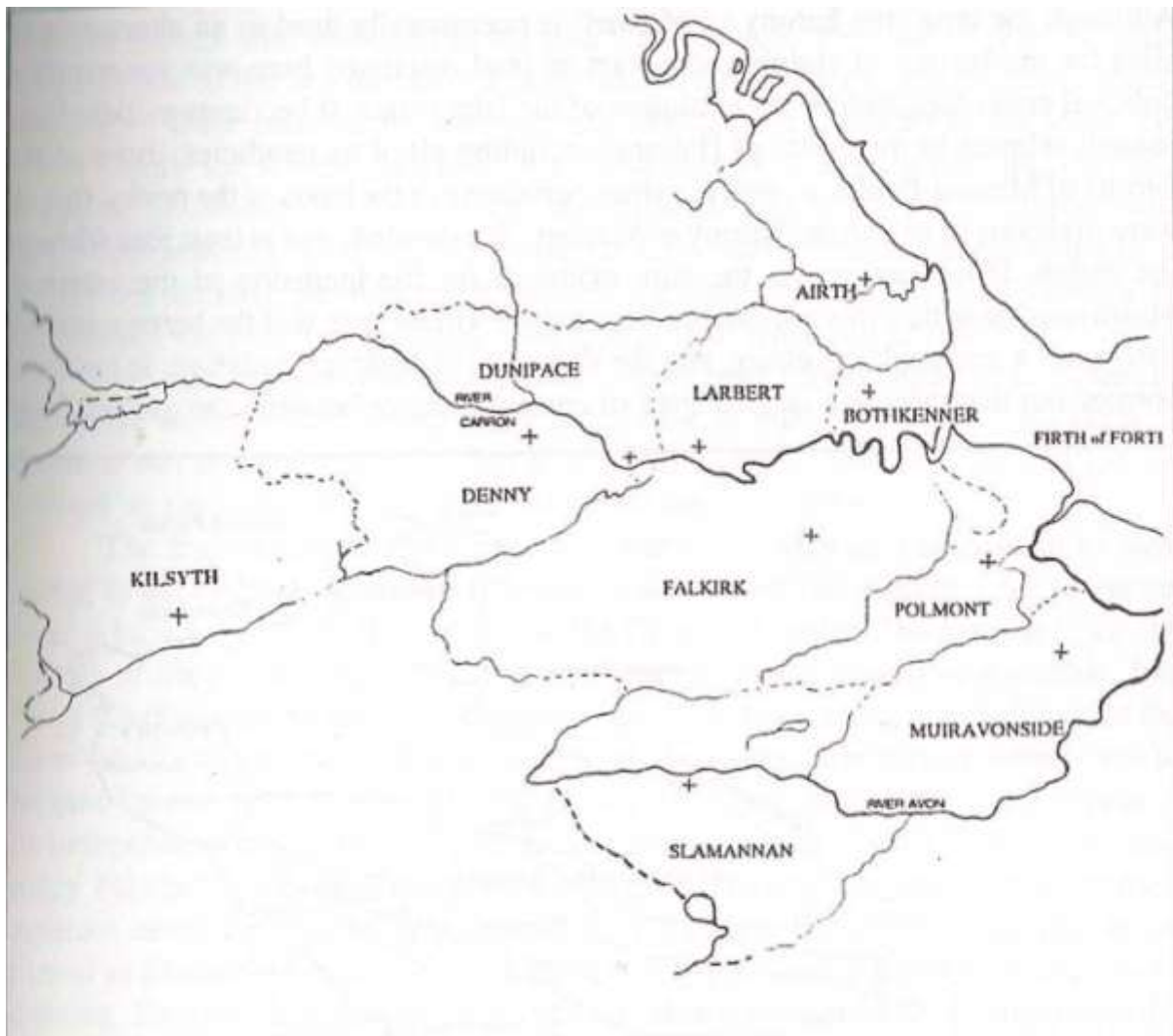


# *The Feudal Land Divisions of East Stirlingshire*

**John Reid**

When David I returned from England to claim his crown he brought with him to Scotland a retinue of Anglo-Norman knights. He, like them, had been raised at the English court. Together, they were products of the new style of feudalism which emerged in the twelfth century. With them they brought the attitudes and expectations which were to encourage the adoption of that form of the feudal order to Scotland where, although it remained to some degree recognisably different from that in England, it evolved as essentially that which pertained throughout late mediaeval Europe.



**The Parishes of East Stirlingshire**

It was a force which was to dominate Scottish society from that time until the eighteenth century when a series of revolutionary events; civil, agricultural and industrial, caused a diminuation of feudal power. It was the [Jacobite](#) risings which led to the forfeiture of many of the old families in whose hands these hereditary powers had rested, while the later upheavals of that century saw a massive movement of the people from the land with, consequently, a reduction in the authority of the land owners.

Feudalism was a product of its time. It was born of the need for kings to retain their realms through military strength. They required the support of men trained in the most effective skills of warfare. These men, the king's vassals, also required followers. It was, in effect, a power pyramid. To achieve this, the king set his vassals in estates as his tenants-in-chief and they returned to him military service. One of the most common feudal land divisions found in East Stirlingshire was the ten pound land and this, it would seem, was a knight's holding. The possessors of these holdings would, in turn, set their retainers in parcels of land relative, no doubt, to their status. It was largely upon these knight's holdings that the Scottish baronies developed although some, such as Callendar, were formerly thanages. Obviously, for the greater part, the knight was the baron. Therein lies the fundamental difference between the Scottish baron and his English counterpart: in England, a baron was a noble who, when called upon to render military service, would be required to bring to the field several knights with their appropriate followers; the Scottish baron might be a noble but most often was not and it would be he and his tenants who would ride and march to hostings.

Although baronies were most often held by individuals, some were possessed by institutions and so it was necessary to distinguish between secular and monastic baronies. Regardless of status, whether secular or monastic, all baronies were structured in the same fashion. There was the principal seat of the estate, which would take the form of a fortified house, peel or castle. This would normally stand in the "Mains, the demesne land. The remainder was divided into pendicles known as "toons", which were lands farmed in common by joint tenants with sub-tenants and cottars. In the earlier feudal period, these tenants had hereditary possession of their toons and were known as "kindly-tenants", that is tenants by right of kinship. From the fifteenth century onwards it became increasingly common for such tenants to purchase a feu-tenancy of their holdings. Those who did still farmed the "toon" in the same manner as before but their status changed to that of portioner. Most noticeable in these instances is their change of designation from 'in X-toon' to 'of X-toon'. They had become 'bonnet-lairds'. There were instances where kindly tenants were encouraged or coerced into selling their kindliness so that complete "toons" came into the possession of one person. Such holdings might form small estates in their own right.

Barons were feu-tenants of the crown; the new possessors held their feus of the baron. A baron might own lands other than those held directly of the crown. Whoever was the principal holder of each of these additional parcels was his

overlord. Each of these circumstances explains the concept of superiority, an important facet of feudalism which survives to this day. The person from whom the feu derived, the superior, would normally impose conditions upon the feu. In the event of these being breached, the superior could revoke the feu and the lands would revert to him. The same would apply in the instance of forfeiture. A baron was required to perform duties over and above those of a military nature. He was responsible for the day to day administration and the exercising of justice up to a certain degree within his lordship. Despite any shortcomings which might be recognised within feudalism, there can be no doubt that it provided a devolved system of justice and governance at a time when communication was difficult. Surviving baron court records would suggest that these duties were performed in a reasonably diligent manner. Land holding, it will be recognised, was an important aspect of the feudal period. Whether held by king, earl, baron, tenant or cotter, regardless of the manner in which the land was possessed, be it a kingdom or a midden-stead, land was fundamental to life. For this reason, in the texts presented here and in forthcoming editions of *Calatria*, an attempt will be made to reconstruct the feudal divisions which formerly existed in East Stirlingshire. While the barony will form the core of the work, estates which did not receive this status will also be featured. The geographical extent of the study is largely that which forms the local government administrative area known at the present time as 'Falkirk District' with the exception of that part which lies in West Lothian and contains Bo'ness and Blackness. Historically and geographically this part does not belong in the study area and deserves to be dealt with separately. On the other hand, Kilsyth and its environs are in Stirlingshire and, despite not being in the District, will be included. The study is constructed on a parochial basis. It follows that priority will not be given to chronology or degrees of status in the order of the presentation of the texts.

## **CONTENTS**

(click links to read)

[The Barony of Manuel](#)

[The Barony of Haining or Almond](#)

[The Nunnery and Priory of St. Mary](#)

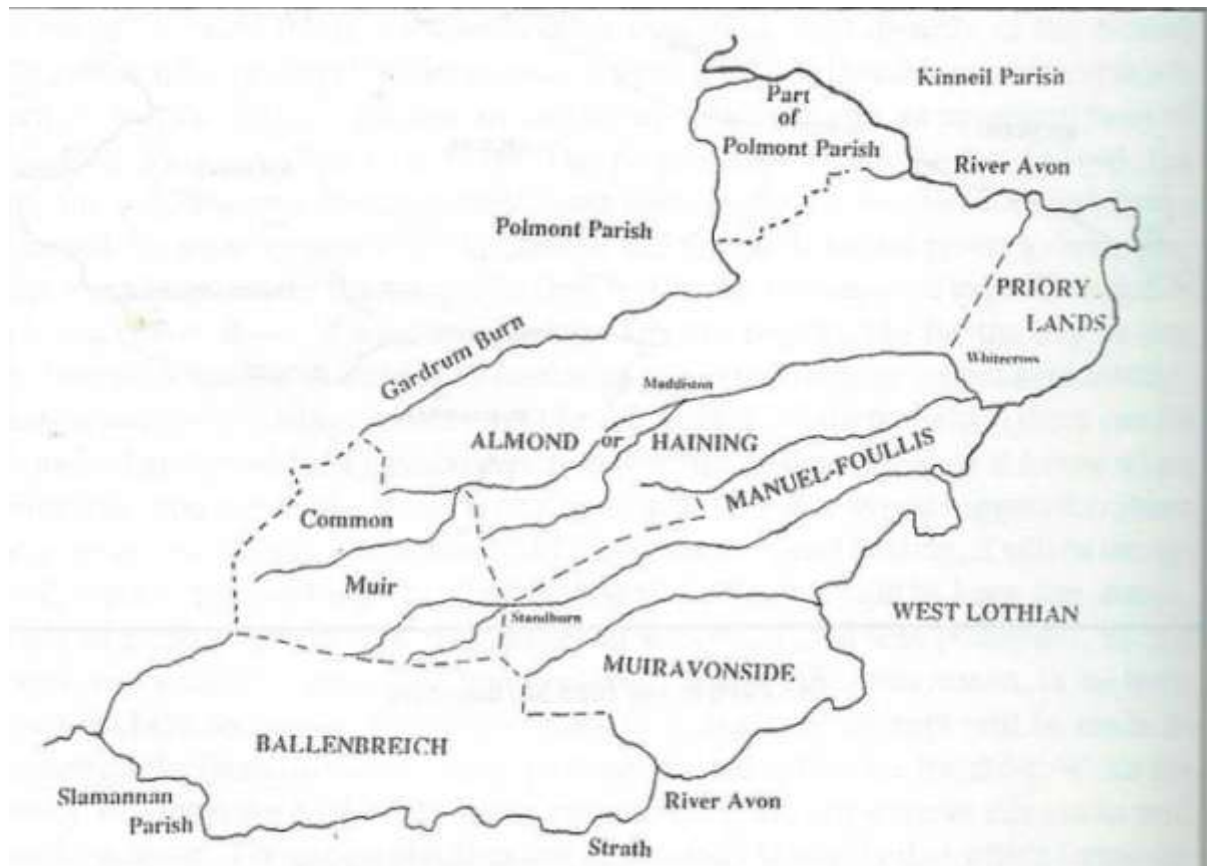
[Manuel Foulis](#)

