

Cairn, Shaw, Glenhead

To understand the Scottish records, some knowledge of conventions of the time is necessary. During the medieval period, and the middle ages, land was owned as a grant of the King, and administered by the various Earls and Dukes. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the title to land came more and more to be a government responsibility, and the disposal of land by sale, gift or bequest, without prior reference to government, became the norm. Ownership at an individual level included an obligation, among others, to pay taxes, and these were levied by appointed commissioners at the Parish level. Nevertheless, land ownership remained in very few hands during these centuries.

The landowner was known as the "Laird", a Scots-English word meaning lord but not Lord as applied south of the border by the English, it having no reference to nobility. Indeed, the Laird could be an Aristocrat, a Baronet, a Knight, or just a wealthy commoner. To complicate the matter, a barony could be a group of properties, but was not necessarily owned by a Baron. When a person (most frequently a man) owned many properties, he chose one to reside at, and usually leased the others to tenants. He would be known as being "of" that chosen property. An example we see below is Walter Sloan Laurie of Redcastle (a property in the Parish of Urr), although he actually owned at least 31 farms. He would be known socially by other landowners as "Redcastle", even to his face, rather than Mr Laurie. But his tenants were said to be "in" the property of their tenancy, so we see below Jean Milbie in Phalbay, and Robert Gordon in Shaw, both farms owned by Walter Sloan Laurie.

The area of Galloway in SW Scotland that covers the Parish of Parton (first coming to our attention by way of Birth, Marriage and Death (BMD) records) was known as Kirkcudbrightshire (KKD). We found from John (the first in Australia) Grierson's Army records that he had been born there. Parton is the middle of three parishes on the east bank of Loch Ken, to the north of the modern town of Castle Douglas. The organisation *Scotland's Places* has a website <https://scotlandsplaces.gov.uk/records> that now gives us much greater access to early KKD records than when we began our enquiry into the genealogy of our Grierson family. These include Land Tax Rolls and various maps including a large collection of Ordnance Survey (OS) maps. We still have the BMD records of Parton Parish to guide us, and another source is the vast collection of extracts from Deeds, Wills, Court Records and so on assembled by the late Crawford Grier during the latter half of the 20th Century. With all these to guide us, we now have a much better grasp of the situation that pertained at the time of the birth of John the first.

The earliest mention of the property Cairn associated with Grierson that has been found is in 1674, from the Calendar of Deeds - Kirkcudbrightshire Sheriff Court - 1625-1675, transcribed at the instance of the Marquis of Bute: "Obligation (1[st] December 1674) made at Clachan of Dalry 9[th] January 1671 - John Greir in Cairne & Roger Greirson, his son owe £37 Scots to David Chartors, burgess in New Galloway." [Note: Clachan/Clachan = village or village inn; Dalry is 10km NW of Cairn]

John is a forename that has carried on in our family for generations, and Roger is later used by a Grierson family who farmed on the southern flank of the Parish of Parton.

Further information about the farm was supplied in 1983 by Sam Callander of the Parton Kirk: "At a recent exhibition in the parish of bygone times there was a photocopy of an entry from the Rev. Mr. William Donaldson (approx 1791) for the statistical account of the Parish of Parton and the part on antiquities reads 'near the church there is an artificial mound, 120 yards in circumference at the base, which is circular. It is surrounded by a ditch from 6 to 9 feet deep, whence the earth which composes the mount appears to have been taken. About half a mile north there is another mount, nearly double the dimensions of the former, enclosed with two ditches. On a gentle eminence at 200 yards distance is seen the remains of a small druidical circle. About 3 miles north from the church there is a remarkable heap of stones from which the farm where it lies seems to have been named The Cairn.'" In another document, Sam Callander gave his opinion that a chieftain's grave lay on the farm, i.e. the grave of a very powerful man of about 3500 years ago.

In 1986, J.D.Grierson visited Cairn (now known as Glenswinton), met the owner, stood on the cairn and took many photos. He was advised that according to the deeds, the house in 1720 was generally rectangular, about 18 feet by 30 feet; it had two rooms downstairs, and the whole upstairs was a single room loft in which all slept. This was only six feet high at the ridge, sloping to zero at the walls. Since then, at times unknown, the house has been lengthened, the windows enlarged, a westward projection added, and the first floor rebuilt so that the original roof line no longer exists.

