

HIGHLAND
FAMILY HISTORY
SOCIETY

hìghland family history society



comunn
sloinntearachd
na
Gaidhealtachd

JOURNAL

Vol. 19 No. 3

May 2001

ISSN 0262-6659

*Published by
The Highland Family History Society
Comunn Sloinntearachd na Gaidhealtach*

CONTENTS

1	Editorial
2	Highland Scots in Demerara and Berbice
9	HFHS Projects - Current Status
13	Family History Summer Course
14	The Renaults and the Mackenzies.....
17	Ellis Island Immigrants
18	Income and Expenditure Account 1999-2000
19	Balance Sheet - 31 st August 2000.....
20	Treasurer's Annual Report
21	1865 - A Year Probably Best Forgotten
24	E-mail Addresses (an update)
25	Members' Research Interests
27	Kilmorack Heritage Society Publications
28	Queries (947-952)
29	12 th SAFHS Annual Conference - Help Wanted
30	Publications for Sale.....

© 2001: Highland F.H.S. & contributors

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN
SECRETARY
TREASURER
JOURNAL EDITOR
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY
SYLLABUS SECRETARY
RESEARCH ENQUIRIES
LIBRARIAN
SAFHS REPRESENTATIVE

Neil Murray
Angus Bethune
John Durham
Nick Lindsay
John Durham
Alison Forbes
Sheila Munro
Mary Murray
Neil Murray

For correspondence addresses,
please refer to details on inside of back cover

SUBSCRIPTION RATES for year 01/09/2000 - 31/08/2001

Membership Category	United Kingdom	Overseas
Ordinary	£8.00	£11.00
Family	£10.00	£13.00
Pensioner	£5.00	£8.00
Institutional	£12.00	£15.00

EDITORIAL

Welcome to this quarter's journal. Have you noticed a change in style already? If so, go straight to the top of the class. There is a story to tell, so read on. At the recent Highland Heritage Association conference in Nairn, I was busy doing heritage things, representing Clyne Heritage Society, when I was forced into a dark corner by two shady-looking characters. This was the HFHS heavy mob who had cornered me and there was no escape. The mobsters were John Durham and Jonathan McColl (recently retired editor) and their powers of persuasion (I still bear the bruises) were too great. After spirited resistance and a rather extended period of arm-twisting, I succumbed and took the Society's shilling, and this is why you are now subjected to a change of editor.

Trying to fill the large hole left by the departure of your former editor of twelve years is quite a daunting prospect, I can tell you. You should be sitting where I am right now. I am a novice. I have little experience in the field, but am learning fast. I am very keen and will be leaning on John Durham frequently and often.

Why am I doing it? Well firstly, I suspect that I didn't step back quickly enough from the line when the call for willing volunteers was made. Secondly, I hope to learn a great deal from this fascinating field, even though I have no roots of my own in the Highlands. My ancestry lies in Dundee, although there are members of the Lindsay clan scattered around the Highlands, so there just could be links to the area after all. This may well be an area of research that I can undertake and it may be of interest to you to see how a novice (publicly) approaches the family history minefield and you can all giggle at my naivety and failures, thinking "Been there. Done that!". Hopefully, you can also share in any successes I may be fortunate enough to have, in which maybe some of you will have played an active part.

What has encouraged me already is the fact that in the last journal I placed a small appeal for information on families or ancestors buried in the Old Clyne Cemetery near Brora, which, having no immediate local roots, is a substitute area of local interest to me. I have had around a dozen replies already (and would welcome any more) which have all been extremely useful and fascinating, but what really struck a chord with me is the kindness, helpfulness and interest shown by my respondents. This interest and warmth has really gone a long way to my acceptance of my new role. So finally, it is down to you, the membership, who have given me the most encouragement to try to fill the rather large boots vacated by Jonathan. With your help and continued interest and support, I hope that I can succeed and feel very honoured to have been invited (alright, arm-twisted) to accept the position. So thanks and welcome, and I hope that together the correspondence, articles, projects, queries and good work continue to flow and grow.

There is a definite foreign flavour to two of this month's articles. For those of us who were unable to attend David Alston's talk to the Society at the recent AGM, there is the chance to catch up with this little known branch of emigrant Highland Scots and the roots they replanted in return back in Scotland. I for one (showing my naivety again) did not realise the extent of the Highland presence in the Caribbean in the late 18th and early 19th Centuries, but when one reads of the financial returns available, maybe it's not too surprising that Highlanders were not slow on the uptake. It does beg the question though, why this potential quick financial return appealed so much to the Scots, witnessed by the disproportionately high number of estates in their ownership, compared to other nationalities. I will leave yourselves to ponder...

