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**CONTENTS**

Editorial ..... 1  
 James Merry of Belladrum ..... 2  
 Victims of the Gallipoli Campaign ..... 9  
 A Love Letter? ..... 10  
 Remembrance Sunday in Dingwall ..... 14  
 Genealogy - Gene-Who-Logy ..... 16  
 Glasgow Cholera Epidemic ..... 16  
 Colin's Fight ..... 17  
 Members' Research Interests ..... 20  
 Questions - and Sometimes Answers ..... 22  
 Queries (636-644) ..... 23

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**EDITORIAL**

Whenever I get bigger-headed than normal about my brilliance as an editor of the recordings of the lectures that people are kind enough to give us, I shall reread my version of Norman Newton's splendid talk on early Highland maps. I left in too many of the bits I should have tightened up on, but as the meat of the pudding was so excellently cooked I can hope that only I noticed the surplus bits of pastry in the printed version.

*A cri du coeur* has come from Edna Stark of Glasgow & West of Scotland FFHS. She and colleagues have been working on indexing the surnames of the 1841 census but are starting to puzzle over the northern boundary of Argyll due to the changes in it over the years. Is anyone in the HFHS working on Duror & Kingairloch, Lismore or Appin or other northern areas? Please let either me or Edna know so that she may avoid unnecessary labour. She has noticed how long the Ballachulish one is, but mentioned nothing to me about all around there being full to bursting with McColls.

Unfortunately I missed Mr Gibbs' gentle lecture on his ancestral home of Belladrum in Inverness-shire so was pleased that he had written it down and we publish it here. The slight touch of Dingwallcentricity from which some readers have noticed I suffer encourages me to comment on his reference to Duncan Davidson of Tulloch and his five wives. The wives (who are seldom named individually) are entombed together in a four-foot-high scaled mausoleum in Castle Street near the town centre here, while it was Duncan's horse who had the inestimable privilege to be buried with him on the estate near Tulloch Castle. The story is apocryphal, but I set it down here anyway.

Speaking of Dingwall, if you don't want to read too much about it or about me in these pages it is in your hand/quill/pencil/keyboard to ask questions or give answers to the ones we publish in the Q&A section, and I suppose an article on your own ancestors is out of the question?

John Durham's contribution to our heirloom night in January includes references he did not understand at the time, but his researches have turned up Tom Taylor who, among other things, was an editor of Punch in the 1870s. Among the successful plays he produced was the 1858 'Our American Cousin' which included the character of Lord Dundreary, an indolent bramless peer with a long drooping moustache. The play again became famous when Abraham Lincoln was watching one production but missed the ending under tragic circumstances.

The 1881 Census Project is approaching its denouement as well. Several volunteers have added to our part of the production by working on the evaluation of another 75 batches from Perth and the central belt. As I write this 24 counties out of 33 have been completed. Inverness is due to be finished about now and Ross-shire in March. Evaluation (the final checking of batches before data entry) stands at 80% complete and data entry itself at 63%. The Genealogical Society of Utah hopes that all data entry will be finished by September. The GSU has already begun payment for our work in the first supply of fiches: they have sent us the ones for Nairn and Caithness. These are not yet in the library in Inverness but will be when we have the folders to store them in. Stephen Young, the production co-ordinator of the entire project conveys his appreciation on behalf of himself and the GSU for our participation in the great effort, and would appreciate responses to the indexes. I love the things as I reported earlier, and will swoon when the promised national index comes to fruition. I find it hard to imagine that the Registrar General, whose department is rumoured to be starting a similar job for the 1891 census, could complete such a task within years or at a low price to us the customers.



## JAMES MERRY OF BELLADRUM - 1805-1870

by Mr A.J.M. Gibbs

(talk given to the Society on 22nd November 1994)

'The Spaniards have a proverb - 'A man who prides himself on his ancestors is like a potato, the best part of which is underground.' Or, you don't have to know where you have come from to decide where you are going to.