To understand more about John's family, the farms they worked on, and the broader situation in that area during the period of interest (1649- 1850), a large amount of data was collected in order to give us a base to work from. For instance, in the **1649 Land Tax Roll** we find:

*Johne Glendonyng of Mochrum for him sellff and in name of the heritors etc& within the paroch of **Partoune** £2655/2/1*

*William Grewsone off Bargavin for him sellff and in name of the heritoris etc& of the paroch of **Tongland** £2873/0/0*

It was signed by William Greirson of Bargatton among others.

John Glendinning and William Grierson were the proprietors that the commissioners had appointed as responsible for collecting the tax.

But in the second half of the 17th Century, land ownership in the lowlands began to become more widespread, although in places still in relatively few hands. For example, in 1799 William Glendinning still owned 14 farms in Parton, the Earl of Selkirk owned about half of the parish of Twynholm, and in the Parish of Girthon, Alexander Murray of Broughton owned every farm. Glendinning of Parton had divested himself of some of his properties. On the northern boundary of the parish, adjacent to Balmaclellan Parish, were a number of farms stretching from Loch Ken to Mochrum (see above) and Larglear. By 1682 these were sold to two men:

1682 Land Tax Roll (Some scribes have recorded owner's names, some simply quote values. Urr Parish is without owners.)

In the parish of Parton (very obscure script):

William Gordonne of Shirmers (elsewhere Castle Shirmers) has Over Ervie £90, Glennhead £40, Cairne £37.10.00.

William Martin has Dullarg and Nether Arvie £120.

Just over 70 years later, we find that the farms in this group are more clearly identified: **1753 Land Tax Roll**

No surnames mentioned. Properties identified include Upper Arvie, Nether Arvie, Upper Dullarg, Nether Dullarg, Cairn, Glenhead and Shaw, the latter three all given the same tax value, £40.

At about this time, two significant law cases were concluded. It appears that William Gordon of Shirmers (Chirmers according to Pont) at some time previously sold his properties in the Parton Parish to Stephen Laurie of Maxwellton and Redcastle, but Laurie was still partly in debt to Gordon. The Lauries were a large family, some of whom married Griersons, in particular Stephen's son John, who married Agnes Grierson (daughter of Lag), and Sir Walter Laurie who married Henrietta Grierson, another Lag daughter. The famed Annie Laurie is also of this family. Stephen Laurie as well as having extensive estates in Dumfriesshire, had purchased Redcastle in the Parish of Urr during the 1700s. His barony and later Baronetcy were associated with Maxwellton, he was known by that title and his major estates were in that area. Stephen Laurie first purchased the group of farms in Parton Parish, being Upper Dullarg, Schaw (but Shaw in the land tax rolls), Arvie etc from Glendinning of Parton. At his death, his substantial portfolio of property was divided among a number of sons.

The law cases finalised about 1764 related to the complex will of Walter Laurie (Stephen's son), who had ownership of a number of properties including the "Erviess" (Arvie), Redcastle in Urr and Bargatton in Tongland. His nephew, James Laurie had taken possession of the properties but had not complied with some of the entails of the will. After James' death, Andrew Sloan Laurie and wife Margaret (a daughter of Gordon of Shirmers) claimed the properties, under the provision of entail (as I understand it), and succeeded at law. They also fought a case against Alexander Spalding, another nephew of Walter Laurie, and won that too. Detail may be found at:

<https://www.casemine.com/judgement/uk/5a8ff80e60d03e7f57eb9069>

We can therefore assume that the map showing the boundaries of the farms owned by A. Laurie Esq of Redcastle, said to be dated 1760, and found at:

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=15&lat=55.04681&lon=-4.03843&layers=129393769&b=1>

is that of Andrew Sloan Laurie. This map is the only one known for the two century period 1650-1850 that shows actual boundaries of the various properties, the usual practice being to show and label farmhouses, but not define properties. The farms shown (together with the adjacent farm names) are Nether Arvie (elsewhere Ervie), Upper Arvie (modern Ken Ervie), Upper Dullarg, Shaw (spelt Schaw), Cairn, Glenhead, Little Merkland, and some common areas. The acreage of the various farms is shown, of interest; Shaw, Cairn and Glenhead total some 800 acres. We see on this map that Shaw and Cairn are different properties.

