West Stormont's

Auld Times

Winter 2022

FIRST ILLUSTRATED TALK OF 2022

"The Romans in Perthshire"

By Alan Walker

Monday 21 February at 7.30. On Zoom.

The Romans in Perthshire: They came, they saw, but they didn't conquer . . .

Our knowledge of the Roman period is very patchy. There are long periods when we know in minute detail what was going on, almost day-by-day, and there are decades about which we know next to nothing and are not even sure which Emperor was in power, let alone what was happening in far-away Caledonia.

What type of people were the Romans who came to what we now call Perthshire? What was Perthshire like then? Why did they come and why did they go? Were they just passing through, or was their influence fundamental to the development of modern Scotland? We will have a look at these and other questions in a short presentation, drawing as much as possible on recent research, to try to understand what was going on, or at least to get a better grasp of the probabilities.

To join in, you need only to click on the link below:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86360380790?pwd=S3dhTXB4YnhqS1BjQ0RSVTVnb3d4Zz09

Meeting ID: 863 6038 0790
Passcode: 676848

Site of the Roman fort at Ardoch

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

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THE BATTLE OF BARROSA

JENNIFER MCKAY

When it comes to famous sons, West Stormont's leading candidate would surely be Thomas Graham of Balgowan, Ist Baron Lynedoch; once known only for having been the husband of Mary Cathcart, the "beautiful Mrs Graham", immortalised in oils by Gainsborough.

In later life he was renowned for acts of derring-do during his army career. Graham's most celebrated military action was the battle of Barrosa near Cadiz in 1811, though now, as I write in 2022, it may be that more people associate the name Barossa with vineyards and South Australian Shiraz, than the Napoleonic wars. The Barossa Valley, north of Adelaide, was surveyed by Col. William Light who had served with Graham at Barrosa and, in 1837, he named the area and the town of Lyndoch in honour of his hero.

After his wife's death in 1792, the devastated Graham, seeking distraction, threw himself into military activity. His first taste of military life was at the Anglo-Spanish blockade of Toulon in 1793, where, incidentally, Napoleon first impressed his superiors. Graham decided there, aged 46, to pursue a military career.

According to his batman, Charles Sidey, Toulon was the scene of one of the famous Graham stories. One morning Sidey alerted Graham that they were under attack; Graham proceeded to the front line with Captain Moncrieff. When the soldier beside him was shot, Graham grabbed him and prevented him from falling over the battlements. He organised the man's transport to hospital, asked to borrow his musket and cartouche and took his place. Later he sent a doubloon for the wounded man's care and asked Captain Moncrieff to forward the money to the man's wife should he die. Years later Graham was passing a group of old soldiers in the street when a voice called out, "God bless your noble honour, who saved my life at Fort Pharon".

Graham returned home to raise a regiment; the Perthshire Volunteers or, informally, the Perthshire Grey Breeks. He was determined that his regiment would be the 90th Regiment of Foot. As there were already 89 infantry regiments, time was of the essence in delivering his petition to the Commander-in-Chief of the British army, Lord Amherst. As soon as the letter of recommendation had been written by General Adam Gordon, the Scottish C-in-C, Graham ran to his carriage and drove hell for leather to London, an exploit reminiscent of his ninety-mile horseback dash from Edinburgh to Lynedoch and back, to retrieve his wife's jewellery box before an Edinburgh ball.

Our dashing hero imagined that he would be promoted but he was a volunteer and rules were rules; he had to earn recognition. So there followed several years of hard work to find favour with the Duke of York, the Army's new C-in-C.

Graham went to Austria, where he evaded capture by the French by walking across frozen marshes to Venice; he was involved in the capture of Minorca from the Spanish; he was posted to Ireland for a boring spell in the countryside; he went to Egypt. He was dissuaded by friends from accompanying the 90th Foot to their posting to the West Indies.

In 1808, Graham applied to be aide-de-camp to Sir John Moore and went to Spain. He was only inches away when Moore was mortally wounded at Corunna. In his dying moments, Moore ordered messages be sent to the king, commending his outstanding officers, including Graham. When Graham returned to England, the Duke of York, in breach of the rules, made him a major-general.

The French had invaded Spain and put Napoleon's brother, Joseph Bonaparte, on the throne, triggering the Peninsular War. The Spanish king, Fernando VII, had abdicated and the republican government had moved to Cádiz on the south coast. Cádiz sits on a peninsula which is easy to defend; it is also easy to besiege and the French

did just that, digging in across the isthmus.

There was little hope of the allies breaking the siege as the French outnumbered them but some French troops were withdrawn in early 1811 to assist at the siege of Badajoz. It was decided that the Spanish Army of the South and an Anglo-Portuguese contingent under Graham would attack the French siege lines from the rear.

There were problems. First and foremost, the Spanish were led by General Manuel La Peña Rodríguez y Ruiz de Sotillo, who had enabled a French victory at the battle of Tudela by ignoring orders. He was censured and sent to the Army of the South in a reshuffle of commanders. He was considered incompetent by his Spanish colleagues who referred to him as "Doña Manolita" which translates as 'little lady Manuela'. Graham was given the option not to serve under a Spanish commander if he so chose.

"Doña Manolita"

However, Graham agreed to serve under La Peña.

