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### SOME CHARACTERS OF OLD INVERNESS

by Ian Michie  
(Talk given to the Society 23rd January 1990)

First I should say something of my own name Michie, which became an Aberdeen-shire one in a strange way. A cadet branch of the Macdonalds somewhere in Lochaber had two sons who fell out when the chief died. The younger son Micheal moved east to Strathdon and the theory is that the Doric-speaking locals couldn't pronounce the Gaelic Micheal and it became Michie.

One of the most famous names in Inverness history is Cuthbert, first recorded in 1371 and a Cuthbert fought at Harlaw in 1411 on the side of the Earl of Mar. Then they were given some land at the old Castlehill (not where the present castle is) and "acquired" other lands including Drakies and became a very influential family. They ruled, or misruled, Inverness for about 160 years with nearly every provost a Cuthbert. One died at Pinkie in 1547. Another was Provost George (1556-9). The Black Friars were worried about their future and gave their communion plate to him for safekeeping, and it hasn't been seen since. He was probably the worst of them.

Louis XIV's prime minister Colbert traced his ancestry to the Cuthberts of Castlehill. Another married into the Lyons family so the Queen Mother and the present Queen have Cuthbert blood. Alexander was Provost in 1665 when in the Marymass fair a fight broke out over a cheese dropped when being replaced on a stall and it rolled down the hillside to the river. Alexander had to put on his armour and call out the town guard. The last Cuthbert was Provost John (1683-9) who burnt the last two witches. He used to burn them at Diriebught near where Morrison's bakery is. They cursed him from the stake and he later died after a fall from his horse at Inshes Smiddy.

Everybody talks about General Wade. He was wonderful, an Irishman and very kindly, unusual for officers in those days; but few talk about his successor Major Caulfield who made two or three times the 250 miles or so of roads built by Wade. The West Highland Way includes part of Caulfield's road from Kinlochleven across to Fort William over the hill and is quite fascinating. It was built wide enough for a cart or four men when marching. Along the shoulder of the hill where you get a corrie there is bound to be a lot of water coming down, so they made a little hollow in the road and filled it with 'causies'. The water has been coming down now since 1752 and it has never washed away any of the roadway, it simply washes over the causies. Cradlehall got its name from Caulfield when he lived there. He had some wild parties with a lot of drinking of casks of claret so he rigged up a block and tackle with a cradle to take the guests up to bed.

We used to have in Inverness a street called Davies Square. Davies was a foreman working for Thomas Telford and his small

croft was on the site of the present British Legion houses. To pick his fruit he used to employ small boys, but only if they whistled all the time. You try to eat a raspberry and whistle at the same time!

Last year we all regretted the railway bridge coming down. It was built by Joseph Mitchell, who did more for opening up the Highlands than any other man before or since. He was born in Inverness in 1803. His father worked for Telford on the Canal and young Joseph, while serving his time as a stonemason, helped in the stonework of the locks at Fort Augustus. He studied civil engineering and became Inspector of Roads, Bridges and Harbours, riding up to 9000 miles a year to do his job. He wrote a book of his reminiscences, which gives a wonderful description of life in the Highlands. He lived in Millburn Road, two doors away from the excise man and it amused him to drink illicit brandy smuggled in at Ardersier's Campbelltown.

He built the railway from Dunkeld to Forres and wanted to build the one from Aviemore to Inverness but he was laughed at; Hannibal took elephants across the Alps but no-one could take locomotives to Inverness. Sadly he had died when that part of the railway was done. (In 1987 I was talking about the railway bridge on the radio when I had a phone message from a man in his 90s whose mother when aged 12 was at its opening in 1862, and whose grandfather had witnessed the last public hanging on the Longman in 1835. He was the town missionary Mr MacDonald, who stayed in Portfield Bank). Mitchell should also be thanked by the people of London who could only have fish smoked or cured. He saw the opening and started trains taking fresh fish there from Aberdeen, Grimsby and Hull.

Many will remember Miss Inglis who used to deliver books in the basket of her bicycle to people in hospital. She was the last of that other famous Inverness family the Inglis. Inglis Street was named after William, a merchant who lived at Kingsmills House (now Hotel) and was one of the best provosts the town ever had. He built the Steeple and started subscriptions for the Infirmary, but died before it opened. In 1787 he entertained Robert Burns to a meal at Kingsmills and you can see a plaque there to commemorate this. A later provost was Dr John Inglis Nicol (1840-3). He was instrumental in having the retaining wall built along Ness Bank, and if he hadn't the big 1849 flood would have eroded Castle Hill and the castle would have ended up in the river. He died in a cholera epidemic in 1843.