[The Estate and Barony of Muiravonside or Neuk](#)

[Ballenbreich](#)

[The Common Muir of Muiravonside](#)

## THE BARONY OF MANUEL



**The Parish of Muiravonside - the Feudal Divisions**

Although the term 'the barony of Manuel' is occasionally used as an alternative or alias for the barony of Haining, the tract of land discussed here was apparently a political entity long before the evolution of the later estate. It becomes evident from records relating to the estate of Haining, including all of its pendicles, those of the barony of Manuel Foulis, as well as others pertaining to the lands of the priory, that all were divisions of an earlier 'barony of Manuel'. It extended over at least four fifths of the parish. If we can accept the slim evidence for the inclusion of the estate of Muiravonside within this ancient holding, then it will be seen that the barony and the parish are a geographical entity, and the demands of logic are satisfied.

It has been pointed out that there is a large degree of correspondence between the geographical extent of baronies and that of parishes<sup>1</sup>. While, admittedly, Muiravonside was erected into a separate parish only in the late feudal period, the shape and identity are observable in its present form over the intervening centuries. When it is considered that the priory of Manuel was established between 1156 and 1164, then it may be inferred that the creation of the barony of Manuel must have taken place in the first half of the twelfth century. In that period King David I had been making grants of land to Anglo-Norman barons who belonged to his court and several were set in West Lothian: Kinneil went to Herbert the chamberlain and Strathbrock to Freskin. It is noteworthy that one of these marches

is on the east of Manuel and the other to the south. No doubt one of the King's intentions was to secure the Edinburgh-Stirling corridor within which Manuel lies close to the centre and through which that important route ran. To the west of Manuel lay the thanage of Callendar where the thane, acting as a steward for the king, played a rôle effectively the same as that of sheriff of a county. If, as has been suggested, the thanage took in all the land between the rivers Carron and Avon<sup>2</sup>, then Manuel must be assumed to have been formerly part of it. When the separation took place, if indeed this was the case, is unknown. Nor do we know to whom it was originally granted, but it may well be that those who are entitled 'de Manuel' in early records were descended from the original baron.

The fragmentation of the presumed barony of Manuel would seem to have started in the middle of the twelfth century with the first recorded division being the lands that were gifted to the nuns of the Cistercian order. The geography of the grounds of the parish might also lead us to suspect that the lands of Avondale, formerly Clerkston in the parish of Polmont, may have been an early gift of part of the lands of Manuel to the Abbey of Holyrood. Just when the barony which was to become Manuel-Foulis was divided off is not known: it does not appear as an independent unit until the fourteenth century; when it does it is an established entity. Parkhall was originally merely a pendicle of Haining and, while it did become a separate estate, its superiority remained with Haining. Ballenbreich, despite being named as a barony in the seventeenth century, also remained within the superiority of Haining. The remaining part of the parish was taken up by the estate of Muiravonside. There is only the most tenuous of evidence to suggest that this too was part of the ancient barony. Muiravonside is first noted at the end of the twelfth century, at which time it is obvious that it was not then dependent upon Manuel, although it did have rights of common within Manuel.

**NEXT :** [The Barony of Haining or Almond](#)

[<top>](#)

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### **NOTES : The Barony of Manuel**

- <sup>1</sup> Grant, A                      Scotland 1306-1469: Independence and Nationhood, p65
- <sup>2</sup> Barrow, G.W.S.    The Kingdom of the Scots, p37

## THE BARONY OF HAINING OR ALMOND

in 1417 the Duke of Albany issued a charter of confirmation of a grant of lands in Airth to "*William de Crawford de Manuel*"<sup>1</sup>. When, in 1424, Sir William and his wife, Jonete, resigned their principal estate in favour of their son and heir, Reginald Crawford, it is named as "Haining"<sup>2</sup>. At that time it comprised the following lands:

- Haining
- Mains of Haining
- Maddiston
- Nicolton
- Gillandersland
- Gilmeadowland,
- the mill of Manuel Manuelrig
- Easter and Wester Ballenbreich

The Crawfords, it has been suggested, were a branch of the Crawfords of Baidland<sup>3</sup>. Reginald's younger brother, Archibald, became Abbot of Holyrood in 1457 and was appointed Lord High Treasurer of Scotland in 1474. He also acted as Ambassador to England<sup>4</sup>.

The estate was to remain in the hands of the Crawfords for more than a hundred years after the accession of Reginald as its laird. He was probably succeeded by Rankine de Crawford who, in 1454, petitioned the Pope concerning the lack of a session-clerk in Manuel<sup>5</sup>.

Rankine was apparently followed by Robert Crawford, who received a sasine of the lands of Manuel in 1477.<sup>6</sup> Robert and his wife, Giles, were still active in 1491. The relationship of Reginald, Rankine and Robert is not clear but Robert and his successor, Archibald, were undoubtedly father and son. The latter received a sasine of 'Manuell, Nycholystoun, Estirballinbruch and Wasterballinbruch' in 1498.<sup>7</sup>

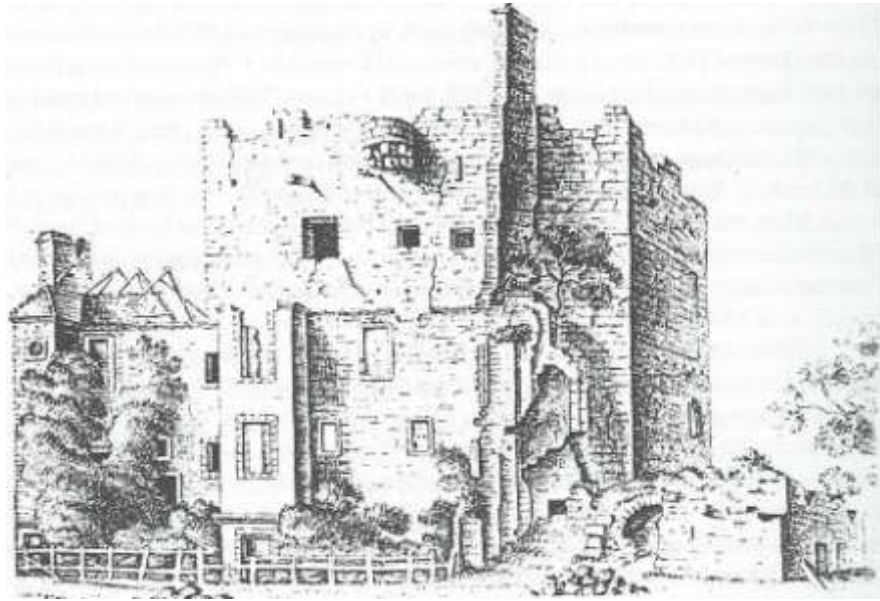
Robert had died by then for, in 1499, we find Archibald in dispute with his brother-in-law, Robert Preston, over certain articles of Robert Crawford's estate<sup>8</sup>. The disagreement was brought before a court and, from the records of the ensuing case, we learn something of the wealth of landed families in these days. Among the contested goods, for example, was a gold chain weighing eight ounces and valued at 57; a gold ring worth thirty-six shillings and, even, the proverbial silver spoon or, as we later learn, 'xij spewnis of silver'. Preston, who had been accused by Archibald of illegally retaining possession of the articles in question, claimed that these, along with others including "*an ox, a cow, a calf and a stirk*", as well as Robert Crawford's best horse, had been given by her father to his wife, Giles Crawford, sister of Archibald. The Lords of Council found for Archibald and decreed that Robert Prestoun should return all of the goods<sup>9</sup>. Later, Archibald was evidently involved in yet another dispute, this time involving lands, for in 1508 he promised to deliver an authentic copy of his sasine of the 'barony of Manuel' to John, Lord Ross of Halkhead, the owner of the neighbouring estate of Muiravonside<sup>10</sup>. This is the earliest overt evidence of the baronial status of Haining.



Archibald Crawford had a son, William, of whom mention is found for the first time in 1530.<sup>11</sup> William consented to a grant being made by his father in 1532 of an annual rent from the Mains of Haining to William Carncors of Cowmislie<sup>12</sup>. Archibald must have died, or at least resigned the estate, by 1538, for in that year William received a sasine of "*all the lands of Manwell [comprising] Hanyng with the manor place thereof, the Manys, Mawdustoun, Nicholtoun, Gillandrisland with the Manwellrig, Gilmudyland and the lands of Westir Ballinbruicht with the mill of Manwell*"<sup>13</sup>. In that year he and his wife, Margaret Livingston, received a charter of confirmation of the lands of Bogo<sup>14</sup>. William's succession as laird is verified in 1541 when he is on record as being involved in transactions relating to the estate<sup>15</sup>. His tenure proved to be of short duration, however, as in 1542 he is described as "*the late William Crawford of Haining*"<sup>16</sup>.

