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Editorial

Number 4

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All historical documents are precious keys to the past, and those relating to Skye and the Hebrides are especially valuable since so little source material of this kind is available.

Those who are interested in the history of the islands and their people ought, therefore, to be concerned about recent developments involving the Macdonald Papers.

For this large collection of family and estate papers, dating from about 1400, has been saved from the auctioneer's hammer only by the timely intervention of prominent clan members in America.

They have come up with the £70,000 necessary to ensure that these irreplaceable documents can stay where they belong - in the Scottish Record Office. That may have been the auctioneer's valuation, but as historical raw material - especially for Skye and North Uist - they are beyond price. The possibility of them being withdrawn from public access - or disappearing abroad - is alarming.

That this should be averted by clansmen from overseas adds a twist of irony to the story, particularly since it was their own Chief who proposed to sell off the clan's archives in this way - apparently to meet death duties.

It is said the Americans were surprised that he failed to ask for their help earlier, but that Lord Macdonald was reticent about making another approach so soon after his last appeal to save the clan lands from a similar fate. He was no doubt in an awkward position, but it is unfortunate that the personal difficulties of one individual had to jeopardise such an important collection.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the case, however, we all owe a special debt of gratitude to this particular group of exiled clansmen.

Eleis of Eleistoun

A Simple case-study in the use of published data

By G.D. Richardson

Historical proof rests finally upon primary sources. But it is sound practice in any historical fact-seeking to exploit the secondary sources fully before going to originals. The most obvious reasons for this are, first, that secondary sources are usually printed and published, and thus more accessible and easier to use; secondly, they commonly lead to other sources, through footnotes or otherwise; and thirdly there is no merit and little sense in re-doing work already done: life is too short.

Naturally, there is need for caution: most genealogical writing before about 1900, and much of it since, is inaccurate and often poorly documented, while even official indexes to public records have mistakes. But as this brief study shows, much may be learnt from the printed page. Thus ...

"Lieut.-Col. John Dalyell ... in 1686 ... m. Christian, dau. of John Ellies, younger of Ellieston (or Elliotstown) by his wife Agnes, dau. of Sir Walter Murray, of Livingstone, a younger brother of the 1st Lord Elibank."
(Burke.- The Landed gentry. 1894 & 1921 eds.)

Burke is notoriously unreliable. Is this series of statements correct, who were the Ellies family of Ellieston, and can we construct their pedigree?

There are internal hints to procedure: Lord Elibank is named, so the natural first step is to consult the extensive and excellent name-index to the Scots Peerage, as the biggest published index of Scots genealogical interest, covering far more than merely the peers and their spouses. It reveals

nothing relevant about Ellies, but we find (III:507) that Sir Walter Murray of Livingstone was born after 4th June 1601 and died in February 1659, having had a son and heir "with other issue".

Burke, however, had earlier said that John Dalyell was third son of General Thomas Dalyell of the Binns. Now anyone working on Scottish genealogy will know, or soon become aware of, the publications of the Scottish Record Society, amongst them a calendar of The Binns Papers. From this the following emerges:

No. 357. "Mr. John Eleis, younger, of Eleistoun, advocate" was a member of an assize; decree 14th June 1676

" 383. "Agnes Murray, widow of Mr. John Ellies, younger of Elliestoun" contracted marriage with Captain Thomas Dalyell, younger of Binns, 17th April 1682, a witness being another "John Elies of Elliestoun, younger", presumably her son.

" 435. At 15th December 1691, Dame Agnes Murray, now wife of Sir Thomas Dalyell of Binns, has two daughters: Elizabeth, wife of David Scot of Scotstarvet, and a Christian, wife of Lieut.-Col. John Dalyell; and a son, John. Mr. John Eleis of Eleistoun, presumably father of Agnes's first husband, is still living.

Again there is a hint to procedure: Mr. John Eleis, younger of Eleistoun (these are the usual contemporary spellings) is an advocate, while the S.R.S. has published The Faculty of Advocates 1532-1943 with genealogical notes.