Highland Scots in Demerara and Berbice

By David Alston

(Talk given to the Society on 24th April 2001)

My interest in this topic began with two local 'stories'.

Hugh Rose was the fifth son of the Rev Hugh Rose and Margaret MacCulloch, whose family owned Glastullich in Easter Ross. Rose made money supplying the British fleet in the West Indies in the 1790s and in the early 1800s married Arabella Phipps.¹ His wife was, according to local tradition, murdered in 1806 in Bayfield House by Rose's 'quadroon' mistress, who had been kept hidden in the attics. It is impossible to determine whether or not there is any truth in the tradition. Nevertheless, it indicates the sense of both the presence of blacks and of the inherent danger they were deemed to pose.

The second 'story' is factual. Hugh Miller was removed by his uncles from the Cromarty parish school and attended a private school established "by some of the wealthier tradesmen of the town"² until his expulsion in 1817. In his autobiography he notes:

"There was a mulatto lad, a native of the West Indies, who sat at the same form with me. He was older and stouter than I, and much dreaded by the other boys for a wild, savage disposition which is, I believe, natural to most of his countryfolks."³

Since he was being educated at this school, the West Indian is likely to have been the son, or other relation, of a Cromarty tradesman or merchant. I should add that a little earlier, in 1805, there were three children on the roll of Inverness Royal Academy who were described as 'coloured'.⁴

Background

Markets in the Caribbean and North America, mainly Virginia, were vital to the growth of the Scottish economy in the late eighteenth century. For example, ninety per cent of all linen exports were for these destinations – brightly coloured for the West Indies and buff for the

¹ Ash, *This Noble Harbour*, p. 111 and note 21 and R W and J Munro, *Tain Through the Centuries* (Tain, 1966), p. 104.

² Miller, *Schools and Schoolmasters*, p. 122.

³ Hugh Miller, *Memoir: From Stonemason to Geologist* (Edinburgh, 1995) p. 107.

⁴ Information from Dr Douglas Hamilton, University of Aberdeen

tobacco plantations.⁵ The effects of these trade links were also felt in the Highlands. The large hemp manufactories established in Inverness and Cromarty, in 1765 and c.1772 respectively, produced bagging for the London-West Indies trade.

By the 1790s a number of parishes reported emigration to the area. Tain reported that 'several young people go yearly to London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, the West Indies and North America, some of whom have prospered well and been of service to their relations'⁶ From Kirkhill it was noted that 'some [young men] go to the West Indies . . . while the women remain'⁷

Great Britain gained effective control of Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo in 1796 and this was followed by a growth in the number of estates. While some later saw this as evidence of innately superior British drive, there were in fact sound economic reasons for the expansion since, for a number of years after 1799, the prices of sugar, coffee and cotton all rose. It was reckoned that a sugar plantation with 200 slaves would require capital of £20,000 and produce a net annual profit of £3500. Even if the estate were fully mortgaged at 10%, this would leave a net profit of £1500, with minimal living costs.⁸

There was a strong Scottish contingent in subsequent immigration, fueled by the lure of such profits. One commentator noted in 1807 that new sugar estates in Demerara generally had, in addition to slaves, a number of 'negro and mulatto tradesmen' from West Indian islands working under 'merchants from England and Scotland, but principally from the latter'.⁹ When the same colony presented evidence against emancipation in 1824, the secretary to the committee of inhabitants was a Scot, Alexander MacDonnell, and he produced reports from five estate managers, four of whom were Scots.¹⁰ Rodway's *History of British Guiana*, written in the 1890s, noted that the overseers, before the abolition of slavery in 1834, were 'often young Scotchmen or Barbadians'.¹¹ A list of estate in Demerara with their owners and attorneys – that is, factors who managed the estate for absentee owners – was published in

⁵ C Whatley, *Scottish Society, 1707–1830* (Manchester, 2000) p 109.

⁶ OSA, Vol 3, p 392.

⁷ OSA, Vol 4, p 116.

⁸ J Rodway, *History of British Guiana*, 3 vols (Georgetown, 1891–94) vol 2, p 153.

⁹ H Boimbrooke, *A Voyage to the Demerary* (London, 1807) p 211.

¹⁰ A MacDonnell, *Considerations on Negro Slavery in Demerara* (1824) p 146. The Scots managers were Donald Macdonald (resident for 24 years), John Maclean (resident for 14 years), George Rose (resident for 25 years) and A Macrae (resident for 18 years).

¹¹ Rodway, *History of British Guiana*, p 156.

