

# West Stormont Auld Times

Autumn 2021

In addition to spicing up the heading for our gradually evolving Newsletter/Magazine, we have also set up a website. (See screenshot to the right.) It's easily found, but the best way is to click this link:

[www.wshs.org.uk](http://www.wshs.org.uk)

The library has searchable versions of the Society's Memorial Inscriptions booklets. Work is ongoing.



We intend to hold our AGM on Monday 15th November, at 7.30pm. Online. Via Zoom. However, in advance of this the Agenda and other papers will be delivered to you by post.

For the AGM to work i.e. be legitimate, it requires a quorum of 15 members to "attend".

Your Society needs **YOU**. Online.

Once business is concluded, Paul McLennan will give an illustrated talk about another Murthly related murder.

Auld Times is the journal of the West Stormont Historical Society.

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## Auld Times

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## FURTHER TO ...

## CALLING SCOTT'S BLUFF

PAUL MCLENNAN

Mike Lawrence's article on ferries in the Spring issue prompted Tony Ramsay to write in:

"I remember as a laddie aged about 14 (circa 1948) cycling out from Perth to Waukmill and ringing the big brass bell which brought the ferryman across in his rowboat to take me and the bike over to Stormontfield. I wasn't aware that the service kept going until 1964 (I had left Perth in 1959)."



The committee discussed the Waukmill bell and tariff board. These are probably the only remaining artefacts from that era. While there is evidence that the board is being cared for, and was repainted recently, no one is looking after the bell. It is technically council property, but should WSHS offer to adopt it?

Tony also queried why Mike did not mention the Balmackneill Ferry. Mike replied that this was lost in the edit, and offered the following addendum:

The Balmackneill Ferry is first recorded in 1731 when someone complained about the efficiency of the ferryman. It was a simple coble and used mainly by locals.

The Dunkeld Bridge Act held that no ferry could be worked on the Tay within three miles of the bridge. The Duke of Atholl retained the right to use the ferry at Balmackneill for private use.

Given the way in which he rhapsodised over the Border Country, wild and rugged Highlands, and watery Trossachs, people have often missed that Sir Walter Scott also had a fondness for Perthshire. "The fairest portion" of Scotland is but one of many compliments scattered through *The Fair Maid of Perth*, for example. Perthshire also provides the setting for much of the action of his first novel, *Waverley*. Tully-Veolan, the great house of the Bradwardines, is situated on the Lowland side of the gateway to the Highlands.

Readers of the anonymously published series of *Waverley* Novels speculated often about the real settings of castles, houses and scenes of climatic action. And it all began with *Tully-Veolan*: which great house was its model? For many, *Traquair* was favourite. The entrance to the grounds of *Tully-Veolan* is through an arch surmounted by "two rampant Bears, the supporters of the family of Bradwardine". Bears, of course, are prominent on the iron gates leading to *Traquair*. However, if you look at Pernot's "Château de Tully-Veolan", a great illustrator's visualising of the text, it does not bear any resemblance to *Traquair*.



Another contender was Craighall Castle up river from Blairgowrie. Murthly and Grandtully Castles also had their champions. Indeed, in 1842 when the royal procession made its way from Dunkeld to Taymount, Queen Victoria's attention was directed to the old castle of Grandtully, "which is understood to be the Tully-Veolan of *Waverley*". (According to James Buist's *National Record of the Visit of Queen Victoria to Scotland*) Which little touristy tidbit

would doubtless have been warmly received by Victoria and Albert as true Scott devotees. A contradictory version was given in Sir Thomas Dick Lauder's blow by blow account of each day on the tour. (*Memorial of the Royal Progress in Scotland*) He described the view offered when Victoria's coach stopped at Stare Dam, before descending to Inver. "That which particularly recalls and fixes the observation of the spectator, is the extensive and finely timbered park of Murthly . . . with its old and extremely interesting Scottish mansion, supposed to be that from which Sir Walter Scott borrowed his idea of Bradwardine's Castle of Tully-Veolan." Although there is no suggestion of this claim having been made in her hearing, Victoria would not have been the first tourist to have been given conflicting local 'truths'.

The *truth* of Tully-Veolan was published in 1829. In a footnote.

The 1829 edition of the *Waverley Novels* was the one in which Scott finally admitted authorship. He provided lengthy prefaces, introductions, footnotes and appendices for all of the works. In that edition of *Waverley* you will find the following:

"There is no particular mansion under the name of Tully-Veolan, but the peculiarities of the description occur in several old Scottish seats." Scott then instances the House of Warrender, Old Ravelston, and the House of Dean – all in Edinburgh – before finishing with an oddly circumlocutory sentence: "The Author, has, however, been informed that the House of Grandtully resembles that of the Baron of Bradwardine still more than any of the above."

When I read a sentence like that I know the game's afoot. Instead of clarifying the matter, Scott here casually, slyly, deliberately muddies the water. *Informed* him? Is he suggesting the overwhelming resemblance of Tully-Veolan to Grandtully is mere coincidence? No, he is using a footnote, where the reader might expect an explanatory truth, to disguise his real meaning.

250th anniversary or not, I'm calling Scott's bluff.

The House of Grandtully is not necessarily Grandtully Castle. When Scott drafted *Waverley*, the laird was Sir George Stewart of Grandtully, Bart. By tradition *he* was "Grandtully". But the fourth generation of Stewarts then happily residing in Murthly Castle: the baronetcy remained of Grandtully though the seat of power had moved.

Murthly Castle has the right location: on the Lowland side of the gateway to the Highlands through the Pass of Birnam. Whereas Grandtully Castle lies further west on the River Tay . . . firmly in Gaelic speaking Highland Perthshire.

Murthly has the requisite venerable grandeur with turrets overlooking a walled garden terraced in the Dutch style. All set in a rectilinear pattern of avenues and shelter belts already established in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Grandtully by

comparison was old, gloomy and unloved. Yes, it had been restored in the 1690s but would not blossom again until made fit for Sir Archibald Stewart's widow, Lady Hester, who moved there in 1893.

This is, of course, pure idle speculation. Tully-veolan is only a fictional composite drawn, by Scott's admission, from at least four sources. However, I think it's Murthly's location as the only and obvious fit for Tully-Veolan between Perth and the Pass of Birnam that gave Scott pause. In owning up to authorship of *Waverley* he may have thought "Oops! I've perhaps been too obvious here." and thought to cover himself by telling the truth, in a legalistic fashion. Tully-Veolan *is* mostly based on the House of Grandtully: just not the obvious one.

