



## THE FAMILY OF 'DE MORAVIA' IN NORTHERN SCOTLAND.

### Introduction.

It seems always to have been assumed that the progenitor of the family of *de Moravia* was an individual called *Freskyn* (Freskin or Francis)<sup>1</sup> who settled in the north sometime during the reign of King David I (1124-52). Freskyn was a man of high repute and, before he even arrived in what is now Morayshire, he had already obtained a substantial estate, in Linlithgowshire (West Lothian), which was known as *Strathbrock* or *Strabrock* ('the vale of the badger'). Many writers have described him as being a Fleming - largely because he bore a name that was common in that country - but there is no absolute proof that he was from Flanders. Indeed, as this paper progresses, we may find that we are directed towards an alternative construct which would suggest that Freskyn had some English/Welsh roots.

### What do we mean by "a Fleming"?

From the start, it is important that we define what we mean by the term *Flemish*. Lauran Toorians has suggested that the reader has two options, "The one: 'A Fleming is a person from the county of Flanders, or who is dependent upon the Count of Flanders', the other: 'A Fleming is a person speaking Flemish'".<sup>2</sup> However, we would suggest that there is a third option which arises from the characteristic use of *toponyms* in early medieval Scotland: "A Fleming is a person who has visited, or lived for a time in, Flanders, but who is not, necessarily, of foreign stock". This latter suggestion places the whole matter in a very different frame! The concept of a *surname* or *sirename* is absent from early medieval Scotland. An individual was known by his personal name (Christian name) which was sometimes qualified by an adjectival addition which often indicated a particular physical attribute of the individual concerned but which could also indicate the name of a place that the individual had visited. So, for example, *Berowald Flandrensis* might mean that the person in question was set apart from others bearing the same birth-name (Berowald) by the addition of 'Flandrensis' to show that he was 'unique' amongst other men in that he had visited or lived in Flanders for a period of time. This makes for a much more complicated world, and the student must be very wary of not jumping to quick conclusions when such a name is encountered! Likewise, and most particularly, we must avoid concluding that individuals bearing the name "de Moravia" must all be related one to the other and, similarly, we should avoid determining that everyone called "Freskyn" must be related.

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<sup>1</sup> In a recent email to the author from Professor William van Ryckeghem of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, he pointed out that names ending with 'kin' (such as Freskin) were given to underage orphans in Flanders - and that it is a diminutive. (Personal communication - 3 July 2025)

<sup>2</sup> Toorians, Lauran (1996) 'Flemish Settlements in Twelfth-Century Scotland.' In: *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, tome 74, fasc. 3-4, 1996. *Histoire médiévale, moderne et contemporaine - Middeleeuwse, moderne en hedendaagse geschiedenis*. p. 659.  
<https://doi.org/10.3406/rbph.1996.4120> (accessed 16/11/2020)



We should post another warning here – that not all Flemings were traders and merchants. Flanders produced many of the finest knights to be found in early medieval Europe and countless numbers of Fleming mercenaries<sup>3</sup> are to be found in the ranks of many armies, occupying positions from the lowliest squire to the most exalted knight. In Scotland, their employment was well known and is confirmed by Jordan Fantosme, who described how King William “the Lion” requested:

*“... send us from Flanders his Flemings with ships  
By Hundreds and by fifties of those bold people:  
I will give them the road to the people who war against us,  
They will attack the castles by regular siege”.*<sup>4</sup>

Fantosme’s comment attests to both the boldness and the cruelty in battle of these Flemings!

For too long, there has been a tendency amongst historians to ‘rubber-stamp’ Flemings as belonging to the merchant classes, being traders or manufacturers. The fact is that many were **both** military men **and** traders – take for example the valiant defenders of the Flemish *Red Hall* in Berwick, fighting most valiantly against the siege forces of Edward I of England in 1296!<sup>5</sup> Godfrey de Saint-Omer, one of the first to join Hugues de Payens and become a Templar Knight, originated from what is now a part of France but which was, in the medieval age, part of Flanders and it is difficult to imagine a more puissant knight than he! The first commandery (headquarters) of the Order of the Temple in Europe was in *Ypres*, Flanders, on lands given to the Order by Godfrey. Whatever other attributes they had, the military pedigree of the Flemish people seems not to be in doubt!

## Recent Research.

In more recent times, there has been significant research carried out using the DNA profiling of various population groups. Much has been accomplished as part of the [\*Scotland and the Flemish People Project\*](#) at St Andrew’s University in Scotland.<sup>6</sup> Alongside the DNA research, a part of this project involved a more widespread and rigorous literature search than had been carried out before.

The results which the Project produced are intriguing! It would appear, for example, that an individual by the name of *Fresechin (Freskyn)*, as an adult, probably lived near *Wiston*<sup>7</sup> in Pembrokeshire, Wales, and the research has even established a possible name for his father – *Ollec*. This is suggested since in one of the Pipe Rolls<sup>8</sup> we find the following:

<sup>3</sup> During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, people from Flanders and Brabant were very much in demand as mercenaries. In French the word *brabançons* even developed the general meaning “mercenaries, group of adventurers” (which in turn led to Middle Breton *brabanczon* and Modern Breton *brabañsal*, “to brag”). [Piette, J.R.F. (1973) *French Loan-Words in Middle Breton*, Cardiff, p. 83-84.]

<sup>4</sup> Fantosme, Jordan, *Chronique de la guerre entre les Anglois et les Ecossais en 1173 et 1174*, M. Michel (ed.), II, 418-421, as quoted by Lawrie, Annals, p. 130 (using the translations by M. Michel and Mr Howett).

<sup>5</sup> Duncan 1975, 515. The reference is to the thirteenth-century *Chronicle of Walter of Guisborough*, H. Rothwell (ed.) (Camden Third Series, LXXXIX, 1975), p. 275. See also <https://flemish.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/2014/01/25/berwick-upon-tweed-and-the-torching-of-the-red-hall/> (accessed 17/11/2020)

<sup>6</sup> Recently, to mark the conclusion of the Project, a book has been published which brings together the researchers’ findings under one cover. [See, Fleming, A. and Mason, R. (eds.) (2019) *Scotland and the Flemish People*, Edinburgh: John Donald.]

<sup>7</sup> *Wiston Castle* began life as a motte-and-bailey castle. It, and the village of *Wiston*, were founded by Wizo, a Flemish settler who was granted the land by Henry I of England (1100-1135) after a the king had put down a revolt led by its previous owner, Arnulf de Montgomery c.1102.

<sup>8</sup> *Great Roll of the Exchequer*: 1130. r Henry I for Pembroke.

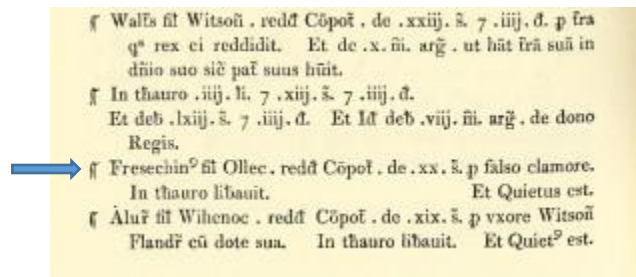


Figure 1: Extract from Pipe Rolls: 1130. r Henry I for Pembroke

It has been further suggested that this “*Fresechin fili Ollec*” may be the same individual as the Freskyn who eventually found his way north to the lands of Morayshire. However, at the present time, there is no demonstrable evidence to support this suggestion, and we must question whether it is simply another example of researchers pouncing on the ‘Freskyn’ name and concluding that it must be the same historical individual.

