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Prestongrange  
House

Sonia Baker



PRESTOUNGRANGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
<http://www.prestoungrange.org>



## FOREWORD

This series of books has been specifically developed to provide an authoritative briefing to all who seek to enjoy the Industrial Heritage Museum at the old Prestongrange Colliery site. They are complemented by learning guides for educational leaders. All are available on the Internet at <http://www.prestongrange.org> the Baron Court's website.

They have been sponsored by the Baron Court of Prestongrange which my family and I re-established when I was granted access to the feudal barony in 1998. But the credit for the scholarship involved and their timely appearance is entirely attributable to the skill with which Annette MacTavish and Jane Bonnar of the Industrial Heritage Museum service found the excellent authors involved and managed the series through from conception to benefit in use with educational groups.

The Baron Court is delighted to be able to work with the Industrial Heritage Museum in this way. We thank the authors one and all for a job well done. It is one more practical contribution to the Museum's role in helping its visitors to lead their lives today and tomorrow with a better understanding of the lives of those who went before us all. For better and for worse, we stand on their shoulders as we view and enjoy our lives today, and as we in turn craft the world of tomorrow for our children. As we are enabled through this series to learn about the first millennium of the barony of Prestongrange we can clearly see what sacrifices were made by those who worked, and how the fortunes of those who ruled rose and fell. Today's cast of characters may differ, and the specifics of working and ruling have surely changed, but the issues remain the same.

I mentioned above the benefit-in-use of this series. The Baron Court is adamant that it shall not be 'one more resource' that lies little used on the shelves. A comprehensive programme of onsite activities and feedback reports by users has been designed by Annette MacTavish and Jane Bonnar and is available at our website <http://www.prestongrange.org> – and be sure to note the archaic use of the 'u' in the baronial name.

But we do also confidently expect that this series will arouse the interest of many who are not directly involved in

educational or indeed museum services. Those who live locally and previously worked at Prestongrange, or had relatives and ancestors there (as I did in my maternal grandfather William Park who worked in the colliery), will surely find the information both fascinating and rewarding to read. It is very much for them also to benefit – and we hope they will.

Dr Gordon Prestoungrange  
*Baron of Prestoungrange*  
*July 1st 2000*

### **Sonia Baker**

Sonia came to academic studies late in life; achieving a 1st in Scottish Historical Studies MA (Hons) as a mature student (1999) at the University of Edinburgh (having failed History at O level). She worked previously as a horticulturist specialising in garden design – 7 years in Kent/Sussex and 7 years in East Lothian. Her long-standing interest in organic gardening predates present mass interest. Articles and photographs on gardening and on travel were published from 1986 and she co-produced a workbook for major DIY chain in late 1980s.

Her university projects included: 'Paradox in Grenada – Ninian & George Home; a Study of Slave-Owning Scots of the Enlightened Age', and 'Mull in the later 19th Century; Population Change, Landlord Coercion and the Decline of Traditional Land Use'. There were both awarded prizes by the university.

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## INTRODUCTION

PRESTONGRANGE HOUSE is an impressive mansion located in its own policies between Prestonpans and Musselburgh at the far western extremity of the county of East Lothian, Scotland. The house is situated about half a mile from the sea, and has extensive views north over the Firth of Forth, towards Fife.

In 1958, the property was purchased by the Coal Industry Social & Welfare Organisation (CISWO), and is held in trust by the Musselburgh Miners' Charitable Society. As a golfing sub-section of the latter, Prestongrange is the home course of the Royal Musselburgh Golf Club.

The history of Prestongrange House is easier to trace for some periods than for others; from the nineteenth century, much can be pieced together from documentation and from the standing evidence of the house as it is today. However, earlier evidence intrinsic to the building itself is hard to find, and even harder to trace in written sources. Fortunately, the history of such a house is more than the building itself: the people who owned (or rented) the house, and the accompanying Grange, provide the key to Prestongrange House's past, and there is quite a lot of information on them. Thus it is their history that this work addresses.

Prestongrange House and its policies have had some very influential owners over the last nine centuries. For example, the sixteenth century Ker family, and the eighteenth century Grants were both closely involved with the Scottish ruling elite. Prestongrange was to prove to be a profitable property, with its agricultural base enhanced over time by income from other sources. Its wealth was initially built on wool, and as early as the twelfth century, coal was mined from shallow outcrops. As technology developed to allow deeper and more extensive mining, so coal production increased. The proximity of the harbour at Morrison's Haven aided the development of additional industries such as salt, soap, glass, brick and tile, and pottery production. All of these developments provided an income for Prestongrange's owners, apparently peaking in the mid nineteenth century, when their surplus income was used by the Grant-Suttie family to employ WH Playfair – one of Scotland's leading architects – to add to and to embellish Prestongrange House.

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Such an extended history presents much of Scottish history in microcosm; it also is a lot to take in. Because of this, brief summaries of the relevant periods are provided, to enable the reader to place events that occur to and around the various owners, in a broader Scottish context. Until the eighteenth century, details are given of the monarchy, as several of Prestongrange's owners were closely aligned to the court. For the later periods, this type of information is of less import, as the aegis of power influence of the House's owners, like their contemporaries in both Scotland and Europe, was more closely tied to their immediate locality.



*Rear view of Prestongrange House  
(now Royal Musselburgh Golf Clubhouse).*



## THE EARLIEST RECORDS – THE LATE 12TH AND EARLY 13TH CENTURIES<sup>1</sup>

### **Kings of Scots**

David I (1124–53)

Malcolm IV (1153–65)

William I [the Lion] (1165–1214)

FROM THE TIME of David I, there was an influx of Anglo-Norman, and later, an increasing number of Anglo-Scottish, supporters of the crown. Monasticism grew and, with it, a concomitant increase in royal and noble patronage of monastic foundations (David I founded the Abbey of St Mary, Newbattle, in 1140). From 1192 Scotland was seen as a ‘special daughter of Rome’, and church matters were resolved with Rome direct, not via English Archbishops. Problems persisted over the Anglo-Scottish border, which impacted on Lothian and Northumbria. Loyalties of landowners – many had land in both Scotland and England – were divided, and this was especially tricky in time of war, often pushing King/aristocrat relationships apart. Under David I, there were good Anglo-Scottish relationships, which wobbled under Malcolm, and declined rapidly with William.

### **The de Quincy family**

Like so many Anglo-Scottish families of the period, the de Quincy family roots lay in the Norman knights who came to Scotland with David I,<sup>2</sup> when he returned to Scotland from a lengthy stay in England at the court of Henry I (firstly as a prisoner, later by choice). Robert de Quincy was a younger son of Saer de Quincy I and Maud de Senlis,<sup>3</sup> but it was his marriage to Orable (also known as Oribilis, and also as the Countess of Mar) which appears to have brought him land<sup>4</sup> in

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful for Dr S Boardman’s comments on this section

<sup>2</sup> Stringer, KJ, *Earl David of Huntingdon, 1152–1219: a Study in Anglo-Scottish History* (1985) p. 179

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 130

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 130, Anderson, AO, *Early Sources of Scottish History: AD500–1286* (1922), p. 487 Ritchie, RLG, *The Normans in Scotland* (1954), p. 285

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both Fife and the Lothians. While Prestongrange may well have been included in these lands, one source suggests that it was given to de Quincy by King William I in 1165.<sup>5</sup>

From 1171–1178, Robert held the post of Justiciar of Lothian,<sup>6</sup> and he was evidently active in politics in the southern heartland of Scotland as he appears to have witnessed several royal acts there.<sup>7</sup> The owner of Prestongrange was an important member of William the Lion's court circle although in 1170 Robert de Quincy found it necessary to make arrangements to pay off some of his creditors. However, his fortunes evidently improved as, by 1190, he had inherited extensive lands in Huntingdon; it is thought he died in 1200.<sup>8</sup> He had close links to David, Earl of Huntingdon, the brother and heir of King William I: not only was the Earl a distant relation<sup>9</sup> to de Quincy, but had also acted as surety for Robert on the 1170 Prestongrange Charter. The grandson and namesake of David I would have been a powerful ally.

### The 12th Century Charter<sup>10</sup>

This Charter of 1170, detailing the terms of a 20 year lease between Pain de Hedleia for Newbattle Abbey,<sup>11</sup> and Robert de Quincy provides the earliest evidence of the traceable history of the site of Prestongrange. The document provides a brief description of the site, what the Cistercian monks were to get as their part of the bargain, and introduces the de Quincy family as its twelfth century owners – albeit in a feudal system where the King retained ultimate ownership.

Robert de Quincy offered the Newbattle Cistercian monks a 20 year lease on Prestongrange in return for the settlement of a debt of 80 pounds of silver, which he appears to have borrowed from Aaron of Lincoln. A later Charter of 1179 x 1189, in the names of both Robert de Quincy and his son Saer IV, confirms the grant of land to Newbattle,<sup>12</sup> and in the early 13th century, the Newbattle Cartulary recorded further

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<sup>5</sup> McNeill, P, *Tranent and its Surroundings* (1883) p. 2

<sup>6</sup> Barrow, GWS, 'A 12th Century Newbattle Document' in *Scottish Historical Review* XXX (1951) p. 42. A Justiciar was a Royal official who supervised the Sheriffs; there were only 2 Justiciaries – one to the South and one to the North of the Forth.

<sup>7</sup> Barrow, GWS, *The Kingdom of the Scots: Government, Church and Society from the 11th–14th Centuries* (1973), p. 102

<sup>8</sup> Barrow (1951) op. cit., p. 42

<sup>9</sup> Stringer, op. cit., p. 27

<sup>10</sup> Barrow (1951) op. cit., pp. 41–49

<sup>11</sup> Stringer, op. cit., p. 277 note 19

<sup>12</sup> *Regesta Regum Scottorum*, p. 280, no 241

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Charters, confirmed by both William the Lion and the Pope, in which the land at Prestongrange was given ‘in free alms’ to Newbattle. The monks were thus expected to say prayers for the original benefactor – Robert de Quincy – but they were, in terms of secular services, under no further obligation to the family. This is the arrangement that continued unhindered until the mid-sixteenth century, when the Reformation shifted land ownership out of the churches and into the secular sphere.

The name Prestongrange initially appears to suggest some sort of monastic settlement, but in fact the name was already in use at nearby Preston – the Priests’ Town – before Prestongrange was leased to the Church. This is confirmed by the wording of the 1170 Charter of

... lands at Preston, later Prestongrange...<sup>13</sup>

Evidently, priests were already working the land, and extracting coal and salt from the area now known as Prestonpans, which lies on the coast a few miles from Prestongrange. The second part of the name ‘grange’ referred to a ‘farming establishment’, particularly in relation to a farm

belonging to a religious house or a feudal lord, with granaries for the storage of crops, and titles in land<sup>14</sup>

The Charter granted the Cistercians pasture for 700 sheep, and for oxen to work the land; meanwhile Robert and his men were still able to cultivate their own land there. The monks were also to have

... all other easements, water, grass and fuel for the grange, except for [Robert’s] demesne peatery...

and it stipulated that

... such buildings as the monks have received with the land they are to return at the end of the lease, or else 30/- having removed whatever is theirs whether buildings or other things...<sup>15</sup>

The Charter then, suggests that any buildings extant in 1170 on the grange were fairly utilitarian agricultural buildings; there is no mention of any sort of dwelling house. It is not

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<sup>13</sup> Barrow (1951) op. cit., p. 41

<sup>14</sup> Craigie, WMA, *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue from the 12th Century to the End of the 17th Century* (1938, 1951) Vol II, p. 693

<sup>15</sup> Barrow (1951) op. cit., p. 49

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known what accommodation the monks enjoyed during almost four centuries of occupation of Prestongrange.

### What became of the de Quincys?

Saer de Quincy IV, Robert's son, married Margaret of Beaufort, daughter of Robert 3rd Earl of Leicester, thereby becoming (in 1207) 1st Earl of Winchester. In addition, Saer IV benefitted from a further inheritance when he unexpectedly succeeded a nephew, re-uniting two branches of the family, and consolidating their wealth. Saer's son Robert became the 2nd Earl of Winchester, and he in turn made a propitious marriage to Hawisia, sister to the Earl of Chester;<sup>16</sup> this Robert became Constable of Scotland.