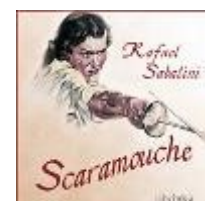
## BACK IN THE DAY

The UK's first mobile library service was created 100 years ago. In Perthshire.

A Ford motor van was fitted out to carry over 800 books, thanks to a grant from the Carnegie Trust. The service was operated by the Rural Libraries Committee for the Perthshire Education Authority.



Popular authors then were E. Philips Oppenheim, Sinclair Lewis, Dorothy Canfield, Ethel M. Dell, Edith Hull, and Zane Grey. However, the top selling novel was *Scaramouche* by Rafael Sabatini.



# PARTY LIKE IT'S 1829!

MICHAEL LAWRENCE

## Plenty of excuses for a good celebration.

The human urge to celebrate is as old as time. Every culture, nation, and tradition has developed its own way of commemorating a special occasion with food, drink, music, song, and dance. These customs are a direct result of a tangled web of beliefs, history, geography, and lifestyle.

We celebrate beginnings and endings such as birth and death. We celebrate the cycle of the seasons and our relationship with nature. We celebrate past events, anniversaries, and rites of passage through the journey of life. We celebrate marriage and divorce. We celebrate victories and achievement. And we celebrate the overcoming of a major setback or disaster.

Celebrations add fun and excitement to our usual routine. These are occasions when we can let our hair down and take a break from the mundane aspects of daily activity. Love, grief, joy, sadness, reverence, relief, and success are all perfect reasons for a gathering. This has always been the case.

Our ancestors enjoyed local fairs and regular religious festivals, celebrated for centuries on set dates throughout the year. This pattern of community celebration was completely reshaped in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries by the power of the Kirk in Scotland which suppressed anything that might be associated with the Catholic religion and idolatry.

By 1800, the principal elements of the old church calendar – Christmas, Lent, Easter, and the celebration of Saints' days throughout the year – had disappeared as special holidays in Scotland or its rituals continued as a popular annual event but without any of the religious connotations.

In the 1820s and 1830s, workers didn't have much time for a social life. 14-hour days were the norm in the factories and during the long dawn to dusk days on the farm. There was an abundance of inns, pubs and dram shops to slake the daily thirst of the locals, and drunkenness was an in-

creasing problem. But habitual drinking never diminished the appeal of coming together for special occasions. And some two hundred years ago, there were plenty of excuses for a good celebration:

### Birth

When the birth of a child was expected, a special malt ale was brewed in readiness to treat the relatives, friends and neighbours who called in to see the new born child. Athole Brose – a mix of oatmeal brose, honey, whisky and cream – was another favourite at birth celebrations. Baptisms were celebrated with the same brew.

In the homes of poorer families, a dish of butter, sugar and pepper was prepared, and either whisky or rum was added to the mixture. Every person who called at the house for several days after the birth was encouraged to sample the dish. It was traditional that, after tasting the "birth brose", the visitor dropped a silver coin into the bowl as a token of luck and good fortune for the baby.



### Marriage

Weddings were perhaps the most important occasions for local celebration. They were attended by large numbers and several hundred guests was not uncommon. Invitations were not specifically required but everyone who attended was expected to contribute to the festivities, by providing food, drink, utensils, or a service, or through a cash donation.

A couple of weeks before the big day, the groom and his best man travelled around making sure the community was aware that a wedding was planned while the bride and her best maid specifically invited the family and a few special friends.

Wedding presents were always practical – a butter dish, bread bin, clothes rope, clothes pegs, boot polish, brushes, cutlery, spurtle, pots, pans – and never frivolous. A set of china was traditionally given by the chief bridesmaid and

the best man usually gave a clock.

The wedding celebrations began on the eve of the ceremony with much mischief making and plenty of singing, drinking, and dancing. The bride and groom were usually grabbed by friends sometime during the evening and their legs daubed with soot, ash and cinders. Then followed the ceremonial washing of the happy couple's feet by the groomsmen and bridesmaids.

On the wedding day, the best man and chief bridesmaid escorted the groom to the home of the bride and the vows were exchanged. Immediately after the ceremony, a plate of salt was broken over the head of the groom. As the couple departed the bride's house, old shoes were thrown after them to symbolise the passing of responsibility from father to husband.

The bridal party then headed for the groom's house where the wedding feast was held. Neighbours provided plates, knives, forks and spoons for the big day. The dinner was plentiful – milk, broth, rounds of mutton and fowl, loaves and oatcakes, and puddings swimming in cream. In the rural communities, a bullock was often gifted by a farmer guest and roasted in advance. The many toasts during the meal were lubricated by ample supplies of home brewed ale, and whisky.



The dancing carried on into the small hours. Each drinker paid for their share of the wedding punch and the money collected was given to the newly-weds and used to pay the musicians.

Around three o'clock in the morning, the bride retired to the bedroom, accompanied by her maids, for "the bedding" ceremony. Once she was in bed there was a general rush to the room and whisky, bread and cheese were distributed to the guests. The bride removed her left stocking in a flamboyant gesture and threw it over her left shoulder amongst the guests. The stocking was fought over by the single ladies in the room – and the winner hoped to be the next to marry.

## Death

Two hundred years ago, many locals were secretly delighted to hear news about a death in the neighbourhood. And with good reason! Burying with decency meant filling the mourners with free food and drink for several days until the internment.

When someone died, visitors would call at the house in a steady stream to pay their last respects. It was customary for people to sit with the body until the burial, day and night. Relatives, friends and neighbours took part in the wake, one group succeeding the other.

The mourning time was spent around the death bed on storytelling and the singing of psalms and dirges but an excess of alcohol usually meant that the wake degenerated into unseemly behaviour such as dancing around the corpse, telling macabre jokes, and even fist fights. It was not unknown for the drunk mourners to proceed to the graveyard on the day of the funeral and forget to take the remains of the deceased with them.

After the funeral service came "the draidgie", the funeral feast. Those attending the funeral were served with loaves and cheese, currant bread, cakes, biscuits and shortbread. New pipes, tobacco and snuff were also expected. Ale, whisky or wine were the drinks of choice for the many toasts to celebrate the life of the departed – the proposer speaking highly of the virtues and character of the departed friend as each person drank to their memory in solemn silence. And there was a view that the more intoxicated the individual, the more respect they were showing to the deceased.

## Hogmanay

The traditions of celebrating a new year were well established by the early 1800s. The increasing wealth of the country and the easy availability of cheap whisky produced a festival of heavy drinking over the "daft days" after Hogmanay.