Graham's Anglo-Portuguese sailed from Gibraltar, their destination Tarifa. It was late February and an Atlantic gale was blowing, severely impeding progress. Graham asked to be allowed to return to Gibraltar. La Peña refused permission. They disembarked at Algeciras, 30 miles short of Tarifa and 80 miles from Cádiz. La Peña's troops left Gibraltar three days after Graham and made it to Tarifa by sea.

As he wanted his troops to arrive at Cádiz as fresh as possible, Graham asked for short marches and plenty rest time. La Peña ignored his request. There was a choice of routes: inland or by the coast. La Peña insisted on the coastal route, a mistake, as the French had occupied coastal watchtowers and saw them coming. La Peña ordered the troops to march through the night. The guides lost their way and they unwittingly turned back on themselves. With daylight, they arrived on a low ridge, the Cerro del Puerco, above Barrosa beach, well short of Cádiz and to cap it all, there was no food.

La Peña ordered Graham to proceed to lower ground while he and his army remained on the ridge. Graham's troops had to make their way down through pine woods. While they were among the trees, they spotted the French advancing up the ridge towards the Spaniards. Sizing up the situation, Graham took the initiative and ordered his exhausted, starving men to about turn and attack the French column.

Chaos ensued as the rear guard were now at the front and men were tripping over tree roots as they rushed to take up positions, at the edge of the woods. Major Duncan with ten artillery pieces, hastily positioned, did considerable damage to the French with shrapnel shot. There was no order among Graham's men; they charged and charged again and it was all over in ninety minutes. The French retreated in disarray. The Anglo-Portuguese were unable to press their advantage due to fatigue and hunger. La Peña, didn't lift a finger to either help them or pursue the enemy, despite comfortably outnumbering the French. The Anglo-Portuguese single division had heroically defeated two French divisions.

The gallantry of Graham's men has entered the realm of legend. Sergeant Patrick Masterton of the 87th Foot, the Royal Irish Fusiliers, captured the first French imperial eagle of the Peninsular War, after a fierce struggle in which he killed several French officers. He was rewarded with a commission and the Prince of Wales subsequently instructed the regiment to wear an eagle on their colours. The regiment celebrates "Barrosa Day" on the anniversary of the battle. Even in 1940 when the regiment was in France, they took a break from digging defences, to keep up time-honoured tradition, with their pipers playing the regimental march "Barrosa" at dawn.

La Peña claimed he had won the battle and criticised Graham for not pursuing the enemy. Graham, who was fluent in Spanish, wrote demanding an apology within 24 hours or a duel at dawn. La Peña reluctantly apologised. He was court marshalled and acquitted, then removed from his command.

The grateful Spanish government offered Graham a title: duque de Cerro del Puerco. Graham turned down the honour, probably from modesty or just possibly because the title "Duke of Pig's Hill" didn't appeal.

The ultimate outcome of the battle proved debatable. There is no doubt that Graham defeated the French at Barrosa, but as there was no follow up attack on the siege works on the Cádiz isthmus, the French were able to return and the siege lasted for another 18 months. They felt entitled to claim victory as the object of the attack

had not been achieved. Either way it was a hollow victory.

The futility of the action did nothing to dampen spirits in Perth and West Stormont. Charles Sidey, now Postmaster in Perth, wrote that when news that Graham had set sail to Algeciras arrived, the Balgowan tenantry had started to prepare for victory. On hearing of victory, Mr Sandeman of Luncarty took his horse to the post office and lent it to Mr Sidey who rode out to Balgowan with the "glad tidings". That night, bonfires were lit on the hills and "there was plenty of whisky and porter for a more numerous company than you had soldiers to fight the battle with".

Local pride in Graham endured. Sometime before 1823, the new street running west from the north end of Rose Terrace in Perth was named Barossa Place and, later, Printing House Lane which runs behind Rose Terrace was renamed Barossa Street.

In 1850, an obelisk was raised to Thomas Graham's memory on Murrayshall Hill above Scone. In 1896 the Lynedoch monument was built on the North Inch to commemorate the 90th Light Infantry (Perthshire Volunteers) and their founder.

Observant readers will have noticed the differing spellings of Barrosa. The original Spanish is Barrosa, meaning "muddy place", but in Scotland and South Australia a slip of the pen has generated an alternative spelling. During the nineteenth century several streets were given the name Lyndoch or Lynedoch in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Greenock. In Scone, Graham's preferred spelling of Lynedoch was used.

The last word goes to Mr Mellis Nairne of Dunsinnan who raised a toast to Lord Lynedoch at the farewell dinner for retiring Perthshire MP, Fox Maule, in 1838. Aged 90, Lord Lynedoch had sent in his apologies.

The Perthshire Courier reported thus:

"… he called upon them to dedicate a bumper to the health of one of the first Generals of the age; one whose reputation was second only to Wellington – he knew their thoughts would at once be turned to the gallant Lord Lynedoch. (Great cheering). Sure, he was that the achievements of "Scotland's darling Hero" were not unknown to his countrymen – for Corunna, San Sebastian and Barrosa, these scenes of his glory were still fresh in their recollection. (Cheers) Mr Nairne then proposed the health of Lord Lynedoch which was drank (sic) with deafening applause."