A different type of character was a tailor John Maclean. He was born in 1746 and spent most of his life around Duff and Wells Streets. He published a book in about 1831 "Reminiscences of a Clachnacudden Nonagenarian" (you can see why I'm only saying it once). In this fascinating book he tells his grandfather's stories about the Rebellion, the Young Pretender's men taking



the castle and so on, and he tells his own stories. He died in 1851 at the age of 105. There must be something in brass as he lived on it, herrings and potatoes.

One of his stories concerned Samuel Cameron, obviously from Lochaber, up for sheep stealing and awaiting execution when he escaped and hid in the rocks above the new Clannaman Hotel on Loch Ness-side. One day he saw the "Black Sheriff" Mackenzie from the Black Isle, went down with a pistol and grabbed him by the throat threatening to do him in if he didn't proclaim his innocence at the Mercat Cross. The next market day the sheriff did just that, so Samuel came down to live in the Bunchrew area, raised a large family and was a good citizen.

In Abriachan in living memory was a man known as the Swaddy who had an illicit still. He had an agent with a shop in Chapel Street who sold the Product for him. Once the swaddy had a consignment coming in and was tipped off that the police knew about it. He sent for two horse cabs to go to Abriachan, he went in the first with all sorts of boxes and cases and the second had the Product for Chapel Street. The police stopped him at the Canal Bridge and emptied everything out. While they were doing this the second cab came along and was just waved through.

In 1784 in Strathconon Farquhar (Fearchar?) MacLennan was born. He was slightly mentally retarded and the whacks he received cannot have helped this. His father was a crofter and a very experienced smuggler. Farquhar was charged with having set fire to the new house of the Strathconon first resident excise man when it was just ready for occupation. He came up before the sheriff in Dingwall but just said nothing so they could do nothing about it except admonish him. He left home when his brother was killed by accident in a skirmish with some excisemen, as this incident really upset him.

After trouble at a farm at Ferintosh in which he was hit on the head with a spade he became a wanderer. He lived in a hut in Redcastle in about 1845/6. The minister there had come back to Scotland at the time of the Disruption as there was a stipend to be earned. Once he went into the hut looking for Farquhar and the stench was indescribable. When he mentioned this Farquhar said "The deer on the hill have a wonderful sense of smell, but it cannot be as good as yours, because you smelled the stipend at Redcastle all the way from America!"

He made a gun out of old pipes and was known as Farquhar of the Gun, he'd get powder for it from the farmers who used it for blasting rocks. He would never take parish relief, being not a beggar but a Gentleman of the Road. He earned money by breaking up old carcasses and bones to sell for bone meal. His beat was from Fairburn as far as Culloden and he was often in Inverness. When the railways opened up someone once suggested he take the train to Redcastle but didn't tell him about buying a ticket.

When he was thrown off he decided that "To take the train is like going to the Lord's Table, you must have a token". He died in the Infirmary in 1866 and is buried in a pauper's grave in Tomnahurich.

One of the most interesting characters who graced Inverness fortunately did not live here although he tried to: Alasdair the last of the McDonells of Glengarry. He fought with Telford when the Canal was being built and insisted they plant good trees along it at Invergarry. He was at an Inverness ball in 1798 where he had a row with a young lieutenant of the Cameron Highlanders and they fought a duel at Ardersier. The lieutenant died but Glengarry had a good counsel and got off. He went about like a medieval clan chief with his "Tail" of bodyguard, piper, sword bearer and valet, all wearing kilts and coming behind him wherever he went.

He was a governor of the Inverness Royal Academy. The others were the Provost, the Dean of Guild, the bailies and anyone else, such as Glengarry, who could buy a £50 share. Once when one of the Academy's masters was going into the ministry, Glengarry put up a candidate and made three friends governors with £50 each, but his candidate still lost. MacIntosh of Raigmore opposed him and a most vitriolic correspondence started between them in the papers over it. Eventually they held an all-night meeting to sort it out. The Academy got over £2000 as so many people put up £50 to stop Glengarry carrying out his threat to move to Inverness if he won.

He died when he fell on a rock while getting off the Corran ferry in 1828. His funeral was probably the last huge one seen in the Highlands. All the Highland chiefs were there and had a huge meal. 1500 others attended but they only had biscuits, cheese and whisky. On that stormy day he was carried to be buried at Kilfinan on the north side of Loch Lochy by men of Invergarry wading up to their thighs.

My final character in this talk many of you know: my late father, an auctioneer. On one occasion a stuffed grizzly bear came into the saleroom. It was the most horrible moth-eaten thing you ever saw. Nobody would buy it so it was sent in a van from Fraser & Co to a minister out of town with a ticket "From a Grateful Parishioner". The poor minister did not know who sent it and couldn't throw it away in case the parishioner called. After a couple of years standing in the hall he thought it was safe to get rid of it so he sent it to the saleroom. You can imagine his consternation when it arrived back on his doorstep with the comment "We believe you already have one of these, now you have a pair!"