On the stroke of midnight, neighbours exchanged warm salutations and the good wishes of the season but also carried gifts of coal, cake and whisky. The neighbour had a tray of food ready and some drink for visitors. The first foot was always welcomed unless they arrived empty handed. The prized first foot was someone who arrived unexpectedly, particularly a stranger rather than a relative.

Misrule was a feature of Hogmanay with youths up to harmless pranks such as unscrewing shop signs, dousing street lamps, and dragging carts into the street. The emphasis of the new year celebration was on community –

meeting and greeting neighbours to wish them well for the year ahead.

Hogmanay was also a time for children to go from door to door in their best disguise to receive a dole of cheese or a piece of wheaten loaf or shortbread to take home. A favourite chant was “Hogmanay, troll-al-lay. Give us some of your white bread and none of your grey”.

### **Hansel Monday**

For over 500 years, Hansel Monday was the great winter holiday of the year. Hansel Monday was a day of gatherings and the exchange of small gifts between colleagues, neighbours and friends.

Originally it was celebrated on the first Monday after January 12<sup>th</sup>, New Year’s Day under the Julian calendar, but the date was later modified to the first Monday of the new year under the Gregorian arrangements. Some traditionalists continued to observe the original holiday date and Old Hansel Monday was celebrated well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Perthshire.

No work was done on Hansel Monday and it was usual for farm and house servants to receive a gift from their masters – a shilling or half-crown would often be collected together with a piece of cake and a glass of toddy to bring luck in the year ahead. Tradesmen expected a hansel gift from their masters, weavers from the manufacturer they supplied, and retailers from their customers.

It was also a day for family reunions - grandparents, parents, sons and daughters, aunts and uncles would meet for a meal, a glass, a song and a dance. The traditional breakfast was fat brose made from beef fat and poured over oatmeal. The dinner was boiled beef with ale, cake, and whisky. This was a day of convivial drinking, not drunkenness.

After the meal it was customary to visit friends and neighbours to celebrate the holiday with singing, dancing and telling tall tales while large quantities of food and drink were shared.

Hansel Monday was also a day when the young would get up to all sorts of nonsense – grabbing anything flammable they could find to build a bonfire. In the evening there was usually a dance with the lads in their best attire and the lassies “all rigged out in white”. And later, guisers would go from house to house – dressed up in odd clothes with masks on their faces and often accompanied by a fiddler. Their purpose was to receive money or a drink from each house visited.

### **Fastern’s E’en**

*First comes Candlemas, and then the new moon,  
And the first Tuesday after that is Fastern’s E’en.*

Fastern’s E’en, known as Shrove Tuesday in England, was abolished as a holiday in Scotland following the Reformation but the traditions of the day carried on outside the ban. According to the rule, Fastern’s E’en is the seventh Tuesday before Easter.

We know that before the Reformation, Fastern’s E’en was a day of wild revelry as the people confessed and received absolution for their shiven sins and then plunged into an excess of eating and drinking in the few hours left before Ash Wednesday and the first day of Lent which ushered in a period of austerity and abstinence in the six weeks of penitence before Easter.

After the Reformation, Fastern’s E’en became a secular celebration – a day for eating rather than heavy drinking. Skair Scones (made with milk, oatmeal, eggs, flour and sugar), boiled beef, beef brose (made of oatmeal and the water in which the beef had been stewed), and large bannock cakes were the favourites.

Sir Walter Scott provides a description of Fastern’s E’en in *The Fair Maid of Perth* “the common people had throughout the day, toiled and struggled at football, the nobles had fought cocks, and heartened to the wanton music of the minstrel; while the citizens had gorged themselves upon pancakes fried in lard”.



The afternoon was spent in singing and storytelling. Neighbours would call in, a fiddler would strike up a tune, and the dancing would go on for hours. People wended their way home around midnight.

Fastern’s E’en was a break from study for school children. The classroom was converted into a cock pit and every boy was expected to bring in a well-fed fighting rooster for a cock fight. Dues of two pennies were paid by the boys for each cock entered and the teacher kept both the entry money and any slain birds.

## Plough Fest

Making the first cut of the year with a plough was a significant event in the agricultural calendar of each farm. No more than a symbolic scratch of the turf was made on the first day and this was known as “the feering”. Bread, oatcakes, cheese and sweet milk porridge were then given to the ploughmen together with a good glass of whisky.

The ploughmen would drink the dram and pour a refill over the bridle of their plough saying “God speed the plough”. This part of the ceremony was known as “streaking the plough”. The horses were also given a piece of the oatcake. A portion of the food was kept for the Plough Fest in the evening when the whole farm community gathered together for a supper and dance to celebrate the start of another farming year.

## Midsummer

The Midsummer Fair was a big day in Perth and Perthshire. Originally it celebrated the birthday of John the Baptist and was celebrated on the 24<sup>th</sup> June as John’smas. The religious holiday was swept away with the Reformation and the day was switched into early July. Eventually this settled as the first Saturday in July, Midsummer Saturday, and was traditionally an annual holiday in Perth when businesses closed for the day.

Midsummer Saturday was celebrated by the lighting of large bonfires and this custom continued into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There was a strong superstitious element to rituals performed around the bonfire –boys and girls would gather large quantities of heather, the fire was lit by a live coal from a neighbouring house, and bones were always thrown into the embers. Farmers who wished for a bountiful crop would light torches from the fire and circumnavigate their fields carrying a flambeau. After dancing through the night, the young people would jump through the flames of the fire, chasing each other with big blazing fire balls.

## Harvest Home

*The cheerful harvest home, the harvest o’er,  
As it has oft been kept in days of yore,  
With an o’er flowing kirn and dance, and glee,  
To mark the Autumn’s welcome jubilee.*

Completing the arduous task of bringing in the harvest was always a natural cause of great joy on the farms. The last handful of reaped corn was called the Maiden and was contrived to fall into the hands of the prettiest girl amongst the reapers. The Maiden was then plaited, ornamented and dressed in ribbons as a corn dolly and brought to the farmhouse in triumph to announce that the harvest

was home. The lassie who received the Maiden was the Queen of the Feast and the Maiden was hung in some prominent part of the farmhouse to bring luck in the following year.

It was customary for the reapers to be guests of honour at the Harvest Home supper in a specially decorated granary and attended by a large number of the local community. A substantial meal was served and many toasts were drunk. A typical meal would be roast and boiled beef, chicken, game, potatoes, and vegetables, with cold sweets or crowdie and cream for dessert.