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Afterword and Question.

I once read that a carriage which General Graham had brought back from Barrosa as booty, and used as a baggage waggon, was being stored at a Luncarty joiner's workshop around 1900. Can any reader provide further information?

Iron nails from the horde discovered at the site of the Roman Legionary Fort at Inchtuthill.

IN PRAISE OF OAT CUISINE

MIKE LAWRENCE

For makin' flesh an' buildin' banes

There ne'er was siccan food for weans;

It knits their muscles steeve as stanes,

An' teuch as brasses;

Fills hooses fu' o' boys wi' brains

An' rosy lasses.

Robert Bird

The Scots like their oats and have done for at least 1,500 years. And not just the occasional bowl of brose or porridge. In February 1865, for example, the Perthshire Constitutional & Journal reported that the accustomed allowance of oatmeal for farm servants in the county of Perth was 17½ lbs per week. This is the equivalent of one box of Scott's Porage Oats each and every day.

High in carbohydrates and protein, rich in vitamins, and packed with fibre and minerals such as calcium, iron and potassium, oats have provided the basis for cheap, filling and nutritious meals in Scotland since medieval times.

Climate and physical geography meant that our ancestors lived in a marginal area for the growing of most grains. Successful cereal production before the agricultural revolution was limited to the hardy staples of oats, pease, beans and bere barley. Wheat was generally difficult to grow because of the damp climate.

Now waving grain, wide o'er the plain, delights the weary farmer

Robert Burns

Oats thrive best where the weather is generally cool and regular rainfall in the early summer provides ideal conditions for the kernel to fill out slowly. Scotland has perfect conditions for growing oats. Over the centuries improvements have been made to the crop by selecting the best seeds, cross breeding with continental varieties, and recognising the optimum varieties to grow in different parts of the country.

The range of soil and climatic conditions in Scotland is wide and oats can be grown on most of the arable land throughout the country. The names of the varieties of oats chosen reflect their yield in different soil conditions. In lowland soils of high fertility, we find names such as Abundance, Marvellous, Star, and Victory. At higher elevation of medium fertility, varieties such as Early Miller, Potato, Castleton, and Pure Line thrive. In less fertile, upland soils and in some of the northern parts of the country we find that the Bell, Black Tartarian and Sandy strains of the grain are more common.

Send us yer braw fat oats

Oats cannot be eaten straight from the field. Harvested oats are wrapped in a hard husk that must be removed through milling before cooking and consumption. During milling, the outer husk is removed first and then the inner husk (the sids) to which a coating of oat meal clings. Husks, sids and oat dust have always been used for animal feed. Once the husk is removed the oat's groat is left for further processing. The sids were also used by our recent ancestors to prepare the popular dessert and drink of sowans.

Rolled oats are just steamed and flattened groats. Quick cooking or instant oats are rolled oats that have been further flattened, steamed and part-cooked. Pin head or steel cut oats are groats that have been cut up into small pieces. Oatmeal is groats that are stoneground into a variety of sizes – fine, medium, coarse.

A pund a month and parritch twice a day

Under the farm bothy system, single farm servants and orra-loons would use their oatmeal allowance by mixing it with hot or cold water or milk. The quickest method was to put two good handfuls of coarse oatmeal into their bowl, press it down firmly, add a nut of butter and some salt, pour in enough boiling water to cover the meal, stir thoroughly, and then eat with a cup of milk. This they called brose.

On days when there was more time, such as a Sunday, the loon would boil the water or milk for all the men in a large iron pan over an open fire and gradually add handfuls of the oats, stirring all the time until it was absorbed. The mix would then be salted and left to simmer and thicken, with only the occasional stir using a wooden spurtle until it was ready. This they called porridge.

Sowans are guid for baith body and soul

Sowans were once part of the traditional Scottish diet but are now somewhat forgotten. To make drinking sowans, the inner husks of the oats with kernels sticking to them (the mealy sids) would be steeped in twice their bulk of water for a week or so until the mixture became fermented and sour. The liquid was then drained off through a sieve and fresh water added to the sediment (the serf) which was boiled until it was creamy. Once the mixture was ready and assumed the consistency of gruel it was sweetened with treacle or sugar and drunk out of bowls. Drinking sowans was a favourite on the 5th January, Auld Yule's Eve and morning.

The other kind of sowans was much thicker and eaten like porridge. Salt was added to the sowans gruel and stirred briskly as it came to the boil and thickened. It was then poured into a bowl and served with milk.

Sowans were also used as a balsam and applied to boils and open sores with some effect.

Poured in a drawer tae slice oot cauld

The porridge drawer was a tin lined drawer into which freshly made porridge as thick as a cake could be emptied and left to cool. When cold, any remaining liquid was pressed out until the mix was about an inch or so thick and slices of the porridge could be cut into pieces and taken out by workers for consumption in the field, mine, factory or building site. These pieces were easier to carry than brittle oatcakes. Children also ate a slice when they came home from school.

Others would refry the porridge pieces – known as caulders - in bacon fat or butter with sliced onion and serve them as dinner with eggs. Porridge cakes were another favourite – the cold porridge was mixed with flour and baking powder into a stiff paste and rolled out into squares and baked. These were delicious when served hot with butter and cheese.

