

# The Names Behind The Streets: Haldane Avenue

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So far in this series we have had a soldier (Lord Abercromby) and a scientist (John Murray). This time we have two men of the cloth - Robert and James Haldane, both ministers.

The name Haldane (Halden or Hadden) can be traced back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when a charter of lands around Gleneagles was granted to Roger de Halden by King William the Lyon. The family retained possession of the barony of Gleneagles.

The family tree has, over the centuries, produced many talented and influential figures in the fields of politics, science and literature. Naomi Mitchison, the Scottish writer and poet was a Haldane, her father being John Scott Haldane, a physiologist whose work led to the invention of the gas mask.

Captain James Haldane of Airthrey, the father of Robert and James, was a man who was generally respected and well-liked, but insisted on high standards of morality and discipline. One report recalls his shock at the "profane swearing" amongst his crew.

He was determined to stamp it out and was an early adopter of "tagging" offenders. Any midshipman guilty of this "profitless vice" had a wooden clog clamped to his ankle. There is no record of what happened to lower ranks - perhaps they were beyond any sort of cure.

What would this mean today? Gordon Ramsey tagged with a frying pan? Billy Connolly with a haggis?



Airthrey Loch, created by Robert Haldane

Robert and James, though, had a distressing upbringing - their father, Captain James Haldane of Airthrey, died suddenly when the boys were ten and six years old.

And just six years later their mother died. She was part of the Lundie family of Dundee, and her brother was Admiral Duncan, who fought at the battle of Camperdown. She died in 1774 "from a cold caught while visiting Ferntower in Crieff", and is buried at Lundie, a village about five miles to the west of Dundee.

The final blow was the early death of their sister, Helen, from what was probably tuberculosis. She is buried at the churchyard at Monivaird near Ochertyre.

Little wonder that these events had a profound influence on the brothers. They both became avid biblical scholars, more than one observer thinking the boys would one day become ministers.

Robert and James followed their father and enlisted with the navy. After being involved in several battles though, Robert rather quickly left the service, undertook a grand tour of Europe, married, and returned to Airthrey Castle, the family home.

He made many changes and improvements to Airthrey. Landscaping was not too common in those days, but Robert set about improving the estate and experimented in transplanting fully-grown trees, which generally proved successful. He also created Airthrey Loch and erected four miles of wall



Robert or James? See footnote

around the estate, as well as building a new castle.

In 1797 Haldane sold the estate, left the Church of Scotland and travelled around Scotland preaching. In December of that year he joined his brother and some others in the formation of the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at Home", the forerunner of the Congregational Church.

He is said to have spent more than £70,000 in the course of the following twelve years building chapels or "tabernacles" for congregations and for the education of young men to carry on the work of evangelization.

He also had a plan for evangelizing Africa by bringing over native children to be trained as Christian missionaries.

He purchased a new estate at Auchengray (South Lanarkshire), and died in Walker Street, Edinburgh, in 1842. Robert is buried in Glasgow Cathedral.

*Much more can be found in the book Memoirs of the lives of Robert Haldane and his brother James Haldane the entire contents of which can be read on line by going to [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org) and searching for 'Haldane'. Other web pages refer to the portrait above as Robert Haldane. However, the book clearly shows it to be his brother, James.*