Similar patterns of Anglo-Scottish interplay through marriage were common in late 12th and early 13th century aristocratic circles; servants and loyal retainers too, followed their lords north<sup>17</sup> and, over time, many moved up the social scale. Land ownership in both Scotland and England might be acceptable in peace time, yet could pose immense problems of identity and loyalty in time of war. Indeed, Robert the Bruce made his supporters choose between their lands, and their Kings.<sup>18</sup>

Unfortunately, throughout the 12th to 16th centuries, war between Scotland and England was a recurring theme. Outright invasion, by both sides, and more minor skirmishes over border disputes occurred time and time again, and Northumbria and the rich lands of the Lothians bore the brunt of it. While the unsettled nature of their Lothian lands may have been part of the reason why the de Quincy family gave the monks Prestongrange, it would have been genuine religious piety that promoted their gift. Grants in free alms were gifts in perpetuity, in return for which they expected only the monks' prayers and God's grace.

So, in the longer term, Lothian remained in the front line: it was usually the first part of Scotland to be invaded – understandably, given its position relative to England, the

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<sup>16</sup> Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 487

<sup>17</sup> The de Brus (later Bruce) and Steward (later Stewart) families, both of Norman origin, came to Scotland in this period; the former probably with David I c1124, the latter in 1136. Lynch, M, *Scotland: a New History* (1991), pp. 56, 57

<sup>18</sup> The fortunes of the de Quincy family prospered for several years on the back of a series of fortuitous marriages; it seems that the male line eventually died out, and the three remaining co-heiresses managed to marry a trio of husbands, who in c1318, gave their support to the English Edward II against Robert the Bruce. McNeill, *op. cit.*, p. 3

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usual aggressor. Nevertheless, the Cistercian monks at Prestongrange appear to have weathered this turbulent time; no records have yet appeared to clarify this period, but Prestongrange was still in the possession of Newbattle Abbey in the sixteenth century, when a more detailed, yet still fragmented picture of its known history, begins to emerge. Even then, some large gaps and questions remain.

PRESTONGRANGE'S OWNERS FROM THE  
REFORMATION, AND WHAT ABOUT THAT  
MOST INTERESTING CEILING?

**Kings & Queens of Scots**

James IV (1488–1513)

James V (1513–1542)

1513–24: minority intermittently under Albany Regency

1524–28: minority under Douglas, Earl of Angus

1528–42: rule as adult

Mary, Queen of Scots (1542–1567 – abdicated)

1542–61: minority under i) 1543–54 Earl of Arran  
ii) 1554–60 Marie de Guise

1561–67: rule as adult

James VI (1567–1625)

1567–70: minority rule under Moray Regency

1570–72: minority rule under Lennox, and then Mar,  
Regencies

1572–78: minority rule under Morton Regency (he was  
executed 1581)

1579–82: influence of Esme Stuart, Earl, later Duke, of  
Lennox

1582–83: Ruthven Raid: they captured James, who then  
escaped

1583–85: influence of James Stewart, Earl of Arran

1585–1625: rule of Scotland as adult

1603: Union of the Crowns – absentee Kingship. As  
James I of England: Court moved to London

1603–25: rule of England as adult

A COMPLEX PERIOD, full of intrigue, encompassing several very lengthy periods of minority rule, which in turn led to ever-changing power-play between different factions of the nobility. In addition, English ambitions to inveigle a marriage between the very young Catholic Queen Mary, and their (Protestant) King Edward VI came to a head in what Walter Scott later called 'The Rough Wooing' (1540s). The resultant disputes, skirmishes and occasional battles left their scars on the borderlands, including the Lothians.

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As was happening elsewhere in northern Europe, the Reformation – when Catholicism was superseded by Protestantism (in Scotland, it was later refined to Presbyterianism) – eventually ushered in profound changes at every level of society; however, initial progress was both very piecemeal and gradual. The process of changing lifelong Catholic beliefs was slow, led by a dedicated Protestant minority; there was, for a long time, the possibility that the country would revert to Catholicism. In Scotland, the rise of Protestantism was further complicated by the fact that Mary, Queen of Scots was, and remained, a Catholic. On her abdication in 1567, her one-year-old son James became King and, even after years of minority under an ever-changing array of Regents, proved to be a well-regarded monarch. In spite of the economic problems that beset Scotland at the end of the sixteenth century, his Government provided the country with a considerable degree of stability.

### **Moving with the times: the rise of the Ker family**

From the twelfth century, Prestongrange's fortunes were tied to those of Newbattle Abbey. Come the sixteenth century, the Commendator (later, he became Abbot), of Newbattle was an ambitious and acquisitive man called Mark Ker. These were not perhaps qualities which today would be associated with a man of the cloth, but by being in the right place at the right time, and perhaps by acting when others might hesitate, Mark Ker<sup>19</sup> soon made some impressive career moves. This second son of the powerful Sir Andrew Ker of Cessford, Warden of the Middle March (a border family that was no stranger to fighting for its rights), was born in Edinburgh Castle in 1517; he was educated at college in St Andrews. Like many other younger sons who had little hope of an inheritance, Mark Ker pursued a career in the Church; in a society where land and property bequeathed power and status, the Church itself was a rich and powerful player, although increasingly uncertain of its future in the face of change already sweeping Europe.

Mark Ker was firstly (1536) granted the income from Maison Dieu, Jedburgh, and eleven years later, on 5 May 1547,<sup>20</sup> was appointed by the Pope to the Abbey of Newbattle, and thus to receive, on behalf of the Abbey, the

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<sup>19</sup> Sanderson, MHB, *Mary Stewart's People* (1987) pp. 166–178 provides extensive detail on Mark Ker

<sup>20</sup> Balfour Paul, J (Ed), *The Scots Peerage* (1907), Vol V, p. 453

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concomitant income from agriculture, coal and salt. The longevity of the existing Abbot, James Haswell, meant that Mark Ker had to wait a further ten years until he could succeed to the Abbacy. Meanwhile, from 1549 he operated as commendator, an administrative post to which individuals were generally nominated by the Crown, and appointed by the Pope. This placed him in control of Newbattle's income, without the inconvenience of playing any part in the religious life of the Abbey, nor of taking any restricting vows. His role was fairly typical for the period when, across Europe, secular clergy were taking an increasing part in running Church property.

After Abbot Haswell's demise in 1557, Mark Ker speedily exercised his new powers, using the feuing system to grant land in exchange for cash. Part of Prestongrange<sup>21</sup> appears to have been feued to his nephew, Alexander Home: another 'arrangement' made by Mark Ker in 1558, was the feuing of other Newbattle lands to his son, Mark. The child's mother was Helen Leslie, a widow with two children, to whom his father was not, at the time, married:<sup>22</sup> unmarried clerical paternity was not unusual, but it does perhaps indicate that Mark Ker's ambitions did indeed lay more in the secular, than in the religious, realm.<sup>23</sup> His liaison with Helen Leslie gives a further hint of where his own allegiances lay: her family were in favour of religious reform, tended to be pro-English and anti-French, and to that end had been associated with the murder of Cardinal Beaton (who had supported Marie de Guise) twelve years earlier.

Unsurprisingly, Mark Ker emerged from the upheaval of those Reformation years as a Protestant, with his hold of the Newbattle lands intact. That he was able to weather the uncertainties of the time is remarkable; if Catholicism had won through, he might have lost everything. As it was, the new Protestant Kirk was slow to seek to acquire the old church's wealth, giving the likes of Ker plenty of time to secure it for themselves.

What is more, thereafter Mark Ker's name appeared regularly in various documents relating to State events: in 1558, he sat in Parliament, and on 26th April 1560 put his signature to the Covenant to 'defend the evangell of Christ'.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Sanderson, MHB, op. cit., p. 167

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 171, suggests that Mark Ker and Helen Leslie were married by 1567

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 175 states that Mark Ker also had a natural daughter, Margaret, who gave birth to his grandson sometime before 1557

<sup>24</sup> Balfour Paul, J, op. cit., p. 453



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He sat in the Reformation Parliament in August the same year, and again in 1563. Mark Ker was appointed an Extraordinary Lord of Session in 1569, and made it to the Privy Council by September that year. On Regent Morton's resignation in 1578, Ker appears to have been one of the twelve appointees to the replacement Government,<sup>25</sup> and, two years on, he was an auditor of the Exchequer. Ker's astuteness ensured he remained a step ahead of trouble; he opposed the Ruthven Raids of the extreme Protestant faction, and thereafter became less involved with day-to-day political events, passing his office of Commendator to his son, Mark, in October 1581. He remained a member of the Privy Council up to the year of his death, 1584. His widow, Helen Leslie, died on 26 October 1594, having lived her last ten years at Prestongrange. They left four sons, and one daughter: the latter, Katherine, and the third son, George, favoured the Catholic faith. Such religious dissonance within families was common.

### **The Prestongrange ceiling<sup>26</sup>**

In 1560, Mark Ker re-acquired the Abbey lands he had feued away a few years earlier, naming his wife and son as beneficiaries. At some point in this period, Ker was transforming Newbattle Abbey into an impressive private residence; Sanderson considers it unlikely that he actually lived there, and points to the existence of a

house at Prestongrange, comfortably furnished, to which Helen Leslie retired towards the end of her life.<sup>27</sup>

Evidence relating directly to Prestongrange House continues to prove elusive; nevertheless, a chance discovery during renovation work at the House in 1962, provided a further insight – and raised more questions – about Prestongrange's sixteenth century owners, Helen Leslie and her husband, Mark Ker. When the removal of a later plaster ceiling revealed an earlier painted finish, it became clear that, by at least 1581 – the date on the ceiling – there had been a substantial house on the site. Comments made by art historians in the early 1960's suggested that the ceiling was designed for a much larger room than the one in which it was discovered. Other than that, there is very little substantiated evidence available to indicate what the sixteenth century Prestongrange was like.

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<sup>25</sup> Sanderson, MHB, op. cit., p. 173

<sup>26</sup> See also the section on the Twentieth Century

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 173

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It is possible that Mark Ker and Helen Leslie had invested their wealth in building a 'new' tower house, on the old site. Sanderson gives Mark Ker's net estate on death at £16,046, 5 shillings (Scots, although this is unstated), when the average laird left an estate of around £2,000.<sup>28</sup> Given that, from 1547, East Lothian had been devastated by the English occupation during the latter phases of the 'Rough Wooing', and that the Battle of Pinkie, September 1547, took place just outside Musselburgh, it is hard to see how Prestongrange, at that time a Catholic, monastic property, would have escaped undamaged.

It is thus entirely valid to suggest that any buildings at Prestongrange may have been destroyed, and that, as did many of his contemporaries,<sup>29</sup> Mark Ker indulged himself in building a new house or considerably adding to an existing building. That either are possible is supported by the standing evidence: the most easterly section has smaller windows than the central part of the building, and the floors are at different levels.<sup>30</sup> From Ker's last testament it is clear that he had a gardener, George Tait, at Prestongrange, as well as a grieve – Robert Watson; while the latter may be quite common, the presence of a gardener appears to imply that there were parts of the property's policies that needed a particular type of maintenance, and it is likely that there was a substantial house set in those policies.

In addition, Mark Ker chose to embellish his house with an unusual painted ceiling. While many of these late sixteenth/early seventeenth century houses had painted ceilings; Mark Ker's taste was somewhat earthier than most. At Culross Palace (c1608), Sir George Bruce chose moralising stories: the owner of Pinkie House (c1603), Sir Alexander Seton, favoured heraldry and Latin and Greek inscriptions: Mark Ker's selection of images reflect a bawdier side of life. The Prestongrange ceiling – now at Merchiston Tower, Edinburgh<sup>31</sup> – portrays a series of lively if rather grotesque and, at times

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 175

<sup>29</sup> Wormald J, *Court, Kirk and Community: Scotland 1470–1625* (1981), Chapter 10, pp. 160–176 lists Crathes, Midmar and Castle Fraser as examples of developments on 'the native style, the tower house' p. 171 Howard, D, *The Architectural History of Scotland: Scottish Architecture from the Reformation to the Restoration 1560–1660* (1995) illustrates the style of this period; Chapter 3, pp. 48–96

<sup>30</sup> Apted, M in Murray, G, Apted, MR & Hodkinson, I, 'Prestongrange and its Painted Ceiling' in *Transactions of the East Lothian Antiquarian and Field Naturalists Society* Vol X (1966) p. 102

<sup>31</sup> The Prestongrange Ceiling at Merchiston Tower, Napier University, Edinburgh is normally open to the public by **appointment only**. Telephone: PR & Marketing Unit on 0131 455 6311. As of December 1999, the site is closed for essential maintenance.