I am not sure that I wholeheartedly agree with that. (Certainly, harking back to history can have a stultifying effect; we in the Celtic nations are past-masters at pursuing old grudges down the centuries, using the mistakes of the past as an excuse for inaction in the present. But often research by a man into his family history can throw up revelations that inspire him to greater deeds in the present, enable him to set new goals, and avoid past errors; his family history can give him a sense of perspective, fill him with a burning ambition for self-improvement and ignite in him a fine sense of pride in his historic homeland. As the great Irish commentator Edmund Burke said of the French Revolution "People will not look forward to posterity, who never looked backward to their ancestors."

The Merrys of Belladrum, as they became, were an example of a particular socio-economic phenomenon that marked out the first half of the 19th century - an era of amazing economic fertility in central Scotland which resulted in the creation of a whole new breed of millionaires. These were the days of the 'go-getters', men who thrived in an atmosphere of 'devil take the hindmost' and profited handsomely from the exploitation of cheap labour, natural resources and the technology of the Industrial Revolution as the domestic economy, the British Empire and Atlantic trade burgeoned. Think of any Porsche-driving, mobile-telephoning, City wheeler-dealer making his pile in the free financial markets of the nineteen eighties and you have, in a sense, James Merry, main architect of the family's fortunes. And yet ... and yet ... There was more to him than that, for he was the principal architect of a company that gave a living to thousands, lasted well over 100 years and helped create Scotland's industrial economy; he was a patriotic Scot and had some notion of public service.

The dynasty began with James's father, also James, born probably some time in the 1770s, who was said to have been an itinerant pedlar in Ayrshire who founded the family firm. The name Merry, though Scottish, is an uncommon one. Although there are smatterings of Merrys all over Scotland, the greatest concentration of them is in Ayrshire, Lanarkshire and Greater Glasgow. The name is thought to be a derivation of Mirrie, a name that is found all over Scotland as far back as records go, but hardly seems to exist any longer. There were Merrys in Inverness in the 17th century. Others have suggested that Merry is a derivation of Murray. By his marriage to Janet (Jessie) Creelman, James Snr. had two children: James, born in New Monkland, Lanarkshire in 1805 and his sister Agnes born a little later. An examination of the lairs in the old graveyard in Old Monkland suggests he may have also had an illegitimate son - Robert Barclay, shoemaker, born to the late James Merry.'

The Merrys were among the earliest exploiters of the rich Monkland coalfield as it was opened

to the Monkland Canal in the 1790s. James Merry worked small coal leases at Blaiklands and Gummy near Coatbridge and shipped his coal to the Glasgow market, moving his family to Glasgow at the end of the Napoleonic wars when Port Dundas became the centre of coal distribution. Young James Merry was sent to the High School and then he attended some classes at Glasgow University.

James entered his father's business in the 1820s, served an extensive apprenticeship and became a partner when he was 25 in 1831. Five years later his father - described even then as 'an opulent merchant of Glasgow' - retired and James began two spectacular decades of empire building. The great opportunity for him lay in James Neilson's invention of the hot blast furnace which allowed coal deposits to be used to smelt local iron ore into iron. In 1833, James acquired a mineral lease in the heart of the new coal and iron district and, lacking the capital to build an ironworks on his own, formed a partnership in 1838 with Alexander Cunningham and Alexander Allison, a Leith merchant, to form Allison and Co. The new partnership opened up Cambroo iron Works on James's leased mineral field and, via Cunningham's strong connections, expanded into Ayrshire at Glenarnock.

By 1845 - i.e. within seven years - the empire extended to twelve collieries, many iron mines and three iron works and Merry and Cunningham, as the firm had become, were second-ranking ironmasters in Scotland to the Bairds of Gartsherrie and third-ranking in Scottish coalmasters. During this phase of expansion James Merry was the senior partner and driving force behind the company; as each ironworks was acquired, he built up a network of mineral leases in its hinterland. He combined local knowledge with close attention to detail, a sharp judgement of men and an uncompromising attitude to his workforce. Inevitably, he acquired a harsh reputation for aggressive management and 'conservative' labour relations. Friction was common at his works, strikes frequent and strike breaking by importing Highland or Irish labour a repeated feature. Merry had no compunction in squeezing his men through the operation of company 'truck' stores - at one time he operated twelve - a third of all those operated by iron masters in Scotland. But by the time Merry retired, due to ill health in 1875, the M & C empire ran to 23 collieries, 26 iron mines and 3 iron works employing over 5,000 men.