Fresechin fili Ollec (Freskyn son of Ollec) would appear to have been a “warrior knight”<sup>9</sup> who, as the entry in the Pipe Rolls shows, was resident in Pembroke(shire) c.1130, around the time that the Cathedral of St David in Pembroke (*Eglwys Gadeiriol Tyddewi*) was consecrated (1131). It should be noted here that the sanctity of this old Christian site was recognised by none other than William the Conqueror himself who visited it in 1081. The locality was soon completely under Norman control and, following the grant of a papal privilege by Pope Callixtus II, it became one of the most important sites of pilgrimage in all of Europe.<sup>10</sup> Considering these points it is not difficult to understand that *Fresechin fili Ollec* may have been part of the system of military control imposed in Pembrokeshire after its subjugation by King Henry I (1100-1135). It should be remembered that Henry’s mother, Queen Matilda, Duchess of Normandy, was Flemish - she was known as *Matilda of Flanders*.<sup>11</sup> Also, Henry’s wife was Matilda/Edith of Scotland, daughter of St Margaret and King Malcolm Canmore, and sister of King David I. Queen Matilda had been the young Edith’s godmother at her christening. The links between the English crown and Flanders, and with the Scottish King David I, are a vital part of our story.

We must also mark here that Count Robert II of Flanders, sometimes known as Robert of Jerusalem, is commonly referred to as Comte Ollec de Flandre. Certain enthusiastic genealogists have determined that Count Robert II was the father of Freskyn, ‘Lord of Duffus’, and in this they are following Moncrieffe & Hicks.<sup>12</sup>

The fact remains that Freskyn was not an unusual name in eleventh and twelfth century Flanders. All that we can safely conclude is, firstly, that there was an individual – Fresechin fili Ollec – in Pembroke, who was possibly associated with the military forces of Wizo, lord of Wiston, and, secondly, that there was a Freskyn who had lands in West Lothian and who later moved to Morayshire. But it is probably

<sup>9</sup> Murray, Alexandrina (2016) ‘The Murray, Sutherland and Douglas families: were they related and were they Flemish?’ Blog Post, Friday 26 February 2016. <https://flemish.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/2016/02/26/the-murray-sutherland-and-douglas-families-were-they-related-and-were-they-flemish/> Accessed 4/11/20.

<sup>10</sup> In 1123, at the request of Bishop Bernard, then Bishop of St David’s, Pope Callixtus II bestowed a privilege decreeing that, “Two pilgrimages to St David’s is equal to one to Rome, and three was equivalent to one to Jerusalem itself.” <https://www.stdavids cathedral.org.uk/discover/history/medieval-cult> Accessed 4/11/20.

<sup>11</sup> Matilda’s father was Baldwin V, Count of Flanders.

<sup>12</sup> Moncrieffe, Sir Ian and Hicks, David (1967) *The Highland Clans*, Bramhall House, 176, 222.



unlikely that the two were the same individual. Recently, Fleming & Mason have drawn a similar conclusion about Wizo. They conclude that any suggestion that the Wizo who is found at Wiston in Pembroke is the same as the Wizo who is found in Upper Clydesdale is “... to be discounted”.<sup>13</sup>

## The Flemish Migration.

Lauran Toorians comments that, “One of the general trends which made people move about in Europe was the booming population growth that occurred in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Especially in Flanders, this growth must have been enormous, and towns rose up in numbers, resulting in a population-density unsurpassed north of the Alps.”<sup>14</sup>

Some writers have said that, in 1108, the low-lying lands bordering the German Sea, suffered catastrophic flooding, and many of the inhabitants—including Flemings—sought assistance from King Henry I of England.<sup>15</sup> Other writers, who have found no record of such floods,<sup>16</sup> suggest rather that there was an explosion of agriculture, supported by land reclamation schemes<sup>17</sup> and that this put pressure on the inhabitants causing them to have to search for additional sources of the resources necessary to continue their manufacturing ‘industries’. In particular, it would appear that the Flemings were on a ‘mission’ to find sources of grain and wool – it is interesting to find that many of the locations in Britain, where early Flemish settlements were to be found, would have been precisely those that could have provided a ready supply of both. We are told that King Henry offered to settle the ‘refugees’ in the hinterland of the Pembroke Lordship - *Haverford* (the western part of the *Daugleddau Estuary*) and *Dungledy* (the eastern part), thus supplementing his garrison at Pembroke Castle with a compliant and grateful local populace. The number of Flemings so settled far outweighed any local Welsh population, resulting in a significant genetic impact on the population of Pembroke which lasts to this day.<sup>18</sup>

In *Dungledy*, the Flemings settled under the leadership of a man named *Wizo*, who proceeded to build and live at *Wiston Castle*. It would seem possible, if not probable, that *Fresechin fili Ollec* might first have been one of Wizo’s men-at-arms, or knights, who aided him in carrying out his military commission from the king.

<sup>13</sup> Fleming, A. and Mason, R. (eds.) (2019) *Scotland and the Flemish People*, Edinburgh: John Donald, 52.

<sup>14</sup> Toorians, Lauran (1996) ‘Flemish Settlements in Twelfth-Century Scotland.’ In: *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, tome 74, fasc. 3-4, 1996. *Histoire medievale, moderne et contemporaine - Middeleeuwse, moderne en hedendaagse geschiedenis*. p. 670. <https://doi.org/10.3406/rbph.1996.4120> (accessed 16/11/2020)

<sup>15</sup> Laws, Edward (1888) *The History of Little England beyond Wales and the non-Kymric colony settled in Pembrokeshire*, London.

<sup>16</sup> The great North Sea Flood of the Low Countries did not take place until 1212. However, when we consider that the name Flanders is likely derived from the Frisian \*flāndra and \*flāmisk the roots of which are Germanic \*flaumaz meaning “overflow, flooding”, it would appear that inundations were a perennial (if not daily) problem rather than some great catastrophic event. <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Reconstruction:Proto-Germanic/flaumaz> (accessed 09/11/2020). From the 3rd to the 8th centuries, until steps were taken to begin to construct coastal defences, the coastal areas of Flanders were flooded twice per day by the regular coming-and-going of the tides. Salt marsh is very productive in certain ways, but not for the production of cereal crops or raising sheep – both of which were the primary ‘needs’ demanded by the Flemish townships. It is not surprising, then, to find the Flemings looking for supplies from other ‘foreign’ sources.

<sup>17</sup> Gottschalk, M.K.E. (1955) *Historische geografie van Westelijk Zeeuws-Vlaanderen: I Tot de Sint-Elisabethsvloed van 1404*, Assen, p. 21. “The part which the count of Flanders played in this activity [land reclamation] is brought to the fore in the years between 1055 and 1067, when the archbishop of Reims praises count Baldwin V (1035-1067) for his inventiveness and zeal in cultivating lands which seemed altogether useless for agriculture.”

<sup>18</sup> (Coghlan 2015; Leslie 2015).



Recently, research has determined additional intriguing facts about Wizo. It is now suggested that his father was one *Leusetani* who is believed to have been a goldsmith (*aurifaber*) in the tradition of many other Flemish Knight-Craftsmen in England at this time. However, it should be remembered that this does not mean that Leusetani was a first-generation incomer who had arrived with the 1066-Conquest - although there is a possibility that his forbears were. An individual called Wizo,<sup>19</sup> and his goldsmith father, appear as members of the *Cnihtengild* (Guild of Attendants) in London in 1125.<sup>20</sup>



This statue of a knight on horseback (*left*) is by the sculptor Denys Mitchell, who died in 2015. It was commissioned by *Standard Life Assurance* in 1990. The company have owned this land (including *Portsoken*<sup>21</sup>) since 1978. The statue represents one of the 13 noble knights (the *Cnihtengild*) who were given the land in the 10<sup>th</sup> century by King Edgar 'the peaceful'. The statue is unusual in that it is made from worked bronze and is not a cast. In 1108, Queen Edith (Matilda) founded the Holy Trinity Priory at Aldgate, and, in 1125, the *Cnihtengild* surrendered all its lands to that Priory and disappeared from history. The written record of this gift includes the line:

*"Robertus frater ejus filii Leostani, Leostanus aurifabr et Wyzo filius ejus."*

We must also take note here of another facet of the Wizo, who became lord of Wiston – he was a great benefactor of the Military and Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem.<sup>22</sup>

It is evident that Wizo ruled directly, or exercised suzerainty over, a wide extent of country comprising much of the *cantrevs* of *Daugleddau* and *Rhos*.<sup>23</sup> It has also become clear that, in 1114, Wizo donated a number of churches in the Dungleddy deanery to the abbey of St Peter at Gloucester.<sup>24</sup> Amongst these

<sup>19</sup> *Wyzo filius Leostanus* is described as a goldsmith in MS. D. and C. of St. Paul's, Liber L. ff. 27-31, in which he is a party to an agreement relating to the grant of part of the church of St. Anthony to his son John (12th century).