Towards the turn of the century, we find a number of details that could interest us in our search:

1799 Land Tax Roll

Parton.

Walter Sloan Laurie of Redcastle has Upper Arvie, Nether Arvie, Upper Dullarg, Little Merkland, Shaw, Cairn, Glenhead, Poundland and Falbay.

William Glendonwyne of Glendonwyne has Nether Dullarg and 13 other properties.

Urr.

Walter Sloan Laurie of Redcastle has Redcastle, Waterside and the Three Merkland.

Crossmichael

Walter Sloan Laurie of Redcastle has Airds, Crofts, and Kirkland.

Balmaghie

Walter Sloan Laurie of Redcastle has 15 properties.

Balmaclellan

Walter Sloan Laurie of Redcastle has Urlofh.

Troqueer.

William Grierson has Laurieknow.

Charles Sharpe of Hoddom has Starryheugh, Fellend, Terraughty Miln.

Kirkpatrick Durham.

John Grierson has Corfe, McNaught's Kirkland, and Bardarroch.

Kells

William Grierson of Garroch has Two Garroghs, Dunveogh.

Irongray

---Grierson has Larbreck.

Carsfairn

William Grierson of Garroch has Braidenough, Kilterfon, and Carnavel.

Tongland.

Walter Patterson has Dunjop.

A few years later it appears that Walter Sloan Laurie has died:

1803 Land Tax Roll**Parton**

William Kennedy Laurie of Redcastle has Upper Arvie, Nether Arvie, Upper Dullarg, Little Merkland, Shaw, Cairn, Glenhead, Poundland and Falbay.

Kirkpatrick Durham.

John Grierson has Corfe, McNaught's Kirkland, and Bardarroch (all owned by others in 1819).

We have another distribution of ownership within 20 years:

1819 Land Tax Roll**Parton**

Walter Bigham Laurie of Redcastle has Shaw, Cairn, and Glenhead, all £40.

William Bailie Kennedy Laurie of Woodhall has Upper Arvie, Nether Arvie, Upper Dullarg, Little Merkland, Poundland and Falbay.

In "History of the Lands and their Owners in Galloway Vol 5" by P.H.McKerlie, published 1879, which some regard as an authority in the area, the following information about the lands in which we are interested in the parish of Parton is found: "... after 1695 there is no specific information until in 1799 Shaw, Upper Dullarg and Arvie (Upper and Nether) belonged to Walter Sloan-Laurie of Redcastle. These were next owned by Walter Kennedy-Laurie of

Woodhall, who sold Shaw to John Birney of Glenswinton, Ireland. This owner renamed the land.."

Contrary to McKerlie, we have information from 1760 (the estate map). Further, the 1819 Land Tax Roll shows a different ownership pattern. Shaw, Cairn and Glenhead went to Walter Bigham Laurie. William Kennedy Laurie (not Walter) has the Arvies, Upper Dullarg, and Little Merkland.

McKerlie makes no mention of Cairn, just referring to Shaw, although the farm in which we are interested was known as Cairn for a lengthy period, possibly 200 years. When and why did Cairn become Shaw when in 1819 it was identified as Cairn? There are possible explanations, three of which are:

1. Shaw, Cairn and Glenhead were consolidated into one entity for economic reasons by W B Laurie or his successor(s); or
2. The cartographers of the Ordnance Survey (OS) maps made a mistake, and that mistake became accepted over time; or
3. Ebenezer Shaw, who occupied the farm in about 1850, decided to call the consolidated farm "Shaw".

Certainly, by the time J D Grierson visited in 1988, the owners (Mr and Mrs Widdup) had "about 600 acres" as came out in discussion, so the consolidation appears to have happened. Given that the Glenswinton Plantation was sold off (ref Janet Jackson) the year the Widdups bought the farm, that explains the Widdup 600 acres statement. But the OS mistake is also attractive. The following is a section of the 1856 1"/mile OS, the first available:



Anciently, Shaw was the single building shown towards the bottom left. What is now Glenswinton, and its outbuildings is in the centre. Glenhead farm was about at the curve in the burn close to the capital B, but that building had apparently disappeared by 1853. Nothing much changed in the 1885 edition, but by 1903, Shaw has become named Glenswinton. By 1951, the ancient Shaw farmhouse has disappeared from the OS, but Janet Jackson of Glenswinton writes that it was in use as a shepherd's cottage. There are still walls standing there, with trees growing in them.

