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EDITORIAL

Well. I have just about recovered from the rigours of compiling the last prologue and suddenly it's time again to put pen to paper, or rather tap in two-fingered fashion at a keyboard. It never ceases to amaze me as I mature, I would like to think, gracefully how time really does fly. This will become especially more apparent to me now, with the regular publication of this journal marking the passing of each quarter of the year as I continue to ripen in the future.

How our ancestors measured time was probably by a different method than a quarterly journal, but the same result and passing of time was achieved by nature's own clock, the quarterly seasons. These seasonal changes must have been considered much more significant than the diurnal changes offered by the more regular and monotonous night and day.

The annual cycles which had been established by nomadic hunters in pre-history in some way set the pattern and still governed the life of our forebears even only a few centuries ago. The nomads journeyed to where the food was richest at different times of the year, often abandoning a semi-permanent base camp for the whole of the summer season. When permanent settlement was the norm around 4,000-5,000 years ago, the seasons would still have been the main timescale the more static population would have set their Neolithic watches by.

Both then and in more recent times, post-Clearances for example, scraping a living from the poor lands which had been allocated to the ordinary folk must have been a monumental struggle and the arrival of the life-giving season, Spring, must have been more than most welcome. Thanks would have been paid to the Gods on many seasonal occasions - for safe delivery through the long and bleak Winter, for the arrival of milder weather in Spring and for the new life which accompanied it. Thanks were offered at harvest time in the Autumn for providing food for the long Winter ahead and also at the Winter solstice, signifying the optimism riding on the promise of receding dark and cold nights.

This ancient chronological system would only fall down in times of famine, when the summer was poor resulting in the failure of crops, which probably was all too frequent. Persistent failure would have led to even more disease and death amongst the population than usual, leading to the survivors reaching breaking point and searching for better land. This, in turn, leads to pressure on the better lands and ultimately conflict.

What, you may be wondering, is what does all of this have to do with Family History? Well, it appears that time (along with family blood, of course) is perhaps the only true constant that we share with our ancestors. The previous generations, apart from those whom we know or knew personally, and are so well displayed in our Family Trees, are only leaves and branches to us; nothing more to us than names and dates. They were here for a time, they all had their problems and disasters, much like ourselves, but arguably more life-threatening and they all went on their way, some more rapidly than others.

The crux is, that I believe we are so fortunate that we actually have the time to be able to indulge in, what after all is a very rewarding past-time, without a relative care in the world. Unless, of course, you have to start thinking about next quarter's editorial!

Cleared Settlements of Sutherland - A Series of Present Day Observations

By Nick Lindsay

At the risk of turning the journal into a very Sutherland-centric production, which, by way of some compensation, has the added benefit of reducing the number of these pages taken up by the Durham clan (apologies, John - only joking!), your editor has been taken by an idea. At weekends in fair weather, he can frequently be found wandering the hills of Sutherland, usually in the parish of Clyne, generally taking in the scenery, the natural history, the geology and the archaeology. One thread of fascination for me during this time of escapism concerns the remnants of the most recent age of habitation of the upland areas, in the times prior to the notorious Clearances. In the case of Clyne parish, this was in the early 1820s.

So rather than retain the secrets to myself, it occurred to me that I should share them with a wider audience, especially if these often long forgotten townships meant more than just marks on a map and alignments of boulders and building blocks on the ground itself to some members of the Society. So welcome to the introduction to, hopefully, a long series of descriptions of, and information about townships and settlements, usually cleared, but maybe just deserted for the bright lights of the coastal villages or even for the new world.

I have no knowledge of any such similar exercise being undertaken before, so it should prove to be both academically fruitful and also intriguing from the family history perspective if readers have any links to or knowledge of the selected areas. In an effort to make this an ongoing project/series, I have decided to try to make this a two-way exercise. In advance of each article, I shall set the scene of an area of interest, which may hopefully have the effect of producing correspondence containing information about the selected areas prior to the next journal appearing, so that the it carries more than just my mundane description of the present setting.

This quarter, I have chosen to outline (for no other reason than it is still fresh in my mind, having visited it twice in the last month) the setting for the settlements of the Allt a' Mhuilinn (Mill River) valley, which trends NNE from Ascoile, at the head of Loch Brora, around 10km (6 miles) NW of the modern day village of Brora. A tributary of the River Brora, the Allt a' Mhuilinn rises in the boggy moorland plateau of the hinterland to the NW of the Moray Firth coastal fringe. This area is desolate and exposed and several clearance settlements have been recorded. Living conditions here in the longhouses (and in the many foregoing Bronze/Iron Age round houses) must have wavered from the tolerable to the downright bleak.

