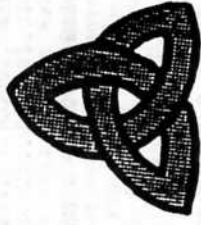


hìghland family  
history society



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sloinntearachd  
na  
Gaidhealtachd

JOURNAL

Vol. 12 No. 2

February 1994

ISSN 0262-6659

Published by

The Highland Family History Society

Comunn Sloinntearachd na Gaidhealtachd

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**E D I T O R I A L**

There is a great danger in writing editorials and things in Journals: pontification goes to the head! In 12.1, I reviewed the SAFHS publication on Parishes and Registers of Scotland and criticised the typographical errors all through it. I mentioned KINLOCHPELVIE in error and KILMARNOCK in sheer ignorance and both have been firmly pointed out to me!

We have found that our question-and-answer evenings are very well received so we now have one in each session's calendar of lectures, and I thought it might be nice, or even helpful, to add such a section to the Journal too. For this first one I have put in questions that I have asked in these pages before and received little but silence when I held up my head with hand to ear, and questions which have occurred to others as I asked them. If you know a partial or complete answer to a question, please come forward as we don't know everything and that's why we publish this journal.

Our 500 or so members cover a large range of ages, interests and backgrounds as well as addresses, and many are members of more than one family history or other society, so I hope we might get a good conversation going here. Please also send in your questions, serious or apparently trivial; I say 'apparently' because I know that sometimes I am puzzled by something but feel too stupid to ask about it until another brave soul in the same room puts up his hand and asks the very question I ought to have done. Ask and somebody around is sure to know some or all of the answer. I'm happy with an answer being a reference to a book or other source, and also to put in more than one answer with any time delay you like between answers.

We are desperately in need of articles from the memberforce for the journal. If you like reading what you see here, then someone else will like reading your bit too. If you have done a lot of work on your family history, show off, tell us about it. If your ancestors left the Highlands, why and when was it? Was it because of the Clearances or because they had a brother in North Carolina or Auckland? If your ancestor died in childbirth or fought in the Crimea or spent forty years making shoes in Golspie, tell us about it, we're all interested. If you've found a list of passengers on a ship out of Stornoway, or of the land-owners in Dingwall in 1832 (that's the one I'm working on) or of the jurors in the Appin Murder Case, tell us about it, we're still all interested!

One lecture evening we all enjoy in Inverness is the Heirlooms Night when, instead of one invited speaker, we have a dozen press-ganged ones from the audience who bring something along and give us five minutes on the meaning the object has for them. We appreciate that not all of the members can make it to

Inverness so write to me instead and tell me about your heirloom and I'll pass it on. Go on, I'm waiting!

Apròpos of absolutely nothing, in the OPR for the Argyll combined parishes of Kilbrandon and Kilchattan a series of marriages carry the same format of "A and B consigned their names ... and married 12 Mar 1760" but not this one: "July 11th 1758 Archibald Shaw in Kilmory in Scarba and Mary Johnson daughter of Duncan Johnson quarrier at Blackmill consigned there names this day and was Married this same very day after there banns was lawfully proclaimed three several Sabbaths for that purpose." This sounds like a bit of over-protecting to me!

#### QUESTIONS AND SOMETIMES ANSWERS

1. Does anybody out there know anything about Dingwall ex-patriates who made good in the rough wide world? This question is inspired by the article on Thomas Wilmor Mackenzie in the last issue and by some correspondence with James Maclean who used to cycle about Dingwall delivering the messages from his father's shop. Dingwall is special in the world of family history research only because I live there. Also I do not know of any other town with three names!

2. What songs did my gt-gt-grandfather sing when he was standing at his loom in the mid-1700s weaving in the wilds of Argyll? Who did he sell the material to, just his neighbours, or further afield?

3. How accurate is my perception that there was a policy in London to use ethnic minorities from around the Empire to squash what is nowadays called 'unrest' and was 'thenadays' called 'rebellion'? The examples that spring to mind for our area concern the use of Scottish troops to 'lance the boils that afflicted the bottoms' of the rulers of Ireland, while separately sending Irish troops to 'quell Scottish indigestion?' There once was a troop of Irish dragoons cam' marching down through Fyvie-o" is a song that many still sing far outside the north-east of Scotland.