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perhaps, almost obscene, figures. Various interpretations on this were made at the time of discovery, with suggestions of a link to witch-craft seemingly having credence.<sup>32</sup> Academic views today on the prevalence, or otherwise, of witch-craft in sixteenth century Scotland,<sup>33</sup> reveal a pressing need for the interpretation of this ceiling to be re-visited; it is currently thought that the figures represented comic actors in German folk-plays.<sup>34</sup> It seems more likely that the Kers delighted in the sexually suggestive imagery, rather than the decoration being tied to devil-worship and witch-craft. Quite what Mark Ker's and Helen Leslie's successors thought of the ceiling is not recorded; it probably came as no surprise to their son, and grandson, but perhaps the later residents of Prestongrange found it a little difficult to live with.

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<sup>32</sup> Murray, G, Apted, MR & Hodkinson, I, 'Prestongrange and its Painted Ceiling' in *Transactions of the East Lothian Antiquarian and Field Naturalists Society* Vol X (1966) pp. 92-132

<sup>33</sup> Cohn, N, *Europe's Inner Demons: the Demonization of Christians in Medieval Christendom* [Ch 8] (1975, 1993)

<sup>34</sup> Napier University, *Merchiston Tower* (undated pamphlet) p. 5

THE MIXED FORTUNES OF THE  
SEVENTEENTH AND EARLY EIGHTEENTH  
CENTURY OWNERS

**Kings & Queens of Scots**

James VI (1567–1625)

1585–1625: rule as adult – Scotland

1603: Union of the Crowns – absentee Kingship. As  
James I of England: Court moved to London

1603–1625: rule as adult – England

Charles I (1625–1649) – executed 1649, in England

Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell (1651–1659)

Scotland incorporated in England

Charles II (1649–1684)

1649–1659 nominal King

Restoration 1660

James VII/II (1685–1688)

1688 leaves country – Roman Catholic convert

William & Mary (1689–1702)

Anne (1702–1713)

1707 Acts of Union: Scotland and England as equal  
partners – Great Britain

George I (1714–27)

George II (1727–60)

A TURBULENT PERIOD, with Scotland and England united under one monarch in 1603, yet remaining separate, and each with its own Parliament. During the early years of the seventeenth century there was a shuffling of power amongst the wealthy in Scotland, once James VI had decamped to the London court. The problems created by having one monarch for two countries were many; absentee kingship stimulated a ‘tightening-up’ of the systems by which government ran. For example, in 1619 an Act<sup>35</sup> was passed which introduced an examination and a thesis as criteria for the office of Advocate, whereas previously no qualifications were required.

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<sup>35</sup> Grant, FJ (Ed), *The Faculty of Advocates in Scotland 1532–1943* (1944), p. iii

## 16TH AND 17TH CENTURY OWNERS

Mid century saw civil war in England, Scotland and Ireland – for a range of reasons. There was a period of enforced union as Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector, and once again the Lothian area was used as a battlefield. The upheaval of war led to economic disruption, and the seventeenth century marks a distinct change in trading patterns, with the rise of numerous burghs of barony which competed in the domestic market. The coal and salt industries existed side by side, the latter using the low grade coal in the distillation process.

With a change of owners in around 1609, the emphasis on Prestongrange moved towards a more localised viewpoint, although some of those who owned the property were to play an important role in Scotland's government. The Union of the Parliaments in 1707 led to more upheaval as the hub of politics became concentrated on London. Not everyone approved of the Acts of Union, and of the removal of the Stuart dynasty from the Scottish throne. Jacobite claims continued with varying degrees of vigour, to 1745, to be eventually quelled at the Battle of Culloden, when the supporters of Bonnie Prince Charlie were routed by the King's armies. This was not a clear English/Scottish confrontation, as each side had supporters from both nationalities; the reprisals that followed Culloden reflected that, after almost forty years of conflict, the Hanoverian regime wished to annihilate any possibility of further warfare in a part of Britain widely regarded as barbaric.

### **The Earls of Lothian – Mark Ker's son and grandson**

Mark Ker was succeeded by his eldest son, also Mark who, before his father's death, had already shown an inclination to serve his monarch. In 1567, Queen Mary confirmed that he had a right to the commendator role at Newbattle after his father,<sup>36</sup> and on his father's retiral, he took over his commendator duties in 1581. The year before, Mark Ker (younger) had been made a gentleman of the bedchamber to the young James VI, and was appointed Master of Requests in 1581<sup>37</sup> not only was Ker's right to the Newbattle lands confirmed by the King in 1584, but in 1587 he was one of the few people to retain his hold on what had previously been church property, when all else was being gathered back into

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<sup>36</sup> Sanderson, MHB, op. cit., p. 175

<sup>37</sup> Balfour Paul, J, op. cit., p. 455

## PRESTONGRANGE HOUSE

crown ownership. Dated 28 July 1587, the Charter granted by James VI gave Mark Ker and his heirs male

... the whole lands of the suppressed monastery of Newbattle, including the baronies of Newbattle and Prestongrange...<sup>38</sup>

The official acquisition of the barony of Prestongrange, and its associated courts, would have confirmed Ker's social status in the area: barony courts enforced a range of national legislation, but it was their influence over the locality that was of greater importance. The barony court (essentially under the aegis of the landowner) disciplined tenants, and settled disputes. The tenants were thus placed in a vulnerable position, while the holder of the barony profited from fines and forfeitures.<sup>39</sup>

From 1581, Ker also took over his father's political duties on the Privy Council and as an extraordinary lord of session; he was present at many important committee meetings until his death in 1609. By 1591, Mark Ker had been given the title of Lord Newbattle, and in 1606 that of Earl of Lothian. On his death on 8 August 1609, it is evident that he had nurtured his inheritance, as his net estate was worth nearly £37,000.<sup>40</sup> Mark Ker's wife, Margaret Maxwell, died at Prestongrange on 8 January 1617, and it seems likely that she and her husband had made Prestongrange their main home after his mother's death in 1594. They had a large family of five sons and seven daughters. Their eldest son, Robert, became 2nd Earl of Lothian, and it is thought that he disposed of Prestongrange fairly soon after his father's death in 1609, although primary evidence of this has proved elusive.<sup>41</sup> The question then raised is why? Why did he need to sell off part of his inheritance, when that inheritance was so immense? And even though it is likely that the Kers were, by this time, no longer owners of Prestongrange, the story of their problems is enlightening and aids understanding of the problems of the period. It also helps to put the demise of a later owner, William Morison, in 1737, into context.

The 2nd Earl of Lothian is known to posterity as the one who committed suicide. On 6 March 1624, at Newbattle, he gave instructions that he was not to be disturbed and, barring

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 456

<sup>39</sup> McNeill, PGB & MacQueen, HI (Eds), *Atlas of Scottish History to 1707* (1996), p. 201

<sup>40</sup> Sanderson, MHB, op. cit., p. 177

<sup>41</sup> Murray, G, Apted, MR & Hodkinson, I, op. cit. p. 98

## 16TH AND 17TH CENTURY OWNERS

the door, wounded himself with a dagger, and then cut his throat.<sup>42</sup> Fanciful explanations have abounded over the years for the reasons behind his action, with one of the most popular being that he killed himself as a result of dabbling in witchcraft. Other stories have linked the Ker family to witchcraft (see the section on the Prestongrange ceiling above), but may all be dismissed. Robert Ker, like many of his contemporaries, was beset by debt.

Brown points to the combination of warfare, poor harvests and high inflation as being the driving forces behind ‘noble indebtedness’ which was a common problem amongst the nobility: in the seventeenth century, it was the only way to maintain a noble lifestyle, and credit was easily available.<sup>43</sup> Another contributing factor that Brown<sup>44</sup> highlights is that if a widow survived, as did Margaret Maxwell, she had a right to the liferent of the property – about a third of the estate; thus Robert Ker would have been unable to realise that income until 1617. Having eleven siblings may also have tied up his inheritance.

When set against Robert Ker’s likely share of his father’s enormous estate, it seems hardly believable that someone could get into such a fix.<sup>45</sup> That the family was still well regarded by the Crown is apparent: James VI even intervened to rescue the Newbattle estate from the creditors. As Ker had probably sold Prestongrange to John Morison fourteen years earlier, and as the sale of property was generally the last resort of land-owners, it is likely that Ker was in serious trouble long before he killed himself.

### **The Morisons: almost 150 years at Prestongrange – c1609–1745**

Information on Prestongrange’s new owners, John Morison – bailie of Edinburgh – and his wife Katherine Preston – daughter of the Lord President,<sup>46</sup> is minimal; it appears that there were family links to other East Lothian families – the

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<sup>42</sup> Brown, KM ‘Noble Indebtedness in Scotland between the Reformation and the Revolution’ in *Historical Research: the Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* Vol LXII (1989), p. 260

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273 note 49 indicates that, in c1622, Ker had forfeited a £40,000 caution on behalf of Sir John Kerr of Jedburgh, thus pushing his finances out of control. Why he did this is not explored.

<sup>46</sup> Grant, FJ, *op. cit.*, p. 155

## PRESTONGRANGE HOUSE

Hepburns of Smeaton, and the Sutties.<sup>47</sup> It is not known exactly when they bought Prestongrange, nor when their second son, Alexander, inherited it.

However, as a member of Scotland's legal elite, Alexander Morison's history is better known and recorded.<sup>48</sup> Born in 1579, he died at Prestongrange on 20 September 1631,<sup>49</sup> his wife was Helenora, daughter of William Mauld, merchant and burgess of Edinburgh, whom he married 6 September 1610. Admitted to the Faculty of Advocates on 25 January 1604, he became a lord of session – Lord Prestongrange – on 14 February 1626. The following year, Alexander Morison appears with the title of Senator of the Court of Justice,<sup>50</sup> and was elected rector of Edinburgh University. High office did not preclude Alexander from either borrowing or lending money (£40,000 Scots on one bond), although in doing this, he was not unusual amongst his contemporaries.<sup>51</sup>

His wife survived him by 34 years,<sup>52</sup> but it is not known whether she, or the next Alexander Morison, later Lord Prestongrange, made Prestongrange their home. For this period, the evidence is once again patchy: Alexander had only one son, William,<sup>53</sup> and at least two daughters, the second of which, Christian, married William Bennet of Grubet on 6 April 1665.<sup>54</sup> Like his father, Alexander too lent and borrowed money,<sup>55</sup> and some of these debts were to return to haunt his son, William. William's date of inheritance is unclear, although one source suggests he 'succeeded his father in the lands of Prestongrange in 1684':<sup>56</sup> his father seems to have been around until at least 1691, but was definitely dead by 1711. William's wife, Janet Rochheid, died in 1716,<sup>57</sup> at around the time that his hold on reality began to fade.

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<sup>47</sup> NAS GD357/43/1 1627

<sup>48</sup> Brunton, G & Haig, D, *An Historical Account of the Senators of the College of Justice from its Institution in MDXXXII* (1832) p. 27

<sup>49</sup> NAS CC8/8/55 fo 224

<sup>50</sup> NAS GD124/2/22 1627

<sup>51</sup> NAS GD124/2/22 1627 Assignations; GD124/2/47 discharge of 1627 bond GD357/43/1 1627 Procuratory by Mr Alexander Morison: demand for bond £40000 Scots. For notes on 'discharge' see Gouldsbrough, P, *Formulary of Old Scottish Documents* (1985)

<sup>52</sup> NAS CC8/8/55 fo 224 1665

<sup>53</sup> NAS CC8/8/86 fo 181 GD20/1/813 reference to William Morison of Prestongrange, only son of said Alexander, now deceased 1711

<sup>54</sup> NAS GD6/1367 1665

<sup>55</sup> NAS GD6/2156 1634 Debt Discharge GD20/1/813 1668 Assignation by Master Robert Gordon to Sir Alexander Morison who, on a bond dated 16, 17, 18 March 1668, borrowed 14,000 merks Scots – this bond reappears on 6 April 1717 in GD20/1/813

<sup>56</sup> Murray, G, Apte, MR & Hodkinson, I, op. cit., p. 99

<sup>57</sup> NAS CC8/8/86 fo 181



## 16TH AND 17TH CENTURY OWNERS

William himself had a parliamentary career that spanned some 40 years, and he sat both in the pre-Union Scottish, and the post-Union British, parliaments: in 1707, he had won the Haddingtonshire seat against Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun. It thus appeared that he was a successful, and wealthy, land-owner. However, by 1734, the lords of session had appointed Alexander Tytler (writer in Edinburgh) as factor to Morison's lands and estates,<sup>58</sup> and were aware of the possibility that

the lands and baronie of Prestongrange shall be roup'd  
and sold by the lords of session...