The supper was repeated throughout the area as each farm completed their harvest and invited neighbours over to celebrate. The evenings were marked by exuberant dancing and laughter, the occasional song, perhaps an amusing monologue, and much reminiscing.

## Hallow E’en

Halloween can be traced back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain to mark the end of summer and symbolised the boundary between the world of the living and the world of the dead. Bonfires were lit to scare away the undead and neep lanterns lit the way.

There was much fun after dark – practical jokes, rapping on doors and running away, placing a turf over chimneys, and fastening doors from the outside. A long-standing tradition was that boys sneaked into gardens to strip them of every green thing.



Halloween was a night when guisers wandered the streets. Youths gathered around the blazing fires and cracked nuts and jokes. Others amused themselves by looking for apples in tubs filled with water.

Halloween was essentially a children’s celebration only by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century – dressing up in strange garments, faces painted, and doing the rounds of neighbours’ houses. Each child carried a bag to gather apples, nuts and sweets and was expected to do a turn for their benefactors. Recitations, a song or a dance were quite acceptable.

## Tenantry Dinner

Estate suppers to celebrate anything from the birth of an heir, a family marriage, or the succession of the eldest son to the dukedom, baronetcy or lairdship were a feature of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century social round.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> July 1814, for example, the tenants and workmen of the Atholl Estate gathered to celebrate the Duke's birthday at the New Inn in Bankfoot of Auchtergaven. Upwards of forty tenants and workmen assembled for the evening to honour their patron with whisky toddy. The celebrations continued to a late hour "with the utmost hilarity and good humour" and many toasts were drunk with great enthusiasm to the Duke, her Grace, the Duchess of Atholl, their son Lord James Murray and the rest of the Atholl family.

## Initiation

Most highly skilled jobs, especially those with trade guilds, liked to foster a sense of mystery and intrigue and to have secrets known only to the inner sanctum of their fully qualified men. These secrets were revealed to new members with the threat of strict penalties if they spoke of them outside the craft. The Horsemen's Word and the Masons were the most preserved of these secret societies.

Ritual ceremonies were held to initiate ploughmen into the Horsemen's Word. The secret of the Word was supposed to give the ploughman complete control over any horse. The initiation was invariably at midnight in a granary loft, apparently with no other person within calling distance. The ploughman had to eat half a loaf and drink a bottle of whisky. He was then blindfolded and led to an alter where he was questioned on his horse knowledge, made to swear an oath, shake the Devil's hand, and receive the Word. The individual had to promise not to write, carve or divulge the Word to anyone and was made fully aware that breaking the oath meant dire consequences for him. Once the ceremony was over, the other Horsemen would reveal their presence and a ceilidh was held to celebrate the initiation.

Masonry has its roots in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century when a group of Scottish stone masons set up lodges to protect their interests, promote fraternity amongst members, create craft standards, and provide relief to those members in need. Secret handshakes, code words and the all-seeing eye gave masonry an aura of mystery that it retains today. The initiation drama for entered apprentices and the rituals involved for passing through the various craft levels were celebrated at a special lodge dinner.

## Sport

Two hundred years ago, sport was localised. Travelling any distance on the country roads was difficult but, if an individual, group, village, or parish developed a reputation for their skill at a particular game, challenges were inevitably issued across the neighbouring area. And when a match was accepted then there was always a victory to celebrate, a loss to lament, or the acceptance of a hard-fought draw.

One of the oldest sporting contests was the annual ba' match which was held at Scone between married men and bachelors on Fastern's E'en. A ball was thrown in the air and the first catcher would run with it until caught. He could wrestle clear or throw the ball to a team mate but no competitor was allowed to kick the ball. The objective of the married men was to put the ball three times into a small hole on the moor – "dooling in the hole"- while the bachelors were trying to drown the ball three times in the River Tay – "dooking in the river". The side which achieved three dools or three dooks first was the winner. If the game was a draw, the ba' was cut in half. After the match, players and supporters decanted to the local inns to celebrate the victory or drown their sorrows.

Bulleting was also a popular sport. The bullets weighed about two pounds each and were roughly double the size of a golf ball. The game was over two, three or four miles and the winner was the man who covered the distance along the road in the fewest number of throws of the bullet. A match was usually played by two, three or four men. The starting point was invariably a pub and the target was an agreed milestone. Usually, the game was played out to a mile mark and back to the pub for a good drink. Bulleting was banned by the Turnpike Act of 1848 for the simple reason that it scared the horses.

The games of curling, bowling and quoits are essentially the same – throw a stone, ball or ring as close as possible to a target and, if needs be, knock out your opponent's shot. All were popular in the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and matches would be arranged within and between local clubs. The day would typically end with food and drink in a local inn to celebrate success or commiserate for the loss.

The Perthshire Hunt was established in 1784 by the county gentry and proved a great success throughout the 19th century. The horse races were held on the North Inch in October each year and continued for a week. People around Perth enjoyed the races as spectators and in the evenings of the Hunt week there were dinners and balls



for the landed elite, army officers and the merchant class.

There is no doubt that it was a soldier who first taught the people of Perth and Perthshire to play cricket. From 1812 to 1814 there were four regiments in Perth Barracks as the military guard keeping watch on some 7,000 French prisoners. It was the officers and men of these regiments who introduced cricket to the area. The Perth Cricket Club was founded in 1826 and their first match was reported in the 13<sup>th</sup> July 1826 edition of the Perthshire Courier: "A match of cricket was played on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> July between the Perth Cricket Club and a party of the 7<sup>th</sup> Hussars". Perth won "by two notches". Cricket expanded across the county and success was celebrated every weekend and at the annual dinner arranged by each club to reflect back on the season just passed and award prizes.

The Perth Golfing Society was founded in 1824 and played over the North Inch and South Inch links in Perth. The club organised lavish dinners for the presentation of cups and medals to coincide with their regular competitions. Very little golf was played in the rural areas of West Stormont until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century other than the simple game of hitting a ball around a field with a suitable stick.

Life was hard two hundred years ago but our forebearers enjoyed a good party. They were grateful for what they had, watched out for their neighbours, and knew the importance of celebrating family, community and sporting occasions.

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# WAS IT DUE TO THE WEATHER?

ROSALIND PEARSON

## Lady Logiealmond's Debtors

### The Document

In January 2020 a cache of documents relating to Logiealmond was found among the Murthly Muniments in the National Records of Scotland in Edinburgh. These included some of the long-sought estate papers of the Drummonds, who had owned Logiealmond from 1668. In 1828 the estate passed by marriage to Murthly and Grantully, and in the 1840s was sold to the Earl of Mansfield.



