

The Spiers Family and the Tomb at Lochgreen

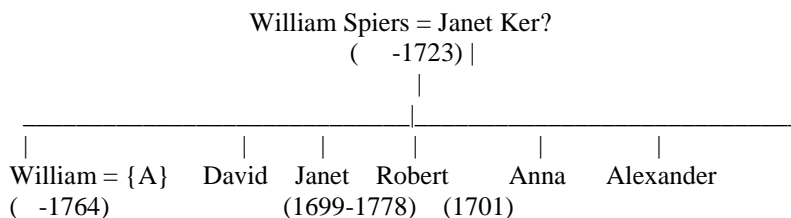
Geoff B. Bailey

In 1730, William Spiers bought the estate of Loch Green, near Castlecary, in the parish of Falkirk. He appears to have made much of his money from dealings in linseed at the port of Bo'ness and, as an Elder of the [Falkirk Parish Church](#) was already a respected member of the community. The purchase of this large estate, which included Burnhouse, Dykebrae, Hawkies Dub, Springwells and LochDrum, was soon commemorated by a new building close to the site of the present house at Lochgreen, the main door lintel of which is now built into the north wall of the garden.

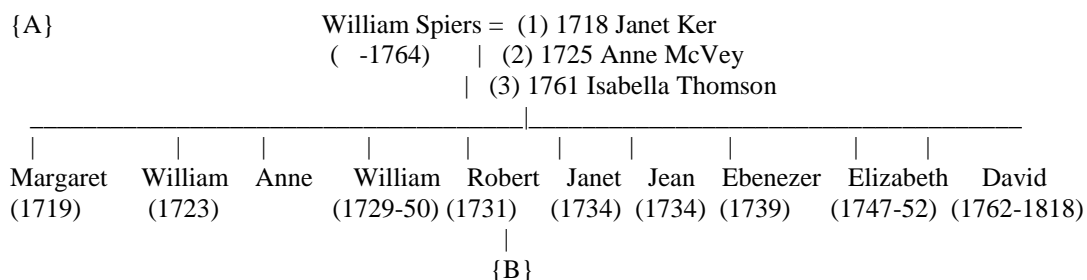


Illus 1: Marriage Lintel in the Garden Wall.

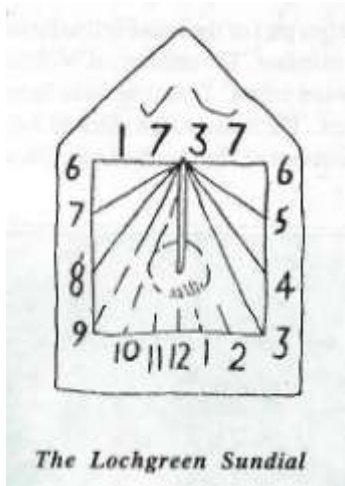
By this time William was the father of a daughter and a son by his first wife, Janet Ker. This son, named William after his father and paternal grandfather, had died young and so the first son of William's second wife, Anne McVey, was also named William in 1729.



Two of William's brothers, David and Alexander, seem to have farmed parts of the estate.

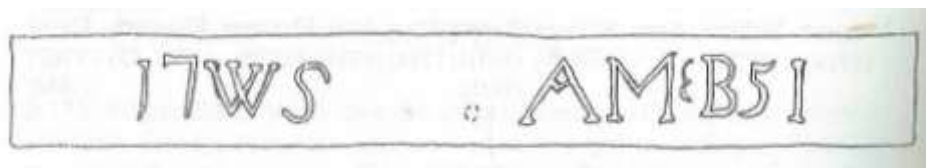


In 1738 William Spiers was one of the leading dissenting Elders in the Parish of Falkirk responsible for creating the first secession church in that parish. In this he was supported by his brother Robert and many of the other Elders, with a number of the congregation. The first record of the new congregation is the minute of the meeting on 23rd February 1739 at Lochgreen: "Which day and place the Associate Session of Falkirk met: were present the Revd. Ebenezer Erskine, Minr. of the Gospell at Stirling, Modr., Michael