The guid Scots diet

Potatoes and turnip were added to the Scots diet from the late 18th century. Looking at the (Old) Statistical Accounts of Scotland in the 1790s, it is clear there were many similarities in the food eaten by the people across the West Stormont parishes. The staples were potatoes, oatmeal, beremeal, barley, turnips, kail, cabbage and milk.

At that time, it was not unusual to have some oats with every meal. Breakfast could be oatmeal brose, usually salted but treacle or coarse sugar was sometimes added as a treat. Oat or barley bannocks were also eaten in the morning, washed down with milk or home brewed ale. The mid-day meal could have been barley, kail and potato broth with oat or barley bannocks and a cup of milk or ale. And for evening supper, oatmeal porridge with turnip or kail juice, potatoes and butter, oatcakes and a milk or ale drink was very common.

The diet was supplemented with dairy products such as butter and cheese. Eggs are seldom mentioned. Those living near lochs or rivers could add the occasional poached salmon, trout or eel and the coastal communities enjoyed sea fish, oysters or other shellfish. Wild fruits such as raspberries, brambles or blaeberries were enjoyed in season, and nettles, wild garlic, wild spinach, honey and earthnuts could be gathered for flavouring.

Meat played a prominent part in the diet of the rich only. The wealthy could enjoy venison, beef, mutton and hare, week in and week out. Salmon, capons, partridge, heath cocks, chickens, grouse and capercaillie were also regulars. And to wash it down, there was always plenty of ale, wine, claret and whisky to drink.

Scots turn their backs upon oatmeal

The revolution in farming practice and machinery from the final quarter of the 18th century meant that poor harvests and food dearth became a rare phenomenon. Longer leases for tenants, enclosures to corral livestock, the extensive use of lime and fertilizer, reclamation schemes to free bogland for cultivation, and the development of mechanical reapers and travelling threshing mills all contributed to a huge increase in agricultural yields.

The radical change in farming methodology during the 19th century, however, coincided with the rapid growth of industrial towns and cities across Scotland. The development of roads, canals and then railways meant that meat, fish, vegetable, milk and grains could be brought from a distance to the new urban markets.

The unprecedented increase in the production of grain and root crops in Scotland from the end of the Napoleonic Wars coincided with the mass movement of people from the countryside to towns and the rapid growth of industry and commerce. This was also the beginning of the end of the traditional Scots diet and the rise of the urban diet of cheap filling foods, over dependence on white bread and sugar, and a lack of cooking facilities in the cramped houses of the poor. Porridge, skirlie, bannocks, oatcakes and Scotch broth were replaced with cheap white bread and pies, a general lack of fresh milk, and a growing aversion to fruit and vegetables. Margarine took over from butter, and sugar intake in Scotland rocketed from 15 lb per head in 1815 to 100 lb per head by 1890.

By the turn of the 20th century, flour was cheaper than oatmeal and the consequence was that low-income families shifted from cereal, potatoes and roots to tinned food, fatty meat products, sweet and salty snacks, pastries, and an excess of sugary drinks, smoking and alcohol. Plain white bread with syrup, treacle, jam, and marmalade became the new staples. The Scots taste for sugar fuelled a distinct loss of teeth and the poor diet contributed to a range of serious illnesses amongst the population including coronary heart disease, certain cancers, strokes, osteoporosis, and diabetes.

A healthy diet consists mainly of wholegrain products, potatoes, fruit and vegetables, milk and dairy products, nuts and seeds. All we need to do is switch the clock back 200 years. That is easy to say but it is going to take much work to achieve a rewind.

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Oat Recipes

A collection of oat recipes to accompany this article can be found on the Society's website.

Click here.

THE GREAT EXODUS

ROSALIND PEARSON

On Friday 2nd April 1830 over 100 people left Logiealmond to emigrate to Canada, perhaps 8% of the population of the parish area. They were of all ages including 30 children under 14 and an elderly couple, the man aged 84. Most were related and the families included many Wylies, Harleys and Gregors. They took farm implements and the tools of their trades with them for their new life.

All but three families were Dissenters and on the previous Sunday attended their final service at the United Presbyterian Church in Harrietfield. The Minister, the Rev Alexander Young, preached and they sang the paraphrase 'O God of Bethel'. Their white church at the west end of the village with its tall pointed windows was crowded with a congregation of around 500. It had been designed to seat 450 and so benches were added in all the passages.

From 'Logiealmond', David Forrester, 1944

The emigrants travelled to Perth on Friday, which was market day, and were able to say their goodbyes to many friends. They left Perth on the Saturday by the steam packet Hero, not long back in service after a refit, and it took them to Dundee.

On the following day 56 set sail in the brig Sprightly under Captain Andrew Johnstone.

Tuesday 6th,, more set off in the Isabella (built in 1826, owned by Robert Clatto, master James Donaldson) arrived

Quebec 24 May.

FIRST SPRING SHIP.
AT DUNDEE, FOR QUEBEC,
And will forward Goods to Montreal, at Ship's expense and Shipper's risk.