4. I have an atlas published in 1861 and Scottish counties have bits of themselves scattered all over as if the mice had been chewing bits out and someone had stuck them back in the wrong places. I know why Cromarty was inside but separated from Ross, but why did Nairnshire have a little hill-enclosed valley above Inverfarigaig on Loch Ness, or other bits of Elginshire (now Moray) on the wrong side of the river Findhorn? Banff has lost a bit, split off by an Aberdeenshire corridor to the sea near Turriff, but Banff had several enclaves in the bigger county in revenge. Inverness-shire extended out to the isles, which is fine, but Rum and Canna (and not Eigg) belonged to Argyll for some reason. Why did Ross have Lewis but Inverness had Harris? Well?

5. When and why did 'Elginshire' become 'Morayshire'?

6. What is an 'ahnentafel' that I see mentioned as one of the selling points in some genealogy computer programs? My German dictionary suggests that it means a 'table of prophecies' or some such, but I have a mental reservation against that idea!

7. (Abernethy question)

Half an answer: write to the Secretary, Abernethy Gathering.

8. Ian Baillie (281) asks about my comment that microfiched Scottish OPR index is more complete than the IGI, could his eyes have misread my statement?

No they didn't misread it, but I had oversummarised the GSU statement. As a list of births and marriages from Scotland, the OPR index is better than the IGI which doesn't always have the OPR entries, but the IGI entries are based on other information than purely OPRs, so can have entries the OPR index lacks. I prefer the OPR index because it indexes the OPRs so I know precisely where I stand with it; I prefer the IGI because it gives me other avenues to follow even if it misses some OPR entries.

Regarding the Scottish OPR index, it was designed to be a 100% record of something, but as soon as it was published the LDS discovered missing bits, so three more fiches of 'Addenda indexes' have been issued with 31,000 missed off in error. To quote from their announcement: "These additional record entries have been gleaned variously from Church of Scotland register sources, newly recovered entries in original parish microfilms, and corrected or previously missed records reported by users of the 1990 indexes." Almost immediately the new fiches were issued (like just in time for an addendum to the press release about the Addenda!) a couple of Fife registers for the early 1700s, long classified as lost, have surfaced in the Scottish Record Office, so the LDS are once again gnashing their teeth.

#### GRAVEYARD TRAIL

A Ross and Cromarty District Councillor has thought up the idea of a Graveyard Trail for tourists and locals alike. The civil servant in charge of finding out the feasibility of this project wants to know from groups such as ours what we would like in such a project and what could we offer to it? Please let me know as I shall compose an 'Official Letter' to the council by early March. I expect to say things like:- the architecture of the church and boundary of the yard are important. Styles of stone carving matter. Above all, a list of who's in there matters! We are slowly doing our bit, could the council support/help us to do it all better and faster? What do you think?

MERCHANT SEAMEN IN THE CROMARTY FIRTH  
IN THE 17th & 18th CENTURIES

by David Alston

(condensed from a talk given on 15th December 1992)

[continued from the previous issue]

With the fall of Barkly, his place was taken by William Forsyth who is the last of the merchants I want to mention. He is the merchant about whom most is known because Hugh Miller was commissioned by Forsyth's descendants to write his biography. Millers widow, Lydia, incorporated it in the volume "Tales and Sketches by Hugh Miller" and in that at you see a very full picture of the life of a merchant at the time. Although a rather glowing picture I should say and claiming slightly more for Forsyth than can be actually be justified but he was certainly of that same enterprising type.

He rose from a fairly poor background. His father was a journeyman stonemason who moved from Elgin and set up as a merchant in a small way in Cromarty. William was sent to train in a London counting house and returned to Cromarty in 1739 on the death of his father and to begin with, he seems to have been involved in exactly the same trade as Barkly and Reid exporting grain or fish and importing salt and Forsyth was made when Gilbert Barkly was sacked by the British Linen Company because Forsyth then became their chief agent in the north of Scotland, responsible for the distribution of flax to the women who spun it at home.