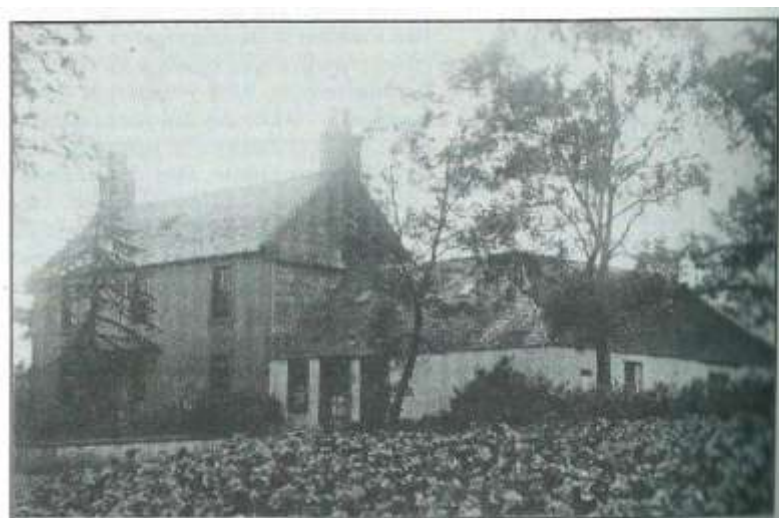
Muirhead, John Callendar, Thos. Kater, Walter Scot, William Spears, Robert Spears, Robert Ruchat, Thos. Henderson and James Arthur, Elders." In June of the same year a public sermon and baptism by Ebenezer Erskine took place at Lochgreen, and other meetings were then held at Woodend not far from Lochgreen, and Randyford, Falkirk. The congregation came from a wide area including Cumbernauld, Monklands and Slamannan, making Lochgreen a convenient meeting place. The Elders therefore looked for a site for their new church near Bonnybridge in the parish of Denny. However in 1742 land was acquired in Horsemarket Lane in Falkirk and a meeting house built there. In 1746 the congregation at Dennyloanhead became a separate charge and members of the Spiers family served as Elders there for many years.

On the 4th June 1750 William Spiers junior died, unmarried, at the age of 21 years. He used to study at a favourite spot near Loch Green and according to his desire was buried there. It lies at the bottom of a wooded escarpment which faces northwards across marshy ground in a pleasant valley (NS 817 772). A simple stone tablet is inscribed "Here lyse the body of William Spiers/ Who Died ... 4 June 1750/ Aged 21 YEARS." The inscription is placed on the inside of the north wall of an enclosure measuring? m by ? m. The wall is ? m high at the south where the lintel above the entrance records his parents' initials and the date of construction of "the Tomb".

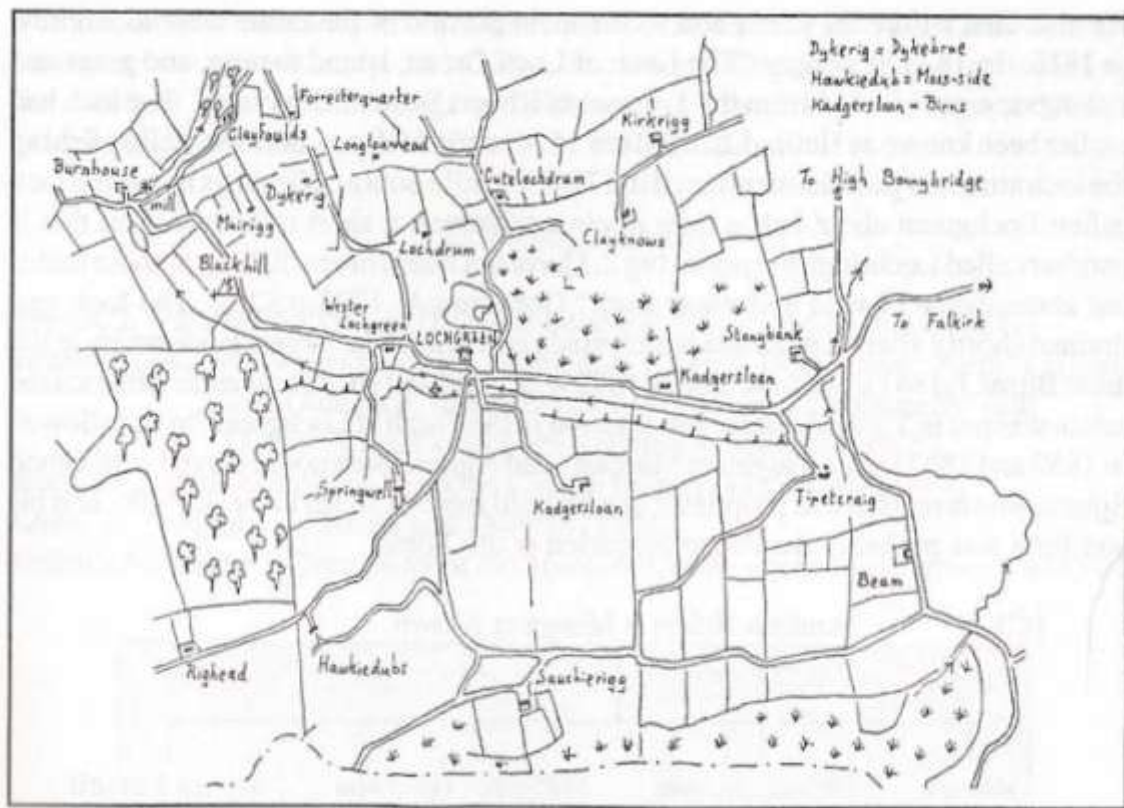


Illus 3: The Lintel on the Tomb.