William left no male heirs and the estate fell to his two daughters, Agnes and Margaret. They must have been then still in their minority for in 1542 Alexander, Lord Livingston, was given the ward of the lands and barony of Haining with 'the tower and fortalice' and all that pertained to the estate. The lands, it was said, were lying with the crown at that time through non-entry; a further indication perhaps that the girls, as yet, had not come of age. Lord Livingston was also given the power to arrange the marriages of "*Nannis and Margaret Craufurde, dochteris and airis of the said umquhile William*"<sup>17</sup>. Agnes, the elder daughter, must have reached the age of legal maturity in 1546, for in that year she was retoured in "*the lands of Hanyng with the manor-place*"<sup>18</sup>. Later in that same year, she received a sasine of "*all and hail the lands of Manwell*", which document shows the estate to have the same composition as it had in 1424.<sup>19</sup> Evidently, by 1548 Margaret had also come of age, for then she too received a sasine, but of "*half of all and hail the lands of Manwell*"<sup>20</sup>. In 1551 Mary, Queen of Scots, confirmed a grant made by Agnes in favour of Mr Alexander Livingston of Dunipace of her half of the lands of Haining<sup>21</sup>. These lands were then almost immediately transferred from Livingston of Dunipace to Thomas Livingston, brother of William, Lord Livingston, and husband of Agnes<sup>22</sup>. Margaret sold her half of the estate to Agnes in 1556 and so, once more, the estate was united<sup>23</sup>. Thomas and Agnes also took possession of Easter Ballenbreich at that time. This land which was reverting to Thomas and Agnes seems to have been feued at some time by Archibald, grandfather of Agnes<sup>24</sup>.

Thomas survived Agnes, who had died by 1565; it was then that he granted to their son, Thomas, "*the landis of Hanyng Myln or any pairt thair of*" as a wedding gift<sup>25</sup>. Presumably, this was when Thomas married Elizabeth Forrester who was to become the mother of his son and heir. Thomas could have been only in his early forties when Agnes died and he remarried at least once more. His last wife was Elizabeth Nicol, widow of John Forrester of Logie, whom he also survived<sup>26</sup>. Not for long, however, for he died in 1605.<sup>27</sup> Three years before then, his son Thomas was retoured as heir to his mother in "*half of the lands of Manuel*"<sup>28</sup>. These are specified as the lands of Haining, lands of Maddiston, Nicolton, Gillandersland and Manuel Mill. The dominion of the Crawfords had ended, albeit their blood flowed in the veins of the new dynasty



**Almond Castle - from Archer's 1880 Drawing**

Shortly before the death of old Thomas, a contract was drawn up by the younger Thomas for a marriage between his son, Alexander and Jonet Henrysoun, for which a royal confirmation was received in 1604.<sup>29</sup> Jonet was the widow of William, Lord Elphinston, and daughter of John Henrysoun, the laird of Fordell. It is evident from the charter of confirmation that Alexander had taken possession of all of the estate, the extent of which was, to all intents and purposes, identical to that which his forbear, Reginald Crawford, had acquired from his father almost two hundred years before. Thomas retained the use of the Mains of Haining with the tower-house in life-rent, as well as Manuel Mill which, it may be recalled, was gifted to him by his father. He also retained a life-rent in the lands of Nicolton, Gilmeadowland, Maddiston, Manuelrig and Wester Ballenbreich<sup>30</sup>. It is noteworthy that among his possessions at this time were the coal-works of Haining. Alexander is noted as late as 1647.<sup>31</sup>

Haining was to remain for some considerable time in the hands of the Livingston family but, in 1646, the superiority came into the hands of the senior branch of the family in the shape of James Livingston, Lord Almond<sup>32</sup>. He was later created Earl of Callendar and with that title as well as those of Lord Livingston and Almond, he was granted a royal charter in 1646 which included the lands and barony of Haining, along with those of Manuel, that is the lands which had formerly belonged to the priory of Manuel and these were incorporated into the free barony of Haining<sup>33</sup>. This was the first time these particular lands had been united in the formal sense since the division of the priory lands in the twelfth century. It was this barony which was to become known, for obvious reasons, as 'Almond'.

The Livingston connection ended in the eighteenth century when the estate was sequestered as a consequence of the family's participation in the 1714-15 rising. Callendar was sold to William Forbes in 1783 and in 1791 he received a sasine for 'the Barony of Haining or Almond' and, even within the phrasing of that document we still find at one juncture: '... the barony of Manuel or Haining'<sup>34</sup>.





**The Remains of Almond Castle in 1994**

Today, the remains of the castle still stand, surrounded by the chaos of a brickwork, with discarded machinery and rusting metal-drums lying cheek by jowl with the tatty wire fencing which surrounds the sad and decaying pile. The “*hainit*” wood of the estate lies close by, little changed in extent over the last two hundred and fifty years or so and it is difficult not to muse, when sitting in one of its quieter corners, whether or not this may have been the very feature which lent its name to the lands and barony many centuries before.

**NEXT : [The Nunnery and Priory of St. Mary](#)**

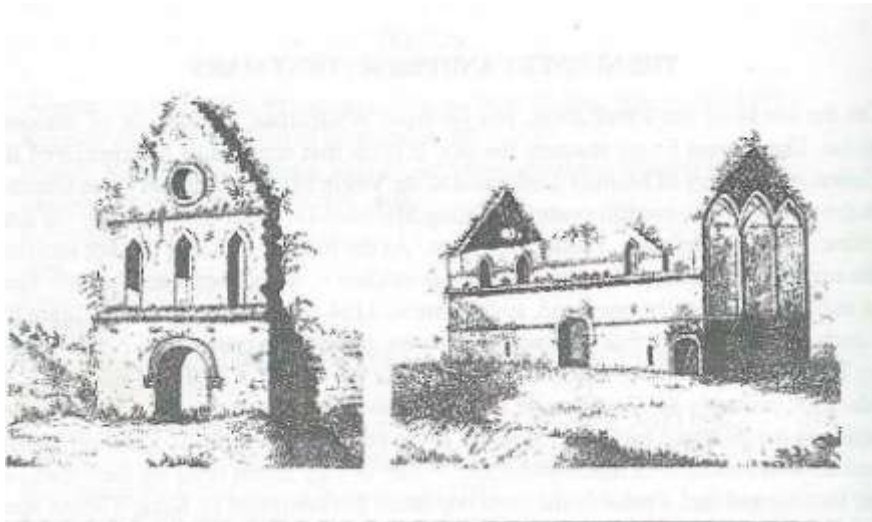
[<top>](#)

**NOTES: The Barony of Haining or Almond**

- 1 Armstrong, W.B., The Bruces of Airth and their Cadets, Edinburgh 1892
- 2 Register of the Great Seal of Scotland ii, 14
- 3 Hunter, R.L, Haining Castle, Falkirk Archaeological & Natural History Society Proceedings (1946-49) p9ff
- 4 Holyrood Liber, p xxxi
- 5 ibid
- 6 Exchequer Rolls ix, p678
- 7 ibid xi, p461
- 8 Acts of the Lords of Council in Civil Cases (1499 x1500), p359
- 9 ibid p403
- 10 Protocol Book of James Young, Scottish Records Society (1952), 14
- 11 Forbes of Callendar Papers, Scottish Records Office, GD171.3911
- 12 Register of the Great Seal of Scotland iii, 1647
- 13 Exchequer Rolls xvii, p754
- 14 ibid 2102
- 15 Protocol Book of James Young, Scottish Records Society (1952), 334; Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scottorum ii, 3996
- 16 ibid 146
- 17 ibid
- 18 Stirlingshire Retours 2
- 19 Exchequer Rolls xviii, p407
- 20 ibid p422
- 21 Register of the Great Seal of Scotland iv, 554
- 22 ibid 555
- 23 ibid1053
- 24 Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scottorum iv, 3290
- 25 ibid v, 1957
- 26 Register of the Great Seal of Scotland vii, 770
- 27 Commissariat Records of Edinburgh, Scottish Records Society.
- 28 Stirlingshire Retours 36
- 29 Register of the Great Seal of Scotland vi, 1499
- 30 ibid vii, 770
- 31 Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, VI.ii.32b
- 32 ibid ix, 1690
- 33 ibid xi, 432
- 34 General Register of Sasines (Stirlingshire)

## THE NUNNERY AND PRIORY OF ST MARY

On the banks of the River Avon, not far from Whitecross, a fragment of masonry points like a great finger towards the sky. It is all that remains of the church of the Cistercian nunnery of Manuel.



The Nunnery Buildings in the 18th Century

Dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the nunnery was founded in the middle of the twelfth century by King Malcolm IV, a fact confirmed by the later charter of Malcolm's son, William the Lion<sup>1</sup>. As the founding charter has not survived, the actual year in which the gift was made is unknown; it has been stated to have been as early as 1156 on the one hand and as late as 1164 on the other<sup>2</sup>. From William the Lion's charter we learn that the lands which were gifted to the priory were perambulated by Thor, son of Swain, who was almost certainly the Sheriff of Lothian and one G. de Melville, probably Sir Geoffrey de Melville, who flourished at that time and who was active in the district<sup>3</sup>. Included in the gift to the nuns was the right of common pasture and an entitlement to as much wood and timber as they might need for their own use for fencing and fuel. Probably the most important gift conferred by King William upon the nuns, however, was his protection, for the final clause of his charter reads:

*"he wills and commands the the said nuns hold the said lands as freely and quietly as any alms throughout his lands are held and straitly prohibits anyone, upon forfeiture, to injure them in any way within the bounds of the said lands"*<sup>4</sup>