Once there today, and out of sight of the valley floor of Strath Brora, you could be forgiven for thinking that you were a million miles from anywhere. There are no sounds. There are no people. There are no buildings. Unfortunately for the purists amongst us, however, there is an unrelenting scar on the landscape in the form of a string of electricity pylons which run over this ground from the SW over to the Strath of Kildonan. It is a lifeline today, just as much as the Allt a' Mhuilinn itself was in the days of the valley's human habitation. At first glance these modern day monsters mar the serenity of the area, but somehow they also reflect the isolation, because there is nothing here but moorland, punctuated by a lonely grey metal 'monolithic' chain which is completely out of place in this uniform, wilderness landscape.

Settlements in this valley, from south to north, include Ruidhe na Gaoithe (Windy Point), Creag Ruadh (Red Rocks), Bad Leodhais (Place of Lewis) and Baddamraffan (Grassy Place).

If you can supply any information about any of these places or any other of the townships in Clyne or Sutherland, or even suggest a location for me to track down and investigate in the future, then I would happily oblige and it would be so good to share this with the readership.

Contact can be made via e-mail to nick.lindsay@highland.gov.uk or via the more conventional postal address on the inside back cover. Thanks - in anticipation!

EDITORIAL (2)

It was only recently when Jonathan McColl told me that he was going to have to finally hang up his editorial hat that I realised we had been co-editing the Journal for as many as twelve years. As you already know Nick Lindsay has taken over the editorial chair vacated by Jonathan - and he is making a fine job of it. However, as this Journal will be the fiftieth I have been involved with, I felt it was an appropriate time to pen an editorial of my own.

Do I hear cheers of acclamation or is it just remarks like "Oh God, does that mean he is going to try to reach his century" or "There can't be anything else he can tell us about his family, is there?". I am sorry, but until you start sending in those articles that you really intended to write, but haven't quite found the time to get down to, you are going to have to put up with me. In fact on page 4 you will find yet another article on my Caithness roots. What is even worse is that it is six pages in length and is sure to induce severe lethargy if not deep slumber.

Although you may feel that the fact that I have been involved in the production of fifty journals is not a reason to celebrate, there is one fact that may have escaped your notice that is worth cheering about. Next month the Highland Family History Society will be 20 years old. It was on 21st September 1981 that Donald Whyte was the speaker at the inaugural meeting of the society. It was held in the Inverness Museum & Art Gallery and was attended by an estimated 120 people. As Duncan Ross, the chairman of the steering committee, said in the first journal he produced in December 1981, the committee has been expecting a maximum of 60 people to turn up and it was a case of 'standing room only'.

By the end of the first three months in the life of the society the membership had grown to 74. It has risen steadily every year since and today we have a total of 830 members. In each of the past few years we have lost about 60 members for various reasons but at the same time we have attracted about 100 new members to more than compensate for the loss. What hasn't increased is the number of volunteers to join the Committee and help the society survive the next twenty years. We really do need some new blood and especially new ideas at a time that more and more information is now becoming available on computers like the *Gazetteer for Scotland* on CD that the society has been given for helping with testing the software.

We are now an official publisher! Donald Whyte approached the society earlier this year and asked if we would be prepared to publish a book on his behalf. It is called *Clock & Watchmakers of the Scottish Highlands & Islands 1780-1900*. In order to do so we had to obtain an ISBN Certificate, which we have done. Donald's book is now available for purchase by any of you who know or believe that you had a clockmaker among your ancestors. The book is based on watch-papers that the clockmakers used to advertise themselves but also includes additional information that Donald has gleaned from a variety of sources. It is very well researched and I found it a very interesting read.

The search for my Durran Roots

By John Durham

My interest in my father's ancestry started in 1978 when my aunt told me about some research she had done at New Register House (NRH) in Edinburgh. This was in the days when you looked up the birth, marriage and death index details in heavy bound books in the area which today is still called the Dome Room. When you had a maximum of four certificates to look at you added your name to the bottom of a list displayed on a small lectern. Those on the list were dealt with in strict sequence and, once your name got to the top of the list, a member of staff led you up a staircase to the upper floors where the many volume of certificates were to be found stacked tightly together on long shelves. Having been told the parish, year and entry number he located the correct volume and opened it to the page where the entry was to be found. Then while he waited nearby with a bored expression on his face, you were allowed to copy all the details you needed into your notebook, if you had remembered to bring one. Once you had perused all four entries you went back down the stairs and had another trawl through the index books. Then you added your name to the bottom of the list and waited until it rose to the top once more. On a busy day this cumbersome method of working meant that you were lucky if you got to look at more than 16 certificates.