This affirms that John Eleis (Ellis), baptised 19th November 1641, advocate 22nd January 1662, was son of John Eleis, Dean of Faculty, and married (contr. 26th October 1663) Jane, daughter of John Crichton of Crawfordstone; also that John Eleis of Eleistoun, born 1613, son of Patrick Eleis merchant

burgess of Edinburgh, advocate 6th November 1634, Dean of Faculty, died 1680, married :

1. Rebecca (d. Dec. 1642) daughter of Sir John Scott of Scotstarvet
2. Margaret, on 3rd June 1645 (d. Sept. 1646), daughter of James Scott of Clonbeath
3. Marion Sandilands, on 21st February 1655 (bur. 22nd Aug. 1662)
4. Agnes, sister of Murray of Livingston, who m. (2) Thomas Dalryell younger of Binns

But we already know from The Binns Papers that Agnes Murray was wife of John Eleis, younger, and that the latter died between June 1676 and April 1682, whereas his father was still living in 1691. We may therefore tentatively assume that John, younger, not his father, died in 1680 and that the father's fourth wife was Jane Crichton. Forbye, we have another lead : John Eleis of Eleistoun's father was a merchant burgess of Edinburgh, and the invaluable Scottish Record Society has published a Roll of Edinburgh burgesses.

This roll lists alphabetically twenty-three of the name of Eleis in the period 1406-1700. For the moment the following, rearranged chronologically, seem relevant :

- | | | |
|---|---|----------------|
| { | Eleis, Andrew, B., as s. and h. of umq. | 16 Mar. 1551-2 |
| { | Jas. Heleys | 11 May 1585 |
| " | " , G., mt., B. of awld | 12 July 1555 |
| " | Alexr., B., as second s. of umq. | 19 Sept. 1579 |
| " | Jas. H. | |
| " | Patrick, B. and G., mt., as eldest s. to umq. Alexr. E., B. and G. | 3 Jan. 1597-8 |
| " | Samuell, G., mt., B. of before, as p. to umq. Andrew E, mt., B. and G. (23 Dec. 1584) | |
| " | Patrick, B. and G., mt., as eldest s. to Patrick Eleis, mt., B. and G. 16 Sept. 1607 | |

- Eleis, Mr. Alexr., B. and G., mt., as eldest s. to umq. Andro E., mt., B. and G. 12 Oct. 1608
- " , James, B. and G., mt., as second s. to Patrick E., elder, mt., B. and G. 8 Jan. 1617
- " , Andro, B. and G., litster, as onlie s. to Mr. Alexr. E., mt., B. and G. 7 Sept. 1642
- " , Mr. John, B. and G., elder of Eilestoun, advocat, by r. of dec. fr. Patrick E., B. and G., gratis by act of C. of last of July last 7 Apr. 1675
- " , Mr. John, B. and G., younger, advocat, be r. of fr. Mr. John E. of Eilestoun, advocat, B. and G., gratis by act of C. 1 Aug. 1677

(B = burgess; G = guild-brother; umq. = umquhile; mt. = merchant; p. = (ap)prentice; C = council)

We can set out these relationships in pedigree form :

James ELEIS ("Heleys")

d. by 16 Mar. 1552

Andrew

Alexander

Mr. Alexander Samuel

Patrick

Andro

Patrick James

Mr. John of Eleistoun

Mr. John younger of Eleistoun (d. 1680?)