As well as the gift of their main holding of the land, the nuns received other gifts, donations and benefices over a period of time. Among the earliest of these was in or around 1196, when King William made a further gift to the nuns of his revenues from the sherifffdom of Linlithgow and of mills, money, wheat and flour from both the burgh and shire of Linlithgow. He commanded the sheriff of Linlithgow and the bailies of the burgh to pay these teinds annually to the nuns without obstruction<sup>5</sup>. Although the mills gifted are not specified within the surviving document, evidence arises in the sixteenth century which identifies them, for at that time they were set in feu by the nuns to the burgh of Linlithgow. In 1224, one and a half chalders of salt

were donated by King Alexander II from the teinds of his saltpans on the Carse which were, at that time, held in feu by Ralph Barret. While it is not stated, it may be presumed that this was intended to be an annual grant for, some eight years later, when these saltpans were granted by the king to the abbey of Newbattle, he relieved the monks from the payment to the nuns of Manuel<sup>6</sup>. Just as the physical remains of the priory are sparse, so too are the associated records. Nevertheless, enough may be gleaned with which to reconstruct a little more of the story of the nuns. It seems somewhat strange, at first glance, to find the earliest recovered record referring to 'Roger, prior of Manuel' witnessing a charter sometime around 1190.<sup>7</sup> However, it has been pointed out that nunneries were in need of greater protection than monasteries and, to this end, a male person was appointed, usually as a priest called a 'Master' who dealt with secular matters necessary to the efficient organization of the priory<sup>8</sup>. Throughout the following century, most of the notices are to be found in the royal exchequer accounts. These concern the payment of the Linlithgow teinds to the priory and show that they were paid on two terms each year. In the earlier years, each payment fluctuated between about ten and twelve shillings but after a while they seem to have settled at thirteen shillings and fourpence<sup>9</sup>. Towards the end of the thirteenth century mention is found of Lady Christina, 'prioress of the nuns of Manwelle' who, on the 28 July 1291, swore fealty to Edward I, king of England, at Linlithgow<sup>10</sup>. It is unusual to find what is commonly called the Ragman Roll being signed in that town: usually the additional indignity of having to travel south of the border was imposed upon those who undertook to do so. This possibly indicates that Lady Christina may have been old and frail, an assumption which is reinforced by the appearance only five years later of Alice, prioress of Manuel when she, this time in Berwick upon Tweed, also gave her undertaking to the English king<sup>11</sup>. It is all too easy now to pass judgement upon those who acted in this way; these were bloody and dangerous times with houses divided against each other: a time when strong rule and protection of law and order was lacking. Proof that the prioress acted with discretion lies in the fact that their house appears to have survived relatively unscathed throughout the turmoil of the [Wars of Independence](#), although some damage was caused by the army of Edward III in 133, for which the nuns received 10 in recompense<sup>12</sup>. In all likelihood the nunnery acted as a haven at various times for all parties involved in the struggle. Certainly Edward I availed himself of its comforts, both spiritual and temporal. On October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1301, he made an offering at the high altar of the nuns of Manuel<sup>13</sup>. On the following day he sent a letter from there to his treasurer, barons and chamberlains of exchequer, in which he complained of his shortage of money. He was also greatly concerned about the high number of desertions from his army. So many men, both mounted and foot soldiers, had disappeared that he feared he would not only be unable to complete his campaign, but would be in danger of losing the gains he had made. It was his intention, he stated, to spend the winter in Linlithgow and he prayed he would not lose any more ground until such time as provisions, which were also scarce, were sent to him<sup>14</sup>. In 1312, while much of Scotland was under English occupation and was being largely administered by the auldemie, English records show the burgh of Linlithgow paying yearly alms of thirty-two shillings and eightpence to the priory<sup>15</sup>.

In the fifteenth century, we encounter two more prioresses but, once again, they are close on one another's heels. In 1492 Lady Elizabeth, 'Prioress of Manwell', issued a receipt to the sheriff of Linlithgow as discharge for the annual teinds of that place to the nuns of Manuel<sup>16</sup>. In the following year, when the same

transaction is recorded, it is made by Lady Marjory, who is also designed 'prioress'<sup>17</sup>. During her principalship, the status of the priory was under threat. In 1506 a commission to the abbots of Cambuskenneth and Balmerino, as well as the provosts of the collegiate church of the Holy Trinity in Edinburgh, was issued by Pope Julius II, in which it was proposed to turn the nunnery into a house of Augustinian Friars Observantines. At the time, it is said, there were only five nuns in the priory and they were to be transferred to another convent<sup>18</sup>. Obviously, as the nuns continued in possession of St Mary's this never transpired, and it may well be that powerful friends were prevailed upon to give their protection. This suspicion is fuelled by a local tradition, persistent until the eighteenth century, which held that only ladies of rank or those from a noble families were permitted to enter the nunnery of Manuel<sup>19</sup>. This is almost certainly true, for by all accounts it was a situation not peculiar to Manuel; it has been said: 'Cistercian nunneries were refuges for the disposal of well-off spinsters'<sup>20</sup>. Lady Marjory was followed in turn by Lady Elizabeth Hoppringle, who was prioress by 1515 and was still in office in 1528.<sup>21</sup> She had resigned the post by 1543, in which year Mary, Queen of Scots presented Lady Jonete Livingston to David, Cardinal of St Andrews, as the new prioress of the 'monastery of Manwell'<sup>22</sup>. Jonete was probably the last prioress of Manuel, although Margaret Livingston, daughter of William, Lord Livingston, was presented as her successor there is no evidence for her having taken office<sup>23</sup>. During the early years of Jonete's rule Elizabeth, prioress of Haddington, defended against a decret issued on behalf of Alison Ramsay, who was claiming expenses of eighteen pence per day for the time she had spent in the 'appee of Manuale' while it was considered whether or not she should be admitted to Haddington<sup>24</sup>.

Only two years after Jonete was entered as prioress of Manuel, she feued the lands of the priory to Alexander, fifth Lord Livingston and his second son, William. Alexander, like all of his predecessors, had a strong allegiance to the royal house of Stuart. He played a considerable part in the protection of James V when the king was in his minority and accompanied him to France on the occasion of his first marriage. Continuing in the rôle of protector of young Stuarts, he was appointed one of the eight keepers of the infant Mary, who was to become the tragic Queen of Scots. So important was this post held to be that Alexander, along with several of his kinsmen, was excused military duty during the time of the rough wooing so that he might remain and guard the royal child. When Mary went to France to marry the dauphin, Alexander went too, as did his daughter, for she was to become one of the Queen's four Maries. He did not return from France but died there in 1550.<sup>25</sup> In effect what Jonete had done was to alienate this considerable estate to the Livingstons who, in all likelihood, were her kinsmen. She did not sell it outright to anyone, for this was forbidden by canon law, but feuing provided an acceptable loophole<sup>26</sup>. The nuns would still have their dwelling place and their church and, because it was written into the feu contract, the protection of the Livingstons. The reason given for this particular clause was that these were troubled times and the Livingstons had the power to provide defence for the priory. No doubt Jonete was a shrewd lady whose perceptions and grasp of the events of the day led her to see that the time of the monasteries were drawing to a close. John Knox's sermon preached in Perth in 1559 is often given as the start of the Reformation in Scotland but, by all accounts, the atmosphere in the land was ripe for religious protest. Monastic establishments had lost their credibility as centres of spirituality and places of learning. Their titular heads were, by then, appointed on the basis of their family



connections rather than for the strength of their religious devotion<sup>27</sup>. In the light of the attitudes prevailing in the immediate pre-Reformation period, it is neither surprising nor unusual to find Jonete capitalising upon the wealth of the priory.

From within the text of Jonete's charter to Lord Alexander we discover for the first time the extent of the immediate lands of the priory and their identity<sup>28</sup>. These were:

*"Mains of Manuel, Myrehead and Williamcraigs,  
Waukmilton with the mill" [i.e. Easter Waukmilton]*

All of these are contained within the eastern corner of the parish, with the exception of Wiilliamcraigs, which is in West Lothian. They are also stated to be in the barony of Manuel. From this it is evident that the three first named lands had been divided, more or less in half, at the time of the foundation of the priory, for each name also occurs in Waukmilton and Wester Waukmilton. Probably the best confirmation that the division was so comes from a charter of 1646, by which time both portions were held by the Livingstons of Callendar<sup>29</sup>. Then each part, the one which formerly pertained to Haining, and the other which was formerly held by the priory, is seen to contain Myrehead and Waukmilton. The east-west division of Wauknilton probably lay along the Sandyford burn and the eastern part that is the present Waukmilton was the one which belonged to the priory. A division for Myrehead is more difficult to determine but it too cannot have been far from the line drawn between the head of the Sandyford burn and the Manuel burn at a point where it btakes a distinctive turn at the village of Whitecross. Certainly, as late as the eighteenth century, the 'Old Stead of Myrehead, which could only have been Wester Myrehead, lay where the present house of Lathallan now stands. When the Mains of Manuel is mentioned in the priory charters, invariably the phrase 'with the greens and haughs adjacent thereto' is used. From this we must assume that the Mains included what is now the farm of Manuelhaugh, but was probably centred in the farm known today as Easter Manuel. The valuation of the lands is given as:

*£21.13s.4d in money; 7 chalders, 12 bolls of wheat; 3 chalders of oats;  
12 bolls of malt; 4 dozen capons; 22 loads of coal; 3 pounds of wax;  
and the carriage of five dozen loads of coal*

We may presume that all of theses were being produced on the estate and had been so for centuries. However, this was a time of change. One of the first effects of the consequences of the Reformation upon the nuns was the cutting off of their revenues from Linlithgow. They had received them, even during times of great strife, for almost four hundred years but in 1560 we find the payments were to cease. The final relevant entry reads: "*Discharge. To Prioress and convent of Manwell and not to be paid in future 13s 4d*".<sup>30</sup>

After the death of his father, the lands came into the hands of Lord William Livingston. He, like his father, remained loyal to the Stuarts. Although he had been a member of the parliament which met in Edinburgh in 1560 and established the Reformed Religion as legal in Scotland, he still held true to Queen Mary. In 1561 he travelled to France without an official commission to confer with the Queen, who was

by then widowed. He was also one of the few Scottish nobles who assisted with the baptism of the infant Prince James, despite the celebration being performed within the rites of the old religion. He was at Mary's side at the battle of Langside and helped her to escape from there. When she fled to England, William and his wife, Agnes Fleming, went with her. Agnes remained by her to the end, while William travelled on numerous desperate missions on behalf of Queen Mary but all to no avail<sup>31</sup>. Mary's recognition of this stalwart is shown some time before her fate became apparent. In the aftermath of the Reformation, all the incomes of monastic and church lands were taxed in order to support the newly established church. This tax was known as Thirds of Benefices<sup>32</sup>. The nunnery was assessed to pay:

*£17.11s.6½d; 1 chalder of barley; 2 chalders, 5 bolls, 1 firloft, 1⅓ pecks of meal; 8 salmon*

Lord William was granted a letter of remission in 1566 of the payment of the Thirds for the whole of his lifetime. It states that this was for "*the gude, trew and thankfull service done be him to our soveranis*"<sup>33</sup>. In that same year Queen Mary and her consort, Darnley or, as he then styled himself, 'Henry, King of Scots', presented William's daughter, Margaret, to the office of prioress. The disposition states that the office of prioress was vacant by the resignation of Lady Jonete, the previous prioress and contains a clause which reserves to Lady Jonete for all the time of her life the fruits of the priory and certain benefits pertaining thereto<sup>34</sup>. There is no evidence to show whether or not Margaret actually ever entered to the office of prioress.