He then collected it back and had some of it woven in Cromarty and the rest of the spun yarn shipped out to Edinburgh for weaving by the British Linen Company there. This was substantially subsidised and the fact that ships were coming in from the Baltic and the Netherlands, also meant that he could fairly easily import other goods. Linseed for locally grown flax, iron, various pottery goods and the same sort of range of luxury goods that we saw John Reid shipping up to Inverness on the "Prosperous Margaret."

William Forsyth was shipping to Cromarty from about 1740 and distributing to the lairds. He seems to have been able to give advice on all sorts of things; we find Lady Ross of Pitcairie recommending him as someone who knew about slating or lime harling. If you wanted advice you went and saw Forsyth as he could tell you what to do and he could get the goods. He built up a good reputation.

The only threat to Forsyth came about 1770 when the government suddenly decided that it was going to cut its subsidy on the linen spinning business. Fortunately for him, the Cromarty Estate had been acquired by a man called George Ross, who was in his 60s. He had made a fortune in London and set about

developing Cromarty as a model of what could be achieved with the resources of the area.

Forsyth with his knowledge on the ground, Ross with his money and his commitment to improvement were able to transform the town. Forsyth, (I suspect) persuaded Ross to fund the building of a factory on Cromarty and to shift from the import of flax to the import of hemp, still coming in from the Baltic. Spun by women at home, about six to eight hundred home spinners. It was all woven in Cromarty into cloth and shipped down to London.

There was a factory in Inverness on the same scale at the Citadel run by local merchants with the backing and expertise of the London company. So the model was there and I think it was a replica of the one in Cromarty. The difference was that they built a more substantial factory in stone whereas the Inverness factory was wooden. It has long since disappeared while the Cromarty buildings still survive.

Here are a few more slides. This is a lead seal which we think is from a bale of flax, which would have come into Cromarty in 1762 from the Baltic. This slightly smaller one is a seal probably from hemp and you can see the initials S.P.B., St. Petersburg where most of the hemp came from and it was this which transformed Cromarty from the town it had been. It produced some very prosperous merchants, like Urquhart, Reid and Barkly. This in turn brought money and people in and almost all of the town was rebuilt.

This factory building was the first of the new buildings and every thing else followed. These are the factory buildings from the sea. Four in an open square and a fifth went behind this one. It was a hand loom factory, not a powered factory, with a weaver sitting at each of the windows on the ground floor, with a "sterling figure" keeping the atmosphere as damp possible on the ground floor. Probably it was a clay floor as it needed dampness for successful hemp weaving. Cromarty is an odd place to put a hemp factory because it sits in this very dry climate. The places that later flourished with hemp like Northern Ireland are almost automatically damp.

That is the harbour which was built at the same time and financed by George Ross. The work was overseen by William Forsyth. William Forsyth was different from some of these early merchants, certainly different from the Reids in that he didn't go to sea himself but he did have his own ship built in preparation for the hemp business, the "Elizabeth" which traded from Cromarty. I think the "Elizabeth" was the last of the ships registered for trading from Cromarty on any scale.

He did trade with the Baltic but very quickly he was reduced to coastal shipping bringing coal from the north east of England and I think that William Forsyth marks the end of the

period of these adventurous merchants like the Urquharts, the Reids and the Barklys.

I would like to say something about the dangers which these small traders faced. I have already mentioned ship wreck. It is remarkable how many of the ships were wrecked at one time or another.

John Reid's brother-in-law, Alexander Steuart, son of Baillie Steuart was captured by Moroccan pirates in the Mediterranean and held captive for two or three years. Collections were taken up throughout churches in the north to raise the ransom to have him freed. Smuggling was an accepted part of trading in that early period but it could very easily lead to the impounding of cargoes and the loss of vessels and that happened to Reid and Steuart and various other people.

Plague and quarantine was another issue which faced them and the Cromarty Firth was an ideal place for quarantining ships because they could be forced into the Firth and made to sit there for forty days of quarantine if they were suspected of having touched a port where there had been cholera or plague. Quarantine was often another excuse for local smuggling. Hugh Miller says ships quarantining in the Cromarty Firth rose notably in the water as the cargo was dispersed.