On the death of William Spiers senior in 1764 the major part of the estate fell to Robert, with his half-brother David receiving Burnhouse as an infant. The children of William's brother, Alexander, also continued on the Loch Green estate. Dykebrae was farmed by Alexander Spiers, and Springwells by John Spiers. Their sister Ann married James Danskin, farmer at Hawkie's Dubs on the Loch Green estate, but he died in 1836 and she left the property with her family in 1841.

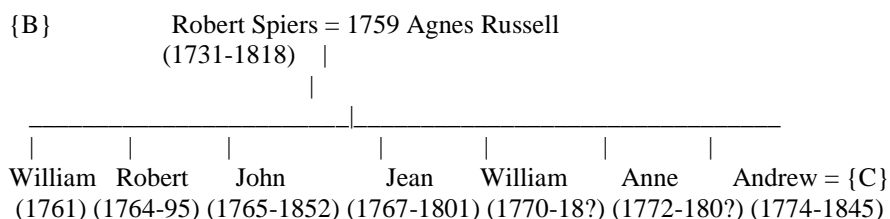


Lochgreen Farmhouse



Illus 5: Map of the Lochgreen Area showing the Local Estates.

Robert was now head of the family and an Elder at Dennyloanhead. In 1794 his eldest son of the same name had a new building erected in keeping with the times - this is the present dwelling which bears the date of its erection on its eastern chimney stack. The house was to be the family home for him and his new wife. However, his wife died shortly afterwards and in August the following year he too died of fever. This may explain why the elaborate door hood contains a plain lintel with no inscription. His father paid off his debts and rallied the family. As John, the next eldest son, had established himself in Nottingham it was William who fell heir to Loch Green and in 1802 he is to be found described as "merchant of Loch Green".



He also died before his father and so the main portion of the estate went to Andrew in 1818. In 1823 he bought "The Loch of Loch Green, Island therein, and grass and fishings thereof" for £14 from the Trustees of Robert Scott of Glenyards. The loch had earlier been known as Helins Loch (Blaeu 1654) or St. Helens Loch. As well as fishing the loch attracted game as mentioned in 1724: "A mile South of Seabegs is a loch called Lochgreen about a mile in circumference a short mile east from this is another called Lochridge but not so big ... I have not heard of any fishing in these lochs, but abundance of wild and water

foul." (Johnstone of Kirkland). The loch was drained shortly after its purchase. Andrew died in 1845 with his eldest son, Thomas, in America the estate was put in Trust. Andrew was interred in the Tomb at Lochgreen, to be followed in 1859 and 1863 by his daughters Margaret and Agnes. Burnhouse stayed with David Spiers, who is recorded as proprietor of a lint mill there in 1836 (Love, J.), and his son John was probably the last to be buried at the Tomb.

{C}

Andrew Spiers = Margaret Brown
(1774-1845)

Robert (1807-25) Thomas Brown (1809-69) Margaret Thomson (1810-59) Agnes Russell (1813-63)

LIST OF BURIALS IN "THE TOMB".

1750	William Spiers	son of	William Spiers, Lochgreen.
1810	Archibald Spiers	son of	David Spiers, Burnhouse.
1818	David Spiers	son of	David Spiers, Burnhouse.
1820	Andrew Spiers	son of	David Spiers, Burnhouse.
1824	Robert Spiers	son of	David Spiers, Burnhouse.
1825	Robert Spiers	son of	Andrew Spiers, Lochgreen.
1845	Andrew Spiers	son of	Robert Spiers, Lochgreen.
1859	Margaret Thomson	Spiers daughter of	Andrew Spiers, Lochgreen.
1863	Agnes Russell	Spiers daughter of	Andrew Spiers, Lochgreen.
1881	John Spiers	son of	David Spiers, Burnhouse.

The Trustees of Andrew Spiers held the estate until at least 1879 (Valuation Roll) when Lochgreen house was empty. In 1920 the estate, consisting of 523 acres and including the dwelling and farm buildings at Lochgreen, a ploughman's cottage at Wester Lochgreen, and a rifle range, were sold by Mr McCallum.

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