By the second half of the sixteenth century the corn-mills known as 'Borrowmylne and Lytill-mylne' had been set in feu by the nuns to the burgh of Linlithgow. These were the mills which had been gifted to them almost four hundred years earlier by William the Lion. It would appear that it took something in excess of fifty years for the prior and the burgh-bailies of Linlithgow to reach an agreement, for in 1508 Dean William Crawford, vicar of Falkirk, acted as procurator for the prioress and convent of Manuel in the process of feuing the mills. He conferred with Alexander Fresall, who acted in the same capacity on behalf of the bailies. The only agreement they came to in that year was the negotiations between the two parties to have the mills "*set in feuferme to the bailies, counsale and communitie of the burgh of Linlithgow*" which they had intended to complete by "*the feist of Pasch nixt to cum*", that is the coming Easter, were to be continued<sup>35</sup>. It would seem as though these early discussions were fruitless as, in 1552, the two mills were set in feu by Dame Jonette Livingston, the prioress of Manuel, to Henry Forrest, a burgess of Linlithgow and Katherine Livingston, his wife. Acting as bailiff for the prioress, sasine was given in the Burgh Mill by Alexander Livingston<sup>36</sup>. In 1560 the feu was resigned by Katherine as the widow of Henry and liferenter of the holding and by their son, John Forrest, who is described as "*fiar*" of the mills and lands. The property, particularised as "*the Burgh Mylne lying on the Water of Aven and the Litill Mylne lying on the Maling burn with the mill lands thereof and astricted by multures of the barony of Manwell*", was then feued to the Burgh of Linlithgow by Jonette. At that time she is described as "*prioress of the monastery of Manwell of the order of the Virgin Mary, in the Diocese of St Andrews*".<sup>37</sup> In 1580 King James VI confirmed Jonette's feu to the Burgh with a charter under the Great Seal.<sup>38</sup> Three years later, King James issued another charter of confirmation. This one was in favour of Jean

Livingston in Dalderse, daughter of David Livingston of Dalderse, in respect of an earlier charter in which Jonette Livingston, prioress of Manuel, had granted to the late David and his heirs *"the corn-mill called Mungal mill with the mill-lands as well as the astricted multures of Over and Nether Mungal in the barony of West Kerse"*<sup>39</sup>. This piece of property may originally have come into the hands of the nuns as a gift but there must be some suspicion that they acquired it through usury. The inference is drawn an earlir episode when it was reported that of two silver articles which featured in a dispute, one was *'the silver pece allegit be the sade Robert Prestoun quhilk was Sir Wilzeam Menteith of Westkerse, knyght, and laid in wed be him til the Prioriss of Mannuale'*<sup>40</sup>. 'Wed' or wad was the process of pledging property as security and heritable property, as well as goods and chattels, was often used for this purpose. Was the silver piece the only unredeemed item secured by the nuns? may they have had the mill for the same reason? Certainly there is evidence of the Cistercians acting ijn this capacity and probably gaining lands as a consequence<sup>41</sup>. There is no doubt that Mungal Mill was still in the hands of the Menteiths less than twenty years previously, for in 1565 it was granted to William and his father as heirs of his grandfather, John Menteith of Kerse<sup>42</sup>.

Alexander, seventh Lord Livingston, in 1599 took possession of the lands which had formerly belonged to the nuns. His charter recalls that they had formerly been held by the priory of Manuel<sup>43</sup>. The payment of the Thirds of Benefices must have been resumed after the demise of Lord William, for in 1645 we find an item for "the stipend payable from the thirds of duties of the priory of Manuel".<sup>44</sup> On seven occasions between 1613 and 1665 the 'Prior of Manuel', that is the successive Livingstons, was ordained by parliament to "convene his feuars and vassals at Linlithgow for apportioning a tax".<sup>45</sup> These are the last notices which formally recognize the institution of St Mary's. From then on, all mentions are by antiquaries recalling the former existence of the nunnery, such as that of 1707 in which Sibbald tells us:

*"There is also in this Shire the Nunnerie of Emanuel, of the Cistercian Order, it is situate upon the brink of the water of Avon, in pleasant Countrey, and founded by King Malcolm the Fourth. It lyes within the parish of Moranside"*<sup>46</sup>

Writing in 1723, Mr Johnston of Kirkland says:

*"There is an old abbacy at Manual about a mile above Linlithgow bridge upon a low champain ground and close upon the north side of Aven, but now much washt away by the great speats or land flouds, that's frequent in this water."*<sup>47</sup>

A description of the extant remains and an assessment of what is known of the former structure of the priory church is to be found in the Stirlingshire Inventory.<sup>48</sup>

**NEXT: [Manuel Foulis](#)**

[<top>](#)

**NOTES: The Nunnery and Priory of St Mary**

- 1 Regesta Regum Scottorum i, No. 27
- 2 Scottish History Society, Miscellany iv, (1926) p326n
- 3 Regesta Regum Scottorum i, p46
- 4 Scottish History Society, Miscellany iv, (1926) p306
- 5 Regesta Regum Scottorum ii, No. 545
- 6 Scottish History Society, Miscellany iv, (1926) p342
- 7 Cartulary of Cambuskenneth Nos 80, 86
- 8 Barrow, G.W.S., Scotland: The making of the Kingdom, p453
- 9 Exchequer Rolls i-ixx inclusive
- 10 Callendar of Documents Relating to Scotland, ii, p124
- 11 *ibid* ii, p196
- 12 Scottish History Society, Miscellany iv, (1926) p326n
- 13 Callendar of Documents Relating to Scotland, v, pp169, 263
- 14 *ibid* iii, p405
- 15 *ibid* iii, p216
- 16 Exchequer Rolls x, p366
- 17 *ibid* x, p394
- 18 Scottish History Society, Miscellany iv, (1926) p327
- 19 *ibid*, pp326-7
- 20 Duncan, A.A.M., Scotland: The Making of the Kingdom, p453
- 21 Exchequer Rolls xiv, p113; xv, p448
- 22 Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scottorum iii, 332
- 23 Cowan, I.B.; Eason, D.E. Mediaeval Religious Houses in Scotland, p147
- 24 Acts of the Lords of Council in Civil Affairs i, p502
- 25 Livingston, E.B., The Livingstons of Callendar, p67ff
- 26 Donaldson, G., Scotland: James V – VII, p136
- 27 Smout, T.C., A History of the Scottish People, pp54-5
- 28 Register of the Great Seal iii, 3308
- 29 *ibid* ix 1690
- 30 Exchequer Rolls ixx, p117
- 31 Livingston, E.B., The Livingstons of Callendar
- 32 Scottish History Society, Miscellany iv, (1949) Thirds of benefices 1561-1572
- 33 Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scottorum v, 2791
- 34 *ibid* v, 2866
- 35 Scottish Records Society, Protocol Book of James Young 1485-1515, No1508
- 36 Scottish Records Society, Protocol Book of James Foulis 1546-53, No 184
- 37 Scottish Records Society, Protocol Book of Nicolas Thounis 1559-64, No 21
- 38 Register of the Great Seal v, 16
- 39 *ibid* v, 568
- 40 Acts of the Lords of Council in Civil Cases 1496-1501, p359
- 41 Duncan, A.A.M., Scotland: The Making of the Kingdom, p412
- 42 Register of the Great Seal iv, 1644
- 43 *ibid* vi, 890
- 44 Forbes of Callendar Papers, Scottish Records Office, GD171.3919
- 45 Acts of the Scottish Parliament, IV.478a, 583a, 602a; V. 171b, 214a, 17b; VII. 532b
- 46 Sibbald, A History and Description of Stirlingshire p24
- 47 Macfarlane's Geographical Collections, folio 397
- 48 Stirlingshire, Royal Commission on the Ancient Monuments of Scotland

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**MANUEL FOULIS**

While this estate did not acquire the title by which it was latterly known until the middle of the sixteenth century, it is, nevertheless, possible to trace its progress from the second half of the fourteenth. The earliest surviving record dates from 1372 when William Somerville, along with his wife, Katherine, was granted a royal charter of "*the whole half of the barony of Manuel with pertinents*".<sup>1</sup>

Until then, the lands had belonged to Christiane Crousire and it would not be outwith the bounds of speculation to suggest that Katherine may have been the daughter of Alexander Stewart of Dernley, upon the occasion of which they were given the lands of Cambusnethan in Lanarkshire.<sup>2</sup> It was from that county that Thome took the title 'of Carnwath' which he bore when he consented to his father's gift in 1424 of an annual-rent of ten merks from his lands of Manuel to the monastery of St Machuti.<sup>3</sup>

There is a gap in the records in the intervening twenty-five years, although there is indication of the barony having been held in ward for some of this time by Thomas Melville, superior of the adjoining estate in Muiravonside.<sup>4</sup> It is not until 1457 that we find John, Lord Somerville, taking possession of lands of Crounerland, Compston, Bowhouse and Manuelrig.<sup>5</sup> He did not retain his grip upon these lands for very long, however, for in 1459 he forged the signature of his son-in-law's father, Lord Campbell, upon a counterfeit receipt for a sum of money but was discovered.<sup>6</sup> Although granted a royal pardon for his offence there was a price to pay: his lands of Manuel reverted to the crown and the king gifted them to his wife, Queen Marie.<sup>7</sup> She soon capitalized upon her possession for, a few months later, the lands were fued to Walter Ramsay and his wife, Jonete, although the queen reserved the coal of Manuelrig for herself.<sup>8</sup> The charter which formalizes this sale confirms the extent of the estate and shows it to have been comprised of the same lands as those which John, Lord Somerville had taken possession of, naming the pertinent as "*Crounerland, Manuelrig and Gilleisland in the barony of Manuel*". The first two of these are still recognizable as place-names today but the last, 'Gillieisland', was to become better known as 'Bowhouse'.