<sup>20</sup> Round, *The Antiquary*. See in-depth discussion on pp. 109-111. It is possible that the Gild, as originally constituted, may have been either an association of young noblemen not yet of full estate, or of the personal attendants of various lords, who, although in those days regarded as of an inferior rank even to the thegns, nevertheless occupied positions of trust in their lords' households, and were not incapable of holding grants of lands from them [Kemble Cod. Dip. III. 49, 50; and Thorpe, Dip. Angi. 559, 560, 545]. There is a great deal of additional information available from the *Dictionary of London: Portsoken Ward*. [https://london.enacademic.com/4731/Portsoken\\_Ward](https://london.enacademic.com/4731/Portsoken_Ward) (Accessed 07/11/2020). There is also much information about the *Cnihtengild* at the end of the Introduction to Reginald Sharpe's work available online at - 'Introduction', in *Calendar of Letter-Books of the City of London: C, 1291-1309*, ed. Reginald R Sharpe (London, 1901), pp. i-xxvii. <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-letter-books/volc/i-xxvii> (accessed 07/11/2020).

<sup>21</sup> The lands of the *Cnihtengild*, in what is now the City of London, comprised an area extending north from the Aldgate to the Bishopsgate and south at least as far as the Thames. Part of this area became the Ward of Portsoken, one of the City's twenty-five wards, or administrative districts. The *Cnihtengild* held the 'soken' or jurisdiction of this Ward as is confirmed by a charter of King Edward which relates that the Gild had held the soke since the days of King Edward (959-975). This proves that the Guild had existed for some time before the Conquest, but it says nothing about its composition. [Edward's confirmation charter is included in the Aldgate Chartulary currently held in the Special Collections of the University of Glasgow. [https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/library/files/special/images/chaucer/H215\\_0149rwf.jpg](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/library/files/special/images/chaucer/H215_0149rwf.jpg) (accessed 11/11/2020)].

Previous to the dissolution of the monasteries and religious houses in the reign of Henry VIII., the office of Alderman of Portsoken Ward was held jure officio by the Prior of Christ Church or Holy Trinity, Aldgate, apparently as the result of the voluntary surrender to that Church and its Canons of their Soke or manorial jurisdiction by the English *Cnihtengild* in the reign of Henry I., which had been held by that body since the time of Canute. British History Online <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/london-aldermen/hen3-1912/pp179-188> (accessed 11/11/2020).

<sup>22</sup> The Order was founded in Jerusalem in 1080 but did not gain Papal approval until later (c.1113). [Website of the Museum of the Order of St John.] <http://museumstjohn.org.uk/our-story/history-of-the-order/> (accessed 09/11/2020).

<sup>23</sup> RCAMW, note on p.2.

<sup>24</sup> Rolls ed. i, 228, 262-6; Hist. et Cart. Mon. S. Petri, Glouc.



was the church of St John at *Slebech*<sup>25</sup> which was, at that time a simple perpetual chaplainry. Only a few years later, these churches were given to Worcester Priory. Subsequently they were attached to the commandery of the Order of St John when it was established at Slebech, c.1161, and which soon became the headquarters of the Order in west Wales. When the commandery was established, Wizo, or his son Walter, gave to the Order the lands which surrounded the church to help provide for the upkeep of the commandery. Slebech was on the 'pilgrim route' to St David's and was a favourite stopping point for travellers but having to provide hospitality for them proved to be a severe drain on the Order's resources. To have been given what was a considerable estate at Slebech would have helped to defray the costs somewhat.

We must ask ourselves the question, "from where did Wizo's great interest in The Hospitallers arise?" The answer that offers itself most readily is that Wizo, and possibly his son also, were knights of the Order. Unfortunately, we cannot, at this time, determine if this was the case – but neither can it be disproved. It goes without saying that there is a possibility, too, that *Fresechin fili Ollec* was linked with the Order in some way through his association with Wizo.

### The Rise of David Prince of Cumbria.

We know that in 1093, David, when still a boy of only about nine years of age, was exiled to England and it has been suggested that, following his sister's marriage, on 11 November 1100, he became a dependent at the court of his new brother-in-law, King Henry I. At this time, he would have been approximately 16 years of age, fast approaching his 'maturity', and steeped in the ways of Norman chivalry. William of Malmesbury commented that during this period, David, "rubbed off all tarnish of Scottish barbarity through being polished by intercourse and friendship with us".<sup>26</sup> King Henry I arranged for David to be married to Maud, then Countess of Huntingdon, who was heiress to the vast Huntingdon-Northampton lordship<sup>27</sup> and was some twelve years his senior. The ceremony<sup>28</sup> seems to have taken place close to Christmas of 1113.<sup>29</sup> As a consequence, David became Earl of Huntingdon,<sup>30</sup> and one of the premier nobles of England. This also seems to have been the time when David became styled *Prince of the Cumbrians*, which lordship encompassed large parts of northern England and southern Scotland. This is an important point to which we shall return since the former kingdom of Strathclyde or Cumbria extended from the Lennox south to the Solway (but excluded Galloway) and the family of Murray or de Moravia has been proved to have very strong DNA links to that area, particularly in Clydesdale.

<sup>25</sup> Slebech is only about 4km south of Wiston.

<sup>26</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, W. Stubbs (ed.), *Rolls Series*, no. 90, vol. ii, p. 476; trans. A.O. Anderson, *Scottish Annals*, (1908), p. 157.

<sup>27</sup> Her first husband had been *Simon de Senlis* († c.1111), 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Northampton and 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Huntingdon.

<sup>28</sup> Following an enquiry made of Dr Matthew Payne, Keeper of the Muniments at Westminster Abbey, I received the following correspondence:

"I am afraid we have nothing to indicate that King David I of Scotland and Maud de Senlis were married here. As you will appreciate, sources for such events are rather thin on the ground at that date. It is certainly plausible, given that Henry I was himself married to David's sister Edith/Matilda here in 1100, but I am not aware of any source that would corroborate the theory (and in fact Henry and Matilda's wedding is the only royal wedding we know of here until 1243, so it does not seem to have been particularly considered the appropriate location for royal weddings)."  
[Personal correspondence dated 13/03/2023]

<sup>29</sup> On a number of occasions, even after the Battle of Tinchebrai (28 September 1106), King Henry I had to travel to Normandy to put down rebellion. He returned from one such expedition in June 1113. [Oram 2004, 61]

<sup>30</sup> The King reserved the Earldom of Northampton to the Crown.





Richard Oram has suggested, very plausibly, that David I went with King Henry I on some, if not most, of his military expeditions to Normandy, and that he may have been present at the *Battle of Tinchebrai* itself, in 1106, when Duke Robert of Normandy was finally defeated.<sup>31</sup> For a young man of nobility it would have been a very necessary part of the passage towards knighthood for him to participate in such expeditions. For the brother of the Queen it would have been essential in order that he could establish a 'reputation' for himself that would reflect well on both royal families. There is no doubt that Henry I did not 'travel light' and he would have taken significant forces with him to Normandy to add to those that he would have drawn from his Norman estates. It is certain that amongst these there would have been a significant number of knights-aspirant, probably including David.



Figure 2: Arms of Robert de Craon as Grand Master of the Templars.

It is important to notice here the significant fact that, at some time prior to 1114, David came into possession of lands in the northern part of the *Cotentin Peninsula* which were the property of King Henry. Can we doubt that this was David's reward for military service to the King? We know that Henry returned to England in June of 1113 and it was at Christmas of that year that David I married the Countess Maud (*vide supra*). Would we be wrong to speculate that the young Prince returned from Normandy at the same time with the King and that, together, they formulated a plan to present the royal *protégé* in such a way that he could be recognised as the heir apparent (*tànaiste*) to the Scottish throne?