In effect then, Morison's property was sequestrated by the lords of session in order to pay his debts: he died abroad, in 1739.<sup>59</sup>

There is little doubt that William was a man who would exploit any opportunity to his advantage: he is recorded as being perhaps hesitant to pay his dues relating to the coal road access across the neighbouring Pinkie lands.<sup>60</sup> And with about 63% of his non-agricultural income being derived from salt, Morison was certainly guilty of by-passing the laws on salt duty, being twice found guilty between 1719 and 1721. Evidently the penalties charged – £430 Scots – were minimal compared with the profits gained.<sup>61</sup> However, while Green puts his demise down to the fact that

in London, William Morison unfortunately took to  
gambling and lost his money, with the result that he  
became moody and strange<sup>62</sup>

and he indeed owed an enormous amount of money to Colonel Charteris – a noted gambler – there was more to William Morison's downfall than just gambling. One of Alexander Morison's debts, relating to money borrowed by him from Nisbet of Dirleton, in 1691, was only resolved in William Morison's favour in 1703.<sup>63</sup> A very complex case developed alongside this one, this time between William Morison and Nisbet of Dirleton, which appears to have lasted from the 1690s through to 1733;<sup>64</sup> it concerned monies gifted

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<sup>58</sup> NLS Charter 1019 5.4.1734 NLS MSS 10851 re Alexander Tytler acting for the creditors of Prestongrange 10.2.1736 although NLS MSS 16809 fo 116–123 indicates Tytler was Prestongrange factor 1729–34

<sup>59</sup> NAS CC8/8/104 fo 267 will registered 30.7.1741

<sup>60</sup> NLS MSS 14757 fo 92–143 1695–1697 NLS Charter 11832 and Charter 11833 1696

<sup>61</sup> Whatley, CA, *The Scottish Salt Industry 1570–1850* (1987) pp 71 & 117

<sup>62</sup> Green, CE, *East Lothian* (1906) p. 63

<sup>63</sup> NAS GD6/2094 12 November 1703

<sup>64</sup> NAS GD6/2094 1688–1733 GD6/2156

## PRESTONGRANGE HOUSE

to William Morison's sister, Joan, who had married into the Nisbet of Dirleton family and, in the process acquired a step-daughter. This lady, Lady Scott, because of the law of entail, could not inherit her father's estate, and felt that the heir of entail – who had agreed to give the bond to Joan Morison – had no right to do so. In spite of numerous discharges of the bond, and deaths of Lady Scott, the original pursuer, the case continued being heard in court, appealed against, and returning to court, until 1733, when the records, though not the case, end.

By the second decade of the eighteenth century, a further agenda appears to this case, when letters are being sent, by the Nisbet faction,<sup>65</sup> to various members of the aristocracy appealing for their support. They were successful in getting the Duke of Roxburghe, Lord Belhaven and, through the last, the Duke of Argyl and Lord Islay on their side against Morison. William Scot's comment is also revealing about the way that the Anglophile, post-Union parliament operated

... all the entreat in my power is useless against the English... the lawiers in the house determines it seldom or never coming to a vote. PS as [to] my own opinion, I must indeed say that Prestongrange will reverse the decree, it having to my judgement little foundation in law...<sup>66</sup>

The same document also records a letter from Robert Dundas, solicitor, who agreed to act for Nisbet, even though he had already been approached by Morison to act on his behalf. It looks rather as if the Scottish establishment were acting as a unit to condemn someone who perhaps was not actually, in this instance at least, guilty.

Nevertheless, other surviving documents do suggest that William Morison was living beyond his means. Perhaps he was a man who lived on the edge of what was legal, as his affairs on death proved to be a nightmare to sort out. Important documents that would have clarified whether his (sizeable) debts to the family of Colonel Charteris had been discharged, were noticeably absent. Because of the state of his affairs on his death, various official papers were drawn up relating to the estate, providing later readers with almost as many questions as answers.

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<sup>65</sup> NAS GD6/2156 1715, 1718, 1719

<sup>66</sup> NAS GD6/2156 12.3.1719

## 16TH AND 17TH CENTURY OWNERS

The *Minutes for the Creditors of Prestongrange*<sup>67</sup> show that, by 1716, Morison had two bonds from Colonel Charteris, totalling £14,305 sterling, with no evidence of them being discharged.

... it is well known that Prestongrange had no funds to pay such a sum, but out of the rents of his estate here in Scotland so that if either Prestongrange or his factors had applied so considerable part of the rents towards payments of these 2 debts it is incredible but that proper documents of such payments would have been taken It cannot be alleged that Prestongrange's writings have been abstracted or embezzled, and as no documents are produced, or any the least evidence offered to instruct payment of so considerable sum other than this null-doquet subjoined to the Act which, if genuine, appears to have been instituted in the view of a sale of lands which never took effect...

... it is indeed possible that Prestongrange would have another duplicate, what became of that the creditors cannot tell. There would have been repeated diligences for recovery [in] Prestongrange's writings, but considering in what great confusion his affairs were, how negligent he was, and yet his residence was very uncertain, sometimes at Edinburgh, sometimes in the country, very frequently in London,<sup>68</sup> there can scarce be any doubt that many of his writings have been mislaid or lost which probablie will never be recovered...

Acting as a curator for Francis Charteris of Ampsfield (Colonel Charteris' grandson) was the Lord Justice Clerk, Andrew Fletcher of Miltown, who managed to locate copies of the bonds in the Charteris papers. He also located a further bond for £1746 19 shillings 5 pence sterling dated 26.5.1726, and another for £820 dated 22.6.1722.

Other documents indicate that the rot did not stop there: Morison appeared to request assistance over a loan for £15,125,<sup>69</sup> and an appraisal of the debts due to the creditors was, by the 1740s, given at £24,472 5 shillings 8 pence, while the estate was valued at around £26,000.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> NLS MSS 17706 fo101, 102, 106, 220

<sup>68</sup> NLS MSS 16352 fo 87 1725 – Morison's house was in 'Chelsay'

<sup>69</sup> NLS MSS 16352 fo 87, August 1725

<sup>70</sup> NLS MSS 17712 fo 68, undated, probably 1742

## PRESTONGRANGE HOUSE

Another document generated as a result of Morison's situation was a *Memorial Concerning Prestongrange* in 1736.<sup>71</sup> This provides the following information:

### Money

Barony of Prestongrange £1151 1 shillings 2 pence  
Barony of Dolphinstone £ 779 15 shillings  
Barony of Muirfoot £2313 6 shillings 8 pence  
Barony of Lethinhopes £5626 6 shillings 2 pence  
plus wheat and bere

The above is the just rental of the estate of Prestongrange... besides 84 hens, 82 carriages,<sup>72</sup> 16 darques of peats, 12 darques of selling trees, 20 grazing sheep and 3 turfs of hay, all payable out of the barony of Muirfoot

The factors account will show what the casual rent of coal and salt has amounted to for these several years bygone.

There is no proof of the value of the lands

It also gives a list of debts, and the factor appointed by the lords of sequestration. In contrast to earlier figures, the sum of the whole debt is given as £382,011 12 shillings, which, if accurate, is a huge sum of money.

The executor of the 'defunct William Morison' was his son-in-law, Viscount Arbuthnot, who registered Morison's will on 30 July 1741;<sup>73</sup> the estate evidently took a lot of sorting out. Perhaps the most interesting document of all is given as Folio 269, which is a three and a half page list of William Morison's goods: for the first time, there is real evidence of what was in his home, and it does seem likely that the list related to the contents of Prestongrange House. The detail given of the rooms in which the furniture was placed is also enlightening, and goes a long way to illustrate the layout of the House at this time. There were listed, a kitchen, a dining room with a room off, a [?aigly] gray room and a high gray room, a gallery with a room off, a first and second room off the staircase, and a nursery. It is almost a century until later records provide

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<sup>71</sup> NLS MSS 17713 fo 48

<sup>72</sup> Mitchison, R, *Lordship to Patronage: Scotland 1603–1745* (1983) p. 96 explains that 'carriages' referred to '... fetching goods, particularly cutting and bringing in peats.' and that this was a service often carried out as a means of paying the rent in a society where the economy was based less on money and more in goods.

<sup>73</sup> NAS CC8/8/104 fo 267 30 July 1741

## 16TH AND 17TH CENTURY OWNERS

further evidence of Prestongrange's interior, and the two descriptions are hard to correlate. Nevertheless, the list is revealing.

### List of William Morison's goods: 1741

2 silver candle snuffers [and assorted other silver]	2 tables in the room next the dining room
a 1lb piece of gold	4 chairs and 2 sconces
a blew moyhair bed with yellow lynning	In the dining room
a feather bed	2 tables, 4 chairs
4 pair English blankets in very bad state	5 pieces worsted arras and a small piece
4 pieces arras hangings	a grate
one pair yellow window hangings	
a fine Japanese cabinet and table	In the [?aigly] gray room
a fine glass	bed with yellow moyhair and a feather bed and bolster
2 bigg chairs	3 pair of single blankets
4 small chairs	2 armed chairs and 10 other
4 bigg pictures and gilded frames	a grate
3 other pictures	a table
10 framed prints	hanging of the room
4 unframed	piece of glass
a grate	chest of drawers, and another
old shutters	a table
2 small bells	
pair of pistols	In the high gray room
	bed with silk hangings
In the kitchen	feather bed mattress
a large grate and gallows	bolster and pillow
3 spits	3 pair blankets
one old brass pan, drainer and saucepan	hangings of the room
brass poll with cover	chest of drawers
copper oven pan and saucepan	a glass
old white iron sconce	a table
marble mortar	3 armchairs
linen	6 other chairs
	and a table
	2 pictures
	a chimney

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In the room of the gallery a bed hung with Irish shot feather bed, a bolster, 2 pillows hangings a grate 3 small and a bigg chair	one feather bed, small and bolster one blanket and room hanging
In the gallery one small cabinet a dutch ambrey chest of drawers	In the 2nd room of the staircase a bed hung with blew stuff a feather bed and bolster grate, 3 chairs and a table
Wardrops 5 old trunks 2 old chests	Nursery one old feather bed and 2 [?] a table and timber box
In the first room of the staircase one bed lined with green stuff	Kitchen assorted linen and napery (a long list) plates and trenchers

This list indicates a well furnished home, with plenty of goods of value, and would have been fairly typical of a home of the wealthy class. From the early years of the eighteenth century, consumerism had grown in importance, and so it is possible that Morison's acquisition of home comforts predated his slide into disrepute which effectively brought the Morison family's ownership of Prestongrange to an end. Its next resident was the very respectable William Grant, who purchased the Baronies of Prestongrange and Dolphinstone on 19 May, 1745.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> NLS MSS 3720 1745

## LORD ADVOCATE WILLIAM GRANT AND HIS DAUGHTERS

George II (1727–60)

George III (1760–1820)

1811–1820: Regency under Prince George, later George IV

FROM 1745, THE WHIG establishment were deeply concerned to bring the Highlands of Scotland into what they regarded as the civilised world. They were unable, or unwilling, to see that Gaelic culture had its own civilisation, in much the same way that they could see no validity in the claims of the Jacobite supporters. From mid-century, heavyweight legislation was introduced to limit the rights of the Gaelic people, and hand-in-hand with this went the desire to educate them, in English, a process which had begun after the 1715 rebellion. These efforts eventually had the desired result, in that Gaelic declined, and the erstwhile clan chiefs of the Highlands and Islands transformed themselves into landowners, a process that began in the south and west, and moved slowly north and east. In turn, the changes the landowners introduced in land tenure triggered the emigration of the better-off, and was also instrumental in the emergence of Highland regiments in the British army, as the young Highlanders sought regular employment off the land. Parallel to these changes in the Highlands was the growing industrialisation of the Lowlands; the proto-industry of the early years of the eighteenth century provided the base on which many industries grew, and, from around the 1770s, expansion was rapid, although patchy. Changing agricultural practices, like enclosure, had been in place in the rich lands of the Lothians since early in the eighteenth century, and the population had already begun to be pushed off the land: they were thus available to provide the workforce for the expanding industrial sector.