Samuell is recorded merely as apprentice, 23 Dec. 1584; however, yet another S.R.S. publication, Register of Edinburgh apprentices, confirms that Andrew was his father. All the family are shown as merchants except Andro, 'onlie' son to Mr. Alexander Eleis, who is a litster, and, of course the two 'of Eleistoun' who are advocates; "Mr." Alexander is probably so designated as a university graduate. Since the family clearly has deep roots in Edinburgh, through six generations

over at least 140 years, we may now explore further Edinburgh records from the S.R.S., such as the Commissariot record ... register of testaments, Edinburgh marriage register, Canongate marriage register, and Register of interments ... Greyfriars. These provide the following :

Mr. Alexander Eleis m. Bessie Achesoun 6 Feb. 1605
Patrick Eleis, merchant, m. Lillias Moresone 18 Feb. 1606
and Isobel Seatoun 16 Feb. 1609 (Neither could have been mother of Patrick, younger)
Patrick Eleis, younger, m. Margaret Prestoun 18 May 1613
Mr. John Eleis, advocate, m. Margaret Scott 3 June 1645
and Marion Sandelands 21 Feb. 1655
Agnes Murray, widow of Mr. John Eleis, ygr., adv., m.
Thomas Dalryell ygr. of Binns 18 April 1682
John Dalryell in General Major M'Cay's regiment
m. Christian Eleis 12 March 1686
David Scot of Scotstarbit (!) m. Mrs. Elizabeth Eleis
12 Nov. 1691

Lady Eliston (!) was buried 15 December 1693. (This must have been wife no. 4 : Jane Crichton ?)
Mr. John Eleis of Eleistoun was buried 21 December 1698
The testament of Mr. John Eleis, elder of Eleistoun, was confirmed 12 Jan. 1699 (a mistake for 12 June) and 16 Oct. 1723 and the testament of two of his spouses, Margaret Scott and Rebecca Scott on 10 Sept. 1649.

We are rapidly learning more about the family of Eleis, besides having nearly verified our original statement. However, somewhere about here, in most searches like this one, the genealogist has to decide whether to confine further work to the immediate object or to go what may be very much further and search out the whole family pedigree : in this instance not only of John Eleis of Eleistoun but of his 'sisters and his cousins and his uncles and his aunts'. There is plenty to work on. For example, the published Register of sasines (H.M.S.O.), which, for Edinburgh, covers 1599-1660, lists

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many others of the name, often with wives, parents, or children; we learn from it of Eleis of 'Stanehoipmylnis', of Southsyde, of 'Saughton Mylnis', of 'Mortounhall', and of 'Plewlandis', with a confusion of Christian names repeated in successive generations, especially Patrick, Alexander, James, John, Janet, and Isobel. With painstaking care most of these can be set out in their proper relationships, although space forbids it here. Sasines recorded in 1656 and 1658 do, however, tell us of a Patrick who is son of John Eleis, advocate.

The Register of the Privy Seal, the Register of the Great Seal, the 'Retours' (i.e. Inquisitionum ad capellam domini regis retornatarum ...), the Acts of the parliaments of Scotland, the Calendar of the Laing charters, and the Index to the register of deeds all furnish additional data. The last of these, for instance, confirms in entries between 1667 and 1687 that Jean Crichton was indeed wife of John Eleis, elder, and not of his son, and gives the name of her first husband; 1681 confirms that there was a Patrick who was son of John, elder, while 1684 confirms not only that Agnes Murray was spouse of John, son of John Eleis of Eleistoun, but also that she was daughter of Sir Walter Murray of Livingstone; and, finally, 1694 establishes that the children of John, elder, included at least Isobel and Jean besides John and Patrick.

Another form of record, not yet considered, is the several series of the Scottish History Society, comprising substantial volumes of, usually, original manuscripts printed, edited, and indexed. These yield further incidental