Some of the merchants and skippers also got caught up in politics one way or another, like the Jacobite Rebellion. Some of them stayed very sensibly clear of it but there were some interesting schemes going on. We have one seaman from the Cromarty Firth, a brother of Urquhart of Newhall who had served in the navy under Queen Ann, but when George I came to the throne he felt he could no longer serve and a scheme was got under way. What was proposed was that Urquhart of Newhall would purchase a ship and his brother would be set up in business as a trader from Cromarty but the whole purpose was that he would act as a courier for the Jacobites and ship people and messages about under the cover of trade.

In 1718 there was a scheme to mount a Jacobite invasion of Scotland and the bulk of the force was to land in the Firth of Forth. It was planned that a thousand men would land at Cromarty with horses and guns and from there mount an attack on Inverness.

Then there was the danger of pirates and privateers. We have one very interesting case from the early 18th century of a ship actually being taken by French privateers while sitting off shore from the harbour at Cromarty. Ironically, the ship that was taken was the customs' vessel. It had just been launched from Tyneside to patrol the coast to prevent smuggling. As soon as they set sail they got into a storm and they spent two weeks being blown about. First out to the Isle of May, then over to Norway, then back to the Moray Firth, then up to Shetland and

back to the Moray Forth again, by which time their masts were broken. They hailed a fisherman who got them into Cromarty where they repaired the ship, which took about three weeks; set off again for Leith, got as far as Aberdeen when the wind came up and blew them back to Cromarty again and they sat there.

One March evening, a ship sailed into the firth as darkness was falling. They hailed the ship and the brigantine which was coming in replied that it was under Captain Law and bound for Lisbon via Findhorn for a cargo of barley and fish. The captain of the "Orkney", which was the customs vessel, knew Captain Law and so lowered his boat with six sailors. They rowed across. One of the sailors got onto the brigantine. No sooner had he done that but two men appeared and grabbed him. He broke free from them, ran forward on the ship and found the deck covered with Frenchmen heavily armed lying down and he shouted down to his own ships boat to push off. They tried to do that but another group of heavily armed Frenchmen leapt up from the back of the ship and pointed muskets at them and told them they weren't going anywhere.

They took the captain and the men prisoner. They loaded the rowing boat with fifteen or sixteen Frenchmen, rowed back to the customs vessel who were expecting to welcome their own captain and possibly Captain Law on board. They were all ready to greet them and the Frenchmen leapt on board. Some of them had a very lucky escape because the gunpowder in the guns had got wet coming across. So although there were a few attempts at firing nobody was killed. They very quickly rounded up the crew, imprisoned them in the hold and the only attempt to defend the ship was by the cabin boy who had been lighting a fire in the captains cabin. He had been missed in the rounding up of the crew and got the captains blunderbuss and came out in the darkness and fired it off but hit no one. The crew had to walk to Edinburgh to make their report and the French privateer made off at least with the cargo and perhaps with the ship itself.

So we see over the hundred year period I am talking about, 1650 up until the 1780s quite a transformation of trade from the very low point in the 1650s to when Cromarty became almost a one product town with hemp. We have this period of rather attractive merchants and skippers and seamen: Urquharts making their money in herring, the Reids trading in grain and all sorts of goods from Cromarty down to London.

Gilbert Barkly over-stretched himself with the import of tobacco and his numerous tons being lost to what were to become the United States and then finally William Forsyth, a much less adventurous but a shrewder businessman who was involved in the transformation of Cromarty to what you see now.

### CAPTAIN DONALD MACLENNAN, DINGWALL

[From our latest graveyard publication on St Clements in Dingwall we have several concerning the parents, brother and sisters of Captain Macleennan, Dingwall's own pirate. I had heard that he had made a fortune sailing the world so I wanted to know more. What follows is slightly condensed from the Inverness Courier of November 20th 1851. A reference to the Simpson family will recall to members with fine memories an article by Donald Whyte in the May 1993 Journal]