Walter and his wife, Jonete Ogilvie must have been a considerable age by 1494 when they resigned the lands to their son, Archibald.<sup>9</sup> Despite the reservation on the coals of these lands, in 1501 Archibald obtained a licence to "*wyn a coleheuch and colis within his landis of Manwell-rigis, Crowarland and Gilleyis*".<sup>10</sup> In 1507, Walter Ramsay is named as "son and heir apparent" of Archibald but there is no evidence for his succession.<sup>11</sup> Doubtless he did succeed and subsequently passed it down to John Ramsay, who obtained sasine in 1527 of the lands of "*Crunerland, Manwel Rege and Gillislandis with their pertinents*".<sup>12</sup> He sold the estate in 1530 to Master James Foulis, a burgess of Edinburgh and his wife, Katherine Brown.<sup>13</sup> It is only upon the later royal confirmation of the change of ownership that we learn that until the estate had been formerly known as 'Manuel-Ramsay' but, as a consequence of the sale, it was to become known as 'Manuel-Foulis'.<sup>14</sup>



In 1540 yet another royal charter was issued, this one was to confirm the incorporation of the lands of Manuel-rig, Bowhouses and Crounerland into the free barony of Manuel-Foulis and ordained the manor-place of Crounerland to be the principal dwelling place or messuage of the barony.<sup>15</sup> Five years later, Mr Henry Foulis of Colinston, who was the son and heir of James and Katherine, along with his wife, Margaret Haldane, became the owner of the lands and barony, which was then described as "*the lands of Manuelrig known as Manuel-Foulis*".<sup>16</sup> This tends to suggest that Manuelrig was the generic name for that tract of land; an assumption which seems to be confirmed by later references. Among Henry's acquisitions at this time was the mill of Manuel-Foulis which, presumably, the family were permitted to build and operate, when the estate was erected into a barony. Henry must have enjoyed a reasonable length of tenure, for it is not until 1578 that his son and heir, James was retoured in the lands and mill.<sup>17</sup> He then received a sasine of "the lands and barony of Manwelrig now called Manwel Foulis with the mill, the outsettis, etc."<sup>18</sup> Three years later, he and his wife, Agnes Heriot, received a charter of confirmation of the barony of Manuel-Foulis.<sup>19</sup>

In 1609, James was succeeded by his son, 'Lord James of Colington, knight'.<sup>20</sup> At this point we learn for the first time the valuation of these lands, which are then specified as: Manuelrig, Bowhouses and Crounerland with the mill: they had been rated at 5 under the Auld Extent. This compares with the neighbouring lands of Muiravonside, which were valued at 10. The new updated valuation of Manuel-Foulis was 20. Over and above the main block of lands was Compston, "*with the fulling mill*" and which was valued at 18 merks, that is 12; presumably its new rating.

Lord James, having acquired the lands, then sold them in the following year to Robert Hamilton of Ecclesmachin for 12000 merks.<sup>21</sup> Presumably it was the same Robert, or perhaps his son who, as 'Robert Hamilton senior of Strawethie', with the consent of his son, 'Robert Hamilton laird of Strawethie', sold the lands in 1636 to William Rig of Atherny.<sup>22</sup> At this point, the king renewed the status of the estate as a barony and once more ordained the manor-place of Crounerland to be its principal dwelling-place. Here the relevant charter states the right of barony to "*comonty upon the muir of Moirwinside*"; an indication that the name for the district was changing from Manuel to Muiravonside. William Rig was followed into the estate in 1644 by his son, Mr Thomas Rig of Athernie, who was probably an advocate.<sup>23</sup> In the period between the accession of Thomas and 1687, the estate had apparently begun to be divided, for in that year William Ker, heir of William Kerr, burgh-clerk of Linlithgow, entered as heir to his father in the lands of 'Manuellfowlls'.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, as late as 1691 the barony remained with Mr Thomas Rig.<sup>25</sup>

Several parcels of the estate were further disposed of in the eighteenth century. Among these was Blackridge, a tract of land which was disjoined in 1762 and which had almost certainly been gained by the barony at the beginning of that century as a result of the division of Muiravonside muir.<sup>26</sup> By the next century, the estate appears to have changed considerably for by this time the name became Hillhead, although the baronial name remained 'Manuel-Foulis'. While it retained that older distinction, its extent had altered somewhat; it now comprised: Easter Bowhouse, Hillend, Hillhead, Burnbridge, Crounerland or Broomstabs and by 1789 Causewayend is also mentioned as belonging thereto.<sup>27</sup>

As late as the nineteenth century, the term 'Manuel Foulis Barony' was still recognized when its lands are shown as marching with those of Blackbraes.<sup>28</sup> In 1817 the site of the present Manuel House is shown to coincide with what formerly had been the house of 'Hillhead'.<sup>29</sup> This allows us to indulge in the speculation that this may be the traditional site of the old manor-place of Manuel-Foulis, lying as it does immediately adjacent to the farm of Crownerland.

**NEXT: [The Estate and Barony of Muiravonside or Neuk](#)**

[<top>](#)

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### NOTES: Manuel-Foulis

- 1 Register of the Great Seal i, 416
- 2 *ibid*, 828
- 3 *ibid*, ii, 3
- 4 Exchequer Rolls, vii, p254
- 5 *ibid*, ix, p666
- 6 Register of the Great Seal ii, 690
- 7 *ibid*, 693
- 8 *ibid*, 747
- 9 *ibid*, 2218
- 10 Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scottorum I, 638
- 11 *ibid*, ii, 315
- 12 Exchequer Rolls, xv, p645
- 13 Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scottorum iii, 987
- 14 *ibid*, 1254
- 15 *ibid*, 2156
- 16 *ibid*, 3214
- 17 Stirlingshire Retours 12
- 18 Exchequer Rolls, xx, p529
- 19 Register of the Great Seal v, 295
- 20 Stirlingshire Retours 68
- 21 Register of the Great Seal vii, 232
- 22 *ibid*, ix, 620
- 23 Stirlingshire Retours 180
- 24 *ibid*, 307
- 25 Stirling County Valuation Roll: Muiravonside Parish
- 26 *ibid*
- 27 General Register of Sasines for Stirlingshire
- 28 Plan of the Estate of Blackbraes, West Register House, RHP 14358
- 29 Map of Stirlingshire surveyed by John Grassom

## THE ESTATE AND BARONY OF MUIRAVONSIDE OR NEUK

The history of the lands of the estate of Muiravonside dates from the time of King William the Lion, that is from the twelfth century. By that time, about 1189, many Anglo-Norman families had been gifted lands in Scotland, mostly by King William's grandfather, David I. He had been raised at the English court and, upon his succession to the Scottish throne he had brought back to his kingdom not only an English wife but many Anglo-Norman followers. Among those, evidently, were the forbears of Reginald Pratt, a Northumbrian, designed 'of Tynedale'. It is the occasion of Reginald's gift of the lands of Muiravonside to his daughter, Margaretta and her husband, Richard de Melville, as part of their marriage settlement, which brings to us the first notice of the estate.<sup>1</sup> In that early charter we find the lands named in the vernacular as 'Murgunessete', which the scribes also Latinised as '*Sedem Sancta Morgan*'. With the accession of Gregory, son and heir of Sir Richard and Margaretta, Muiravonside was annexed to the barony of Melville and retained so for the next three hundred years.<sup>2</sup> The phrase, "*It cam wae a lass and it'll gang wae a lass*" was probably not coined by James V; it is more likely to have been a '*weel kent*' phrase for there are so many instances of the male line of great Scottish families dying out. Not, it would seem, as a consequence of lack of virility: more often than not it was a result of being killed in battle with the *auld enemie*. This was to be the pattern of the Muiravonside superiors as much as those elsewhere. And so, after Gregory's son William, who had signed the Ragman Roll in 1296, died, a continuous succession of heirs, alternately named Thomas and John, came and went as the owners of the estate until the last, Thomas Melville, died, leaving as his heir a daughter, Agnes. She was still a minor at the time and was made a ward of the crown but, in 1471 she eventually married Robert Ross, son and heir of Sir John Ross of Halkhead.<sup>3</sup>

Sir John Ross was undoubtedly a powerful man: he owned several large estates, was sheriff of Linlithgow and keeper of Blackness Castle, acted as ambassador for Scotland and was created Lord Ross of Halkhead in 1499. Robert did not survive his father and both these immense baronies, Halkhead and Melville, went to Sir John's grandson, John, the child of Robert and Agnes. He was destined to become one of the *flo'ers o' the forest*, falling at the Battle of Flodden in 1513.<sup>4</sup> Similarly his grandson, Robert, who should have succeeded to the estates, died at the Battle of Pinkie. Robert's father, Ninian, had six children in all, one of whom, yet another John, was illegitimate and it has been suggested that it was he who may have been responsible for building the old house of [Muiravonside](#), or Neuk as it was known in those days.

James, the fourth Lord Ross, was much involved with the troubles of Mary, Queen of Scots and was captured at the Battle of Langside by the Regent Moray.<sup>5</sup> It is unlikely that any of the senior members of the Ross family resided at, or even visited Muiravonside. Certainly it was held in feu by at least the sixteenth century, for in 1565 we find it feued to one John Ross who, as has been suggested, may have been the natural son of Ninian, Lord Ross. Along with his wife, Giles Crawford, John feued Neuk from James, Lord Ross of Halkhead, the superior.<sup>6</sup> No doubt John Ross was at least a member of a cadet house of Halkhead.

One Lord Ross did, however, make a local connection when, as Sir William Ross of Muriston, prior to attaining his senior title, he married Margaret, eldest daughter of Sir James Forrester of Torwoodhead.<sup>7</sup> It was during William's lordship that the severance of the estate from the baronies of Ross and Melville took place: in 1685 he sold the superiority of Muiravonside to Andrew Ross, who had been its occupier for some years. He had been titled 'Andrew Ross of Nuicke' from at least 1666.<sup>8</sup> The estate was then erected into an independent holding known as the 'Barony of Morrowinsyde'. When Andrew Ross died, the estate once again fell to a girl, for he was succeeded by his daughter, Jean, who was married to a cousin, John Ross.<sup>9</sup> An act of Parliament had been obtained shortly before then, allowing the owners of the barony to hold two fairs annually as well as a weekly market.<sup>10</sup> The annual fairs were to be held on the second Thursday of May and the second Tuesday of September, while the weekly market day was ordained to be Tuesday. Having established a very viable and desirable property, Jean and John sold it to Lieutenant-Colonel John Dalziel in 1700.<sup>11</sup> This brought to an end the Ross connection, which had lasted some two-hundred years.