1832 and from this it is possible to provide some quantification of the extent of Scots involvement.

Estates in Demerara, 1832 (source <i>Local Guide</i> , 1832)				
Parrish	Number of estates	Estates with proprietors having a Scots surname	Estates with attorneys having a Scots surname	% of estates with Scots in ownership or management
St Swithin	15	3	3	33%
St Luke	37	15	4	38%
St Peter	31	9	10	39%
St James	28	6	4	28%
St John	39	8	7	25%
Holy Trinity	34	7	2	23%

The strong Scots presence is also apparent from Thomas Staunton Saint Clair, an ensign in the Royal Scots, who wrote an account of his service in Berbice and Demerara between 1806 and 1808.¹² This included an extended social visit to Plantation Geanes, jointly owned by the Easter Ross laird, Macleod of Geanies, and a Simon Fraser. The adjoining Brighton plantation was owned by an Evan Fraser, on whose schooner they travelled, and who accompanied them on an expedition up the Corantine river. A Scots doctor, named Gordon, was also part of the party and their helmsman was a black slave, named Mungo, from another of Macleod's properties, Plantation Guedes.¹³ A number of other lairds from the northern Highlands had a stake in these colonies and in 1814 nearly £1000 was subscribed from Berbice to help establish Tain Academy. Most of these donations came from estates named after properties in Easter Ross and Sutherland – Alness, Creich, Dunrobin, Foulis, Golspie and Novar.¹⁴ There were also, at that date or later, plantations in Berbice named Tain, Fearn,

¹² TS Saint Clair, *A Residence in the West Indies and America*, 2 vols (London, 1834). Saint Clair also met with a recluse known as Old Glen, a sailor from Glasgow who had then been in Berbice for over 60 years. He had settled under the Dutch, bought land and slaves, and prospered until he came under the influence of Swedenborg's thought. Thereafter he neglected his affairs, lost his estate and served as a private soldier, until he was court-martialled for falling asleep on duty. He then retired to the forest on the estate of a Mr Lawson, becoming a respected herbalist but still, when Saint Clair met him there, obsessed with Swedenborg.

¹³ Saint Clair, *Residence*, pp 240ff.

¹⁴ From *Tain Through the Centuries* (RW and Jean Munro, Tain, 1966)

Culcairn, Kiltearn and Glastullich.¹⁵

Scots also left a legacy in the names given to slaves on the plantations. Emancipation, in 1834, was followed by a four-year period of 'apprenticeship', during which the former slaves were obliged to remain at work but were paid a small wage. At the end of this transitional period many former slaves bought small plots of land. This was often done co-operatively, creating villages on former plantations. The records of these transactions show that a large number of slaves had Scottish surnames, presumably given by the owners of the plantations on which they, or their parents, had been born. For example, Lot 79 of Plantation Skeldon in Demerara, which had belonged to a series of Scottish owners since 1811, was divided in 1843 into eighteen lots. Of the eighteen new owners, four were surnamed Ross (Joe, Ramdos, Christmas and Eva) and two were surnamed Douglas (Romeo and Tom).¹⁶

A much larger division was that of Plantation Ithaca, which had belonged to the London-based Scottish sugar merchants Davidson, Barkley and Co. This was divided into 165 lots. The purchasers' surnames included McCammon [8], Chisholm [2], Anderson [1], Robertson [1], McCree [1], Blair [4], McLeod [1], Laing [1], Cameron and Davison [3] (which may have been a corruption of Davidson). The forenames of others included Dundas and Watson.¹⁷ As a final example, when the ninety-six lots of Belladrum were judicially sold in 1890, thirty-three of them were then owned by villagers with Scots surnames.¹⁸

The fortunes of one Highland emigrant to Berbice are particularly well documented.¹⁹ Edward Satchwell Fraser of Reelig (1751–1835) was the eldest son of the laird of a small Inverness-shire estate. He served as a captain in the 71st Regiment – Fraser's Highlanders²⁰ – and emigrated to Berbice in 1803 to manage estates acquired by the family. These included the lands of the Berbice Company, purchased jointly with Lord Seaforth, who was governor of Barbados.²¹ Fraser recorded his experiences and impressions of the colony in numerous letters home – and before his departure he had already written 'On Emigration from the

¹⁵ Land Claims

¹⁶ Land Claims, Demerara, p759.

¹⁷ Land Claims, Demerara, p328–329.

¹⁸ Land Claims, Demerara, p44.

¹⁹ Fraser of Reelig papers.

²⁰ Fraser's Highlanders, formed in 1778 and disbanded in 1784. The 71st was the first new Regiment raised for North American service and raised 2,340 Highlanders for service.