Nowadays, with the indexes on computer and the certificates on microfiche, it is possible to transcribe upwards of 90 certificates in one day provided that you have done your homework in advance. One positive feature of those early days was that you could look at the original books containing the Old Parish Records (OPRs) and census returns and it was a nice feeling to be able to handle the original documents. However, this regular handling, particularly by those who were not too careful how they turned the pages, started to weaken the binding of some of the books. This was probably a contributory factor in the decision to microfilm both the OPRs and the census returns and that is the format in which we view them today.

As my visits to Edinburgh were fairly infrequent my early researches took some time to build up the framework of the family tree. I was able to establish reasonably quickly that my 3-great grandparents were Donald Durran and Janet Sutherland. Donald was a farm servant who worked on various farms in the parishes of Thurso and Orlig in Caithness in the early 1800s. An early attempt to establish definitely who Donald's parents were was not helped by the haphazard way in which baptisms and marriages were recorded in the OPRs during the 1700s. Quite often only one or two baptisms for a family were recorded, none at all if you were very unlucky. Unfortunately Donald and Janet only managed to record the baptisms of three of their children - John, my Gt. Gt. grandfather in Thurso in 1806, James in Netherside, Thurso in 1814 and George in Orlig, Orlig in 1817. They are known to have at least one more child, Anne, born c1803 in Orlig and who died in Dunnet in 1897, aged 94.

Fortunately Durran is not a common surname, so I decided to note all baptisms and marriages involving that name in the OPRs. It was at this point that I realised that the name appears in the form Durrand just as frequently as Durran. Were these families all related? If so, that would add to my workload. On the other hand, if I could show that the Durran and Durrand families came from different sources, I could concentrate on the former spelling of the name. From my initial researches it looked as if the name without the 'd' appeared almost exclusively in the parishes of Bower, Dunnet, Orlig and Thurso. Once you attached the 'd' the vast majority of those entries turned up in the Burgh of Wick with a few in the parish. There were other forms of the name such as Diran, Diren, Duran and Durren but very few

examples of these variants appear and none after 1779. As I was mainly interested in the period around 1800, it seemed reasonable to ignore these forms of the name in my investigations.

I then analysed all the Durran, Durrand and Durham entries that appeared in the IGI. The latter format was included because my great grandfather James Durran named all his children Durham and I wondered where he got the idea from and why he decided change the family name. The index in the IGI covered the period from 1648 to 1855 in the OPRs and then birth and marriage entries at NRH up to 1873, when the Mormons stopped filming such certificates. The results of my investigation into the time period and frequency that the three surnames appear in each of the five parishes mentioned are shown in the following table: -

	BOWER	DUNNET	OLRIG	THURSO	WICK	Total
DURHAM						
Period		1763-1794	1700-1766	1648-1726	1717	
Entries	0	6	3	26	1	36
DURRAN						
Period	1836-1874	1795-1859	1801-1869	1792-1873	1771	
Entries	17	20	45	52	1	135
DURRAND						
Period	1790-1866	1798-1862		1731-1871	1748-1873	
Entries	2	2	0	6	118	128

By the year 1795 the use of the surname Durham had ceased completely and we are left with the two main contenders Durran and Durrand. The parishes in which these two names appear confirmed my first impressions that there was definitely a geographical element in their use. Almost all the Durrand entries can be found in the Wick area whereas the Durran entries are centred round the Parish of Orlig where there is a place called Durran. This place appears in Johan Blaeu's *Atlas Novus* of 1654 as Deeran.

I then looked for any other differences that would allow me to confirm my decision to concentrate on the Durran variant only. As the result of a number of visits to NRH I had transcribed all birth, marriage and death certificates involving the name Durran, and a few with the name Durrand where I was not sure which spelling had been intended. These records took us right up to the present day, well beyond the 1873 which was the limit of the records analysed in the table above. I was able to establish that there were significant differences between families using the differing forms of the name. For example, the occupations followed by members of the two groups varied quite dramatically. Those named Durran were on the whole farm servants who progressed with each succeeding generation to become farmers, teachers, doctors or ministers. The farms they occupied were always to be found in the parishes of Thurso, Orlig, Bower and Dunnet. A large proportion emigrated mainly to Canada and the United States and by 1927 the name Durran completely disappears from Caithness.

On the other hand, those with a 'd' added to the surname tended to live in Wick, which was a very important fishing port in the 1800s. The most common occupations for this group were fisherman, cooper, ship's carpenter and fish-curer and, for many of these families, the same occupation appears generation after generation. On the other hand, I found only one instance