The son of the infamous 'Tam Dalziel', he who is alleged to have supped with the devil, John Dalziel, while holding command of the 21<sup>st</sup> Fusiliers, fought at the battle of Blenheim in 1704, where the British and Austrian allied army of 52,000 men defeated a 60,000 strong French and Bavarian army. At the cost of 12,000 casualties, the army killed, wounded or caused the drowning in the Danube of some 18,000 of the enemy, taking captive another 12,000. Among those killed was John Dalziel. He died in the first charge against the village of Blenheim.<sup>12</sup> The estate fell to his widow and, subsequently, his children, of whom there were three. Joanna, the youngest, died while still an infant and her brother and sister, Thomas and Agnes, were retoured in her share in 1722.<sup>13</sup> Agnes must have come of age in that year. This is confirmed by her baptism in 1701.<sup>14</sup> She had married Alexander Crawford of Manuel Mill by the time she came into her inheritance. They sold the estate to John MacLeod in 1724.<sup>15</sup>

MacLeod was a direct descendant of the MacLeods of Bernera. The founder of the two branches, Bernera and Muiravonside, Sir Norman MacLeod, the third son of the chief of MacLeod, was born some time around 1600 on the island of Bernera in Inverness-shire. He was a royalist and led his men in support of Charles II. At the Battle of Worcester, most of his followers were slain; those who were not were taken to South Carolina and sold into slavery. He was captured and taken to London accused of high treason but an error in his indictment saved him from the hangman. Offered freedom in return for allegiance to Cromwell, he refused to give such an undertaking and, after a year and a half of confinement, he managed to escape and returned to the Highlands. He remained loyal to the Stuarts and was involved in a long campaign of direct and indirect action on their behalf, resulting in considerable personal deprivation. By the time of the restoration, he was a ruined man. While the crown nominally rewarded him for his valour, he lived in straitened circumstances for the remainder of his life.<sup>16</sup>

Sir Norman had three sons, one of whom, sir John of Contullich, was father to John of Muiravonside. This last was also a royalist and was certainly involved in the '45. There is a tradition prevalent amongst the MacLeods that during this period **Bonnie Prince Charlie visited Muiravonside House.**<sup>17</sup> As indeed did someone

else at an earlier time – but less willingly! The years leading up to the rising were a time of intrigue and subterfuge. Among those who plotted for the return of the Stuarts was Lord Grange, a leading Scottish advocate. His wife seems to have been a woman of mercurial temperament; she had threatened, or so it was claimed, to disclose her suspicions of their secret activities. John MacLeod, along with several other Jacobites, was recruited to remedy the situation. [Lady Grange](#) was abducted from her Edinburgh lodgings and carried forcibly in a sedan chair through the streets to the outskirts of the city, from where she was taken by horse to Muiravonside House. To allay suspicion over her disappearance, reports of her untimely but “natural” death were circulated and there was even a mock funeral. Lady Grange meanwhile was taken secretly to the Hebrides where, in MacLeod country, she could safely be isolated and there remained alone, unhappy and, eventually, deranged, until her death in 1745.<sup>[18](#)</sup>

John MacLeod appears to have been captured at some stage of the uprising and incarcerated in Edinburgh Castle but he must have been one of the fortunates granted amnesty for he retained the lands of Muiravonside and peacefully ended his days there.<sup>[19](#)</sup>

However, he was not the only one of the local MacLeod family to be involved in the escape for his son, Alexander, known to his contemporaries as ‘Sandy’, and more formally as ‘MacLeod of Neuk’, was a Jacobite who could easily stand as a prototype for one of the more exotic and romantic creations of Robert Louis Stevenson. From the time the Standard was raised at Glenfinnan until the inglorious conclusion of the campaign at Culloden, Alexander was aide-de-campe to the Prince. Accompanying Alexander throughout this time was his servant, Ned Burke, who achieved his own fame and a place of immortality in the history books for his part in leading Charles Stuart to eventual safety. What, perhaps, is less well known of Ned’s life is that after the amnesty he returned to his former occupation as a chairman in Edinburgh – that is a sedan chair carrier!<sup>20</sup> Sandy MacLeod was one of the few who were privy to the arrangements for the Prince’s return to France, and he was among the party who helped to bury the Prince’s treasure in a wood at Loch Arkaig. Unlike his father, he was not among those who were specifically excluded from the general amnesty, but he escaped to hide for a while at Muiravonside and then to the Highlands, before going into exile on the Continent.

He was not granted a pardon until 1778, although he had secretly returned to Scotland before then.<sup>[21](#)</sup> Although he appears to have married, no children resulted from the union but he did father two illegitimate sons. This gave rise to a local tradition concerning his death, of which there are two versions:

- the first suggests that Alexander, in an attempt to legalise the boys, intended marrying his servant, their mother, Louisa Mowat and, to prevent this happening a member, or members of his family, encouraged the cook at Muiravonside to poison him;
- while the alternative states that the fatal encouragement came from the local schoolmaster who was in love with Louisa.<sup>[22](#)</sup>



There is also a belief, repeated by the Stirling family, the last private owners of the estate, that Sandy's ghost roams the Green Road which runs through the grounds.<sup>23</sup> Despite the alleged attempt by Alexander to legitimise his children, he obviously failed to do so, for upon his death in 1785 his estate fell to his niece, Elizabeth MacDonald of Largie.

She was married to Charles Lockhart: a man, by all accounts, of extravagant tastes.<sup>24</sup> It has been suggested that the Lockharts were responsible for building the summerhouse which stands in the gorge. Several tales are woven around it, perhaps the strangest being the occasion when a housemaid had taken one of the Lockhart children there for a picnic on the occasion when a foxhunt was in progress and the fox, in desperation, attempted to go in earth in the little building but to no avail, for the child and maid were 'saved' by the appearance of one of the huntsmen, who despatched the poor creature.<sup>25</sup> Yet another, although less likely origin is attributed to the summer-house: that it was built as a hiding place for another fox, he of the heather, Sandy MacLeod, before he made his escape across the water.<sup>26</sup>

Apparently Charles Lockhart's carelessness with his wife's money soon caused financial problems and they were forced to live in Newparks farmhouse while the mansion house was let to provide some income. Elizabeth died in 1789 and Charles 1796.<sup>27</sup> They were survived by their third son, who was a minor at the time and the trustees of the estate, which was now burdened by considerable debts, sold Muiravonside by roup in 1799 to Alexander MacLeod, a gentleman who had made his fortune in Jamaica and who was possibly a nephew of John, the first MacLeod of Muiravonside.<sup>28</sup> It is interesting to note that a stone, incorporating the arms of MacLeod of Muiravonside quartered with Dalrymple of Dalrymple and bearing the date 1819, is built into the garden wall of Muiravonside manse.<sup>29</sup>

By 1834 Alexander was beginning to resign his lands into the hands of his trustees and in 1835 they were sold to Charles Stirling, the fourth son of Andrew Stirling of Drumpelier.<sup>30</sup> It was a time of agricultural improvements in Scotland and Stirling was a keen exponent of the new methods. He was among the first to experiment with drainage tiles, producing them on the estate. He also introduced a saw-mill to produce sawn timber for the estate.<sup>31</sup> In all likelihood it was he who had the limekilns built, the remains of which still stand in the estate. He had eight children, five boys and three girls, of whom several had military careers which read like adventures stories from "Boys' Own".

Sir William, the third son, was probably the most remarkable of them. He was born in the month and year that his father bought Muiravonside and, when he was eighteen years old, he received a commission in the Royal Artillery. He fought in the Crimean War at the Battles of Balaclava, Alma and Inkerman and at the siege of Sebastopol, receiving several decorations during the campaign. Further medals and honours were bestowed upon him for his actions during the Indian Mutiny, the China War and, finally, the Afghan War of 18768-79. This was not the end of his military career, however, for he remained with the Artillery as Quarter Master General at Woolwich and lastly as Lieutenant of the Tower of London. In 1902, the year in which he retired, he was promoted to General.<sup>32</sup>

Yet another son of Charles Stirling who followed a military career was Francis, his fourth boy. Born in 1839, he entered the Royal Navy as a midshipman when he was thirteen years old. Like his older brother, he was involved in the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny. He rose rapidly through the ranks and became a Captain in 1876. Two years later, he was given command of the training ship 'Atlanta'. A sister ship of similar design had capsized shortly before his appointment and he expressed reservations over the design. Despite his efforts to make her safer, she too was lost for, on the morning that his son was born in 1880, the Atlanta sailed from Bermuda and was never heard of again.<sup>33</sup> Captain Stirling's memorial stone can be seen in the family burial ground in the grounds of the estate.

One other Stirling is worthy of mention in this vein: Walter F. Stirling was the grandson of Charles Stirling and youngest son of General William Stirling. He began his career as a cadet at Sandhurst before seeing active service in the Boer War and Great War. In the latter, among other duties, he acted as a Special Service Officer with Lawrence of Arabia. For this particular service, he was awarded a Bar to his D.S.O., which he had been awarded in the Boer War, thereby adding to his M.C. received in the Palestine Campaign.<sup>34</sup>

The oldest son of Charles Stirling, Andrew, succeeded to the estate but, as he had no children, it was sold, via trustees, to a cousin, Thomas Mayne Stirling. He in turn was succeeded by his son, John, who also died childless and so Muiravonside fell to John's brother, Thomas Willing Stirling. Thomas was the last of the family to be buried in the family burial ground which lies in the estate. His death took place in 1930 and the estate then went to his son, Sir Charles Stirling, who remained there until his death in 1967. He intended, as the male line had once more ended, that Muiravonside should go to his elder sister but, just as the lawyers were on the point of handing over the deeds to her, a cousin, Sir Charles Stirling, made an objection on the grounds of entail, which resulted in long and protracted court proceedings. It took ten years for these to be settled and the court found in favour of Sir Charles. By then the house, which had fallen into a poor state during the occupation by the previous Sir Charles, was in a totally ruinous condition. The new owner was a considerable age by this time and, having no intimate concern for the estate which was in need of a substantial sum of money to bring it back to a viable state, can have had few regrets when, in 1977, he agreed to sell it to Falkirk District Council.<sup>35</sup> Since then, the policies of Muiravonside estate have been developed as a Country Park and undoubtedly have become one of the finest amenities available to the public in the district. The earliest known charter for the estate defines the bounds as follows:

*"As the old road passes from Savelmesford, as far as the seat of St Morgan, and from the seat as far as the stone which the foresaid Richard [Melville] set with the advice of the foresaid Reginald [Prat] and from that stone as Witherlem holds, and continuing from there to the great road on the west side of Armethe, and continuing on that road as far as the stream which issues from Monecapel, and continuing westwards from Monecapel to the head of the stream flowing as far as the South Moss, and continuing across the moss and the dryfield to the rock on the west side of the moss, and from the moss to the Little Black Hill, and from the hill to the west part of the peatary of Morgunessete,*