In the discussion which followed the talk a member of the audience commented that a second edition of John Maclean's reminiscences by a "Centenarian" was published later.



by David Dobson F.S.A.[Scot]

Although Highland emigration, as opposed to Scottish emigration as a whole, only became numerically significant after 1763 it had already been in progress for well over a century. The breakdown of the clan system in conjunction with changing economic and social structures in the latter part of the 18th century were the main causes of emigration then, whereas earlier emigration had been mainly the result of the transportation of prisoners of war or political undesirables.

The first Scottish emigrant to America was Thomas Henderson who settled in Jamestown, Virginia during 1607, whereas the first Highlander known to have settled in America was Andrew Munroe. Andrew Munroe originally settled in St Mary's, Maryland during 1641, but returned to Scotland to fight as an officer in the Scots Army which invaded England in support of Charles I in 1648. That army was defeated by the Parliamentary Army at Preston in 1648 and Munroe, along with many other soldiers including a number of Highlanders, was shipped to Virginia to work as an indentured servant.

In 1650 after the Battle of Dunbar and in 1651 after the Battle of Worcester the Royalist prisoners, including many Scottish Highlanders, were shipped to the English plantations in America to work as indentured servants. These contingents of prisoners contained the first significant numbers of Highlanders to 'emigrate' to America. At least two shiploads were taken to Boston and from the 1650s Highland surnames begin to appear in the New England records - Dougal, Grant, Gordon, McCall, McMillan, McNair, McIntyre, McWalter, McCallum, Stewart, Buchanan, Tosh, McPherson etc. The records of the Scots Charitable Society of Boston, which date from 1657, contain many early examples of Highland surnames.

In Barbados, where the Scots connection dates from 1627, Highland names also begin to appear from c1650 - Lamont, McAllister, Ogilvy, Campbell, McLaughlin, Bayne, Taggart, Farquharson etc. Though some of these result from Cromwell's transportation policy others may have come as indentured servants via London or have been transported directly from Scotland as Covenanters or criminals.

The failure of Argyll's rebellion in 1685 led to Highlanders from Argyll-shire being shipped to the plantations as indentured servants. Throughout the English colonies in America Highlanders could be found in the late seventeenth century - the majority had come as prisoners but some had come as voluntary emigrants, such as Daniel MacKinnon, son of Lachlan Mor MacKinnon of MacKinnon, a physician in Antigua.

The shortlived Scottish colony at Stuartstown, South Carolina did not seem to have contained any Highlanders but there were a number in East New Jersey where the proprietors included Ewan Cameron of Lochiel and Lord Neil Campbell. The final attempt to found a Scottish colony in America occurred at Darien 1698/99. The majority of shareholders of the Darien Company were Lowlanders but there were a few Highlanders - Forbes of Culloden, various Campbells, the Earl of Sutherland, Menzies of Shian, McFarlane of that Ilk etc.

Many of the soldiers taken to defend the colony had formerly served in Argyll's Regiment. Some convicts were also sent to work at Darien, including Highlanders such as Laurence McLaren and Malcolm Moir, prisoners from Perth Tolbooth. Many of the colonists died at Darien while others moved to the English settlements from Boston to Bardados. Amongst those who settled in Jamaica was John Campbell who became a leading planter and public official.

After the political union of Scotland and England in 1707 all restrictions of settlement and trade between Scotland and America were removed and this generated emigration. The first major group of Highlanders to settle in America were, however, transported there. In 1715 several hundreds of Jacobites, mainly Highlanders from the vicinity of Inverness and Aberdeenshire, were captured after the Siege of Preston and later shipped from Liverpool to the American colonies, some went to Chesapeake, others to the Carolinas, and a number to the West Indies.

Traditionally the Highlanders, with exceptions, tended to operate collectively and this also applied to emigration, and once a foothold was established others would follow the determined route. North Carolina and Georgia attracted Highland emigration from the 1730s, in the case of the former the emigrants mainly came from Argyllshire, while in the case of Georgia they came from the neighbourhood of Inverness.

The majority of Highlanders who emigrated at this time were Protestants as the colonial legislation favoured them, eg free land grants. Several hundreds of Highlanders, mainly from Islay, were attracted to New York by the promise of land during the 1730s but it was not until the end of the French and Indian wars that they were given it. During these wars Highland Regiments were used for the first time in America and afterwards were partly demobilised there.

In Canada many former soldiers, including Highlanders, were settled from Murray Bay in the west to Nova Scotia in the east, and this generated further emigration from the Highlands. By that time changing social and economic circumstances in the Highlands encouraged emigration. This had, in a way, already begun in 1746 when the British Government deported nearly 1,000 Scots, overwhelmingly Highlanders and Jacobites, to the