This period sees an increase in the importance of the role of the families that dominated the Lothians. Most were inter-related. From 1742, the Dalrymples of North Berwick and the Fletchers of Saltoun combined to agree that they would share the representation of the county and the burgh parliamentary seats, on alternate years; by the 1760s the arrangement was

## PRESTONGRANGE HOUSE

beginning to go awry, as the ‘sharing’ disintegrated. Incidentally, the number of voters they were pursuing was c55 in 1768, and c75 in 1789. Their disagreement was brought into focus by the appearance of a third candidate – a cousin to Dalrymple – Sir George Suttie of Balgone, North Berwick, who was backed by Robert Dundas of Arniston, the Lord President of the Court of Session. Suttie and Dundas were related by marriage – each being married to a daughter – Agnes and Jean – of William Grant of Prestongrange.

### William Grant<sup>75</sup>

William Grant (1701–1764), was the second son of the learned Francis, Lord Cullen, and was an archetypal Scottish Whig: he was a lawyer and a supporter of the established Church,<sup>76</sup> the Union, and the Hanoverian crown. One of his associates was Archibald Duke of Argyll, to whom William owed his political advancement. At the time of his purchase of Prestongrange in 1745, William Grant was a member of the Faculty of Advocates; since 1731, he had held the posts of both principal clerk and of procurator for the Church of Scotland, as well as being a Member of Parliament for the Elgin burghs (1747–1754). From 1737 to 1742, Grant had been solicitor general, and was appointed lord advocate on 26 February 1746: having his portrait painted by the leading Scottish painter Allan Ramsay places Grant at the heart of the cultural and intellectual world that Edinburgh’s early Enlightenment elite inhabited. He was clearly a well-regarded member of the Scottish professional elite.

Post-Culloden, Grant is said to be the author of a pamphlet responding to the Jacobite claim to the throne, which unreservedly takes the Hanoverian stance. This comes through in his politics: as a commissioner for fisheries and manufactories (1738) and as one of those responsible for the legislation introduced after the ’45, he had several opportunities to put his beliefs into practice. He was one of the commissioners for the annexed estates (1755), and saw the Highlands as ripe for ‘... civilising and improvement...’.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Moody, D, ‘Notes on William Grant of Prestongrange’ to be published in *The New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (c 2002) I am grateful to David Moody for making his notes available to me. William Grant appears in Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Catriona*, the sequel to *Kidnapped*.

<sup>76</sup> NLS MSS 17528, fo 46 1747

<sup>77</sup> NLS MSS 16679, fo 48–50 1752



## LORD ADVOCATE WILLIAM GRANT

By 1754, Grant had lost his post of lord advocate (probably due to illness) and also resigned from Parliament. Later the same year, he was appointed as an ordinary lord of session and took the legal title of Lord Prestongrange; by some accounts, he was a better judge than lawyer. However, although he was not above using his position to press-gang local troublemakers to be ‘recruits’,<sup>78</sup> when faced with problems on his own estates, he took pains to avoid ‘... strife or confrontation...’.<sup>79</sup> Because of his political duties, William Grant probably had little time to spare for his new estate, which may explain his reputation locally for being rather mean; he certainly had to leave for London ‘... before he had settled in...’, and so continued to employ Alexander Tytler as factor, and his manager, Mr John Rainin, who oversaw the estate as well as the salt and coal works. When Rainin died ‘...suddenly of an apoplexy...’, Grant was relieved that Rainin’s son was able to take over.<sup>80</sup>

Grant made very few references to Prestongrange in his surviving letters; however, soon after buying the estate he wrote

... I came here this night to visit a nursery which Mrs Grant has fitted up in this old house, in my absence<sup>81</sup>

Prestongrange was clearly rather old-fashioned, and the nursery must have been for their one-year-old daughter, Christian. Dogged by ill health in his later years, it has been suggested that the death of Christian, in 1761, aged 16, contributed greatly to his decline in health. A later reference to workmen being ‘... employed about this house...’ frustratingly omits to state what work they were doing.<sup>82</sup> Since it is thought that a new plaster ceiling was installed sometime in the eighteenth century, masking the sixteenth century painted one, here perhaps is a hint of when it was done; there again perhaps it is not.

William Grant does seem to have supported the development of the industrial aspects of the area. He wanted to repair the harbour, and even asked the Duke of Argyll to visit it:<sup>83</sup> he was also instrumental in getting the pottery

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<sup>78</sup> NLS MSS 16700, fo 129 1757 letter to Lord Milton on getting constables ‘... searching, seizing and bringing to the next meeting persons fit to be recruits...’

<sup>79</sup> NLS MSS 16675, fo 77 1751

<sup>80</sup> NLS MSS 3720, p. 1 1745

<sup>81</sup> NLS MSS 16623, fo 238 11 August 1746

<sup>82</sup> NLS MSS 16671, fo 32 19.11.1750

<sup>83</sup> NLS MSS 16687, fo 234 1754

## PRESTONGRANGE HOUSE

industry started. Grant died at Bath, taking the waters, on 23 May 1764;<sup>84</sup> he was survived by his wife, Grizel Millar (whom he married in 1729, and who died in 1792 in Canongate, Edinburgh) and their remaining three daughters.

### Four daughters and an entail

William Grant is thought to have been the writer of the ‘Memoirs of the History of the Family of Grant’: his view on the role of history is revealing:

the pleasure and the utility of History is universally acknowledged – and the same motives that make it reasonable to research in general histories the memorable transactions of kingdoms, the descents of kings, and the resolution and fate of governments render it no less reasonable to preserve in private in particular, histories or memoirs, the genealogy, the actions and the changes in private families of distinction and eminency<sup>85</sup>

He also commented on the way that the inheritance of a baronetcy must go through the male line, as it was a military honour.<sup>86</sup> By 1756, it was clear that he and his wife were unlikely to have a male heir; William Grant then drew up a deed of entail<sup>87</sup> leaving Prestongrange to Archibald Grant of Moneymusk. This document refers to Prestongrange as ‘... the manor place...’ and lists the associated lands: the lands of Prestongrange, the lands of Salt Preston, the miln and miln lands of Prestongrange, the harbour called Aicheson’s Haven and harbour milns, and sea milns.

William evidently had a re-think as, in 1760, he drew up a new deed of entail,<sup>88</sup> wherein he detailed the line of inheritance that he wished his family to follow. Perhaps it was the production of a male heir in 1759, by his second daughter, Agnes, to her husband Sir George Suttie,<sup>89</sup> that swayed him: his eldest daughter Janet was still childless after eleven years of marriage. The new entail instructed that each daughter, in age order, should inherit, followed by ‘... the heirs male of her body...’.

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<sup>84</sup> NAS CC8/8/119.2 1764

<sup>85</sup> NLS MSS 10970, p. 2 1752

<sup>86</sup> NLS MSS 10970, p. 102 1752

<sup>87</sup> NAS GD357/46/2 1756

<sup>88</sup> NAS GD357/43/18 GD357/44/7

<sup>89</sup> NAS GD357/44/3 The third baronet was the eldest son of Sir James Suttie of Balgone, second baronet, and of Elizabeth Dalrymple, third daughter of Sir Hugh Dalrymple of North Berwick

## LORD ADVOCATE WILLIAM GRANT

Consequently, on William Grant's death, his eldest daughter, Janet (c1729-1818), inherited Prestongrange, which she held as Countess of Hyndford for over half a century. Apart from intermittent entries in the Haddington Sheriff Court Records – because the estate was subject to a deed of entail – little documented evidence survives from Janet Grant's period as owner. She evidently initiated some agricultural works, as the Sheriff Court Records show between 1775 and 1784, where the building of several March dykes are noted.<sup>90</sup> She died childless, and so the estate passed in 1818 to Agnes' son (Agnes having died in 1809), who took the additional name of Grant to become Sir James Grant-Suttie of Prestongrange and Balgone.

William Grant's third daughter, Jean, made an equally auspicious marriage, to Robert Dundas of Arniston, the elder half-brother of Henry Dundas, one of the most powerful British politicians of the time. This assured that the next generation retained the family's close links to the governing circle.

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<sup>90</sup> NAS SC/40/67/1 SC40/67/13

## THE GRANT-SUTTIES: OWNERS IN THE INDUSTRIAL AGE

### Summary

BY THE NINETEENTH century, the hold of the upper classes on government had begun to loosen. From 1832, a Member of Parliament had a larger electorate to satisfy and, as a consequence, the increasing demands of politics saw a lessening of participation by the minor nobility. Population growth, especially in the urban areas, was one of the main contributing factors to change. The 1832 Reform Act (Scotland), gave the franchise to the middle classes; by 1868 it had been extended to the skilled workers, and more working men had the vote by 1884. Women were amongst those considered not eligible for the vote; nineteenth century society remained, in many respects, patriarchal.

This period saw an increase in the amount of documentation as more land changed hands, and as industry grew apace. Estate plans were produced, often to keep track of land sold for industry: changing land use can also be traced from mid-century, from the Ordnance Survey maps of the country. Industrial growth continued, further stimulated by the introduction of new technologies, and by the expanding railway network, which facilitated the movement of goods further afield, as well as by increasing demand. By the third quarter of the century, this growth was matched by an increasing concern about the plight of the workforce; some proprietors were actively involved in the improvement of conditions, whilst others were rather more dilatory. As the coal workers were not only employed by the colliery owner, but also accommodated, their lives were entirely reliant upon the whims of the owners who, in many instances, exploited their positions.

### The fourth to the sixth Baronets

Sir George Suttie [d1783], 3rd Bt.  
 m. Agnes Grant (on 7 June 1757) [d1809]  
 three sons; five daughters]

## THE GRANT-SUTTIES

Sir James Suttie [1759–1836], 4th Bt. from 1783  
from 1818 (aged 59) took name of Grant-Suttie, when he  
inherited Prestongrange from his aunt, Janet, Countess of  
Hyndford

m. Catherine Isabella Hamilton (on 16 April 1792)  
one son, George; two daughters, Grace & Janet

Sir George Grant-Suttie [1797–June 1878], 5th Bt. from 1836  
(aged 39)

m. Lady Harriet Charteris (in 1829), a daughter of the  
Earl of Wemyss & March  
four sons, James, Francis, George & Robert;  
two daughters, Margaret and Catherine

Sir James Grant-Suttie [1830–Oct 1878], 6th Bt. from June  
1878 (aged 48)

m. Lady Susan Harriet Innes-Ker (on 5.8.1857), daughter  
of the Duke of Roxburghe  
one son, George; three daughters, Susan Harriet,  
Harriet and Victoria Alberta

The tenure of the Grant-Suttie family at Prestongrange House coincides with the expansion of the estate and surrounding area as an industrial complex. Paradoxically, while the increase in income from its industrial base had enabled the Grant-Sutties to engage in conspicuous consumption, ultimately, it was the proximity of the coal workings that contributed to the decline in the property's amenity value. The history of this family in the Victorian age is fairly typical, with its rise and subsequent fall in fortune. What later came to be a major problem in wealthy families post First World War, hit the Grant-Sutties much earlier. The unexpected death of the 6th Baronet barely four months after the death of his father not only placed severe financial demands on the estate, but also left it in the hands of a minor, the 7th Baronet being barely eight years of age. While his mother, Lady Susan, was a very capable woman, because of the attitudes of Victorian society towards women, there was no question that she could cope alone; hence while she was named as her husband's executrix, the running of the estate was governed by an assortment of legal advisors. Almost inevitably, once the day-to-day business of such a property moves outwith the hands of an interested owner, all sorts of problems arise. So the death of the 6th Baronet in 1878 probably marked the turning point for the fortunes of the Grant-Sutties, and for Prestongrange

## PRESTONGRANGE HOUSE

House. Nevertheless, prior to that, the family had thrived, particularly under the care of the 5th Baronet; their industrial interests are dealt with elsewhere, so it is the family detail that is addressed below.