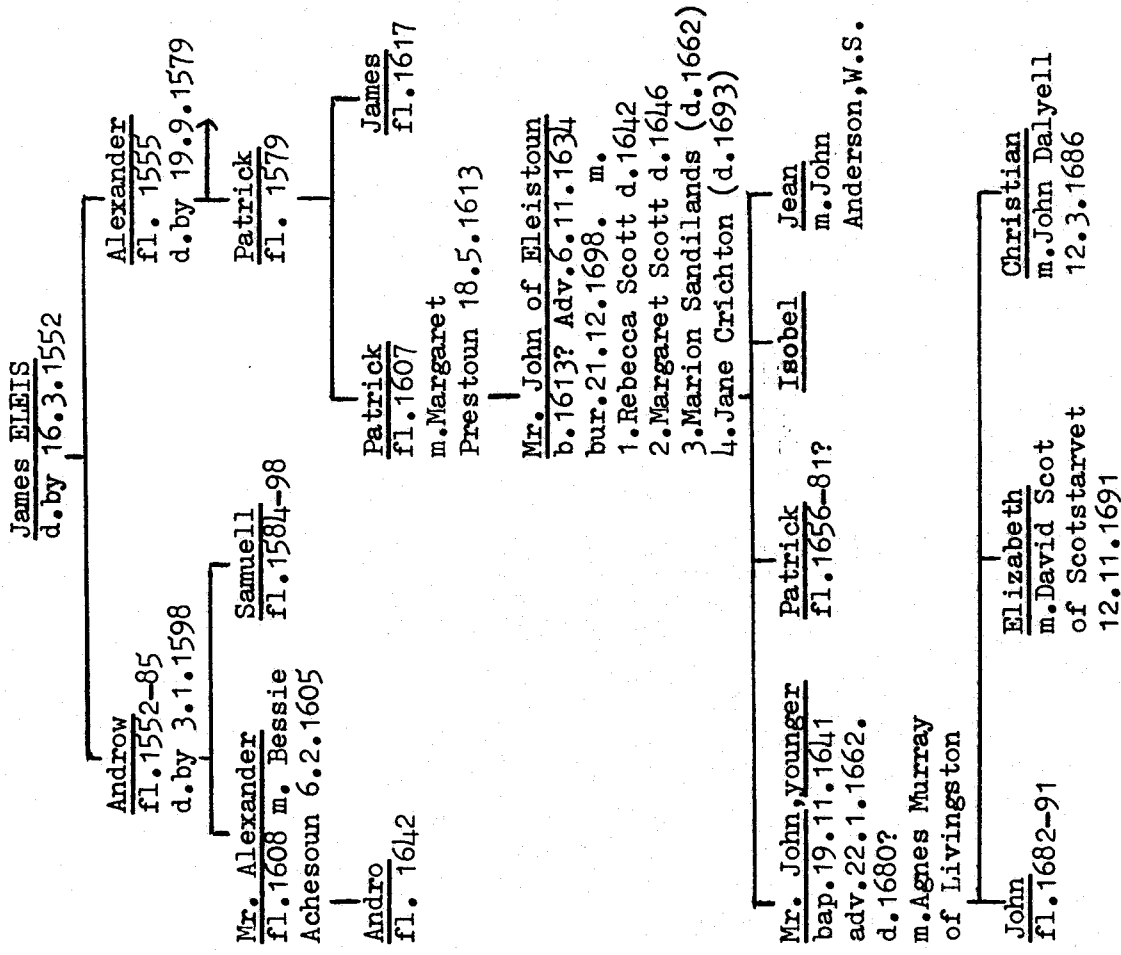
information, including details of some of the causes in which John Eleis of Eleistoun pleaded, two of which were the trials of Neil Macleod of Assynt for treason (1st Ser. vol. 17) and of James Mitchell for the attempted murder of Archbishop Sharp (ib. 49). The journals of Sir John Lauder of Fountainhall (ib. 36) prove to be of special interest, for it turns out that Fountainhall's mother was Eleistoun's cousin, while Fountainhall writes of his visit to the estate, seven miles from Edinburgh, in 1668 and tells us that its "true name" was Hyliston (it was later Illieston, in West Lothian). From Fountainhall's Chronological notes of Scottish affairs (p.81. Edin. 1822) we then learn that Eleistoun's daughter (Jean married John Anderson, W.S., who, like Fountainhall, appears in the Dictionary of national biography. Further Eleis information from Fountainhall is quoted in the Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, 1910.