Sometime just before his marriage, David must have visited his principality in the north since it was in this same, fateful, year that he founded Selkirk Abbey, having invited monks from Tiron in northern France to form a community there. This was a very 'young' religious Order which had been founded in 1109 by Bernard of Thiron. Interestingly, the first houses of the Order in Wales – Caldey Priory, Pill Priory, and the mother house, St Dogmael's Abbey – were also founded in 1113x1115 and all three were in Norman controlled Pembrokeshire.<sup>32</sup> The Tironensians were famous for their austerity and it is tempting to suggest that this trait recommended itself so strongly to Norman ideals that the Order rapidly became a favourite with Norman lords all over Europe. It was very much 'the talk of the town' and the impressionable young Prince of Cumbria must have become familiar with its reputation and been strongly attracted to it – so strongly that he chose it to be the 'ordo' that he wished to be followed in the first of his many religious foundations. I believe that at some point during his campaigns across the Channel, David had met *Bernard*, the founder of Tiron. An interesting point to mention here is that before he established the community at Tiron, Bernard had been a recluse on the Island of *Chausey*, just off the coast of the Cotentin. He then moved and founded a hermitage with two other rigorist monks, in the woods near *Craon*, Angers. The *seigneurs* of Craon must have given their permission to Bernard to establish his hermitage in their woods. It is also to be noted that a younger son of the *seigneur de Craon*, Robert de Craon (d. 1147), must have been a brother-knight of the Templar Order since, in June of 1136, he became the second Grand Master, succeeding Hugues de Payens. Do we have here a link between Bernard of Tiron and the Templars and, if so, to David I's great enthusiasm for the military orders? One final point to consider is that David I had, from about 1113, a personal chaplain called John (who was later to become Bishop of Glasgow). John remained David's chaplain down to about 1116, but it has been shown that, previous to his appointment as royal chaplain, he had very close ties with St Bernard's Abbey at Tiron and had spent some time there 'in retreat'.<sup>33</sup> The influence of the Tironensian Order on the thought processes of the young David, through the 'vector' of John (Capellanus), must have been

<sup>31</sup> Oram 2004, 62-63.

<sup>32</sup> Within less than five years of its creation, the Order of Tiron owned 117 priories and abbeys in France, England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. It was never a 'popular' Order in England.

<sup>33</sup> Oram 2004, 63.



very strong indeed. This, combined with the other contacts which the young Prince had had with the Order, leaves us unsurprised that his first religious foundation – at Selkirk (c.1113) – was a Tironensian house.

### How did David I encounter Freskyn?

A fundamental question must now be addressed, “how could King David I have first encountered Freskyn?”

When he became King of Scots, David gave lands to both the Knights Templar and the Knights Hospitaller. The Hospitallers were invited to Scotland by the King in 1132 and were granted a charter to build a Preceptory at *Torphichen* c.1140. To the Templars, David ultimately granted the manor and chapelry of *Balantradoch* in 1153. But David’s knowledge of the Templars goes further back in time since it is recorded that, in 1128-9, King Henry I arranged an introduction between him and Hugues de Payens, first Grand Master of the Order. What was the Grand Master’s intention in all of this? Money and manpower! At first, this sounds to be a very un-Christian motive, but we should consider the *raison d’être* of the Military Orders which, once understood, demands a recognition that their financial ‘overheads’ were immense. To continue to provide the services that they offered to pilgrims, and pay for their participation in an almost interminable succession of Crusades, the Military Orders needed money, and people would not be enthused to contribute in any way towards the Order unless their King approved and showed himself also to be enthusiastic.

The Knights Templar were not only fierce warriors, but they were also astute landlords and businessmen who ultimately owned over 500 sites in Scotland. In short time, they became principal advisors to King David I and his successors. It is known that, as a matter of habit, the *almoners* of David’s royal court were regularly found to be Templars.<sup>34</sup> In support of this we should add that, according to *Aelred*, Master of the Household in King David I’s time, and later Abbot of Rievaulx, his master: “...entrusted himself entirely to the guidance of religious [monks], retaining beside him the most noble brethren of the distinguished military order of the Temple of Jerusalem, he made them both by day and night custodians of his morals.”<sup>35</sup> This is very revealing indeed. In truth, if you were to put together a ‘job description’ to describe the type of individual that David I had a need for in his young kingdom, then you would not stray far from the mark if you simply described the Knights of the Military Orders.

So, the question then arises – was Freskyn a Knight Hospitaller or perhaps a Knight Templar? There is no direct evidence to say that he was but, if he was not a knight-brother – and he could only have been if his family was of the nobility (and this is questionable) – then perhaps he was associated with one of the Orders in some way. Perhaps he had become a *sergeant* in the Order. It would certainly explain why David placed so much trust in Freskyn.

Finally, there must be a possibility that Freskyn took part in one or more of King Henry I’s expeditions to Normandy and it may have been on one of these that David I met him. Throughout his life, Freskyn

<sup>34</sup> Cowan, I.B. and Mackay, P.H.R. (eds.) (1983) *The Knights of St John of Jerusalem in Scotland*, Edinburgh: Scottish History Society (Series), 4<sup>th</sup> series, vol. 19, xxi.

<sup>35</sup> The Knights Templar were answerable only to the Pope. This resulted in a unique group of rights that separated them from the rest of the population of Scotland. The Knights Templar and their tenants were free from all tithes, taxes, custom, service, and exaction, whether from the King or a local Lord. They were also exempt from all courts or jury duty. These privileges were gladly accepted when the Crusades were at their height, but when the Crusades ceased to be popular, so did public opinion of the Templars and their privileges.

<https://www.historyscotland.com/history/the-knights-templar-and-scotland/> (accessed 11/11/2020).





showed himself to have a great measure of ambition and it is very unlikely that in his youth he would have missed the opportunities offered by being party to Henry's campaigns in Normandy.

### Flemings in the North – a new Interpretation.

Many writers in the past have interpreted the presence of Flemings in the north-east of Scotland in terms of trading-links, merchant enterprise and the ubiquitous wool trade. It is certainly true that in the era we are talking about – the early twelfth century – Flanders is known to have converted much of its agricultural activity to the production of cereal crops. This encouraged ambitious land-improvement and land-reclamation schemes, but it meant that less land was available as pasture, particularly for the rearing of sheep. Consequently, Flanders had a production shortfall and found it difficult to supply the needs of its textile producing towns. The solution had been an obvious one and Flemish merchants are found traversing Europe in order to buy wool and ship it to the various ports of their native country. It was a very lucrative trade and, while it lasted, provided much needed income for the great producers in these other countries, especially certain of the monasteries. But we should not forget that other 'product' of Flanders – mercenaries. The country had always been a training ground for military units. Its knights shared fame alongside the greatest of their cousins – the Normans – and no European ruler would be blind to such a source of military aid when the need arose. This was even more so for those rulers whose families were rooted in Flemish soil or, at least, had close dealings with this part of the world. It is well known that amongst the conquering forces of William 'the Bastard' were numbered many Flemish knights with their accompanying entourages of squires and men-at-arms. Many were 'second sons' of noble families and their one intent was to establish their reputations and secure land grants for themselves and their heirs. Wizo and possibly Freskyn both seem to fall comfortably into this group.

It is easy to imagine that the Normans and Flemings who reached the western extremities of south Wales found opportunities to exercise the very limits of their imaginations. The castle that Wizo built at *Wiston* was one of the 'marcher castles' in this area and there would have been a steady supply of military adventures and challenges against which his men could hone their skills and satisfy their appetites for warfare. In other parts of our country, Scotland, such patterns are to be regularly found where an occupying force first quells the local populace and then initiates an extended period of assimilation into the native society and culture. Scotland has seen many such instances involving invasions of Norse, Gael and Anglo-Saxon peoples. But these instances have not left such an outstanding and long-lived mark in the DNA profile of the modern inhabitants of the localities involved. What we have in Pembrokeshire is quite remarkable and it implies that not only was the area conquered but that a significant proportion of the native population must have been expelled (or killed!) in order that the remaining population, and its succeeding generations, could display such a remarkable concentration of Flemish DNA markers (or *haplotypes*) such as that known as the haplogroup "R-P311".<sup>36</sup>

This prompts us to remember the scenario that was played out in Moray after King David I had finally imposed his power over it – that, in a way similar to what happened in Pembroke, the king not only

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<sup>36</sup> The subclade R-P311 is substantially confined to Western Europe in modern populations. R-P311 is absent from Neolithic-era ancient DNA found in Western Europe, strongly suggesting that its current distribution is due to population movements within Europe taking place after the end of the Neolithic. The three major subclades of P311 are U106 (S21), L21 (M529, S145), and U152 (S28). These show a clear articulation within Western Europe, with centers in the [Low Countries](#), the [British Isles](#) and the [Alps](#), respectively. [Hammer (2013)] These lineages are associated with the non-Iberian steppe-related groups of the [Bell Beaker culture](#), and demonstrate the relationship between steppe-related ancestry and R1b-M269 subclades, [Olalde (2018)] which are "the major lineage associated with the arrival of Steppe ancestry in western Europe after 2500 BC" [Sjögren (2019)].



introduced a number of significant mercenaries into the province, but also ‘encouraged’ the emigration of the native population, especially the ancient land-owning families, to other parts of the country.