At the time he inherited Prestongrange from Janet, Countess of Hyndford, in 1818, the 4th Baronet, Sir James Suttie was a Member of Parliament for Haddingtonshire; he served in three parliaments, retiring from politics in 1826. There is extant a plan which shows the improvements made to Prestongrange Estate to 1825 (with an overlay of the 1877/1878 cropping plan).<sup>91</sup> Little else is known of him. Neither of Sir James' daughters married, and were not elderly when they died – Grace on 15 October 1821 and Janet on 7 January 1836, a few months before her father. The Grant-Suttie archive not only indicates that Janet Grant-Suttie's home was at 63 George Street, Edinburgh, but it also provides an inventory of her moveable property after her death in January 1836.<sup>92</sup> The house was probably owned by the family, but this does show that it was possible for unmarried daughters to live away from home. Amongst the references to linen and china, there is a reference to

'...my curiosities, specimens of lava, marbles etc...'<sup>93</sup>

indicating that Janet, like many other men and women of the time, loved collecting the many extraordinary things that their expanding world had to offer. This private passion for collecting the unusual was paralleled by the collections of the wealthy and great that later came to make up the contents of the museums of the later nineteenth century.

The family archive (NAS GD357) also contains a list<sup>94</sup> of those who attended the fourth baronet's funeral on 16 May 1836; this gives a good indication of the 'good and the great' of the locality, at the time. There are no women listed.

Robert Suttie esq  
George Suttie Esq  
Robert Dundas of Arniston  
William Pitt Dundas Esq  
Captain Henry Dundas  
Lord Melville  
Lord Ramsay

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<sup>91</sup> NAS RHP 41333/2

<sup>92</sup> NAS GD357/51/2 7.1.1836 GD357/51/3 & GD357/51/7 Inventory: 1839

<sup>93</sup> NAS GD357/51/6

<sup>94</sup> NAS GD357/50/3 16.5.1836

## THE GRANT-SUTTIES

James Hamilton Esq  
Major Hew Dalrymple  
David Anderson Esq of St Germain's  
Sir David Baird Bt.  
Sir David Kinloch Bt.  
Sir Thomas Buchan-Hepburn Bt.  
Sir Alexander Hope Bt.  
The Rev Mr Balfour Graham  
Captain Brown  
James Balfour esq of Whittinghame  
Sir John Hall Bt.  
James Hunter, Earl of Thurstone  
Robert Hay Esq of Lawfield  
The Earl of Lauderdale  
Sir George Warrender Bt.  
Archibald Todrick Esq  
The Reverend Mr Cunningham, Prestonpans  
John Borthwick Esq of Crookston

It seems unlikely that Sir James and his family ever lived at Prestongrange House; he was residing at the Suttie house at Balgone, North Berwick at the time of his death in 1836,<sup>95</sup> and the only mention of Prestongrange in the inventory of his personal estate was that the grass parks there were to be let by roup (auction).<sup>96</sup> The letters between William Playfair and George Grant-Suttie, relating to Playfair's work on the alterations to Prestongrange House, date from 1830, so it would appear that Sir James had handed over the House to his heir, 32 year-old George and his wife Lady Harriet, soon after their marriage in 1829, and before his death in 1836. According to their marriage contract, George was given an annuity of £3,000 on which to live.

Over his 42 years' ownership, Sir George Grant-Suttie, the fifth Baronet, was perhaps the most influential and successful member of the Grant-Suttie family to own Prestongrange House. His time at Prestongrange coincided with the boom time in the coal industry, and he had managed to implement two distinct phases of improvement on the House itself (see the section on Playfair at Prestongrange below). In spite of this conspicuous consumption, on his death in 1878, his estate was valued at £48,609 11 shillings 8 pence; Sir George died a wealthy man.

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<sup>95</sup> NAS GD357/50/1 1836

<sup>96</sup> NAS GD357/50/6

## PRESTONGRANGE HOUSE

The relationship between Sir George and his wife lasted 31 years. It started auspiciously

‘... having conceived a mutual love and affection for one another...’<sup>97</sup>

and produced six children; like their aunts, the two daughters, Margaret and Katherine did not marry, but lived away from home, with their youngest brother Robert, at Tilney Street, Park Lane, London. At some stage, Margaret (at least) moved back to Prestongrange House, to assist her ailing mother, who died in May 1858. A letter, thought to date from 1852, Margaret Suttie wrote to a family friend, Mrs Harrington, telling of her mother’s frailty:

... she has not been able to sit up and write for many months, or else she would have written to you before... my dearest mother under went an operation in August and another a few weeks ago, and I am very sorry to say that we do not see the improvements we hoped for. She is very seldom able to be off the sofa and suffers a great deal...

Lady Harriet was evidently very ill. Margaret Suttie then went on to comment on her brothers

... we expect Georgey and Bob down on Friday from their school and we had such a delightful account of Francis from Lord George saying he was such an excellent officer which has given us all much pleasure...

and on the House

... we are delighted with Prestongrange. The house is so nice, I do not think you would know it again, it is so very much changed...<sup>98</sup>

The garden too was evidently being improved: the shrubberies were thinned out

... admitting light and air into this fine old, but now modernised mansion...’

and the hothouses were extended

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<sup>97</sup> NAS GD357/44/7 Contract of marriage between George Grant-Suttie and Lady Harriet

<sup>98</sup> NLS MSS 8191, fo 169



## THE GRANT-SUTTIES

... so as to give more room for exotics and other choice conservatory flowers...'.<sup>99</sup>

Perhaps some twenty years as a widower explains Sir George's later neglect of the House; it was not lack of money. In November 1876, the local minister was berating him for the lack of investment in the local community, and pointing to the

... need of some additional provisions for the pastoral oversight and religious instruction of the very largely increased population which the colliery and other public works on your estate are now bringing to this parish...

and asks for

... an indication of what you would recommend, and are prepared to contribute out of your large increase in revenue from the new population...<sup>100</sup>

There is no record extant of Sir George's response, although the next month, he was writing of his intention to build a school.<sup>101</sup> Two years later, his death at Grantham House, Putney Heath, Surrey,<sup>102</sup> which he had rented for six months, handed Prestongrange House and estate to his son, James, the 6th Baronet and his wife Lady Susan. An interesting document<sup>103</sup> lists the rental of the Prestongrange and Balgone Estates for the final year of Sir George's life, perhaps produced when inventories of his possessions were being compiled.

The death of the 6th Baronet – leaving an estate of £15,059 15 shillings 2 pence – so soon after that of his father, set in train a sequence of events which must have been extremely hard on his widow and four children. On Sir James' death, his family was living at Maines House, Chirnside, and they were only able to move to Prestongrange House after some considerable repairs and renovations were carried out. It

... had been allowed by the late Sir George Grant-Suttie to fall into a neglected state as regards both the Mansion House and offices and the grounds which involved very considerable expense on draining, gas fitting, painting etc. before the place could be made habitable as a residence...<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Haddingtonshire Courier: 6.6.1862

<sup>100</sup> NAS GD357/34/10 Letter to Sir George Grant-Suttie 17.11.1876 from Dr Struthers Prestonpans Manse

<sup>101</sup> NAS GD 357/34/11 14.12.1876

<sup>102</sup> NAS GD357/40/21 21.1.1878

<sup>103</sup> NAS GD357/39/1 1877–78

<sup>104</sup> NAS GD357/87 pp. 243, 244 8.8.1879

## PRESTONGRANGE HOUSE

A new water and gas supply were also provided. It

... has been arranged that Lady Susan shall occupy Prestongrange House rent free in view that the heir is to reside with her... that the garden and grounds shall be upheld at the expense of the heir and that Lady Susan shall pay at market rates for all produce supplied to her from the garden. The gardener has also been instructed to make arrangements for having such of the garden produce as shall not be required by Lady Susan disposed of to the best advantage at sight of Mr Yule...<sup>105</sup>

However, the condition of Prestongrange House was the least of Lady Susan's problems. On Sir George's death, his heir, James, inherited the entailed estates; his other surviving children – Francis, Robert, Margaret and Catherine – also had a claim on the estate. Because their brother, James, was to die so soon, it meant that the claim of the older generation took precedence over that of Lady Susan's family. The details of the inheritances had been set down in marriage contracts of 1829 and 1857, as well as being tied to an entail.<sup>106</sup>

In 1865, Sir George had, with his sons' knowledge, disentailed the property, and then set up a new deed of entail, which settled £20,000 on his younger children, and settled the same amount on James' younger children. Ten years later, Sir George added a further £20,000 on his younger children (as long as this did not exceed 3 years rental from the entailed estate); at the time it would have appeared to be a positive bequest, and the estate could probably have carried out Sir George's request, and recovered.

With the untimely death of the 6th Baronet, and the decline in the returns from coal, by 1878 the estate was struggling to pay its way. Nonetheless, the sons and daughters of Sir George pursued their claim on the estate; eventually the court of session was called upon to make a decision. On 12.5.1881 it was decided that they would get only £7044 19 shillings over and above the first £20,000, secured on a loan.<sup>107</sup> At the time, the two ladies were living at St Agnes, Cannes, France, while Francis lived in London, and Robert at The Lodge, North Berwick. Only £11,600 was left towards the inheritances of Sir James' three daughters.

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<sup>105</sup> NAS GD357/87 p. 268

<sup>106</sup> NAS GD357/87 pp. 167–213 and GD357/24/7

<sup>107</sup> NAS GD357/87 p. 393

## THE GRANT-SUTTIES

As a comparison, there is a list of the servants at Prestongrange and at Balgone, together with their wages<sup>108</sup> which indicates how much of a dissonance there was between rich and poor at this time.

Mary MacDonald Housemaid £20 yearly + 10 shillings/  
week board wages

Margaret Dobson ditto £7 yearly + 8 shillings/week  
board wages

the above are half yearly servants; their wages are paid  
up to Whitsunday 1876 and board wages to July

Prestongrange policies

John Edington 14 shillings per week + 4 bolls potatoes  
yearly

Peter Dudgeon 14 shillings per week

the above are supposed monthly servants and are paid  
up to 8 June

Details are given for farms at Dolphinston, St Clements  
Wells and Rockville garden, Balgone House, Gamekeeper  
(Ninian B Erskine), Home Farm Balgone and Foresters,  
Balgone.

### Conspicuous consumption: Playfair at Prestongrange<sup>109</sup>

When George Grant-Suttie employed William Playfair<sup>110</sup> (1790–1857) in 1830 and again in 1850, to design and implement additions to Prestongrange House, he was employing one of the most important architects of the period, in Scotland; the others were William Burn and James Gillespie Graham. Known chiefly for his public buildings, Playfair was a largely self-taught designer, never having been ‘trained’; this gave his approach to design a particularly personal touch. He was also very conscious of accommodating the physicalities of a site in his designs, and his preference for following the ‘nature of the ground’. This can be seen in his treatment of Calton Hill and the area to the North, the layout of which he

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<sup>108</sup> NAS GD357/40/17 4.7.1878

<sup>109</sup> An excellent summary of Playfair’s work on the House is given by Apted IN Murray, G, Apted, MR & Hodkinson, I, ‘Prestongrange and its Painted Ceiling’ IN *Transactions of the East Lothian Antiquarian and Field Naturalists Society* Vol X (1966) pp. 92–132

<sup>110</sup> for a full interpretation of Playfair’s career see: Gow, I ‘Playfair: a Northern Athenian’ in *RIBA Journal* (May 1990) and Gow, I ‘WH Playfair, Architect to the Modern Athens’ IN *RIAS Diary* (1988)

## PRESTONGRANGE HOUSE

was, from 1818, closely involved with, although, for a number of reasons, his plan was not fully executed.<sup>111</sup>

Playfair's public works in and around Edinburgh were mostly in a Classical style. They included the City Observatory and, with Cockerell, the (famously unfinished) National Monument on Calton Hill; the Royal Institution (now the Scottish Academy) and, later in his life, the National Gallery of Scotland, both on the Mound; The Advocates' (now Signet) Library staircase and the Surgeons' Hall, Nicolson Street. His work on the gateway and terraces of Heriot's Hospital and on the Free Church College leaned towards the Gothic, with a variable degree of success. However, Playfair's Edinburgh *piece de resistance* was Donaldson's Hospital, which was erected between 1842 and 1851: this was not a Classically inspired building, but one clearly influenced by Romanticism and the Picturesque. Its many towers, mullioned windows, and buttresses were gleaned from the Medieval and post-Reformation periods, and the style later manifested itself under the guise of Scottish Baronial, a sort of Gothic Romantic plus Scottish vernacular. Youngson's descriptions of Donaldson's as '... frivolously ornamented...' and of a '... light-hearted and fanciful touch...' sum up Playfair's design<sup>112</sup> most appropriately.