THE fine first class brig ISABELLA, 308 tons register, James Donaldson master, will be ready to receive goods for the above ports in a few days, and will sail about 1st April. As this vessel was lately fitted up with state-rooms, and other accommodation for passengers, in the India trade, and having great height betwixt decks, she will be found a most desirable conveyance.

For rate of freight and passage—both of which will be moderate—apply to the Master on board; or to

KINMOND & HILL.

Dundee, February 4, 1830.

Wednesday 7th, the remaining 70-80 followed in the Margaret Balfour (250 tons, built in 1828 and owned by Bell and Balfour) under Captain John Gellatly of Dundee. It had a stormy crossing and was reported to have lost bulwarks in a gale.

All three brigs advertised their sailing as the first spring ship for Quebec from Dundee. They took cargoes including linens, as well as passengers. All sailed north past Aberdeen and through the Pentland Firth across the Atlantic to Quebec, a journey lasting about six weeks.

More followed the next year, 30-40 chiefly from Logiealmond, as noted in the Perthshire Courier.

The above account is drawn from contemporary newspaper reports and from Thomas Wylie's *Recollections and Traditions of Logiealmond* (written between 1864 and 1932).

These emigrants were not the first to leave Logiealmond to make a different life elsewhere, and far more were to follow, but this group were notable because so many went at the same time and to the same destination, Canada, initially Quebec. Their exodus was noted back home by the Church of Scotland Minister who contributed to the Second Statistical Account of Scotland for this area. Even the census enumerator in 1841 added a note to his records.

The wider context

For generations in Scotland there had been migration within the local area and further afield, from country to town, from Scotland to England and abroad, and into Scotland from Ireland and elsewhere.

Before the American War of Independence, 1775-1783, most British emigration was to the southern colonies of North America, but thereafter the northern colonies were more accessible and their settlement was encouraged by the British government, partly for fear of losing them to America.

Early British trade with Canada was for the skins and furs from the north and west. Agricultural settlement started in the more accessible east and moved westwards from the late eighteenth century, from the Maritime Provinces, to Lower Canada (Quebec), Upper Canada (Ontario) and the Prairies. Many left the Highlands for Canada from about 1800, and even more moved there from Ireland. Lowland Scots began to join them; Logiealmond is in the transition between highlands and lowlands.

Scots were second only to the Irish in numbers arriving in Canada initially. It is estimated that 16,400 Scots emigrated to Canada in the 1820s (compared with 22,600 to England and Wales), 33,400 in the 1830s, and arrivals continued through the rest of the century and into the next. From the 1840s the USA was a more popular destination than Canada.

Who went and where?

Records of emigrants from Scotland and of immigrants to Canada were not compiled regularly until the mid 1830s and there are no official lists of this group leaving Scotland or arriving in Canada. We have not managed to trace the further lives of the 1830 group.

What we know of them comes from Thomas Wylie, 1846-1935, who grew up on the farm of the Shannoch in Little Glenshee. He was a migrant himself, though within the UK. He and his wife, Jessie, moved from Logiealmond to farm first at Doune in central Scotland and then Ashwell in Hertfordshire. He recorded his memories of his place of origin as well as what he had been told by the older generation, and he made significant contributions to David Forrester's local history.

About the 1830 exodus to Canada, he says: 'A young man, one of the McLeishs of the Shannoch, I don't know how prompted, had gone to Canada in 1814. I have been told that he had been writing home that though there were hardships there were also probabilities of making good. What talks there would be about this new country, so hard yet so promising! So in 1830 came the great exodus. I have been told that members of thirty families – my father had eight near relations among them – left in a sailing ship from Dundee, round the north of Scotland for Montreal.'

Three Gregor brothers from Greenfield joined the 1830 emigration. 'But while the Wylies remained about Montreal (the father took up land, but the son took up engineering and became a first engineer on the great lake steamers) the Gregors went west to Ontario and settled in

one of the best districts there. What is now called Acton.'

Acton was settled from 1825 and is now on the edge of Greater Toronto. It provided good farm land when cleared of trees, and timber contributed to the large tanning industry there. The Wylies may not have ventured so far west but the next generation moved out of farming into new areas of work.

Why did they go?

Was it push or pull? Most emigrants probably had several reasons to go and a mix of push and pull.

Thomas Wylie explains some of the motives that influenced the Logiealmond contingent: 'After Waterloo things went all to pieces for a time. With the increased rents and no market … things became very difficult about 1820. The Miss Drummonds had Condie [estate lawyers and advisers] out from Perth, went round all the farms. He recommended that the rents be reduced by a third. (This was told me by the late William Sprunt.) The temporary relief was of little avail. There was still little or no work nor money to pay for what might be done. There were also several dry hot years culminating in 1828. One can imagine what pondering and talking about what was to be done.' This picks out economic depression, shortage of work and income, and a series of years of bad weather – mostly push factors.

The economy

The depression after the end of Napoleonic War 1815 was severe in Scotland. Grain prices fell as trade increased, farm workers wages fell and unemployment increased. Demobilised soldiers and sailors were looking for work too. The population of Scotland was growing, and many were drawn to the expanding towns.