Between 1836 and 1856, James Merry bestrode his business on a daily basis. He had waited until he was 42 and both of his parents were dead, before marrying in 1847 Anne McHardie, daughter of James McHardie, Sheriff Clerk of Glasgow and a successful Glasgow property speculator of Cleddens Estate near Glenboig where Merry had mineral leases. The following year his partner Alexander Cunningham married Anne's sister.

Marriage gave James Merry a new entree into Glasgow society. His wife was a noted beauty and socialite and for a while he enjoyed the advantages this brought in the second city of the empire. But in 1855, the same year that his first son Archie was born, he moved his family from his Glasgow home in Athole Place to the rented Culdees Castle at Auchterarder in Perthshire, thus beginning the process of taking himself outwith the fierce glow of the furnaces

where his fortune was being forged, into a softer social limelight. Then, in 1857, he shook off for ever the dust and grime of industry from his heels and bought the beautiful estate of Belladrum which then amounted to 5,395 acres with a rental of £2,746 and was to be his only residence, save for a London house, for the rest of his life.

I have no knowledge as to whether anyone has ever completed a study as to what percentage of the Highlands changed hands around the middle of the 19th century - but it must have been enormous. All around, the old landed families - the clan chiefs, former tacksmen and gentry - were selling out to the tide of new money that was sweeping the land market before it; much of this, but not all, came from Scotland's industrial anvil. Alexander Cunningham, James's partner, bought himself a sporting estate on the south side of Loch Ness - each of the five Bairds, ironmasters at Gartsherrie, bought themselves sporting estates. Belladrum itself was more of a farming enterprise than a sporting estate - though it did have a very useful small grouse moor.

James Merry Sr. had been an owner of race horses and since 1830, Merry had indulged a passion for horse-racing, entering horses on the Scottish circuits and often riding himself. He had been an enthusiastic rider to hounds, principally with the Lanarkshire and Renfrew Foxhounds. On buying the black and yellow colours of the tenth Marquis of Westminster, he entered the first rank of racing, with his first major win of the 2000 Guineas with 'Lord of the Isles' in 1855. From 1857 onwards, James's horses, Belladrum and his family became the major passions of his life. He stepped back from his business, leaving its running for the most part to his partner Alexander Cunningham and, after his death in 1866, to his son John Cunningham.

Popular with the aristocratic English racing establishment James Merry was not. Despite his unrivalled list of successes on the turf, he was never elected a member of the Jockey Club which had by the 19th century become racing's ruling body. Seen as an uncouth, ill-educated, suspicious-minded Scot as one detractor put it, he was shunned by the English nobility, though he remained popular with the vast majority of the racing public who followed his colours blindly, and respected his straight-forward, honest approach in an era when racing was rife with corruption. As one turf correspondent wrote - "unfortunately, some of the ablest writers on Turf matters have been, and are, tainted with a spirit of aristocratic exclusiveness, and display it when dealing with eminent racing men of plebeian origin, who have the misfortune to come between the wind and their nobility. Among the persons for whom these fastidious writers have professed their profound contempt is ... Mr James Merry, the great Scotch ironmaster and sportsman."

The success of James Merry's betting probably did little to help his popularity with Turfites. In 1860, when his horse 'Thormanby' won the Derby, he was reputed to have made between £100,000 and £500,000 in notes and gold from his bets and was found by his trainer counting them out with his wife on the billiard room table of the house he had rented. Merry handed the trainer a £1,000 bank note. Merry was also an enthusiastic 'cocker' said to keep at one time

more game fowls than any other person in the world, thousands at a time, all for matching and all black-breasted reds. Wagers of 500 guineas for a match were not uncommon, and Merry did not lose often.

One other factor in his life was Parliament. In 1857, he contested Glasgow as a Liberal against the Glasgow merchant Walter Buchanan and lost. Later that year he contested the Burghs of Falkirk for the Liberals and won, defeating George Baird, one of the Tory Bairds of Gartsherrie and his main rivals in business - the Bairds once threatened that if they did not succeed, they would see the grass grow on Airdrie streets. However, his tenure of the seat was short. His opponents accusing him of corrupt practices during the election, petitioned the House of Commons and a committee of investigation unseated him in 1858. It appears that his agents were over-zealous on his behalf and over-stepped the limits on expenditure prescribed by the law in election times. But the taint of corruption seemed to worry him not a jot and in 1859 Jimmy Merry, as he was known to his voters, regained his seat for the same constituency and served it until his retirement from public life in 1874.