In the absence of Playfair's working drawings and correspondence (just two letter books<sup>113</sup> and a few separate letters remain, and only his finished designs were retained), it is only possible to guess at his processes of inspiration. He only worked on private buildings (and Prestongrange House was a private commission) for a close circle of people, all of whom he would have known well.<sup>114</sup> The houses he worked on were luxurious and, partly because of his inability to devolve any of his work, partly because of his attention to detail, he was not a cheap architect to employ. He even turned down work if he felt it undeserving of his abilities.<sup>115</sup>

Very early on in his career, in the 1830s, he was working on existing properties – like Craigcrook Castle, Cramond, Grange

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<sup>111</sup> Youngson, AJ, *The Making of Classical Edinburgh: 1750–1840* (1988 ed) pp. 155, 156

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 281, 282

<sup>113</sup> Letterbooks for 1830–33 and 1840–45 are held by the Special Collections in the University of Edinburgh library: they also hold his collection of drawings, which are available on microfilm. Others of Playfair's letters are held in various collections in the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

<sup>114</sup> NAS GD18/5847 1.11.1849 Indicates that Sir George Grant-Suttie was on the Board of Management for the designs for the Mound, Edinburgh. Playfair's work on Prestongrange House began c1830, so it is clear that they knew each other before 1849.

<sup>115</sup> Gow, I (1988) *op. cit.*, under 'Playfair's Life of Work' [no page numbers]

## THE GRANT-SUTTIES

House and Prestongrange House – enlarging and modernising them, all the while ensuring that his efforts were, externally at least, virtually indistinguishable from the original. Gow has said that Playfair ‘... adjusted the tower house vocabulary...’:<sup>116</sup> Playfair’s designs for Prestongrange bear this out. Externally, the House echoed its earlier tower house roots, sitting safe and secure on its site; internally, the layout was modernised, yet every detail (and Playfair was very conscientious about detail) spoke of quality – both of design and materials – and of comfort. Sixty-two drawings<sup>117</sup> survive out of seventy listed for the 1830 period, when Prestongrange House was first being altered for George Grant-Suttie (later 5th Bt.) and his wife Lady Harriet, shortly after their marriage: the main addition was a solid North tower, complete with the owner’s coat of arms and motto – Nothing Hazard, Nothing Have – over the entrance. In 1837, Playfair was back, designing an Eastern Lodge and gateway – twenty-seven drawings for these – and in 1845, he designed a range of offices and stables: forty drawings survive. From c1845, Sir George and Lady Harriet had commissioned some more additions for the House: the final plans were submitted, and work on the House was begun by 1850. Eighty-three drawings survive. This time, Playfair added a massive tower to the West.

Playfair’s drawings are very beautiful; they bear the mark of an artist whose commitment to quality almost leaps off the page. Every decoration – inside and out – was drawn in detail; even the ornamentation to the roof-line, the star, the thistle, the crescent and the fleur-de-lis, were drawn out to scale. These last were symbols of power in the late medieval to early modern period,<sup>118</sup> and Playfair may have either been adding to what was extant, or creating anew in the older style; he certainly used them in great abundance all over the estate buildings. So it seems that the Romantic was his preferred style, allied both to any history a house might have had already, and to the site; his work at Floors (1837–45) for the Duke of Roxburghe is perhaps the most ebullient of all his private designs. Nevertheless, in his public works, it was rather later in his life before he felt able to suggest Romantic flights of fancy to his commissioning clients.

To have Playfair to work on your House was a real cachet;

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<sup>116</sup> Ian Gow, informal conversation December 1999

<sup>117</sup> Playfair’s collection of drawings is held by the University of Edinburgh, reference P19. A copy of the list of the drawings is appended as Annex A

<sup>118</sup> Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 55

## PRESTONGRANGE HOUSE

it also was costly. In 1853, Playfair submitted his bill to Sir George: he appears to have usually charged 5% of the amount of expenditure. In this instance, this was estimated at £231 10 shillings 6 pence; but for Sir George, Playfair had arranged to charge 2.5%, plus his travelling expenses – in total £138 10 shillings.<sup>119</sup> This was consumption at its most conspicuous. As Prestongrange estate was entailed, any investment in the property could be recorded in the Sheriff Court records, and a proportion of the sums spent set against the property when the heir of entail inherited. In the private papers there is reference to an ‘Account of money expended by Sir George Grant-Suttie ... on Additions to Prestongrange Mansion House’,<sup>120</sup> but the works listed seem to be totally out of proportion to the work indicated by Playfair’s drawings. The amount of money mentioned are far below those referred to by Playfair.<sup>121</sup> Work at Balgone, North Berwick (the other family home) is also recorded.

It is hard to know why so little of the work was recorded, either in the family papers (although the relevant documents could be missing) or in the Sheriff Court records. It might be that the bulk of the work was not eligible – although the Sheriff Court records contain pages of information relating to similar works on other owners’ properties. It perhaps implies that either the heir of entail would not agree to the work being set against the estate (assuming some degree of consensus was necessary), or that the financial situation of Sir George and the estate were such that it was deemed as unnecessary. It seems more likely that it was the latter.

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<sup>119</sup> NAS GD357/28/3 18.1.1853

<sup>120</sup> NAS GD357/15/1 to 4 1852–1872

<sup>121</sup> Edinburgh University Library: Playfair Letterbooks: No 4 – 1830 pp. 1, 5, 8, 9, 20, 121, 146, 181. No 7 – 1840 pp. 288, 503

INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: A NEW  
ROLE FOR AN OLD HOUSE

Sir George Grant-Suttie [1870–1947], 7th Bt. from October 1878 (aged 8) unmarried

*succeeded by his relative [who inherited via his grandfather, Francis, 2nd. son of the 5th Bt.]*

Sir George Philip Grant-Suttie [1938–1997], 8th Bt. from 1947 (aged 9) m. Elspeth Mary

Dr Gordon Prestoungrange [1937–], Baron from 1998

THE FAMILY'S HISTORY in this period is particularly difficult to piece together, as the contents of the NAS GD357 collection peter out. From local newspaper reports it is clear that Lady Susan played a role as 'lady of the manor' in the area, and lived, with her family, at Prestongrange House. Her three daughters each married – Susan Harriet in 1878 to the Earl of Stair, Harriet in 1886 to the 2nd baronet of Woollahra and the third, Victoria Alberta, in 1896 to the Reverend George Smith, Minister of Prestonpans. Their brother George, the seventh Baronet, was educated at Eton and Oxford, and then seems to have lived most of his life in Hampshire, leaving the estate to be administered by his mother, and then by the family lawyers, who acted as his *curator bonis*.<sup>122</sup> In essence, Prestongrange House was thus run by lawyers from 1876 onwards. This, combined with a more general decline in the fortunes of the gentry led almost inevitably to change. Such a large House needed a lot of maintenance, which cost money, and problems of staffing increased as industry offered increased wages, and more attractive working conditions. Once Lady Susan died in October 1909, the House lay empty.<sup>123</sup> The Inland Revenue Survey of 1912–14 is revealing about the state of the property:

A well built but not very conveniently arranged house of considerable age. Owing to proximity of Collieries, it is not a readily lettable subject, and the only bathroom in the house being on the third floor is also a distinct

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<sup>122</sup> Stair Memorial Encyclopedia, *The Laws of Scotland*, Vol II (1990), paragraphs 1232–1237 on the role of a *curator bonis*; 'a curatory of those under mental disability'.

<sup>123</sup> NAS VR99/21-29 1909–1927

## PRESTONGRANGE HOUSE

disability. There is a rather attractive flower garden and a walled orchard which latter has recently been separately let.

and the Survey also gives a description of the layout:

*Ground Floor* contains kitchen scullery, housekeepers room, 2 butlers pantries, wine cellar, 4 servants bedrooms – 2 of which are in court wing.

*First Floor* Hall, Library and Drawing Room (both large) dining room, business room and schoolroom, 2 bedrooms and WC, besides 4 smaller bedrooms.

*Second Floor* Large bedroom with maids room and lavatory off, and 5 other bedrooms, 1 with dressing room.

*Third Floor* and attics, 7 rooms and a bathroom.

The stable offices are substantial structures comprising 2 stables of 7 stalls and 2 loose boxes each, harness room, boiler house and coachhouse, besides a house or houses of 6 rooms over same. At back of stable there is also a washhouse byre for 6 cows and old coachhouse in poor condition.

At the garden there is a rather poor gardener's house, brick built and containing 2 apartments. There is also a quantity of glass which however is in very middling order.<sup>124</sup>

So, Prestongrange House, despite its earlier owners' expenditure, was suffering from neglect once again. The war years delayed still further the letting of the property; nonetheless, with hindsight, it proved fortuitous that the eventual tenant, in 1924, was The Royal Musselburgh Golf Club.

### **The Royal Musselburgh Golf Club (RMGC) at Prestongrange<sup>125</sup>**

The RMGC is the fifth oldest golf club in the world: founded in 1774, its early history was played out on the 9 holes of the Musselburgh links, which was located on the site of the present race course. It took 100 years before the epithet of

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<sup>124</sup> NAS IRS 64/92 p. 102

<sup>125</sup> CISWO files: extracted from an unpublished article by J Bush, 15.5.1962. A new publication on the History of the RMGC is to be published shortly



## INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

'Royal' was added, when the 24 year old Duke of Connaught (one of Queen Victoria's sons) became the Club's Honorary President. By the middle of the 1920s, the RMGC had outgrown its Musselburgh site, and was looking for alternative accommodation; Newhailes was one possibility, but Prestongrange was chosen and, from 1924, the RMGC rented both House and policies.

The course was designed by James Braid (1870–1950), one of the leading golfers of his day; he won four Open Championship in the early 1900s, and was, in 1902, one of the founder members of the Professional Golfers' Association. He also designed the course at Gleneagles. James Braid and three other leading players – JH Taylor, Harry Vardon and Sandy Herd – played an exhibition round at Prestongrange to celebrate the new course. The Club seems to have attracted members from many different walks of life, including members of the mining community.

So Prestongrange House remained in the Grant-Suttie family, but was home to the RMGC for the next 33 years. Quite how much work, if any, was done to the property is difficult to ascertain; the surveyor's reports (see below) for 1960 suggest that the House continued to be neglected during this period. In 1947, George, the seventh Baronet, died and the estate passed to his nine year-old relative, George Philip; probably because of his youth, and because the family then lived in Canada, the estate remained in the hands of lawyers, until, in 1956, it was decided that Prestongrange House and policies were to be sold. The RMGC were given first option on the property, but could not raise the money. This last caused some embarrassment, and there appears to have been mention of a law suit as the RMGC had made an offer, and were then unable to honour their offer. Another player, CISWO (together with the Musselburgh Miners' Charitable Society), now entered Prestongrange's story.

### **Prestongrange as a Miners' Welfare Trust: 1958 to date<sup>126</sup>**

In the 1950s, the coal industry was booming; production was high, and the communities that the industry depended upon were both large and vibrant. The miners and their families

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<sup>126</sup> Thanks are due to Ian McAlpine, CISWO's Operations Manager (Scotland) for his assistance in making the CISWO files available, and also to Tom Hardie and his team at Prestongrange House.

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came, as they still do today, under the pastoral eyes of the Coal Industry & Social Welfare Organisation, and one of the activities that CISWO encouraged was golf. The National Coal Board Golf Championships had been a feature of the social schedule of the mining industry for some time and, while the membership of the RMGC was not dominated by members of the mining community (115 of 270 members were miners<sup>127</sup>), it was thought that the loss of this amenity to the community would have quite an impact. So when CISWO was approached by coal industry employees who were also RMGC members, to consider purchasing Prestongrange House and policies, the suggestion was considered and accepted, and the property eventually purchased on behalf of the Musselburgh Miners' Charitable Society. The RMGC was to continue using the course, and the club house, as a golfing sub-section of the Musselburgh Miners' Charitable Society. Evidently there were some members of the RMGC who could not cope with this change of ownership, and who left; yet the only way that the RMGC was going to continue was through such a partnership.