²¹ Bundle 152.

Scottish Highlands and Islands',²² a work which shows him to have been an astute observer of social and economic life in his home country.

Fraser's experience of Berbice was like that of many Scots in the West Indies – where few intended to settle permanently and where, consequently, there was little investment in social institutions.²³ He described the 'deficiencies of the town of Berbice and the low tone of society there'²⁴ and also the death of many colonists both in Berbice and Demerara (Bundle 8). Disease was, indeed, the principle disincentive to settlement. In 1796 an astonishing 40% of white troops in the West Indies died from disease and although this dropped to just over 11% in 1802²⁵ yellow fever was a constant threat.²⁶

There were also economic difficulties. In 1807, a vessel with the estate's cotton was seized by a French privateer and in 1808 the cotton crop failed (Bundle 8). Although the price rose in 1811, coffee and sugar had slumped (Bundle 10). By 1810 Fraser had concluded that there was no prospect of getting on in Berbice and that India was preferable. (Bundle 9). He returned to Inverness in 1811 or 1812, from where he travelled to India (Bundle 10), regarding the family's 'West Indian venture' as a failure because 'everything was unfavourable to the production of cotton'. (Bundle 65). However, it was 1818 before all of the estates were sold.

Black mistresses and mixed-race children

A number of those who wrote accounts of these colonies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries noted that it was a common practise for young European men to buy an educated black slave who became their mistress.²⁷ Many 'free coloureds' also became concubines, some of them enticed to Demerara and Berbice from Barbados and other Caribbean islands.²⁸ It was claimed that many of these relationships, despite their origins in

²² NLS Ms 9646.

²³ AL Karris, *Sojourners in the Sun: Scottish Migrants in Jamaica and the Chesapeake, 1740-1800* (London, 1992) p47.

²⁴ Bundle 27

²⁵ Bolinbroke, *Voyage to the Demerary*, p 129.

²⁶ The death rate for white troops in Demerara and Berbice averaged 8.4% between 1817 and 1836, but was higher in Jamaica, St Lucia and Trinidad, where it was closer to 12%. Fever accounted for almost half of the deaths but 'disease of the brain', usually *débruitum tremens* brought on by alcoholism was significant. Deaths from disease among black troops were consistently less than half that of whites. See HG Dalton, *A History of British Guiana*, 2 vols (London, 1855) vol 2, p 128.

²⁷ See Saint Clair, *Residence*; Bolinbroke, *Voyage to the Demerary*, and Pinckard,

²⁸ AO Thompson, *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Guyana, 1580-1803* (Bridgetown, Barbados 1987) p 87.

slavery, developed into affectionate and enduring partnerships. This was the more so if there were children – and at this early date it was not uncommon for mixed-race children to be sent to Britain to be educated.

A parallel – although not an exact one – can be drawn between these relationships and relationships between native women and fur-traders, many of them Highland Scots, in Canada.²⁹ Van Kirk has shown that the trade depended on quasi-marital relationships between traders and Indian women, both as a means of creating and sustaining trading links with Indian tribes and as a source of vital survival skills. These included the production of moccasins and snow shoes. 'To be without women,' van Kirk notes, 'was to invite disaster.'³⁰ There was a similar survival value in Demerara. The young ensign, Saint Clair, claimed to have been persuaded of the value of taking a black mistress after two of his friends were nursed through bouts of fever by their partners.³¹

There were, of course, important differences. Indian women were not slaves – although some early accounts of inter-marriage refer to them as 'slave women'³² – and they were from an established local culture, rather than to the cultural mix of slave society. However, life in a fur-trading post offered an easier existence than in traditional Indian society, where much heavy work was carried out by women,³³ and there was a similar advantage in a slave or 'free coloured' becoming the mistress of a plantation owner or manager. Such women also had a key role in the emergence of a new culture in plantation society. For example, Mintz³⁴ argues that the development of a cuisine within slave society was not only, in itself, an important exercise of freedom but that masters learned from their slaves and came to prize certain foods. Thus, some slaves 'came to enjoy an unanticipated freedom of manoeuvre' and masters allowed themselves to humanise the central contradictions of slavery. As the person responsible for the management of a household, it can be argued that black mistresses – who were often cooks themselves – played a crucial role in salvaging some value from the fundamentally abusive nature of slave society.

The title of van Kirk's book – *Mary Tender Ties* – refers to the affectionate and enduring relationships that were formed between fur-traders and Indian women. A similar 'tender tie'

²⁹ See S van Kirk, *Mary Tenders Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1679-1870* (Oklahoma, 1983).