Changes in the timber trade created opportunities for those that wanted to emigrate to Canada. Taxes on Baltic timber were raised considerably from 1807 and so Canadian timber became much more desirable. As the shipping companies brought back the cargo, they could take emigrants on the return journey, and fares became more affordable. (A newspaper advertisement for the brig 'Sprightly' notes the company has timber for sale.) The strong market for trees could also be of benefit to the new settlers clearing land, especially if their plot was near navigable water.

Changes in Agriculture

The decades before and after 1800 were a time of great change. It came gradually to Logiealmond; it had started by the 1790s but was not complete by 1841. The old way of life where several families lived in a hamlet or fermtoun in a landscape with hardly any trees or enclosures, cooperating to provide most of their needs, was supplanted. Compact farms managed by one tenant with the fields enclosed and drained, became the landowner's objective. Labourers and skilled tradesmen were still needed to achieve the changes, but the small farmers and those with a cottage and small area of land lost out, and not all stayed.

The population of Logiealmond was growing between about 1800 and 1840. Thomas Wylie describes how, in response, much of the rough ground on the slopes above the cultivation and in Little Glenshee was broken in for agriculture with a small individual house and steading. For the rest of the century and beyond population totals fell, except for a small rise in the 1890s.

All were tenants of the landowner or were their sub-tenants. Leases for farmers were usually of 19 years duration, and then the rent and conditions were re-negotiated. The new, 'improving' leases for the resulting larger farms set conditions on how the land was managed. One of the attractions of Canada was the opportunity to own land and work it according to one's own judgement. The pull factor could be strong even for the larger farmers.

Migration within the local area was common, as well as to other farming areas, or to the growing towns, but emigration was an option and Canada was the most popular destination at the time for Scots, and Logiealmond families knew of others who had gone before.

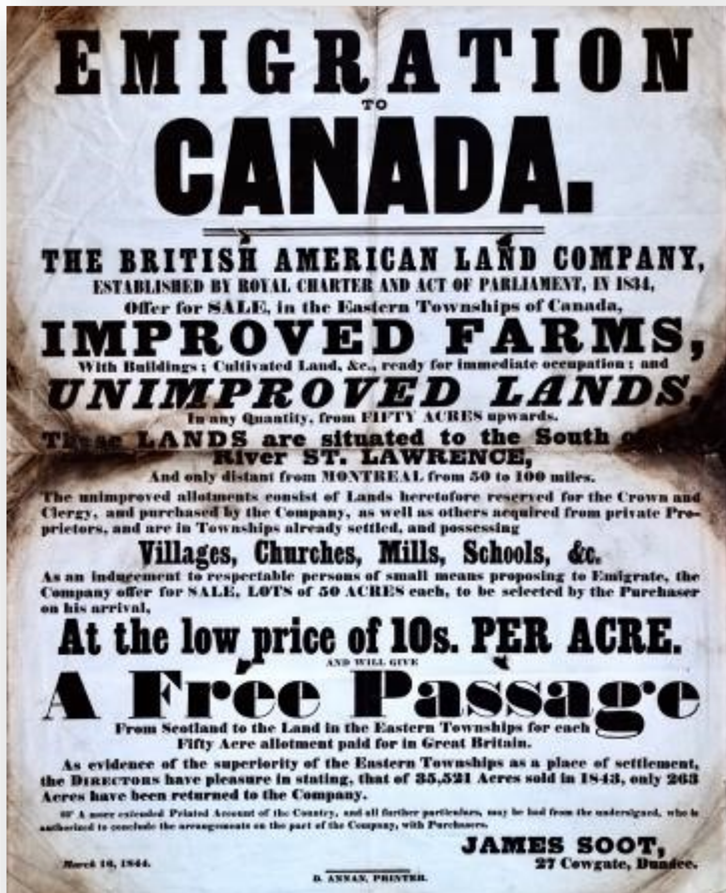
Publicity

Having been strongly against emigration in the eighteenth century, by 1800 the UK government was prepared to encourage if not subsidise emigration. Their agents provided information on different destinations and the means to get there. For Canada they worked through land development companies that sold land, albeit with conditions on what must be achieved over the first 10 years. These included the Canada Company from 1826 and the British American Land Company from 1832.

People were wary of the official information, and sometimes with good reason. Patrick Bell, a minister from Angus, emigrated to Upper Canada in 1834 for four years,

and said of the Canada Company; ‘They held out great prospects to emigrants at home and coaxed and flattered every one that thought of coming to this Country.’ But those that came found themselves in thrall to the company and without promised amenities – roads non-existent, bridges and mills unbuilt.

The newspapers published long letters from emigrants with information and advice, which could be useful if you had confidence in it. Letters home from those you knew who had gone out before were much more trustworthy.



The newspapers also provided essential information on the passage. Sailings were advertised several months in advance and more information was provided nearer the time. They left for Canada after the worst of the winter weather, but as early as possible, so that work could be done over the summer on the land and, if necessary, a house. Conditions on board ship could be grim, due to the weather, poor preparations or the running of the ship, but improved over the years and the passage shortened when steam power was introduced.

We know of a number of other emigrants from Logiealmond. In 1747, after Culloden, Michael Steele from Logie-Almond, late of the Atholl Brigade, landed at Port North Potomac, Maryland, to be sold as an indentured servant. 1856, Murdoch McLeod ran away to sea and eventually became a grain magnate in Australia, calling his house ‘Logiealmond’. 1890, George Keay’s family emigrated to the prairies of Canada, though he moved on to Vancouver, volunteered in the First World War and was killed in the battle of the Somme. 1925, Duncan Campbell emigrated from the marginal farm of ‘Montreal’ to Big Island Hawaii where he managed sugar plantations.

