in one short article. *The Forth Naturalist and Historian* (Vol. 51) containing Murray's life story can be purchased from the Smith Museum in Stirling and Stirling University book shop.