We have, however, a conundrum, as first identified by Derek Dubout. When the Estate Map is overlaid on the OS maps, we see that the Cairn buildings appear to the north of the physical cairn. Janet Jackson has confirmed that the "outlines of a small settlement uphill of and close to the cairn" are there, supporting the layout of the Estate Map. The remains of

Shaw are there, also agreeing with that map. But what of the old farmhouse now known as Glenswinton, which doesn't appear on the 1760 Estate Map, but which Mr Widdup suggested dated from 1720. It is possible that he misunderstood the deeds, which were in fact referring to the ancient Cairn buildings, and that the Glenswinton buildings are of a later date. Indeed, they sit pretty well on the old boundary between Shaw and Cairn, and their construction might be a guide to us of when the consolidated farm became known as Shaw.

The Grierson Connection During the 1700s

In the Court Records we find:

1720 Assignation - Jean Milbie in Phalbay obtained a decret against ISOBEL GERRAN, spouse of Robert Gordon in Shaw for non-payment of £33 Scots but this bond has been taken over by GEORG[E] GRIERSON in Clarkbrae who has made full payment to her and the Bond has been assigned to him.

Protest - 1747 - JOHN GRIER in Shaw, parish of Parton.

1756 Protest - John Grierson in Shaw lent £2/14 to Patrick McCullochs in Barlay.

1761 - Summons - Robert RAE, writer in Dumfries raised an action against John GREAR in Shaw for £1 which he owed him - the summons was left with John GREAR'S wife at Shaw as the messenger was unable to apprehend him personally.

1761 - Claim - John Grier in Shaw lent 25/- to Janet Alexander in order that she might relieve Robert Dauling in Boatcroft out of prison. She had not repaid him.

It is possible this loan arose from the family connection of John with his mother-in-law, the (unknown) Dauling who married George McMonnies. The relationship between Janet Alexander and Robert Dauling is unknown, potentially he being Janet's uncle.

So, in 1720, a Gordon was in Shaw (possibly related to Gordon of Shirmers), but by 1747, our ancestor John was there. Given that his mother was Margaret Gorran, there is also a likely connection with the 1720 assignation, and the possibility that George Grierson in Clarkbrae was a close relative. George continues as a forename in later generations in our line. John's first three children were baptised while he was "in Shaw", but by 1766 he was "in Cairn", and all subsequent children were baptised while he was there. There is a map drawn by Timothy Pont about 1591 which was the basis for the Blaeu Atlas of Scotland 1654 and which shows the name Glensuyntouns in approximately the right place by reference to the local streams. So the name appears to have gone Glenswynton, Cairn, Shaw, Glenswinton, and so McKerlie can be discounted here as well in respect of his reference to John Birney in Ireland.

Having the tenancy to a farm did not necessarily mean that the tenant lived there, so it is difficult at this distance to decide where the Griersons actually resided. Unfortunately, we have no indication of who was "in Cairn" at the time Robert Gordon was "in Shaw". Could it be that William Grierson, with his wife Margaret Gorran, was "in Cairn" at that time, and indeed for the next 45 years. His son John, when of age, became the tenant in Shaw, probably

after Gordon, and his brother Robert, who died in 1754, went to help him. Note that the record states Robert was “at” Shaw, so he wasn’t the tenant. Under this hypothesis, William died around 1767, allowing his son to take over the tenancy, while Margaret survived in the family home until 1770.

Although no record has been found, because Robert Grierson, eldest surviving son of John was able to buy property in Castle Douglas soon after the beginning of the 19th Century, we assume that John Grier(son) in Cairn had died about then, and our connection with the farm was severed.

I am grateful to Janet Jackson, currently of Glenswinton, for her assistance. Family member Derek Dubout was instrumental in discovering the previously unknown 1760 property map of Andrew Laurie.

J D Grierson
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