³⁰ Van Kirk, *Mary Tender Ties*, p 54.

³¹ Saint Clair, *Residence*, p 112.

³² Van Kirk, *Mary Tender Ties*, p 71.

³³ Van Kirk, *Mary Tender Ties*, p 50.

³⁴ Sydney W Mintz, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom* (Boston, 1996) pp 33-49.

MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS

By John Durham

There has been no progress at all in the past 3 months due to a combination of problems, the most significant being the weather. Because of this a reprint of the inscriptions in Avoch Churchyard has had to go ahead without us having time to revisit the burial ground and try to locate stones under the turf. An increase in sales reduced the stock to two copies so the order to reprint had to go ahead so that we had sufficient copies to put on our sales table at the SAFHS Conference later this month at Largs.

On our return from Largs we shall get on with Old Petty Churchyard. I have only recently had a postcard from Joan and Harry Clyne, who helped Graham and I record the inscriptions in Rosemarkie Churchyard, offering to help with Petty. Anyone else who wishes to help with the initial transcribing of the inscriptions, please contact me. Address details can be found on the inside of the back cover of this Journal. We shall also complete the work at Greyfriars Churchyard in Inverness and publish the results.

INDEXES to 1851 CENSUS RETURNS

By John Durham

Considerable progress has been made with this project. The poor weather that affected the work of recording monumental inscriptions (see above) meant more time could be spent on this project. Over the long Easter weekend I had the microfilm reader at home from Thursday to Tuesday. As a result my wife and I checked a number of parishes and no fewer than six new indexes were published over a period of four weeks. Our secretary Angus Bethune had transcribed three of them, Glenshiel, Kintail and Lochalsh; Donnie MacLennan supplied the data for Alness and Margaret and Billy Mackay sent me a disc for Bower. The last index is of Kiltarlity Parish and John and Sue Thomson of The Kilmorack Heritage Association did the initial work on that one

Angus is going to wait until the autumn to start again, whereas Donnie is still working slowly through Rosskeen. Billy and Margaret Mackay are about halfway through Canisbay on their way via Dunnet, Halkirk and Keiss to complete the whole of Caithness. A most satisfactory situation and many thanks to all the transcribers.

HFHS STRAYS INDEX

By Alan Ross

Having spent most of the last three months away from home, the Index has regrettably had little attention of late. I will apologise if you have not yet received a reply to your letters as I still have some that remain unopened. Thanks again to all who have sent in data for me to add,

is seen in the will of George Jeffrey, made in Berbice in 1846. He left his property to his children by his housekeeper, Ajuba, with the provision that a legacy of £50 go to his sister in Dingwall – but only if this could be done without affecting the ‘independence and comfort’ of his mixed-race family.³⁵

In Canada, as in Demerara and Berbice, it was common for officers in the two principal fur-trading companies to send their mixed-race children to Britain for education.³⁶ This seems to suggest an acceptance of concubinage or irregular marriage. However, the position of Indian women deteriorated over time. This was, at first, because of the emergence of a ‘mixed-blood’ society, whose women were regarded as more suitable partners. A more profound change came with the arrival of white women in Canada. This led to clearly racist attitudes towards Indian women – a stance supported by missionaries, who were present in greater numbers and who thoroughly disapproved of the irregular relationships between Europeans and non-Christian ‘savages’.³⁷ Van Kirk claims that this connection between the arrival of white women and an increase in racism can be detected in many parts of the British Empire.³⁸ This, in turn, created a more stratified society, with women of mixed-race looking down on ‘squaws’ and attempting to emulate, and appear like, Europeans. In Canada these changed attitudes led to Indian women being regarded, and used, as prostitutes – a process fuelled by increasing consumption of alcohol by Indians.³⁹ Slave society, in contrast, had always allowed extensive sexual abuse.⁴⁰

These changing attitudes make it unlikely that mixed-race children continued to be sent to Britain. Nevertheless, it is clear that there are many people of Highland descent in the former colonies of Demerara and Berbice.

[At the end of the meeting Mr Alston asked if a search could be made of the monumental inscriptions published by the Society to see how many times the names Berbice and Demerara appeared. This has been done and references to these places were found in Chapel Yard, Old High, Inverness, Killearnan and Rosemarkie, where the name Berbice can be found on eight gravestones and that of Demerara on no fewer than thirteen. Ed.]

³⁵ *Land Claim: Berbice*, p 258–9.

³⁶ Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, p 87.

³⁷ Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, p 171.

³⁸ Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, p 201.

³⁹ Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, p 27.

⁴⁰ Thompson, *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Guyana*, pp 86ff.