There is, to be sure, a book called Notices of the Ellises (London, 1857-80), by W.S. Ellis, but it is rather a rag-bag and mainly English although it does tell us that the 'Elliston' that was known as 'Elliotstoun' (in 1344) was not in West Lothian but in Renfrewshire. G.F. Black's The surnames of Scotland might also have been a starting-point; it has several Eleis references, including one that is wrong (Lanark for Linlithgow), from which circumstance, along with other mistakes already noted, the principle may be postulated: as in Scots law, believe no one (including the present writer) without corroboration. "At the mouth of two witnesses ..."

We are now able, however, subject to more exhaustive investigation, to say that Burke's statement, quoted at the

beginning, is accurate except for the intrusive 'Elliotstoun', and to write out the genealogy of Eleis of Eleistoun. Space restricts that here, but the appended pedigree summarizes what has been established thus far.

Our case-study began with an army officer cum minor laird who, as often happened, married into the burgh and professional ranks. The wife's kin turned out to be more eminent in both these callings than first expected (several armigerous - with a play on 'eels' - according to Nisbet's System of heraldry), and therefore to be quite well documented in accessible published works. Most of them also were indwellers in Edinburgh where the record tends to be more complete than elsewhere. Nevertheless, there are, for example, printed registers of sasines for the sheriffdoms of Banff, Inverness, Ross, Cromarty, and Sutherland, and registers of testaments for Aberdeen and Inverness, besides much other material for the Highlands, ranging from the (unreliable) Wardlaw manuscript (S.H.S. 1st ser. vol. 47) to The Clan Campbell (6 volumes. 1913-1918). Forbye, Edinburgh is the capital: a remarkable number of vital and business transactions is recorded there which touched on people from outwith Edinburgh itself, reaching out over the whole country. The moral therefore is clear: use the sources that lie nearest thee (to paraphrase Carlyle). When that has been done, the manuscript sources follow, with all their peculiar difficulties of decipherment, including, before about 1700, secretary hand and secretaries' Latin.



NEWS

SUBSCRIPTIONS - These were due for renewal on September 1st. Most members have joined up for another year, how about YOU ? If you do intend to retain your membership but have done nothing about it yet, please get in touch with the Treasurer without delay. Subscriptions are still at last year's modest levels, and we need your support just as much now as we did then. Unfortunately, we cannot afford to send further reminders.

STERLING - Overseas members are asked to make sure that all payments to the Society are made in Sterling, since our banks charge handsomely for exchanging other currencies and we therefore lose money on the transaction.

COMPUTERS - It has been recently proposed to establish a new association in Inverness, for all those interested in computers and their many different uses. A steering group has been formed and the aim eventually is to buy a computer for use by members of the club. In view of the potential value this would have for our society (eg, preparing indexes), we are keeping in touch with further developments. We are represented on the steering group - without commitment at this stage - by committee member John Gradon

PHOTOCOPIER - Production of the Journal in its present form requires a source of extremely cheap photocopying, in or near Inverness. Existing arrangements are currently in a state of flux and it would be useful to know whether any local members can suggest where we might get the use of a high-volume photocopier at minimum cost. Please contact the Editor with any brainwaves.

TOMBSTONE INSCRIPTIONS - Some of you have asked whether we intend to publish the results of the work carried out this summer at Geddes Churchyard, Nairnshire. We do indeed, but some further work has still to be done. Watch this space for details.

CONGRATULATIONS to our member Mr Angus MacPhee, 17 Fairfield Rd., Inverness, whose recently published book "Cumartan Cuain" won him An Comann Gaidhealach's annual writer award at this year's

National Mod in Skye. "Ocean Dangers" is the English title of the book, which described two incidents in the life of his grand-father, also Angus MacPhee, who was a fisherman from Harlosh, on the west coast of Skye. The first was a tragio accident in 1889, and the second concerns the salvage operation which followed a shipwreck in Loch Bracadale in 1943 - "The Year of the Tins" ! Mr MacPhee, who was brought up in Skye, is head of Inverness High School's art department and he illustrated the book himself. It is available (£4.50 post-free) from Macdonald Publishers, Edgefield Rd, Loanhead, Midlothian.