### Freskyn’s Career in Scotland.

Freskyn’s arrival in Scotland was instigated by David I after he had become King of Scots, so we can date this to after 1124. Because of the regard that the king had for him and, no doubt, as a reward for what must have been significant services rendered, we are told that the David gave Freskyn a substantial estate called *Strathbrock* which is situated in the modern parish of Uphall, in West Lothian.

If we consider the geography of West Lothian we soon see that Strathbrock, where Freskyn appears to have built a motte-and-bailey castle, has an exceptionally strategic situation – within a ten mile radius are located King David’s own fortification at Linlithgow, the Preceptory of the Knights Hospitaller at Torphichen, the Templar estate at Temple Liston (Kirkliston)<sup>37</sup> and the Queen’s Ferry which was an arterial route to the north as well as the site of an important priory. Of course, like Linlithgow, Strathbrock also lay on the vital route between the pre-eminent royal castles at Edinburgh and Stirling. It would be correct to observe that the king could not have given Freskyn a more commanding location in which to settle, and that this surely was a reflection of the very high regard that he had for him. Freskyn was obviously a man whom the king wished to keep close at his side during the difficult early years of his reign, in exactly the same way that he arranged for both the Templar Knights and the Hospitallers to be nearby should he have need of them. It is difficult to imagine that this respect and affection had just suddenly appeared – the two of them must have known each other for a significant amount of time, perhaps since they were both youths.

Regrettably, the charter recording King David I’s grant of Strathbrock to Freskyn is no longer to be found, so the exact date of the gift is not known. However, it would be reasonable to suggest that it was between 1124 and 1130 – between David’s return to Scotland and the king sending Freskyn to ‘the north’ in 1130.

The early years of David’s reign were difficult, and he had many ‘rebels’ and insurrections to deal with across a far-flung kingdom. Of course, matters were made more difficult by the fact that after his crowning, he embarked upon a single-minded mission to bring the Scots from their old ‘Celtic’ ways and to place them under what was effectively Norman rule. Another significant source of the rebellious attitude of certain of his people is easy to understand - David’s claim to be heir to the Scottish kingdom was spurious! According to the slowly emerging principles of *primogeniture*, the two sons of his older brother, Alexander, both had better claims. But the English King was determined that his protégé should rule and so, hopefully, maintain peace between the two countries. Rumours of illegitimacy were encouraged and when, at last, one of Alexander’s sons, Máel Coluim, determined to settle the matter by going to war, but he was swiftly put down with the aid of the English king.

The field should now have been clear, and David was inaugurated *rex Scottorum* at Scone, sometime between April and May of 1124. It is revealing that, in his first act as king, David restored lands to Robert the Bruce in Annandale.<sup>38</sup> The witness list of the charter recording the event, which was given at Scone,

<sup>37</sup> In the medieval era *Kirkliston* was known as ‘Liston’ or ‘Temple Liston’, the latter name reflecting that the Parish Church was, at an early date, appropriated to the Knights Templar commandery at *Balantradach*. Much of the land around the church was also controlled by the Templars. Although the knights built a church as soon as they arrived, it is suggested that there had been a Christian community here from an even earlier date.

<sup>38</sup> Lawrie (1905), no. 54, p. 48-49.



reveals eight individuals with Norman blood flowing in their veins and one Englishman, but there was not one representative of any of the ancient families of Scotland!<sup>39</sup>

However, Máel Coluim had not been killed and, in time, he appeared to find favour with the 'king' of Moray and amongst the people of these northern lands. In 1130, David was at Woodstock serving as a judge in the trial for treason of Geoffrey de Clinton.<sup>40</sup> It would be reasonable to assume that Freskyn went with his master to attend this court. Whilst he was at Woodstock, David's wife, Matilda de Senlis, died and so the king's return to Scotland was delayed. This gave Máel Coluim the opportunity to rise again in revolt, this time supported by Óengus, Mormaer (King) of Moray. Aided by Henry I, a considerable force composed mostly of Normans was sent north under the command of Edmund, King David's constable in his Mercian lands.<sup>41</sup> I believe that it is virtually certain that Freskyn was part of this army and that he excelled in the tasks presented to him. So much so that, after the expedition, he was very handsomely rewarded with the estate of Duffus, in Moray, to add to that of Strathbrock. The campaign was a success but not completely so since Máel Coluim escaped once again and there ensued four years of what was effectively a civil war during which David struggled to survive. But, at length, the renegade was captured and imprisoned in Roxburgh Castle. King David's plans for Moray and beyond could now be developed at a pace.

Freskyn's military competence was, undoubtedly, the most important facet of his character. King David's gift of the lands of Duffus was not made so that Freskyn could enjoy the balmy weather for which this part of Morayshire has always been renowned! Within a short period, a motte-and-bailey castle arose on the northern shore of the Sea of Spynie, at what is now known as Duffus. Its position was extraordinarily strong, and it had the added advantage of direct access to the open sea.<sup>42</sup> In every sense, this was a military establishment which was intended to make a forceful statement to the people of Moray and beyond – here resided a man of power and great ability who was a sworn servant of King David I. Before long, as he did at Strathbrock, Freskyn had built the church of St Peter whose remains are still to be seen only a little distance north from his 'castle' at Duffus. This is precisely the same as he did at Strathbrock where the parish church still retains considerable 12<sup>th</sup> century fragments of Freskyn's original church.<sup>43</sup> This reveals another facet of Freskyn's character and it is one which many historians have failed to remark on – Freskyn was a very faithful follower of the Christian faith – indeed, this is a characteristic repeated down through many generations of the family after Freskyn's time. This trait would have found much favour with his king and it reminds us of the possibility of associations with the military orders.

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<sup>39</sup> The witnesses were - Eustace fitz John, Constable of Chester, of an Anglo-Norman family; Hugh de Morville, whose father was a Norman; Alan de Perci whose father fought at Hastings of the side of Duke William; William de Somerville, whose father (Walter) came from Normandy in the train of Duke William and fought at Hastings; Berenger Engaine, whose name suggests that he was a Norman; Randolph de Sules, of an old Norman family originating from Soules; William de Morville; Hervi fitz Warin whose family arrived with Duke William and originated in Metz in Lorraine, and Edmund the chamberlain, whose name suggests that he was English.

<sup>40</sup> Clinton was acquitted by the tribunal where David I was sitting in his capacity as Earl of Huntingdon.

<sup>41</sup> This, possibly, is the same Edmund the Chamberlain who witnessed King David's first charter. (see note 38 above)

<sup>42</sup> de Moravia, David (2020) *The Early Church and the Loch of Spynie* <https://cushnieent.com/articles/LochSpynie.htm> (accessed 12/03/2023).