1857 must have seemed something of an 'annus mirabilis' to James, as not only did he purchase Belladrum and reach Parliament in that year, but he also bought Baron Rothschild's racing stables at Rusley Park and all Lord John Scott's racehorses, besides being presented, attired in the uniform of the Queen's Own Royal Glasgow Yeomanry in which he was a Captain, at St. James to Queen Victoria by Lord Belhaven. James's democratic responsibilities in Parliament were obviously not something that wore heavy on his conscience. I can find no record of him ever having spoken there. But membership of the House gave him and his wife access to London and its social whirl.

Merry's education in matters other than to do with his business or horse-racing seems to have been rather sketchy, despite his attendance at Glasgow University. Surviving letters or papers relating to him in the family amount to nil - not I think because they have been discarded, but simply because he was a man of action rather than of words. And his knowledge of religion, in an era when knowledge of the Bible was widespread, was limited to say the least. On one famous occasion, he was heckled on the hustings as to his opinions on the vexed questions of Church Rates, the Law of Hypothec and sundry other abominations in Scottish eyes. He had been previously coached by his secretary as to what answer to give, and was just about to open his mouth, when a voice shouted, "And hoo about the Decalogue, mon?" For a moment James looked perplexed. The word was unfamiliar to him, but supposing it must be one of the questions as to which he had been duly instructed on what to say, he replied - "I'm for abolishin them a'", an announcement which caused mingled consternation and amusement among his audience until, thanks to the prompting of his secretary, he discerned his mistake and clumsily rectified it amid roars of laughter he good-naturedly joined.

In terms of public service, Inverness-shire claimed his services in a way that Glasgow never did. He never served Glasgow in any capacity and though he was latterly a J.P. for Lanarkshire, most of his service as a J.P. took place in Inverness-shire. He even named one of his horses

Belladrum. "The connections which he formed in the North", as the Inverness Advertiser put it in its obituary, "... and the interest which he bestowed upon various matters relating to Inverness-shire, secured for him the appointment as a Deputy Lieutenant of the county." He was elected a member of the Northern Meeting and was, for many years, a director of the Highland Railway which some sources - and I cannot find corroboration for this - credit him with initiating. Before the days of the line between Perth and Inverness, it was necessary to travel to Aberdeen and then change trains to Inverness. When the train from the south was late into Aberdeen, railway officials took great pleasure at shutting the gates to the Inverness platform, debarring angry passengers from boarding it just as it was pulling out. Merry and other influential Highlanders were said to be so incensed at this happening on one occasion, and thus having to spend the night in Aberdeen, that they set about finding support for a Highland line. Certainly Merry was among the Highland landowners who took shares in the Highland Railway Group, taking £85,000 worth.

Belladrum estate itself was formerly owned by the Frasers of Belladrum; originally they were tacksmen of the Lovats, but they obtained the feu and since at least the 17th century were an independent and separate Fraser branch, though obviously de facto adherents of Lovat's. Colonel James Fraser, 7th of Belladrum served as an officer in the Fraser Highlanders under Wolfe in 1757 and commanded the Fraser Fencibles, which he helped raise, in Ireland. He was known as 'Knowing James' and his son, known as 'Knowing Knowing James', thought he knew everything and as a result, on inheriting the estate in 1808, got into financial difficulties, forcing him to sell it in 1828 for £80,000 to James Stewart of Carnoustie who had plantations in Jamaica and British Guyana. Stewart, in turn, ran into financial difficulties and sold the estate to James Merry in 1857.

Belladrum - after the Gaelic for Broomy Bank - is thought to have been originally a Georgian style house, but was altered by Stewart. James Merry, when he bought Belladrum, spent considerable funds on commissioning the architect David Bryce in re-designing the house in a French baronial style and using cream-coloured stone quarried from near Elgin. The Italian gardens, created at about that time, were unique in being so far north, though unfortunately created in a frost hollow as it turned out. Thereafter, Merry lived in the house for a long period each year, though the house and grounds were frequently thrown open to visitors and visits by excursion parties'.