References:

Contemporary newspapers

David Forrester, Logiealmond, 1944

Thomas Wylie, Recollections and Traditions of Logiealmond, 1930s

Jenni Calder, Scots in Canada, 2003

James C Docherty, Scottish Migration since 1750, 2016

T M Devine, The Scottish Clearances, 2018

In 1922, Miss Georgina Ballantyne hooked and landed a salmon weighing 64lbs (29 kg) on the Glendelvine beat of the Tay. It remains the British record for a rod caught fish.

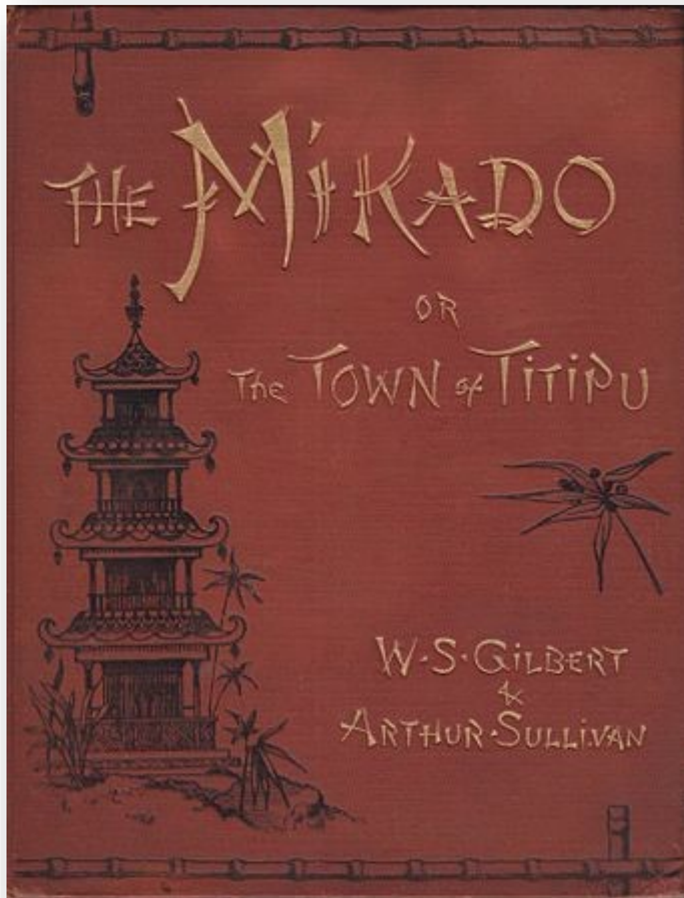
P.D.Malloch of Perth, a tackle and gun shop famous for having a branch office in London (now sadly defunct in both cities) captured its size and beauty in a striking plaster cast.

HIGH WATER MIKADO

PAUL MCLENNAN

I do not think I have ever more enjoyed a production than I did at Murthly Asylum.

I have often seen 'The Mikado' played by amateurs, but I do not think I have ever more enjoyed a production than I did at Murthly Asylum last night."



An arresting first sentence: for the location alone. Well, to our eyes perhaps, but readers of the Perthshire Advertiser in February 1910 would have been well used to references to public entertainments and social occasions in the Recreation Hall there.

Both the Dundee Courier and Perthshire Constitutional concurred with fulsome reviews of their own.

From this I think the cultural high water mark in the life of this community was reached on Friday 25th February 1910. At around ten o' clock. That's when, with the final notes of 'The Mikado' still lifting towards the airy cupola above them, the audience burst into applause. Doubtless, thunderous at the back, but more genteelly among the gloved great and local good closer to the stage.

Although studiously name checking soloists, chorus, conductor, musicians, and even the stage hands, as a good local newspaper should, the PA reviewer inexplicably forgot to mention the production was the work of Murthly & District Musical Society. Then three years old, the Society had previously staged well received productions of 'Trial by Jury' (1908) and 'HMS Pinafore' (1909).

The Musical Society integrated village and asylum. More so even than cricket or football: because, y'know . . . women also involved. A brace of carpenters, a trainee solicitor, barmaid, a milliner, several parlour-maids, estate workers, a typist, a student, and the parish minister's youngest daughter, mixing it with doctors, nurses and attendants, both male and female.

Dr Lewis Bruce, the asylum's version of a Mikado, its medical superintendent, took a leading role in the Society, if backstage. Greatly enthusiastic about Gilbert & Sullivan he had found a kindred spirit in John Chisholm, the asylum's steward (business manager). One was a master of the paint brush, sets and scenery a speciality, the other acted and sang, and arranged Arthur Sullivan's scores for reduced resources in 'the pit'. Their link to like-minded G&S enthusiasts in the village were the Mitchells: James, who had the joiner's shop beside Dunsinane Cottage in Station Road, daughter Alice, a milliner, and James jnr., a carpenter.