*and continuing over the peatary and dry field towards the east as far as the stream flowing from the peatary, and down the stream to the Avon.”*

**NEXT:** [Ballenbreich](#)

[<top>](#)

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### **NOTES: The Estate and Barony of Muiravonside or Neuk**

- 1 Fraser, Melvilles iii, vii
- 2 Scots Peerage, vi
- 3 ibid
- 4 ibid, vii
- 5 ibid
- 6 Scottish Record Society, Protocol Book of Dominus Thomas Johnstoune, 1920
- 7 Scots Peerage, vi
- 8 Register of the Great Seal of Scotland, 70, folio 18; Index to Register of Deeds, 1666
- 9 Stirlingshire Retours, 314
- 10 Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, 1695, c118.IX 502
- 11 Register of the Great Seal of Scotland, 77 folio 26
- 12 Dictionary of National Biography, 13, p446
- 13 Index to Services of Heirs, 2 June 1722
- 14 Records of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Muiravonside Parish, 1701
- 15 Register of the Great Seal, 90, folio 106
- 16 Mackenzie, A., History of the Macleods etc., Inverness 1889
- 17 ibid
- 18 Grant, I.F., The Macleods: The History of a Clan. Edin. 1959
- 19 ibid
- 20 ibid
- 21 ibid
- 22 Clan Macleod Magazine, 1955, p30
- 23 Writs of Muiravonside Estate
- 24 ibid
- 25 ibid
- 26 ibid
- 27 ibid
- 28 ibid
- 29 I am indebted to the present owners of the manse for this information
- 30 Writs of Muiravonside Estate
- 31 Stirling, T.W., The Stirlings of Cadder, St Andrews 1933
- 32 ibid
- 33 ibid
- 34 ibid
- 35 Writs of Muiravonside Estate

## BALLENBREICH

Despite the fact that the earliest recovered record of Ballenbreich dates only from 1424, it is obvious that this overtly Gaelic name of this tract of land must have been coined considerably earlier than any of the others mentioned above, with the exception perhaps of Manuel.<sup>1</sup> It was held of the superiority of Haining from the time of its earliest mention, and was named as being one of the lands of Manuel in the charter of 1424. Essentially, the progress of the lands of Ballenbreich will follow that of Haining, with exceptions such as the one just mentioned and it will be only necessary to note these here.

An interest in part of Ballenbreich was obtained in 1532 by Alexander Livingston of Felde.<sup>2</sup> He was the son of Alexander Livingston of Dunipace. We are told that this particular portion was then occupied by 'Robert Benning, James Black, John Androw, Robert Brissoun [Bryson] and James Mongwell [Mungall]'. These are among the earliest commoners encountered in the parish.

In 1602, James Polworth junior, of Coustoun, married Elizabeth Livingston, sister of Alexander Livingston of Haining.<sup>3</sup> James and Elizabeth purchased a feu of the lands of Easter and Wester Ballenbreich in 1608.<sup>4</sup> Included with the lands was the mill of Ballenbreich, an item which first allows an inference to be drawn of a baronial status for these lands. This is confirmed on several occasions by mentions such as that of 1647 when Peter Bryce was appointed as the officer for 'the barronie of Bambreiche'.<sup>5</sup> Noted in the Falkirk Kirk Session Records for the year 1673 is "*James Robert, officer to the Court of Falkirk, in the barundry of Balmbrick*".<sup>6</sup> There is also a series of references to the "ten pound land of Ballenbreich", which places it, in terms of 'the auld extent' in the same category of valuation as the estate of Muiravonside.<sup>7</sup> When Andrew Polworth, the son of James, took possession of his father's lands of Ballenbreich, his charter makes mention of the 'manner place', but where the messuage lay is unknown.<sup>8</sup>

*Access to the peat-moss of Ballenbreich was the cause of a dispute in 1647 between the tenants of Ballenbreich and those of neighbouring lands. Peter Bryce, the officer of 'the barronie of Bambreiche' reported: 'that Thomas Heastie in Dalquhairne [Slamannan parish] and Peitter Tailyor in Brigende [Avonbridge] and Thomas Inglis in Quhytesyde [Whiteside, Polmont] haldine of the chalmerlaine of Kinneile comes and incrotches upone the comone peatemos of Ballinbreiche and castis peittis thairin and takin no order thairwith. It is remembred to try furthe for the bounding chairtot of the comone mwre of Morrowingsyde alledgit in the custodie and keeping of Mr Thomas Rig of Aithernie that his lordschip mey cleir his mairtches with his nightbors*<sup>9</sup>

From this time, that is the middle of the seventeenth century and onwards, it becomes possible to identify the relevant divisions of Ballenbreich and, consequently, its extent. Among these are Bridgend, that is Avonbridge (but only that part north of the Avon); North Bankhead; Bogog; Bogoknowes; Hillend; Hillhead; Beedyke; and Blackston. Essentially, the lands of Ballenbreich form the south-western corner of the parish of Muiravonside.

**NEXT:** [The Common Muir of Muiravonside](#)

[<top>](#)

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### NOTES: Ballenbreich

- 1 Register of the Great Seal ii, 14
- 2 ibid iii, 1193
- 3 Livingston, E.B., The Livingstons of Callendar, p311
- 4 Register of the Great Seal vi, 2150
- 5 Records of the Baron Court of Falkirk, Scottish Records Office, SC67/2/1
- 6 Murray, G., Records of Falkirk Parish, I, p225
- 7 Inventory of the rights and writings of the vassals of the Earl of Linlithgow, Scottish Records Office, GD170.196
- 8 Register of the Great Seal, vii, 157
- 9 Records of the Baron Court of Falkirk, Scottish Records Office, SC67/2/1

## THE COMMON MUIR OF MUIRAVONSIDE

As with all large tracts of land, the area which became Muiravonside parish had a moor which was held and used in common by all of the people who had an interest there. In earlier times, before the arable land was enclosed, transhumance was practiced: this involved the livestock being taken during the summer months to the muir, invariably marginal land lying on a hill; hence the numerous Summerhills and Shieldhills found in North Britain. The management of the muir was strict: it was not to anyone's advantage to allow them to be overgrazed and to prevent this a system called souming was employed, whereby each person who used the muir had a limit imposed upon the number of animals he or she was allowed to put there to graze.

The muir also served purposes other than grazing: it was often the source of peat for fuel. From it was taken fail and divot that is turf used for a number of purposes such as building dykes and simple structures, thatching and as manure for the land. There might also be a stone-quarry from which the feuars and tenants would take stone for their own use. Such was granted to the greater part of the population as a privilege; it was the heritors only who had rights thereon. From the seventeenth century onwards, legislation was drawn up which allowed the commonties to be divided amongst the interested heritors. Because of the complexity of the division, the principal lands through the sub-feuing, when this happened, everyone who held land in feu received a proportional part of the muir and from the divisions we can recognise the origins of several farms still in existence today. The beginnings of the division of this muir began formally in 1697 when John Ross, ;aird of Muiravonside, along with others, raised a summons of division against James, Earl of Callendar.<sup>1</sup> It was not until 1724, however, that the division took place.<sup>2</sup> An interesting charter dating from 1752 has survived, which displays the complexity of the division:



*“..... granting to William Morrison, portioner of Crossrig 5 acres of land lying on the Crossrig, on the south side thereof, the moor formerly of James Black on the east and north, the moor some time of James Ade on the west, and the mosses some time of Kais Bryce and James Black on the south; also half of the moss of Beiddyck, and the pasturage of the other half of the said moss, and which 5 acres and moss are those parts of the muir of Muiravonside, which on its division were allotted to the heritor of the 4 shilling 5 penny land of Beiddyck, part of the ten pound land of Ballinbrich, in lieu of his servitude of grazing and fuel over the said muir – all lying in the old barony of Haining, now barony of Callendar and shire of Stirling thereof. To be held in feu-ferme for 17 shillings yearly feu-duty.”<sup>3</sup>*

The earliest record of anyone being granted rights on the muir comes from c1190, when Richard Melville and his bride, Margareta Prat, were gifted the estate of Muiravonside, the relevant charter includes: *“et cum commune pasture de Manuel”*.<sup>4</sup> As has been demonstrated above, the generic name for the area was Manuel and only latterly became known as Muiravonside. A later mention of the muir comes from a record of 1647, within which it is evident that the extent and limits were defined by charter.<sup>5</sup> The location of the muir is shown on Timothy Pont’s map of the late sixteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Its extent, drawn from the available evidence, would appear to comprise:

<b>BIRNIEHILL</b>	<b>NS916738</b>	<b>CROSSCROES</b>	<b>NS913748</b>
<b>GREYRIG</b>	<b>NS909747</b>	<b>STANDBURN</b>	<b>NS929748</b>
<b>BLACKBRAES</b>	<b>NS90775</b>	<b>CROSSRIG</b>	<b>NS912739h</b>
<b>GREENCRAIG</b>	<b>NS909749</b>	<b>STANDUB</b>	<b>cNS9274</b>
<b>BLACKRIG</b>	<b>NS918751h</b>	<b>DRUMBOWIE</b>	<b>NS924746</b>
<b>MARCHEND</b>	<b>NS904760</b>	<b>THATCHRIG</b>	<b>NS924755</b>
<b>BOXTONRIGHEAD</b>	<b>NS900744h</b>	<b>DRUMBROIDER</b>	<b>NS921741</b>
<b>NEWLEES</b>	<b>NS924735</b>	<b>TOPPYLANDS</b>	<b>cNS9074</b>
<b>BULLEN MOSS</b>	<b>cNS9076</b>	<b>FARRENRIDGE</b>	<b>NS928748</b>
<b>RIDGEHEAD</b>	<b>NS900742</b>	<b>WAINRIGG</b>	<b>cNS9575</b>
<b>CRAIGMAD</b>	<b>NS902753h</b>	<b>GATESIDE</b>	<b>NS925743h</b>
<b>RIGHEAD</b>	<b>NS900743</b>	<b>WINDY RIGG</b>	<b>NS918745</b>

### NOTES: The Common Muir of Muiravonside

- 1 Ross v Linlithgow, Scottish Records Office, CS 196.290
- 2 Adam, H., Directory of Scottish Commonties
- 3 Laing Charters, No. 3189
- 4 Fraser, Melvilles, iii, charter viii
- 5 Records of the Baron Court of Falkirk, Scottish Records Office, SC67/2/1
- 6 Map of Stirlingshire, surveyed by Timothy Pont, c1590