<sup>43</sup> <https://canmore.org.uk/site/49292/uphall-church-and-burial-ground>



Figure 3: Exterior of Strathbrock church including the tower, parts of which date to the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century.  
© Copyright [Anne Burgess](#)

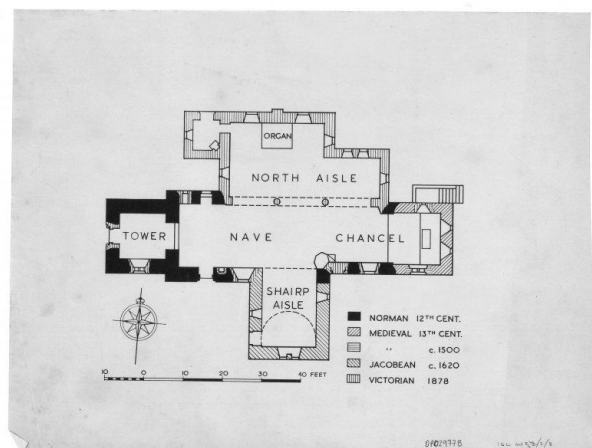


Figure 4: Plan of Strathbrock church.





Figure 5: The chancel of Strathbrock (Uphall) church as it is today, showing 13<sup>th</sup> century windows.



Figure 6: The remains of St Peter's Church at Duffus today.



There is very little in the written record of these times which provides us with details of Freskyn's life in Morayshire. We assume that he married since he had at least one son, William. But the evidence lies very thin on the ground and this has allowed many 'tares' to spring up to mislead the unwary historian or genealogist! From the outset, we encounter the difficult task of determining how many children Freskyn had – some say one, others give three!

As a sideline, we should take note that the family name 'de Moravia' gradually came, through use, to become 'Moray' or 'Murray'. The families of Bothwell and Abercairny were Morays, and all the others Murrays.<sup>44</sup> As we follow the family through time we find that a remarkable number of *cadet* branches became established from it. Space in this paper does not allow for a full catalogue of them all and, in any case, we would not consider it possible to better the scholarship of Mr. G. Harvey Johnston and would simply point the student to his work "*Heraldry of the Murrays*," which is freely available on the internet.<sup>45</sup>

Johnston also states that, "The different families of Moray or Murray are apparently all descended from the Morays of Bothwell, but connecting links are now lost, and the origin of each family is a matter of conjecture or dispute." Johnston wrote his work (Johnston 1910) having called on the assistance of the Office of the Lord Lyon, and the Lord Lyon himself, who was at that time, Sir James Balfour Paul, contributed a great deal to the work. Johnston's work, therefore, carries a certain degree of confidence to the reader, but as he admits (*vide supra*) the whole question of Moray Heraldry often lacks the certainty that we would wish because of the scarcity of historical sources and because we are often left with the 'haze' of historical antiquity caused by the lack of rigour employed by some of the writers and scribes of the times – routinely hundreds of years ago. An immediately obvious question is that, if we are to accept Johnston's statement that all the Moray/Murray families are derived from the Morays of Bothwell, we are then presented with the question of where the family of *Culbin* fits in? More importantly, the lands of Bothwell were brought to the Moray family when William II de Moravia of Petty (c.1175 – aft. Oct. 1226) married a daughter and co-heiress of the House of Olifard.<sup>46</sup> William already held the estates of Petty, Boharm, Brachelie and Artendol (Arndilly) before he was married. The estates (and 'title') of Bothwell only arrived, then, when Freskyn's grandson William II de Moravia, of Petty, took the 'title' of *Bothwell* after his marriage.

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<sup>44</sup> Johnston (1910), 'Preface', v.

<sup>45</sup> Johnston (1910).

<sup>46</sup> Burke (1847), Vol. II., p. 882 'Moray of Abercairney.'



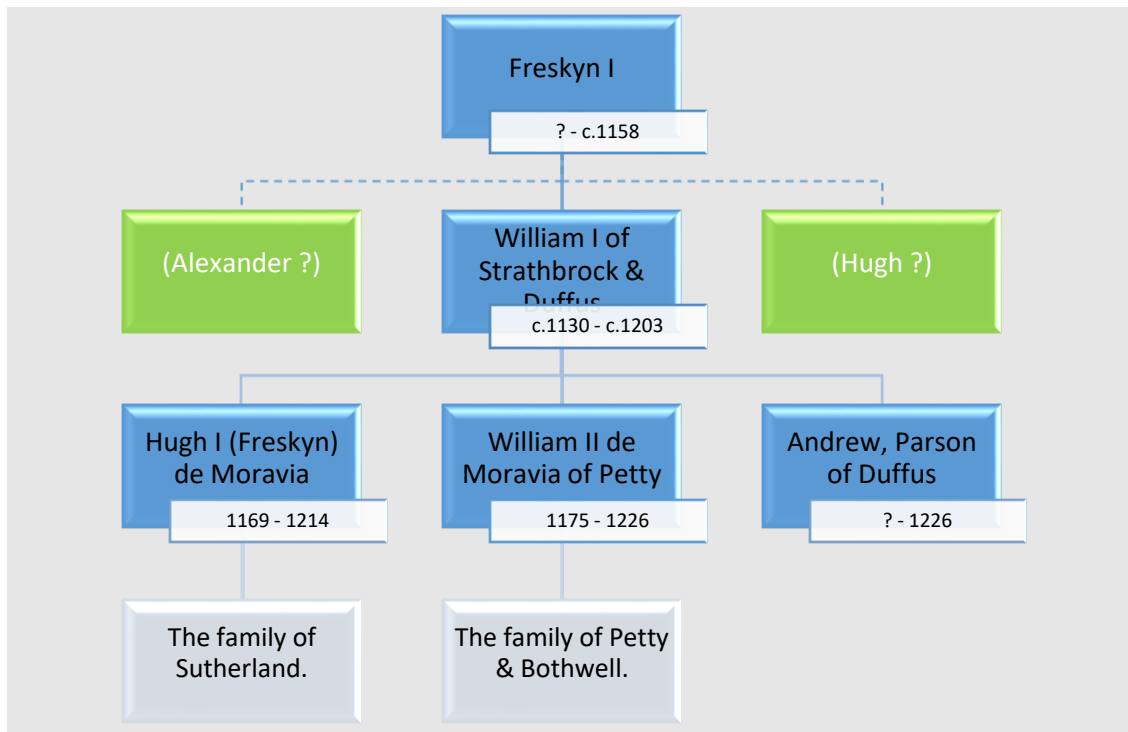


Figure 7: A 'de Moravia' Family tree.<sup>47</sup>

There is much debate to be had here but I would suggest that one 'source' is of great importance. On 31 July 1196, when at Elgin, King William 'the Lion' gifted to the Cistercian Abbey at nearby Kinloss the whole of his lands of *Strathisla*, which lay just to the west of Keith. There are various records of this gift and, of course, our interest is primarily with the witnesses who were present. The 'principal' source is that which comes from the *Regesta Regum Scottorum*, which has both "William son of Freskin, lord of Duffus," and, immediately afterwards, "William, son of William, son of Freskin," listed as witnesses.<sup>48</sup> But the gift is also recorded in Stuart (1872, 109), who gives only "Willelmo filio Fresk" in the witness list. However, from other charter sources we have several instances of "William, son of William, son of Freskyn".<sup>49</sup> The evidence is irrefutable – Freskyn had a son William (I) and a grandson who was also called William (II) (of Petty), whose family became the de Moravias of Petty and Bothwell. William (II) de Moravia had an older brother Hugh (I) de Moravia whose line led to the de Moravia family of Sutherland (later Earls of Sutherland), and another brother, Andrew, who entered the Church and was parson of Duffus, the family's church where many members, including Freskyn himself, lie buried to this day.

After a full and successful life, Freskyn passed his estates (Strathbrock and Duffus) to his son William (I) de Moravia and King William 'the Lion' confirmed them by charter on the same terms as his Father Freskyn had held them under King David I.<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately, as we have observed above, there is no

<sup>47</sup> A much more complete (but still unfinished) 'tree' is available at the Ancestry.com website. <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/tree/172107129/family/familyview?cfpid=232239669248&selnode=1>

<sup>48</sup> Barrow, G.W.S. (ed.) *Regesta Regum Scottorum*, Vol. 2, The Acts of William King of Scots, 1153-1424, Edinburgh University Press, no. 391. <https://www.poms.ac.uk/record/source/432/>

<sup>49</sup> Moray Reg., 23, 31, and 46.