Fig.1: Logie House, Logiealmond Estate: sketch dated July 1852. Courtesy of the AK Bell Library, Perth.

The boxes and bundles of documents amounted to 128 leases, most dating from around 1791 when the young laird of the period came of age, with a few relating to mills and brew seats (places permitted to make and sell ale), these dating to around 1750. The oldest item and the focus of this article is a list of debts owed to Lady Logiealmond in December 1696.<sup>1</sup> It covers most of Logiealmond except Little Glenshee, records the names of the tenants and their places, and details their debts. 'The Lady', as the writer calls her, was Grisel, mother of the then laird, Thomas Drummond, who was 23 at this date, but had inherited the estate from his father when he was five.

The seven-page list of debts was a challenge for several reasons. Though the writing was fairly neat, unlike the later documents it was written in Secretary Hand, so the

script and many of the words used were unfamiliar. After struggling to learn to read it during lockdown the author asked David Perry of Alder Archaeology Ltd to transcribe it. Even then it took time to understand the terminology and to find the meaning of debts for 'cropt', 'dutie', 'gratuitie' and 'kindness'.

The ninety-four tenants listed under fifteen place names owed a total £3,401 13s 4d in pounds Scots in December 1696, equivalent to about £283 Sterling at that time. Five owed nothing, and five owed over £100 Scots. About half the tenants owed 'the Lady' only for 1696 but the other half had gone into debt in 1695 or earlier. About 10% had debts of more than two years standing.

The tenants were listed from west to east and all but two of the place names were easily identifiable (Croft Rannock, possibly Tomnafour, and Little Groan which was linked with Millhaugh). Apart from Girron which lies near Amulree to the north of the hill ridge, the twelve more westerly tenancies lie in a six-kilometre band on the south facing slopes above the Almond, not far from the through road. These places each had three to seven tenants, and in each most of the tenants owed the same 'dutie' or rent for 1696, typical of fermtouns. In several places tenants had the same surname so were probably related, like the seven Gorries in Culnacloch and three Robertsons in Over Kipney.

The two more easterly groups of tenants, eleven tenants at Chapelhill and nineteen at Outer Mains (now called Drummond Park), were different. Those in Chapelhill were loosely grouped around the old kirk and road to Logie House, and the latter, east of the burn, were spread through a wider area around the main house and its two home farms, now called Drummond Park and Drumharrow. Few of these places are named. The range of rents and debts was considerable; a few owed large sums and many small, and none the same.

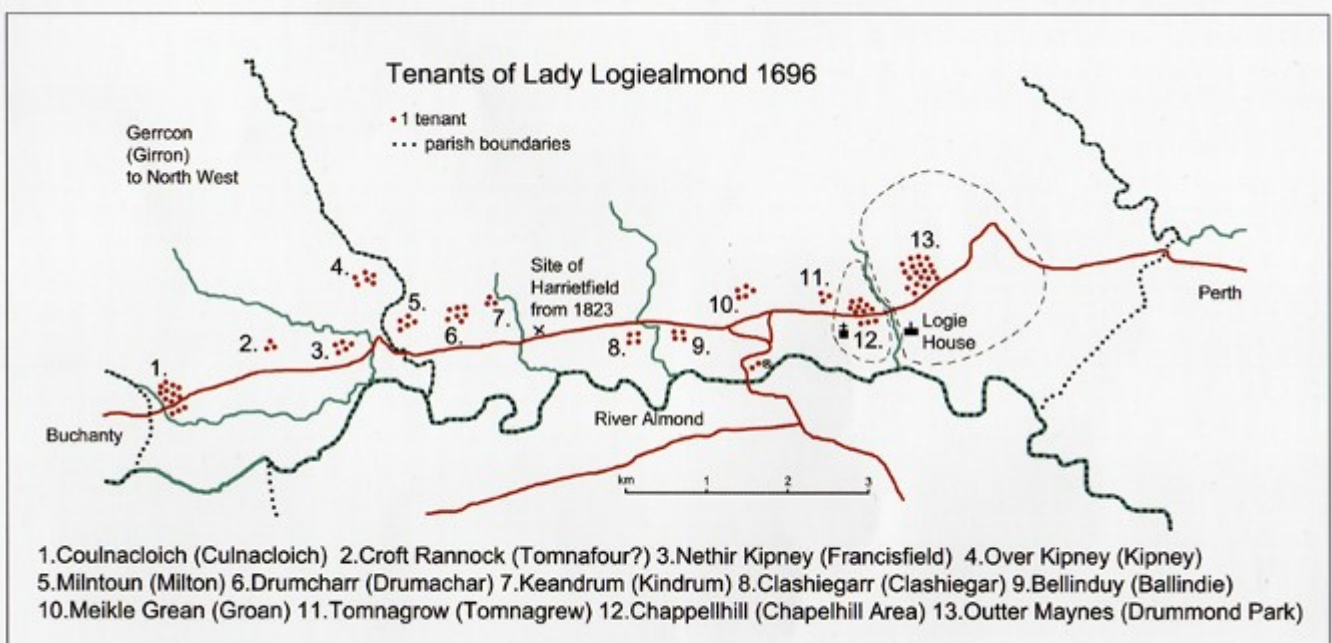
A proportion of the smaller tenants were probably pendiclers, who rented a cottage and a small plot from the landowner (whereas a cottager rented from a tenant). It is likely some had particular skills and trades, working directly for the estate or providing services needed by the estate and other tenants, and some were older men and women.

The careful accounting of all debts and allowances offers some insights. John Miller was the smith at Kindrum and David Murray at Chapelhill. One of the Tomnagrew tenants owed money on a bond as well as three years' rent, but was due 4 merks (£2 4s 0d Scots) for wintering the Lady's cow and a flock of hers; also 44 shillings for wintering another of her cows prior to Beltane 1695.

James Bell in the Drummond Park area was due to pay the Lady £4 for a boll of meal; £2 8s for six hens a year at four shillings each; and £2 11s 8d for a firloft of meal given him by the Lady at £10 6s 8d per boll. However, he was able to deduct £11 14s 10d for his linen cloth that had been sold in Perth by James Menzies of Chapelhill.