The ruin of Tighromach that stands near Phoinneas House - and is also known as the old laundry - was said to have been built by Merry at the junction of the roads to Belladrum and Ballindoun. Belladrum had been eager to buy Ballindoun, which at the time was for sale, and asked a friend to travel down to Edinburgh for him and bid for the property at a solicitor's office there. The friend succeeded in buying Ballindoun - but not for Belladrum but for himself. Belladrum was furious and christened his friend 'Muchaidh' meaning piggish. Out of spite he built 'Tigromach' or 'Shaggy House' with one wall which faced the Ballindoun road rough so that whenever Muchaidh passed he could stop and claw himself.

At his death, seemingly of pneumonia, in 1877 at the age of 72, his estate was valued at £680,000. He was buried in the Necropolis in Glasgow, as was his right as a member of the Merchant House of Glasgow.

James and Anne Merry had three sons, one of whom died early. Archie, the eldest surviving son, was born in 1851, educated at Eion and took a commission in the Blues, the Royal Horseguards. Charlie Merry, his younger brother, was also educated at Eion and entered the army, but later was to spend a considerable fortune in a dissolute life on the Turf and die young and unmarried, of TB., a stark contrast to his father's career. Archie carried out further improvements and enlargements to Belladrum House. He succeeded in winning the 2,000 Guineas in 1890 with 'Surefoot' in black and red colours - the Westminsters had been very quick to reclaim their black and gold colours from cheeky old Jimmy on his death - thus following to some extent in his father's tradition. Neither he nor Charlie had any interest in following their father into his business and both lived as gentlemen of leisure. Thus, within the space of two generations, a family had gone from alleged itinerant pedlars to fabulously rich landed gentry.

In 1899, Archie married the Hon. Ida Helen Chetwynd, sister of the 8th Viscount Chetwynd, an old Norman family who came over with William the Conqueror. Her mother was Julia Bosville Davidson of Tulloch, daughter of Duncan fourth of Tulloch, chiefs of the Clan Davidson, and Elizabeth Diana Macdonald of the Isles, thus marrying the Merry family into some old Highland families. It is sad to note - as an aside - that despite the fact that Duncan Davidson, fourth of Tulloch, Ida's grandfather, had five wives, and no less than 19 children, I know of no other Tulloch Davidson descendants other than myself, resident in the Highlands. In addition, since Duncan Davidson, sixth of Tulloch died without an heir, leaving the clan without a chief and my great aunt Catherine, another Davidson, married Angus Vickers, who inherited Tulloch, turned down the offer of chiefship, the position has remained vacant until today. Luckily, however, moves are now afoot in New Zealand to resurrect one of Duncan's descendants there and interest him in the chiefship. The Merrys were Lowlanders that became Highlanders, flossam washed up in the Highlands on the age-old tide that exchanged families between highlands and lowlands. As such, they had no tartan - if you believe in family tartans - and as such they adopted the Davidson and Davidson of Tulloch which we wear to this day.

Archie Merry died in 1933 and was succeeded by his son Eion James, who was also educated at Eion and joined the Blues. During his army career and the war, Ida continued to live at Belladrum, sponsoring many good causes such as the Ida Merry Maternity Home in Inverness and working for the Red Cross etc. After the war, Eion returned and in 1953 fearing that he would be unable to staff Belladrum House in the changed circumstances then, moved into Phoinneas House, also on the estate which was renovated and cured of dry rot. Belladrum was demolished in 1955 - because Eion was too fond of it to sit and watch it decay as a ruin - after being offered unsuccessfully to several schools and hospitals - and much of the stone was used in the construction of Elgin Post Office. During Eion's ownership of Belladrum, it became

famous for its herd of pedigree Aberdeen Angus cattle.

He had married Jean Trefuis Crichton, daughter of the Hon. Arthur Crichton, a younger brother of the Earl of Erne. By her he had his only surviving child, Davina Jean to whom he made over Belladrum in the 1960s. However, dying in 1966 at the early age of 63, Eion did not survive long enough after handing Belladrum over for the estate to escape crippling death duties prevalent at that time which have dismembered so many family estates and so often thrown a burden on the State as opposed to relieving one in the form of taxes. Davina had married Roland Christopher Gibbs, now Field Marshal Sir Roland Gibbs, and had me in 1957 and my brother James and my sister Melissa subsequently. Unfortunately, in 1977, when I was approaching my 21st birthday, the estate that I had been primed to inherit since birth, had to be sold, principally because of accumulated problems associated with death duties.