YOU, TOO, can win a prize with your family history. To celebrate their silver jubilee, the Institute of Heraldic & Genealogical Studies are offering £500 to the person judged by an independent panel to have written the best family history. Prizes for runners-up, too. Details from the Secretary of the above, at Northgate, Canterbury CTL IBA (send large s.a.e.).

BACK NUMBERS of our Journal are now available from the Treasurer, price £1 each, including UK postage only.

SYLLABUS CARDS - Some of these appear to have gone astray. If you have paid this year's subs, but have not yet received a card, please contact the Treasurer.

REGISTER OF RESEARCH - Committee member Douglas Stewart has now completed this valuable research aid & copies are available from the Treasurer, price £1.50 inc. UK postage only. The Register gives a full list of our members, the surnames or other interests they are researching, the area, and the period. Use of the Register, and other genealogical directories, is a good way to make new contacts and avoid duplication of research.

Western Isles and Skye Parishes

Our series of parish maps continues with the Isle of Skye and the Western Isles, or Outer Hebrides. The original map was published around 1900 and some boundaries or parish names may have changed before or since that date. The Isle of Lewis (parishes 1-4) formed part of Ross & Cromarty; all the other parishes were in Inverness-shire. The dates below indicate the earliest entries in the Old Parish Registers, but the record may not be continuous thereafter. Some years are incomplete and there are many gaps.

KEY

A - Stornoway B - Tarbert C - Lochmaddy
D - Lochboisdale E - Castlebay F - Portree

- 1) Barvas - B. 1810 M. 1810
- 2) Stornoway - B. 1762 M. 1762
- 3) Uig - B. 1824 M. 1824
- 4) Lochs - B. 1831 M. 1831
- 5) Harris - B. 1823 M. 1838 (Separate St Kilda record B,M&D. 1830)
- 6) North Uist - B. 1821 M. 1821
- 7) South Uist - M. 1839
- 8) Barra - B. 1836 M. 1847 D. 1849
- 9) Kilmuir - B. 1823 M. 1823
- 10) Snizort - B. 1823 M. 1823
- 11) Duirinish - B. 1817 M. 1817
- 12) Portree - B. 1800 M. 1800
- 13) Bracadale - B. 1802 M. 1802 D. 1834
- 14) Strath - B. 1820 M. 1823
- 15) Sleat - B. 1813 M. 1813
- 16) Small Isles - No record prior to 1855

BOOKSHELF

Scotus Americanus: A Survey of the Sources for Links Between Scotland and America in the 18th Century. By William R. Brock. Edinburgh University Press, 22 George Square Edinburgh. Price £10.

The author is Professor (Emeritus) of Modern History at Glasgow University, has been a visiting professor at Michigan, Washington and Maryland, and has written several standard historical works on the United States. He is therefore well qualified to assess the Scottish contribution to the development of America during the 18th century, and to identify primary sources (published and unpublished) for further study.

Widely scattered sources from libraries and repositories on both sides of the Atlantic are described and evaluated, and a separate section lists these sources by subject, and gives their locations. The copious reference notes are also separated from the text, and of course there is a good index and useful bibliography. An appendix gives a long list of Scottish doctors practicing in America during the period, and American doctors educated in Scotland.

The book is an outstanding work of reference, but each chapter can be enjoyably read as a general introduction to the subject in hand - despite the irritation of typographical errors which one does not expect to see in a book of this kind. The topics covered include the tobacco trade, religion, education, philosophy, medicine and politics.

Of particular interest to us, is the chapter on "The Highland Migration", which includes a perceptive analysis of the reasons for emigration, and focuses especially on the Highland settlement of North Carolina, Georgia and New York.