<sup>50</sup> RRS, ii, no. 116. The lands are listed as Strathbrock {NGR: NT 058716}; Roseisle {NGR: NJ 138665}; Inchkeil {NGR: NJ 144657}; Duffus {NGR: NJ189673}; Kintrae {NGR: NJ 168651}; and 'Machar' (which is yet to be identified with certainty but may be lands in the vicinity of Straloch and Monycabock in Aberdeenshire, anciently known as *Machar*). The charter is dated in the POMS Database to 1166 x 1171

known record of King David's original gift to Freskyn. Indeed, the royal charter given to William (I) is the first known historical record of Freskyn himself!

His Grace the Duke of Atholl records that, "He [Freskin] died before 1171, and left three sons." These he names as William, Hugh, and Andrew. He adds the following details:<sup>51</sup>

1. WILLIAM, was designated "filius Freskini," who obtained from King William the Lion, between 1165 and 1171, a charter of confirmation of the lands held by his father.<sup>52</sup> He is also mentioned as witness to a charter by Robert, Bishop of St. Andrews, before 1152, and also to a charter by Hugh Freskin about 1211, where he is designated as brother of the Granter.
2. HUGH, designated "filius Friskini," who acquired the territory of Sutherland. His name also appears as witness to the Bishop of St. Andrew's Charter, and he granted a charter of the lands of Skelbo, &c., in Sutherland, to Gilbert de Moravia, Archdeacon of Moray, about 1211, to which his brothers William and Andrew were witnesses. He died about 1214. His only son William was created Earl of Sutherland about 1235, and carried on that family.
3. ANDREW, witness to the charter by his brother Hugh about 1211.

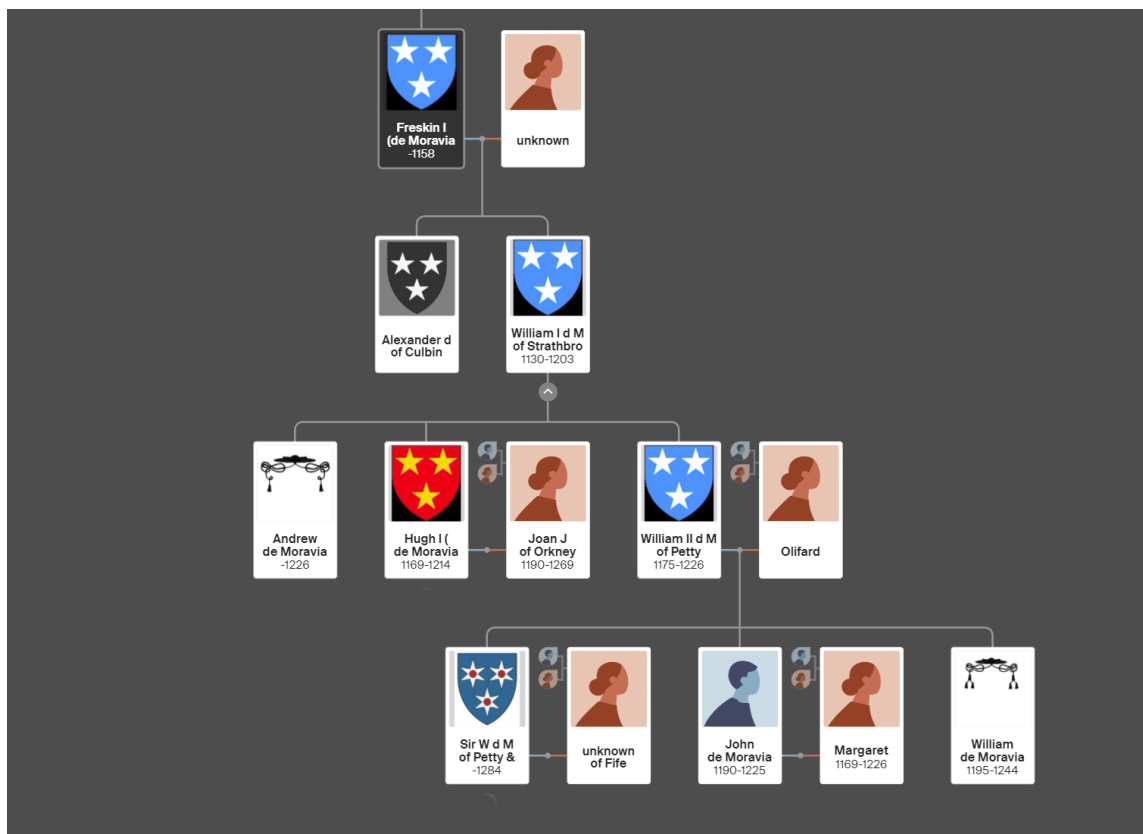


Figure 8: First four generations from Freskin (modern scholarship).<sup>53</sup>

<https://www.poms.ac.uk/record/source/550/> (accessed 20/11/2020). In (Nisbet 1804, ii, App., note (a), p. 183) the author says that: "The original charter I have seen, and copied it from the original in the custody of Dame Katherine Stewart, Lady Cardross, who was proprietor of the lands of Strabork (sic.), as is also her son, the present Earl of Buchan, who has still the charter in his charter-chest."

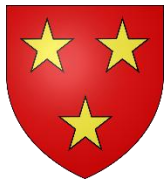
<sup>51</sup> Murray (1908), i., p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> "Quas terras pater suus Freskin tenuit tempore regis David avimei." (Nisbet.)

<sup>53</sup> A complete version of the family tree of the 'de Moravia' family, showing its links to the 'le Chen' family, is to be found at <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/tree/172107129/family?cfpid=232239669248> (accessed 12/05/2024)



## The de Moravias of Sutherland.



It is worth noting that in the witness list to (RRS, i, no. 391) mentioned above, we also have “Hugh Freskyn, lord of Sutherland.” He is named higher up the list, immediately after the Marischal of Scotland (Herbert), and just before the Bishop-elect of Glasgow (Hugh of Roxburgh). Without doubt this reference is to Hugh (I) de Moravia, Freskyn’s eldest grandson. He is already styled ‘lord of Sutherland’ since, by this time (1196), he held large estates there.

Hugh has provided us with something of a conundrum – having obtained lands from the king in the *Suðurland* (Sutherland), sometime after 1190 when he would have been ‘of age’, Hugh then, c.1211, gave a substantial proportion of these lands to Gilbert de Moravia, who was at the time archdeacon of Moray. The gift was not made to the Church but to Gilbert personally. What is more, the lands were not situated within the Diocese of Moray but within the more northern diocese of Caithness, towards its border with the Diocese of Ross.

Gilbert was of the family of ‘de Moravia of Culbin’ and we hear of him acting as archdeacon as early as 1207 - he was a very young man to hold such a ‘senior’ position within the church.<sup>54</sup> No evidence has been found as yet to explain why Hugh made such a generous gift to Gilbert. At Selkirk, on 2 April 1212 x 1214, King William ‘the Lion’ confirmed this gift of Hugh to Gilbert.<sup>55</sup> His lands comprised Skelbo, Invershin, &c., in Sutherland. <sup>56</sup>Furthermore, this gift to “Master Gilbert, archdeacon of Moray”, was later confirmed by Hugh’s son, William, lord of Sutherland, at a date 1203x1223.<sup>57</sup>

The Earldom of Sutherland was created by King Alexander II of Scots about the year 1235 and it has long been recognised and ranked as the most ancient and therefore senior of Scotland’s earldoms. Despite Hugh’s gift to Gilbert, the earldom still encompassed vast areas of land in the north of Scotland and elsewhere.

When he became Bishop of Caithness (1222 x 23), Gilbert gifted these Sutherland estates to add to those already held by his brother Richard de Moravia of Culbin.

It is of interest that the Clan Sutherland Society of Scotland accepts that members of the Moray family are a sept, or a cadet of the Sutherlands.<sup>58</sup> However, if truth is to be told then the Sutherlands should be seen as a sept of the ‘de Moravia’ family since the Sutherlands obtained their title when one of the ‘de Moravia’ family was given substantial lands in Sutherland, i.e. the de Moravia family gave rise to the Sutherland family.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>54</sup> He is considered to have been born about 1185 and so he would have been only about 22 years of age. And yet, as archdeacon, he was the bishop’s lieutenant in the diocese – what some writers have called the “bishop’s enforcer.”