Between 1857 and 1977, Belladrum enjoyed 120 years of stability and serenity. Ask anyone who worked on the estate in those years, and often their antecedents before them, and they will tell you what a happy place it was; everyone on the estate felt part of a family - Belladrum was a tight community within a community - and people looked out for each other; conditions were good, and life followed a regular and pleasing cycle. The estate led a gilded existence of self-sufficiency, supplied by a well-run farm and a bountiful walled garden, under perhaps autocratic - for that was often the spirit of the age, my great-grandmother Ida running her white gloves down the banisters every morning in coming down to breakfast and woe betide the maids if there was any sign of dirt on it - but basically a benevolent and caring regime where the welfare of the people on the estate mattered to its owners.

After 1977, there then followed an unhappy period in Belladrum's history. Having survived intact as an entity for many hundreds of years, it was bought by a Dutchman by the name of Katz and broken up in an asset-stripping exercise which resulted in its complete dismemberment. No longer could the Reelig Frasers sing of the Merrys and the Lovat Frasers, in an adaptation of the old hymn, 'The poor man in his castle, the rich man at his gate.'

It is now much changed from how it was in my youth. But happily for us, in 1987, ten years after my family had left it, I was able to repurchase Phoinias and since then, Belladrum old house site and Italian gardens and Belladrum woodlands and commercial forestry. During that ten years my family retained a small amount of ground and a house on a former croft site at Pettyvaich, and the temple of family burial ground near Belladrum home farm, so in effect we never entirely left Belladrum soil - in fact our territorial designation remains, to this day, by the authority of the Lord Lyon, 'of Belladrum'. The estate is most unlikely to be what it was once ever again. But at least we, my wife and I, and our descendants - at present Hermione and Eion - have the incalculable privilege of being able to live in a place which we love. Belladrum may have changed in some senses, but nothing can destroy its atmosphere, the way it lies in the landscape and looks across to the hills, the way the light falls there in the evenings, the sound of the owls and cattle in the fields; the shades of the Merrys and before them the Stewarts and the Frasers that walk there; it is a place that burns itself deeply into your soul and stays there

for ever, calling you back from wherever you are. And coming to know my ancestors through their history as I have, and in particular that of James Merry, I do take a quiet pride in what they achieved and hope to learn a lesson from their tenaciousness and determination; and I thank them for the part of the world to which they brought their family all those years ago, for now it will always be ours.

### VICTIMS OF THE GALLIPOLI CAMPAIGN

I am a member of the Great Britain-based Gallipoli Association and am in the process of compiling a biographical register (for publication) of all British and Dominion servicemen who fell at Gallipoli, who died later as a result of wounds or illness, or who died in Turkish captivity (provided they were captured at Gallipoli). As such, I would like to enlist the help of the readers of your Society's Journal.

In compiling my register, I am trying to include the following details for each man:

1. Name
2. Service number
3. Company, battalion and regiment
4. Places and dates of birth and enlistment
5. Place of residence at the time of enlistment (to include street address)
6. Names of parents, to include mother's maiden name
7. Name of spouse and date of marriage
8. Names and birthdates of children
9. Education
10. Occupation(s)
11. Previous military service
12. Awards
13. Date, place, and circumstances of death
14. Place of original burial and current resting place
15. Places of commemoration
16. Any other interesting details regarding the individual  
ie. relating to personality, physical stature, experiences etc.
17. Location of photograph (whether or not I am able to reproduce it)  
and source of obituary

I am also very interested in receiving details on men who died after returning home, as a result of their service in Gallipoli. These men are particularly elusive. In addition to seeking information for my register, I would also like to offer to help interested readers learn about the men who fell at Gallipoli, free of charge. In the past, I have been able to help many people clear up mysteries relating to these men and in some cases have been able to help genealogists carry a line back a step in the process. I would be most happy to answer any questions you might have and look forward to hearing from you.