### The broader picture

The document gives a glimpse of a landscape and way of life that had been long established, but was to change over the next hundred and fifty years to an environment that would be more familiar today. In the small clusters of houses or fermtouns families co-operated to cultivate unenclosed plots of land and graze their animals. They were self-sufficient in many ways. Grain provided the staple food and a basis for making ale. Change came to Logiealmond in the eighteenth century with a more commercial approach, based on individual farms with much investment in drainage, enclosure, buildings, crop rotations and tree planting. The list of debts provides enlightening detail on the tenants in Logiealmond (apart



**Fig.2: Tenants of Lady Logiealmond 1696. Map showing place-names given in National Records of Scotland GD 121/1/Box 41/Bundle 121/5, with present-day names in brackets.**

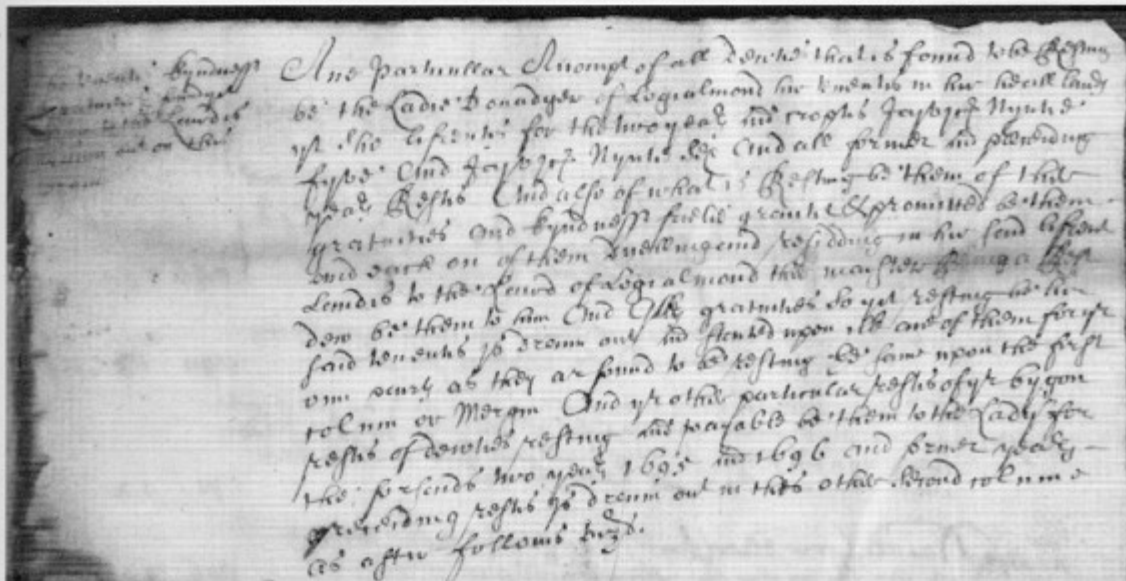
from those in Little Glenshee) prior to this, but how does it fit into a broader picture of the time?

The decade of the 1690s was a significant and difficult time for Scotland, when several long- running problems and divisions coincided: both political (Jacobite and Hanoverian loyalties) and religious (Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and Episcopalian convictions). It was a time of unrest and challenging conditions, nationally and locally. In addition, it was the lowest point of the Maunder Minimum, the period that came to be known as the little ice age. 'The 1690s were a decade of misery for the Scots with the notorious Lean Years of consecutive harvest failures' (T M Devine).<sup>3</sup>

Ian Whyte has described how the crisis began in 1695 with failure of the harvest. It was so serious that the government had to remove the restrictions on the import of grain. The next year the crop failed again. This was followed by a better year in 1697 providing some relief. Unfortunately, the next winter was hard and long, and led to a third year of crop failure and lack of feed for stock. Recovery began in 1699, when there was a plentiful harvest. <sup>4</sup> Scotland was not the only country affected. Much of northern Europe suffered, especially Scandinavia and the Baltic. <sup>5</sup>

### Copy of the heading of the original document

National Records of Scotland GD121/1/Box 41, Bundle 121, Number 5



### The transcription by David Perry, Alder Archaeology Ltd

The Rentis kindness Ane  
(gr)atuitis found yit (resting)  
to the Laird is Drawn  
out on this Mergin

The	Ane Particular Accompt of all dewties that is found to be Resting be the Ladie Douager of Logialmond hir tenentis in hir heall land[is] [tha]t she lifrentis for the two year[is] and croptis Jajvc Nyntie fyve And Jajvc Nyntie sex And all former and preceeding year[is] Restis And also of what is Resting be them of ther gratuities and kindness frielie grantit [and] promitted be them and each on of them duelling and residding in hir said lifrent Landis to the Laird of Logialmond ther maister Being a Rest dew be them to him And Q[ui]k[is] gratuities so yit resting be hir said tenentis is draun out and stented upon ilk ane of them for [the]r oun pairt[is] as they ar found to be resting the same upon the first colum or Mergin And [the]r other particular restis of [the]r bygon restis of dewties resting and payable be them to the Lady for the forsaid two year[is] 1695 and 1696 and former year[is] preceeding restis is draun out in this other second colume As aftir follouis viz.
Mergin	

### Interpretation of the Heading

An account of all that is owed to the Lady Dowager of Logiealmond in all the lands she liferents from the Laird of Logiealmond for 1695 and 1696 and any arrears. Also what they owe in 'gratuities' and 'kindness' that each of them has agreed in the land she has in liferent from the Laird of Logiealmond, their master. And what is due to him from the tenants is in the first column or margin. The duties that they owe to her including for previous years is listed in the second column.

It is not known what the population of Scotland was before or after the famine of the 1690s, but in her 2010 book, *Famine in Scotland*, Karen Cullen estimates that 10-15% of the population died in this part of the country – even more in the north-east and Highlands, though less in the eastern lowlands. She found evidence that the weather deteriorated from 1692, but that those in Tayside were somewhat cushioned by the recent growth of the domestic linen industry.<sup>6</sup>

The official price of oatmeal, set annually by Perth Sherriff Court, increased almost three-fold, from £3 6s 8d per boll in 1693 to £9 0s 0d in 1699.<sup>7</sup> The government had to import grain to feed the poorest. In many parts tenants were unable to pay their rents, some ran short of seed for the next year and some were unable to feed their stock. Arable farmers, graziers, tradesmen, pendiclers and cottagers found it difficult to support their families.<sup>8</sup>