Yes, there were participants from further afield. The "District" in the Society's title was fairly elastic. J. D. Allan, for example, whose sweet tenor had brought Nanki-Poo to life, was the scion of the famous family of agricultural engineers, with several patents for ploughs and seed drills. Their workshop was over at Culthill, near Spittalfield. However, as most of their machinery destined for the rest of Britain, its Dominions, and Continental Europe was exported from Murthly Station, they were known everywhere in those markets as "J. D. Allan of Murthly". P. T. Marshall, a great hit as Poo-Bah, was a grocer from Stanley. (His sister Mattie, a typist, was in the chorus.) The third of the three little maids, Peep-Bo, was played by Miss Nellie Duncan of Perth, an established favourite on local concert platforms for over a decade. Leader of the small orchestra, Herr Gottlieb Feuerberg, was a popular soloist and violin coach. And the conductor, F. S. Graves L.R.A.M., one of the pioneers of amateur opera in Scotland, was approaching his 25th anniversary with Perth Musical Society.

Following previous productions, expectations were high. Just before Mr Graves tapped the lectern with his baton, Dr Bruce stepped to the front of the stage and read a telegram from Lord Tullibardine (recently returned as MP for West Perthshire) apologising with regret for letting duties in Westminster prevent his attendance. (He may

actually have meant it.) Nevertheless, Perthshire society was much to the fore, led by Col. Walter Steuart Fothringham of Murthly, his wife, and party; the Richardsons of Ballathie, and party; Mr Charles Murray of Taymount, and party, etc, etc. Anyone surprised by the parish minister, Rev. Mr Mackenzie's presence in W. S. Gilbert's frivolous world of 'topsy turvy' could not have known that his youngest daughter was playing Yum-Yum. Mr William Rae, Murthly's factor (and a widower) was also there, alone. His eldest son, Willie jnr, was no doubt at the back of the hall ogling the ladies of the chorus with the other young blades.

The performance began well, and grew steadily better. A capable rendering of the overture announced a group of courtiers artistically attired, in a beautiful Japanese setting. As the Perthshire Constitutional noted, "The staging of the opera was magnificent, the backcloth being the work – and lovely work it was – of Dr Bruce." Costumes had arrived just in time at Murthly Station in wicker hampers, on hire from celebrated theatrical outfitters B. J. Simmons & Co. of Covent Garden. (In addition to his other talents, John Chisholm was an astute manager of the Society's finances.)

The audience settled back for "a rich treat". The singing of the ladies and men's chorus proved to be one of the most outstanding features of the performance. The beautiful alto part in 'Comes a train of little ladies' was "never more beautifully sung", and the sopranos' tone had a freshness that was "delightful". Members of the chorus seem to have been evenly split between villagers and nursing staff, albeit with some recruits from Stanley.

The soloists had clearly worked long and hard on their roles. (Like many an amateur production it had a longish gestation, with rehearsals having started the previous September.) Mr J. D. Allan (Nanki-Poo) had a pleasant tenor. Mr A. W. Osborne (Pish-Tush) and Mr D. Stewart (Go-To) acquitted themselves well. Mr P. T. Marshall was excellent as the grasping Pooh-Bah. But the reviewers, and audience, were particularly taken with John Chisholm's Ko-Ko: "He brought to bear on his interpretation an intelligence which brought out naturally the humour and cunning of the Lord High Executioner (and) his humorous sallies were much to be enjoyed." James Mitchell, who had acquitted himself well as a bluff and hearty Bo'sun in 'HMS Pinafore', seems to have suffered first night nerves and was less convincing a Mikado, but nevertheless sang his set piece effectively, and acted earnestly.

The three-little-maids-from-school were sensational. "I have never heard an amateur Yum-Yum (Miss Elsie Mackenzie) in better voice or seen her at better 'business'." She was "delightfully naive" in 'The Moon and I'. Miss Alice Mitchell (Pitti-Sing) brought the house down with 'He's going to marry Yum-Yum', and had to give an encore. (She had also starred as Little Buttercup in 'HMS Pinafore'.) Miss Nellie Duncan (Peep-Bo) with much more concert than stage experience," not only sings the notes, but thinks them as well."
Miss Maud Lyall, a young nurse at the asylum by day, did very well in the unshowy, though demanding, role of Katisha, the jealous and spiteful older woman with designs on Nanki-Po, and sang her numbers "very prettily". Previously, she had been a very well received heroine, Josephine, in 'Pinafore'.

Mrs Chisholm at the piano and Mr Mowat Wilson at the organ rendered "yeoman service". Elizabeth Chisholm was John's wife and a member of the nursing staff. Their son, young Willie Chisholm, was also accorded a role as the sword-bearer.

The Perthshire Constitutional summed it best: "When the history of Murthly Asylum comes to be written, mention will undoubtedly be made of the entertainments given in the airy Recreation Hall, and prominence will be given to this performance of 'The Mikado'."

A high water mark indeed.

Notes & Sources

Review quotations taken variously from:
The Perthshire Advertiser, 26 October, 1910.
The Dundee Courier, 26 October, 1910.
The Perthshire Constitutional, 28th October, 1910.

Photo of James Mitchell as The Mikado taken by the Perth Art Photo Company .

Full details of the cast and chorus can be found in a longer version of this article here.