Patrick Garipey,  
352 Irving Road,  
Eugene,  
OR 97404, U.S.A.

## A LOVE LETTER?

by John Durham

(Heirloom Night - 24th January 1995)

I am going to take a liberty tonight and show you not one heirloom but seven. My excuse is that all are relevant to the sad story surrounding the "love letter" sent from Liverpool to Lerwick in Shetland by my great grandmother Harriet Atherton in July 1871, two weeks before her 19th birthday, to her future husband John Leisk, a man some nine years her senior. At the time she was a teacher living and working in the private school run by her brother-in-law James Bryan. He had taught previously in a Public School in Lerwick where he made the acquaintance of John Leisk.

The first heirloom takes us back almost exactly 28 years to the 5th July 1843. It is a receipt given to Thomas Goulborn for the purchase of Grave No. 202 and for the first interment in St Mary's Cemetery, Kirkdale, Liverpool. Thomas was Harriet's maternal grandfather and his daughter, also named Harriet, had married William Atherton Jnr., a chemist. It is interesting to note the reference at the foot of the receipt to the fact that a headstone must be furnished within 12 months or the grave would be forfeited. Would the family then have to exhume the remains?

The next heirloom is the letter from Harriet Atherton to John Leisk, which on the face of it is fairly innocuous, with its reference to two funerals and the poor weather that year. However I like to think that the paragraph highlighted, which appears to me to be a cry from the heart, allows me the latitude of describing it as a "love letter".

Coburg House

July 23<sup>rd</sup> 1871

Dear Mr Leisk,

I received your kind note & glad to hear that you are quite well.

You will be surprised to hear that we had a visit from Mr W Linklater of Edinburgh yesterday week, I did not see him as he only stayed a few minutes & then being a deal to do in the house after our return I was very busy at the time, he told sister he had spent a very pleasant evening with you and some other gents the Monday previous, he has promised to spend an evening with us when he next visits L'pool.

I forget whether I told you of the death of Mr Jeffries the late bankrupt or perhaps you have seen it through the mechanism of the press, he died very suddenly at breakfast. How his affairs will be settled remains for the future, there were so many people attended his funeral from curiosity & from the proceedings which have taken place.

How different was the attendance at the funeral of the late Mr Newlands, our borough

engineer, who had devoted his time & talent to the improvement of the town, his remains were interred last Thursday at the Necropolis. I enclose for you a slip from the paper, the close of the ceremony is torn off but I could not get another paper.

I suppose you have a little time allowed you each year for recreation, if so I suppose you have not decided what part of the British Isles you will visit this autumn.

We have had a very wet summer so far. I do hope it will be fine soon or the crops will be materially damaged, so far no harm has been done & we must hope & trust for the future.

The schools reopen tomorrow. You will be glad to hear that Mr B. has several additions also that baby B. is thriving surprisingly & takes notice of everybody & everything. James and Louisa wish to be kindly remembered.

I must conclude with kind regards from all & accept the same from

Yours very sincerely

Harriet Atherton

Please excuse this poor paper but I have no more better tonight & if I leave it until tomorrow I shall not have the time to write.

The next heirloom is another letter. This one was addressed to Harriet by her elder brother Tom who was living in Portuguese West Africa at the time. In it he congratulates his sister on her engagement and looks forward to coming to visit the couple following their marriage when he next returns to Great Britain.

Black Point

11th November 1872

My Dear Sister Harriet,

I was glad to receive your welcome addition to Pa's letter & I must say I was not at all surprised at the news contained therein as it was a thing, well not certain, but anticipated & I can only express my happiness in the fulfilment of such expectations.

Well sis you have done well, and I feel sure that John will endeavour to make you a good & affectionate husband & that your path thro' life may be an easy one is your brothers most earnest wish, tho' far distant.

When I hear of the date of the consummation of your Happiness I shall have a holiday all to myself, drink both your healths & enjoy myself in the African fashion by going into the bush in search of wild animals. - You will hear by my letter to what dangers we are exposed here,

but with care & keeping your eyes open you can overcome them.

I am much obliged for your kind invitation to run north to see you both when I return and have no doubt, if spared, will avail myself of it - as it is my intention, if living, to go into Scotland as soon as I return & thence into Ireland, so that the extra journey north will be nothing.