Many set out on the road to look for work, to seek charity or to return to their original parish where they might expect support. Epidemic disease, such as typhus and smallpox, spread with the migrants whose resistance was low. Parishes were responsible for the care of those born there or who had lived there for a number of years, but many did not have the resources and organisation to cope with the numbers affected, particularly strangers to the area.<sup>9</sup> Because of the removal of ministers sympathetic to the Church of England at the re-establishment of Presbyterianism in the 1690s, some parishes had no resident minister and no records and struggled to offer any support to the poor.<sup>10</sup>

Farming and the people only recovered gradually; the labour force was reduced, skills lost, stock decimated, land not maintained, marriage and birth rates fell. Landowners lost income over four devastating years. The country had had to import expensive grain and had lost potential exports. In 1698-9 it was further impoverished through investment in the Company of Scotland and failed Darien Scheme.<sup>11</sup>

### **Logiealmond in context**

David Forrester studied the records for the parishes that later became Logiealmond – parts of Monzie, Fowlis Wester and Redgorton. In his local history of Logiealmond, published in 1944, he records that after the Revolution of 1688 that established the protestant monarchs William and Mary on the throne, the incumbent Episcopal minister and elders of Monzie were swept aside and new men sought. When the new Kirk-Session found the Poor Box broken open and empty, the civil and ecclesiastical authorities investigated the circumstances. The former incumbent disclaimed all knowledge and referred them to the Box Master of his day. He said that for security while Lord Dundee's Highland army were going up and down the country after the battle of Killcrankie, he had taken the box and hidden it beneath the pulpit in the kirk, but he

had told no one and could produce no corroboration. Nothing was found and so 'the poor had to suffer'.<sup>12</sup>

In 1691 after the morning service in the kirk at Chapelhill nine men were appointed elders for the Logiealmond portion of Monzie parish, and allocated responsibility for districts. In 1695 a further four elders were appointed to the more westerly portion of Logiealmond. The names of all their places are familiar today and many of the names of the elders are in the list of tenants' debts of 1696.<sup>13</sup>

Unrest and open war between the government and the Jacobites in Scotland was disruptive for the settled farming population. The armies here and on campaigns in Ireland and on the continent needed money so new taxes were imposed. The records of the poll tax for the Logiealmond area have not survived, but the hearth tax of 1691 lists the tenants of the Laird of Logiealmond. Forty-eight men paid fourteen shillings each with extra for two kilns, and the laird paid £9 16s 0d for his 14 hearths and a kiln (was this all in the 'manor place', or did it include some cottages?). Not surprisingly, it took several years to collect the tax.

Looking at the level of debt in relation to the duty or annual rent where both were recorded (for 74 of the 94 tenants listed) suggests the tenants that were having problems. By December 1696 43% had only to pay that year's rent, but 14% owed a full two year's rent and 16% more than that. John Dow in Tomnagrew paid rent of only £6 6s 8d but owed ten times the amount and John Spindie in the same place owed four times his rent of £26 6s 8d. Patrick Peddie in Drumachar had rent of £34 13s 4d but debts of £142 15s 2d. And there were more bad years to come.

The list of debts only covers the households with a tenancy, not the whole population, which also extended to subtenants, cottagers, and the landowner's family. Tenants had less security and fewer resources than the landowner, but more than the others. All were affected by the harvest failures: the tenants accumulated debts and did not need the labour of the cottagers and others, and they were less able to buy from the skilled tradesmen. The laird may have had to forgo some of the tenants' debts and provide support for tenants and others. Thomas Drummond like many of his class had an additional problem: he and his brother William of Ballathie, each invested £500 in 1696 as adventurers in the Stock Company of Scotland trading to Africa and the Indies, known as the Darien Scheme, and must have lost all of it on its failure.<sup>14</sup>

Rosalind Mitchison searched the parish records for her book on *The Old Poor Law of Scotland* and found that the parish structure lacked the resources and organisation to get support to those that needed it in such a major crisis. In Monzie, the largest portion of Logiealmond, in 1698: 'those who attended the [parish] meeting made arrangements for the tenantry to pay four pecks of oatmeal a week, for one estate to give an equal amount,

and for another to support its own poor'. But none of the other heritors attended or sent a representative, so it is likely that some parts of the parish were not assessed to provide support for the needy.<sup>15</sup>

The 1696 list of tenants' debts dates from the second year of harvest failure when it became apparent that a crisis had arrived, but before they knew it was to last several more years. Even after a good harvest in 1699 it took time for the people and the country to recover. Perhaps this is why the document has been kept, a reminder of a momentous time.

The trail leading from the 1696 list of tenants' debts towards some understanding of its content and significance has been like a cross country run with obstacles. Problems came from the script and language and from intermittently closed libraries, inaccessible archives and travel restrictions due to the pandemic. It has been a surprising, educational and rewarding route, and may continue when research facilities, particularly the kirk session records in the National Records of Scotland, are again available.

**Note:** Within days of submitting this to the journal of the Scottish Local History Forum, the kirk session records were added the ScotlandsPeople website <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/record-guides/kirk-session-records> This article was published in Scottish Local History, issue 110, Autumn 2021.

#### References:

- National Records of Scotland, GD121/1/Box 41, Bundle 121, Number 5.
- <sup>2</sup> A boll was 140lb/64kg and a firloft was a quarter of a boll
- <sup>3</sup> TM Devine, *Clearance and Improvement: Land, Power and the People in Scotland 1700-1900*, p.29 (John Donald, Edinburgh, 2010).
- <sup>4</sup> I Whyte, *Agriculture and Society in Seventeenth Century Scotland*, p. 246 (John Donald, Edinburgh, 1979).
- <sup>5</sup> Karen Cullen, *Famine in Scotland: the 'Ill Years' of the 1690s*, p. 191 (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2010).
- <sup>6</sup> Karen Cullen, *ibid*, p. 188.
- <sup>7</sup> Perth and Kinross Council Archives. Commissioners of Supply. Extract Fiars Prices for crops B59/31/16.
- <sup>8</sup> Ian Whyte, *ibid*, p.250.
- <sup>9</sup> Karen Cullen, *ibid*, p. 250.
- <sup>10</sup> Rosalind Mitchison, *The Old Poor Law in Scotland: the experience of poverty 1574 – 1845*, p. 30 (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000).
- <sup>11</sup> Karen Cullen, *ibid*, p. 188 - 190.
- <sup>12</sup> David Forrester, *Logiealmond*, p. 109 (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1944).
- <sup>13</sup> David Forrester, *ibid*, p. 107-108
- <sup>14</sup> David Forrester, *ibid*, p. 122.
- <sup>15</sup> Rosalind Mitchison, *ibid*, p. 40.