<sup>55</sup> RRS., ii., no. 520.

<sup>56</sup> Murray (1908), i., p. 2.

<sup>57</sup> Moray Reg., App., no. 3. The lands are described as, “the whole lands of *Skelbo* in Sutherland, and of *Fernebuchlyn* (Ferincoskry) and *Invershin*, and moreover his whole land of Sutherland towards the west lying between the aforementioned lands and the borders of Ross.”

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.clansutherland.org.uk/index.asp> and <https://www.clansutherland.org.uk/index.asp?pageid=440968>

<sup>59</sup> The generally accepted ancestry is that William de Moravia (William Sutherland), 1st Earl of Sutherland in the peerage of Scotland (died 1248) was the son of Hugh de Moravia, who in turn was a grandson of Freskin de Moravia.



## The de Moravias of Culbin.



This cadet branch of the family claims great antiquity and they may well be justified in this. Today, many scholars suggest that the Culbin branch stems from the proposal that Freskyn (I) de Moravia had not just one son (William (I) de Moravia) but two, the second being Alexander de Moravia.<sup>60</sup> This is difficult to prove with certainty but there is some evidence to support the idea.

The exact relationship of the Culbin branch of the family to the main branch has not yet been convincingly determined. At most, Hugh and Gilbert were second or third cousins.<sup>61</sup> Of course, in later life Gilbert was to become Bishop of Caithness (1222-1245) and he was considered by many to have become a Saint 'by acclamation'.

The first members of this family to achieve a real historical presence were Gilbert and his brother Richard, of whom we have already heard. They also seem to have had another brother, Simon, about whom very little is known, although James Sutherland has recently presented a thought provoking paper in which he suggests that Simon was the progenitor of the family of Orrock of that Ilk in Fifeshire.<sup>62</sup> Considering the question of the parentage of Gilbert, Richard (and Simon?), three propositions present themselves:

- that the brothers' father was Muiredach de Moravia,
- that their grandfather was Alexander de Moravia,
- that Alexander was a son of Freskyn de Moravia and a brother of William (I) de Moravia of Strathbrock and Duffus.

The first two proposals have some backing since there is an important piece of charter evidence which includes the phrase, "Richard of Moray, son of Murdach, son of Alexander of Moray" - the charter is by 'R.' abbot of Dunfermline, dated 1240 x 1245, in which the abbot and his convent give all the lands of Kyndun {Kildun, Rosshire (NGR: NH 545571)} just south of Dingwall, to Richard.<sup>63</sup> Richard is, at this time, a most unusual name to be found in the Moravia family and, if we add the dating of the charter to our considerations, then there seems to be little doubt that it was addressed to Richard de Moravia of Culbin, Gilbert's brother.

ñri dedim<sup>9</sup> cōcessim<sup>9</sup> ⁊ hac p̄lenti carta ñra confirmauim<sup>9</sup> · R · de mōraū  
fīt m<sup>2</sup>daej filij Aleḡ de mōraua ⁊ hēdibus suis vt suis assignat<sup>9</sup> · totā  
terram ñram de Kyndun · iuxta dyngual in Roffia p̄ oñis rectas metas eū

Figure 9: from Dunf. Reg., no. 307.

<sup>60</sup> For further information see <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/tree/172107129/family/familyview> (accessed 1/12/2020).

<sup>61</sup> For most recent information, see <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/tree/172107129/family/familyview?cfpid=232243143752> (accessed 1/12/2020)

<sup>62</sup> Sutherland, James B. (2020) 'The Medieval Origins of Gilbert de Moravia Archdeacon of Moray (1203-1227) and Bishop of Caithness (1227-1245), and Richard, ancestor of the Murrays of Culbin,' *Foundations for Medieval Genealogy Journal*, *Foundations* (2020) 12: 17-23, <https://fmg.ac/publications/journal/vol-12/649-in-12-03> (accessed 1/12/2020) [membership required].

<sup>63</sup> Dunf. Reg., no. 307, pp. 195-196. <https://www.poms.ac.uk/record/source/2208/> (accessed 1/12/2020). The POMS Database dates this charter to 1240 x 1252 or 1275 x 1296. However, since it is recorded that Richard died at the *Battle of Embo* in 1245, this suggests a different *terminus ante quem* for the Charter.



For the third proposal there appears to be no evidence. Most of the arguments in favour of accepting it seem to rest on heraldry and the fact that the Culbin arms – *Sable three stars argent* – is quite similar to those of Orrock of that Ilk – *Sable on a chevron or between three mullets arg. as many chess rooks (towers) of the field*<sup>64</sup> – which family James Sutherland (Sutherland 2020) proposes to be descendants of Simon, the suggested brother of Richard and Gilbert de Moravia. However, the case is still to be proven. It would appear that Muiredach de Moravia of Culbin had four sons:

- Richard (d.1245) who inherited the Culbin estates from his father. He was married to Marjory de Lascelles. [Dunf. Reg., no. 307] details the gift to Richard, son of Murdaci son of Alexander, of the lands of Kyndun [Kildun {NGR: NH 545571}], near Maryburgh, Dingwall, by the Abbot of Dunfermline. Richard is said to have died fighting a band of Northmen at the Battle of Embo. He was buried in Dornoch Cathedral.
- John.<sup>65</sup>
- Simon.
- Gilbert (c.1185-1245). Archdeacon of Moray and then [Bishop of Caithness](#). Locally acclaimed to be a Saint.



Figure 10: Arms of Orrock of that Ilk.

<sup>64</sup> Paul (1903), 50. "Orrock of that Ilk".

<sup>65</sup> Moray Reg., no. 211. He is called "Joanne de Moravia *fratre ejus*" immediately after Gilbert de Moravia's signature.

## The Modern Families.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the male line of the name of Moray (as opposed to Murray) is represented by [Moray of Abercairny](#).<sup>66</sup> That of Murray is presently represented by the 12<sup>th</sup> Duke of Atholl, Bruce George Ronald Murray, who was born in South Africa and still resides there for the majority of the year.

### [The Morays of Abercairny.](#)



Of old, the Morays of Abercairny bore arms showing only one 'difference' from the arms of 'de Moravia.'



The current laird of Abercairny bears arms that are considerably more complex showing the many intermarriages that successive lairds have made over the years.

### [The Murays of Atholl \(Tullibardine\).](#)



The Tullibardine Murrays bore arms which show the direct kinship that existed with the 'de Moravia' stem. The royal tressure signifies the gratitude of the King to the family for services rendered.



The arms of the current Duke of Atholl who represents this branch of the family show the arms of Tullibardine, surmounted by a Marquess's coronet (representing the Marquissate of Tullibardine), implailing the main arms. Blazon: **Quarterly 1st** paly of six Or and Sable (Atholl); **2nd** Or a fess chequy Argent and Azure (Stewart); **3rd** Argent on a bend Azure three stag's heads cabossed Or (Stanley); **4th** Gules a triskele argent garnished and spurred or (Island of Man); **surtout**, Azure three mullets Argent within a double tressure flory counterflory Or (Murray of Tullibardine).

<sup>66</sup> The present laird of the estate of Abercairny is William George Stirling-Home-Drummond-Moray, 22<sup>nd</sup> of Abercairny. He still resides on the estate at Abercairny House, sometimes called Abercairny Abbey..



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## Web Sites.

A stunning display of the heraldry which has been used by the 'family' through history is to be found at the WappenWiki page - [https://wappenwiki.org/index.php/House\\_of\\_Murray](https://wappenwiki.org/index.php/House_of_Murray)

It is refreshing to see that the House of Sutherland is correctly included as a cadet of the *de Moravia* family. However, it is disappointing to see that the spelling of the family name is only ever 'Murray' which, as we have said above is not correct – Bothwell and Abercairny only ever used 'Moray'. Also, in spite of communications with the administrators of the WappenWiki site, to-date, there has been no response from them regarding their incorrect spelling of the Abercairny 'title' – they have used Abercairney.

## Software.

A number of the coats of arms illustrated in this paper have been created by the author using "[Coat of Arms Maker](#)"



This is an excellent and easy-to-use resource.