I am a good hand, if I might term it, at Portuguese & can now speak it fluently - it was very hard to learn at first, but I "copped" him. Nearly all are Portuguese here so that I almost sometimes forget I am an Englishman & then when the mail comes & I see the English flag there is a proud feeling rises that tells me I am not a mean little Portuguese.

I must now close, wishing you every prosperity & happiness which a brother can wish a dear sister & asking to be remembered to John.

Believe me,

Your affectionate brother,

Tom

I have highlighted two references he made to the possibility of his not being able to fulfil his wish to visit his sister and her husband. Unfortunately his premonitions were well founded as we see from the next heirloom, which is a copy of the page in the Family Bible used for recording births and deaths. We note that Tom died on the 12th February 1874, only 4 months prior to his sister's marriage to John Leisk. The cause of death was black water fever.

The fifth heirloom is a quite amazing letter from William Atherton to his daughter on her arrival in Lerwick after the honeymoon when she is in the throes of setting up her household. The flowery language used in some places appears to be excessive, even for Victorian times. The writing was difficult to read and some words simply do not make sense.

Coburg House  
August 3rd 1874

My Dear Hatty,

You know that letter writing is like strawberries and cream so delicious that we always give the preference to the Ladies, and now that they have had a gushing feast I am content to come in and try to talk something. They have so exhausted all subjects, that I have to look about for a stray bit of news or wait till some crops up, but I must be like the mariner at Church and say "Sermons at a bankede?". I need not assure you that I imbibe all that has been written, for you know, though a silent, I have not been an uninterested spectator of what has been transpiring.

How each of you enjoyed your journey home, were kindly received by relations and friends up

to the point of sailing, how enthusiastically you were met - comest home and surrounded by dear and affectionate friends so as to cause you to forget you were a stranger, enabling you and your dear husband to realise the sentiments that marriage when properly entered upon is the happiest state on earth, the blush remnant of Paradisical bliss for the Ancients tell us that the first thing that produced a smile upon the sorrow-stricken face of Eve was the finding at her feet of the chaplet of flowers Adam had entwined in her hair on the day of their espousal which had fallen on the occasion of the expulsion.

You are now settling down to home life. I often think that I can see you thus engaged, but if I were to describe my suppositions you would only smile for you see I know nothing of the geography of your house, but it is sufficient of me to know that you are happy in each other's society and have all that is requisite to make life so dear, it becomes continually brighter is our most fervent prayer! Give my kind regards to John and if need be tell his friends how grateful I am for their kind endeavours to contribute to your happiness.

Was not the destruction of our landing stage a great nay almost a national loss? Arrangements are nearly completed for the Ferry-traffic &c &c and we must do the best we can for the next two or three years till it is replaced. The loss is great but it has not yet been decided who is to "Pay the Piper" but it is the general opinion that it will be the Gas Co., and every body wishes it, you can see what someday love can do!

All your friends here make anxious enquiries respecting you, and are pleased to learn of your welfare, and happiness, even the little ones say "you might have waited until they were grown up." they desire their kind love. Mrs Williams (Park), Mrs and the Misses Leadger, Mrs Shand, Capt. & Mrs Potts, Lucy &c send their kind regards. Mow Betholt called in last evng. and was very demonstrative and will feel "Most happy" and "compliments" to hear from you, to know that you are happy as you so well deserve to be, when you write to him you can address to us. Uncle Robert's address is "St James Vicarage, Ratchiff Cross, London E" You know how delighted he will be to hear from you. I have not heard from him since you left.

Ma has been much better of late, but for the past few days, she has not been too well, her back is bad, she feels weak, and tired, but I have no doubt she will be better, as she becomes reconciled to your leaving, but you know her love for her children, she would have all of you always with her, or as she expressively said the other day "She wished that she could be at both places".

We were highly amused at John's description of the "Dundreary" Parson and the responding sheep. The latter was the most natural & answering more fully the end for which it was created. A peep at the criticism might perhaps do him good, for it is so just and scoring.

By the way I was pleased with your essay though brief on Phytology, as manifested in the wise allotment of our several localities, and the adaptation of our Physical Nature thereto. I