## A QUIET COUNTRY LIFE?

JENNIFER MCKAY

A vague memory that a forebear had been a tenant at Tomnagrew, Chapelhill, led me to fill an idle lockdown moment with a spot of research on the said farm. I confess that little progress was made as I was distracted by mention of another Tomnagrew, in Strathbraan, about 7 miles, as the crow flies, to the north of the Logiealmond Tomnagrew. Here's the distracting report from the Inverness Courier of 30<sup>th</sup> October 1833.

“DESTRUCTIVE FIRE – Last week, the stack-yard of James Munro, tenant in Tomnagrew, Strathbraan, was completely destroyed by fire, and had not prompt assistance been rendered by the neighbourhood, the dwelling house and steading would have shared the same fate. How the calamity originated is not known; but some vague suspicions exist of its being the deed of an incendiary. We are happy to state, however, that, though not insured, the stackyard, through the benevolence of the tenantry of the Strath, is likely soon to resume its former fulness. That is “friendship indeed” – and there can be no doubt that, at rent day, the laird will not allow so noble an example of right feeling to pass without imitation.”

Several points in the story stand out: the traditional neighbourliness of rural communities where people helped each other out in hardship, emergencies and routine seasonal work and the expectation that, in 1833, a Strathbraan tenant farmer might have insured the contents of his stackyard. However, my attention was particularly caught by the word “incendiary”. Why did the journalist use the term incendiary and not arsonist or fire-raiser?

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the United Kingdom regularly experienced outbreaks of a specific variety of arson known as incendiarism: arson used as a gesture of political protest. Incendiarism was an act of civil disobedience perpetrated by disaffected agricultural labourers who were agitating for wage

increases in times of unemployment and increased food prices and, at times, it was the simple settling of a grudge against an unpopular employer.

Protest was particularly prevalent in the winter months when there was less work available on farms. Individuals or groups would send letters to farmers demanding a wage rise and threatening retribution if the increase was not forthcoming. Around the time of the Tomnagrew fire, the demands were for wages of a minimum of two shillings (10 pence) a week.

One reason there was less winter work than previously was the introduction of the threshing machine; manual threshing had been a traditional winter occupation. In the 1820s there were many instances of “machine-breaking”, that is, damaging threshing machines and chaff cutters.

There were so many insurance claims for fire damage in 1829 that one insurance company refused to pay out on claims on farm buildings and stock losses. The following year the company relented and honoured claims, provided the farmer had not been using threshing machines. In 1830, in south east England, there were examples of insurance premiums for farm buildings rising by up to 33%. For example, one increase was from 18



shillings (90 pence) to 1 pound and 4 shillings (£1.20).

The outbreak of a sustained campaign of arson in Eastern England in 1830 was no doubt facilitated by the invention of the Lucifer match in 1829 and incendiarism was rife throughout the United Kingdom in the 1830s. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of October, 1833, four days before the Inverness Courier story about Tomnagrew, the Scotsman reported:

“We have from recent country papers three cases of incendiarism. On Thursday week at Offham, Sussex, a large barn was fired. At North Walsham, Norfolk, the same night, a barn containing the produce of 11 acres of wheat and 17 coombs of dressed barley, with a stack of new and old barley were consumed. On Saturday night two stacks

of wheat, three of oats, four of hay and a quantity of barley and pease, worth £600, and not insured, were consumed. In all these cases the property was maliciously fired and in no instances have the guilty parties been apprehended.”

It was a different story at Tomnagrew. On 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1833 the Perthshire Courier contained a terse report of one sentence:

“On Saturday a person of the name M’Kinlay from Tomnagrew was apprehended and taken to Perth, suspected of the incendiarism which occurred there lately.”

What became of M’Kinlay I have yet to discover but, if found guilty, the punishment would have been severe; at that time, arson was a capital offence. Convicted arsonists were hanged and farmers were known to encourage their employees to attend hangings in hopes of them having a deterrent effect. It was reported that the hanging of the incendiarist James Passfield attracted 1,200 spectators.

In England and Wales, ring leaders of machine breaking protests and riots who were arrested and found guilty, were routinely sentenced to 7 years transportation to Van Diemen’s Land. The voyage, during which the prisoners were shackled and kept in squalid conditions below decks, took around 5 months. Any further transgressions would result in solitary confinement in total darkness at the Port Arthur penal colony where prisoners went insane due to sensory deprivation.

Linus Miller, an ex-convict, described a visit to the penal colony around 1840, by Sir John Franklin, lieutenant-governor of Tasmania and later the famed Arctic explorer. He harangued the convicts, telling them they were vile wretches, that hanging was too good for them, that he had them there for punishment and they could not escape.

McKinlay’s apprehension, however, did not act as a deterrent. A mere two months later, the stack yard belonging to Mrs Sime of Pikestonehill, Scone, was set on fire and three stacks were destroyed. The Perthshire Courier reported:

“Strong suspicion of incendiarism arose against certain individuals, and a precognition has been led, but the proceedings are as yet in such a state that we deem it improper to state any particulars.”

Incendiarism seems to have been endemic in Scotland in the 1830s. The Scotsman published a leader on the subject in 1833, which laid the blame for these tactics

squarely on the trade union movement which had been developing since about 1810. Agricultural workers had less opportunity to co-operate with fellow workers and consequently:

“...seek their ends by more direct and savage expedients: they burn houses, stables, and farmyards, and coolly ruin individuals, that the class exposed to their outrages may be intimidated into paying higher wages than they can afford.”

Incendiarism abated in the later 1830s only to be replaced by sheep stealing. Another brief outbreak of incendiarism flared up over the winter of 1843/44 when threshing machines and chaff-cutters were being used again.

And how do we interpret the final comment of the original Tomnagrew report in the Inverness Courier? Does the writer confidently expect the laird, at rent day, to

acknowledge and emulate the generosity of Tomnagrew's neighbours? Could that last line have been a hint or was it, perhaps, given the fractious political times, a veiled threat? A quiet country life indeed!

With special thanks to Australian cousins Elizabeth Fraser and Lesley Woods for sharing their experiences of a recent visit to Port Arthur, Tasmania.

**Sources:**

Social discontent and agrarian disturbances in Essex 1795 – 1850. Amos, S W, PhD thesis (1971)

Inverness Courier

Scotsman

Perthshire Courier

Information boards at Port Arthur



A postcard of Stanley Junction, and a photograph of the stationmaster, staff, and . . . Others.

Question: Are they contemporaneous?