CISWO introduced a fairly unusual management programme, in that the administrative committee was to comprise of CISWO members who were also RMGC members together with officials of the No 2 District Welfare Committee of CISWO. The ethos behind this was written into CISWO's constitution, the aims of which, while CISWO has had to adapt to the changes that have occurred over the past 40 years, largely remain the same today.<sup>128</sup> From taking up Charitable status in 1993, the constitutional objectives of CISWO and the Musselburgh Miners' Charitable Society are to

... provide facilities for such forms of recreation and other leisure-time occupations as are conducive to the improvement of the conditions of living of the inhabitants of Musselburgh, Port Seton, Prestonpans, Cockenzie and the neighbourhood thereof within the Society's sphere of operations as defined from time to time and in particular (but not exclusively) such of the inhabitants as are members of the Mining Community provided that nothing herein contained shall authorise the application

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<sup>127</sup> CISWO files: 14.3.1957 letter from TWS Morgan, CISWO Divisional Social Welfare Officer, Edinburgh to RS Sutherland, CISWO, London

<sup>128</sup> The Trustees are now the President, the Vice-President, the Secretary and the Treasurer of the Management Committee

## INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

of the Property to purposes which are not in law charitable.<sup>129</sup>

So in effect, Prestongrange was bought by a miners' social organisation, to be run by miners, for the mining community, with the long term aim of providing for a wider range of social welfare activities, alongside golf. This ethos came to fruition in 1962 when James Bush, a miner, was appointed Captain of the RMGC.

In the late 1950s, the facade of Prestongrange House hid a horror story: as one of the architectural surveys revealed

The house is built of stone, and is commodious, although rather rambling for the purpose of a club house. It appears to have been neglected, with the result that in certain parts rain has been getting in and damage has been done to plasterwork and woodwork. There has been dry rot in parts of the building and some timber repairs have been carried out. Much of the outside stonework is decaying and ornamental roof finials have been removed for safety. To make the house attractive and comfortable much repair work would be required to roofs, stonework, woodwork and plasterwork. The cost would be considerable.<sup>130</sup>

and while CISWO knew of that the building was in poor condition, and that that was reflected in the purchase price, a further report revealed that the

existing clubhouse would require either very extensive repairs and improvements, or that a new clubhouse would have to be built<sup>131</sup>

Fears of dry rot in the roof were to be realised and further investigations into the condition of the building revealed more problems. The consensus of opinion was that a new clubhouse was an urgent requirement; it seems that the golf course was far more important to the new owners than the House. As early as 1951, before the sale of the property was under consideration, there had been talk of demolishing the House.<sup>132</sup> In 1960, the area office of CISWO proposed the building of a new club house; this was rejected by the CISWO

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<sup>129</sup> CISWO files: from the Constitution and Regulations of the Musselburgh Miners' Charitable Society (1993)

<sup>130</sup> CISWO files: letter from Cassells, Architect's Section, Welfare Branch 9.11.1956

<sup>131</sup> CISWO Preliminary Investigation Report, c 1960

<sup>132</sup> CISWO files: 18.1.1951 letter from Architect to the RMGC Secretary

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Council, which suggested that any proposal should cater also for the non-golf playing membership. As a result, part of House was to be rehabilitated, and an extension built to accommodate such as bowling, and other activities. Finance remained a problem, even though a grant was given.

The discovery of the painted ceiling<sup>133</sup> during renovation work created an enormous challenge for the new owners. With no additional funds on which to draw, and a half-completed renovation programme, they called in as many experts as possible to proffer advice. Eventually, the ceiling was relocated to Merchiston Tower, leaving the Prestongrange programme behind schedule, and the owners rather bemused; as TWS Morgan had commented

it was appreciated that some of the paintings were, to say the least, not in good taste, and it might be necessary to conceal them<sup>134</sup>

The eventual solution saved much embarrassment – and money. Such historical artifacts are costly to renovate, and even costlier to maintain; interestingly though, one wonders what the reaction may have been in the climate of the 1990s, in comparison to that of the 1960s. Also, the much vaunted 1960s extension, providing bowling facilities and a large hall area, perhaps would have had a little more difficulty in meeting the planning regulations today; like its contemporary, the University Library in George Square, it is a building very much of its time.

Today, Prestongrange House and policies remain in the ownership of CISWO's Musselburgh Miners' Charitable Society, and its golfing sub-section the Royal Musselburgh Golf Club has the use of the course and the Club House and facilities. Over and above the RMGC's own competitions, two golf competitions are held for workers from the much diminished mining communities – the Annual Retired Mine-workers' Golf Competition (previously the Annual Golf Championship for Retired Personnel) in June (begun in 1961), and the Annual Scottish Coalfield Golf Championships on the first Monday in May. This last competition is the successor to the Scottish Divisional Golf Championship Final (begun 1952), the final of which seems to have been held at Prestongrange from 1964–68. Re-organisation in the industry

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<sup>133</sup> As discussed earlier, relative to Mark Ker and Helen Leslie

<sup>134</sup> CISWO files: report of meeting 20.11.1962 with Michael Apted

## INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

in 1968 resulted in a re-naming of the competition to the Scottish Mineworkers' Golf Championship, which, after a break in 1984, was re-started in 1985 under its present name. From 1970, the winners of the previous year's final at the RMGC have gone on to represent Scotland in the National Competition for Mineworkers; they won the first three years of this, and the 1974 final was held at Prestongrange.

Today, a range of 'social' golf days are held, in aid of charities and for local causes such as the East Lothian Children's Playgroup (for less able children). Indoor bowls remain a popular activity, as does snooker. The weight lifters, so much a feature of Prestongrange in the 1960s, have now moved to Edinburgh.

With the decline in employment in the mining sector, CISWO's brief to deal with the whole community through Miners' Welfare has changed to encompass a development strategy for the whole community – whether associated with mining or not. Nevertheless, as many of today's communities comprise the children and grandchildren of past miners, CISWO's remit almost inevitably retains, at its heart, the mining community: and the whole community which lives around Prestongrange is no exception.

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On the death of the 8th Baronet in 1997 the remaining baronial lands of Prestoungrange were acquired by Dr Gordon Prestoungrange from the Manor of Milton Malsor in Northamptonshire. His interest in the barony arose from Lilian Audrey Park, his mother who was born in Musselburgh in 1902, and his grandfather's career as a miner at Prestongrange Colliery at the dawn of the 20th Century. Since his accession and recognition by The Lord Lyon, he has re-established the Baron Court as a non-profit organisation to assist the Industrial Heritage Museum to further its work at Prestongrange, and to revive some of the traditions of the feudal age which can bring benefit and enjoyment in the 21st Century.

## CONCLUSION

THE STORY OF Prestongrange House is one of a long occupied site, of a number of illustrious owners, and of other less well known residents whose mark, nonetheless, the old House retains. It is a story of lives that impinged on great events in Scotland's history, and of lives that made no impact at all on the national scene. Most noticeable of all, it is a story of variable fortunes, often won by one generation, and lost by another.

In the second half of the twentieth century, CISWO's commitment to Prestongrange has witnessed enormous social and economic change, including change in the coal industry. Having taken on the property at a time when it seemed that the industry would continue to thrive, CISWO has weathered the storms of the 1970s and 1980s, and finally reached the changed cultural environment of the 1990s. The decline in the coal sector has been matched by an increase in the leisure and heritage industries. The adverse influences – the proximity of the colliery – that made Prestongrange House so 'unlettable' in 1912–14 have now gone. Its position on the edge of the Firth of Forth is an admirable one, and its proximity to Edinburgh desirable. There is a nice irony here. The descendants of many of those who laboured to provide earlier owners with luxuries, now themselves enjoy the amenities that the House has to offer. It seems that the future for Prestongrange looks better today than it has done for almost a century.

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*Rear view of Prestongrange House (Now Royal Musselburgh Golf Clubhouse).*

*Courtesy of Ms Sonia Baker*

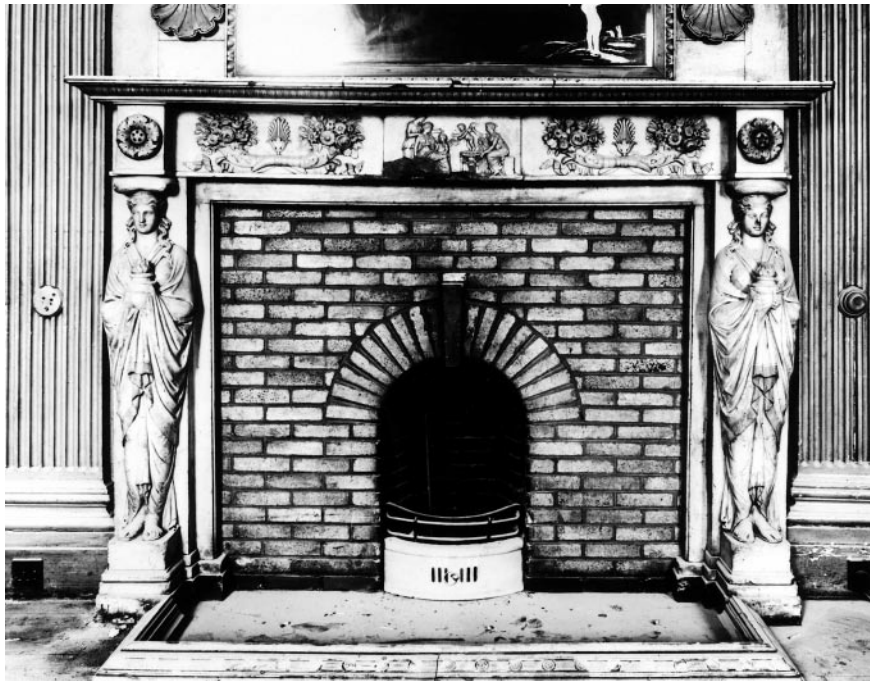


*Coat of Arms above North Entrance*

*Courtesy of Ms Sonia Baker*



*William Playfair by J.T. Smyth after Sir John Watson Gordon  
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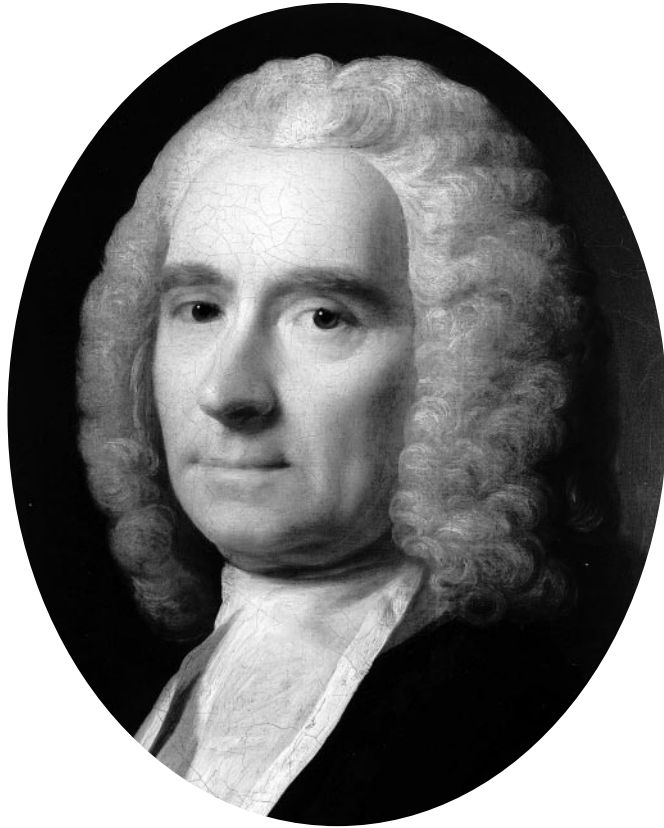
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*View of Alcove*

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*Lord William Grant by Allan Ramsay*

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*Staircase to South Entrance*

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