Among several monuments recently erected in the churchyard of Dingwall there is one just completed by Mr Messer, architect, for Misses Macleennan of the Castle of Dingwall. It is a rectangular figure of the height of ten feet and a half surmounted by an urn, built of the fine stone of the Tulloch quarry, and having inlaid the device of an anchor, beautifully executed in marble at the establishment of Mr David Ness of Leith Walk, and a marble tablet bearing the following inscription:-

"This tribute of sisterly affection is designed to commemorate the virtues of Captain Donald Macleennan. He was a native of this town, of an intelligent, intrepid, and enterprising spirit. After having, in the command of merchant ships in the time of a European war, made many voyages of much incident and peril, from the Thames to India, China, and the South Seas, he passed here in independence and ease the remainder of his eventful life - indulging his love of nautical science; improving and adorning, by his liberality and taste, the place of his birth; and, in an unostentatious and exemplary manner, discharging the domestic and social duties becoming a sincere Christian and a good citizen. He was born in 1778, and died in 1848."

Captain Macleennan was a remarkable man. His father was Mr Colin Macleennan, a burgher of Dingwall, of considerable mark and force of character, who was long a member of the Town Council. Donald was the younger of two sons. In their youth, the brothers, after having received the rudiments of their education in the parish school taught by Mr Alexander Simpson the father of Thomas Simpson the Arctic traveller, were sent to the Academy of Fortrose, which possessed no mean reputation as a provincial seat of learning. There Donald made good progress in the study of mathematics and navigation, and the knowledge gave a direction to his ambition and influenced his future career. Roderick Macleennan, the elder brother, obtained a situation in London as a clerk in the house of Hamilton & Company, East India ship-owners, in which he gradually attained an important and influential position. He was thus enabled to invite Donald to the metropolis. The great city, however, had less attraction for the latter than the sea, and he took his place as a seaman aboard one of Mr Hamilton's ships to India.

Donald set out on his second voyage aboard the Bellona but left her at Madras on account of ill usage received from the chief mate. On writing to his brother from Penang, on 26th August 1797, he says - "I am heartily sorry for having taken such a step, and if I knew where to find one of Mr Hamilton's ships I would go directly aboard of her and work my passage home, to show that what I have done was not from an ungrateful disposition towards him but from necessity. When the Doctor gives you an account of my desertion he will tell you that he left me aboard one of the Nabob's ships, but I found that to be bad employment and left it, and am now aboard the snow Nancy. Captain Drysdale as chief-mate, my money wages being forty rupees a month. We went from Madras to the Malay coast, and from thence came here. If you have occasion to see and transact business with Adamson (the mate), and my name is mentioned, you will find that he can play the hypocrite better than any actor in Drury Lane."

On his return to England early in the year 1799, he obtained an appointment aboard the Britannia, fitting out for a trading voyage to the South Seas. This ship was commanded by Captain Mortlock, the brother of the very gallant naval officer of that name. In this voyage the Britannia captured a Spanish prize off the coast of South America. In a letter containing a detailed statement of the proceedings of the captain and crew of the Britannia at the Cape de Verde Islands, St Salvador, and L'Espirito Sancto, Donald gives the following account of that affair:-

"Captain Mortlock finding he could not execute his plan at those places, determined to have recourse to Rio de Janeiro. Accordingly, we proceeded to that place, and reached it on the 4th July. There we found a number of small Spanish vessels from the River Plate, which had come for European goods, some having 150,000 dollars aboard to purchase a cargo. Our captain then bargained with one of the Spaniards for the greatest part of the investment, and as we were not permitted by the Portuguese to dispose of anything there, it was agreed that we should sail from Rio, and stand off, and on the mouth of the harbour, until a Portuguese vessel should come and take the goods - for you must know that the Spaniard would not trust himself in our claws without the protection of the Portuguese.

After getting 5000 dollars earnest money, we sailed and stood off and on for ten days, when the above vessel came with the rest of the cash, and we shipped the goods; but the Spanish dollars at Rio were so alluring to us that we kept cruising off the coast until the 24th, when we fell in with and captured the Pensamento Felix, Spanish smack, of about 150 tons, of which Captain Mortlock entrusted me with the command, and I was immediately despatched with her to the Cape. My crew consisted only of four hands and a boy, and these, except one, were foreigners, which gave me a great deal of trouble and uneasiness.

