



Newcastle Family History Society Inc
Newsletter of the Scottish Special Interest Group
No 13 Lamas 2026

Faillte !

Welcome to this Lamas newsletter!



The Orkney Hood – see page 5 for more information

True Fact

The National Health Service is the single biggest employer in Scotland, employing people in over 70 professions.

Forwarded by Ken Shilling from The Scots Magazine for June 2024

Clan MacBeth

Article by Su Carter

Most of us know the name MacBeth from Shakespeare's play, but the real MacBeth, Mac Bethad mac Finalàich, to give him his proper name, was vastly different. He ruled Scotland from 1040 to 1057, and those 17 years were evidence of the capable, lawful and stable leader that he was. MacBeth was killed at the battle of Lumphanan by forces loyal to Malcom III, and was buried on Iona.

My Scottish ancestors were named Leitch/Leech. There is record of a Henry Leche, who lived in Glasgow in 1325 and he was of the clan MacBeth. The Leech family are said to have been the hereditary doctors/healers to the clan MacBeth. The clan MacBeth is connected to the MacBeans, Beaton, MacVeitch and Bethunes. The MacBeth physics are also associated with Clan McLean.

The MacBeth tartan, now over 100 years old and based on the Royal Stewart pattern with a blue background edged with yellow, may quite appropriately be used by all of the name. In 2024 Val McDermid wrote a book titled *Queen Macbeth*, which tells a more truthful story about MacBeth and his Queen's lives and deaths. It is a great read, especially for someone connected to the Clan.



MacBeth tartan -

<https://www.etsy.com/au/listing/1601985888/macbeth-tartan-homespun-100-acrylic>

Scottish Shortbread Recipe

From <https://www.scottishtours.co.uk/blog/simple-scottish-recipes-to-try-at-home/>



When it first appeared on the scene, shortbread was an expensive luxury and special treat reserved just for one-off occasions like weddings, Christmas and New Year. Today, the whole family can enjoy delicious Scottish shortbread any day of the week.

Ingredients

- 350g plain flour
- 125g caster sugar
- 250g butter
- A pinch of salt
- Some caster sugar for dusting

Method

- Preheat your oven to 160°C/325°F/Gas Mark 3.
- Put all the ingredients into a bowl, and work (don't beat) the mixture until it forms a ball.
- Place the mixture into a baking tin and press it into an even layer.
- Bake for 30-40 minutes until the mixture is golden brown.
- Carefully remove the shortbread from the oven and allow it to cool.
- Dust with caster sugar to put the finishing touches.

Time to complete: 1 hour.

Scottish Symbols

Ken Shilling forwarded the following interesting illustration he found on the *O Flower of Scotland* Facebook page



Robert Cox Heggie - A Scots Australian

Article by Ken Shilling

My mother's youngest brother, Robert Cox Heggie, was born 3.50am, 25th October 1920 in Hilltown Dundee. The details of this event are recorded on the birth certificate extract below.

EXTRACT ENTRY OF BIRTH: 17 & 18 Victoria Cap. 80, § 37.					
(1) Name and Surname.	(2) When and Where Born.	(3) Sex.	(4) Name, Surname, and Rank or Profession of Father. Name, and Maiden Surname of Mother. Date and Place of Marriage.	(5) Signature and Qualification of Informant, and Residence, if out of the House in which the Birth occurred.	(6) When and Where Registered, and Signature of Registrar.
Robert Cox Heggie	1920. October Twentyfifth 3.50 a.m. 46 Hilltown Dundee	m	Roderick Heggie Labourer Agnes Heggie m. S. Cox 1906 January 2 nd Dundee	(Signed) Roderick Heggie Father (present)	1920. November 1 st . At Dundee (Signed) Alex. Buchan. Registrar.

EXTRACTED from the REGISTER BOOK OF BIRTHS, for the District of St. Clement, in the Parish of Dundee, this 1st day of November 1920. J. G. Clear R. Asst. Registrar.

Barely having reached school age, young Robert left Scotland, never to return, in 1926, sailing via the Suez to Sydney. His father and elder brother, both Rodericks, had come out the year before to arrange a home for the rest of the family, travelling around the Cape of Good Hope. Robert travelled with his mother, Agnes, and his three sisters. They were Rachel Simpson Heggie, Isabella Heggie and my mother, Agnes Cox Heggie.

Robert had a problem with his legs and had been receiving treatment in Dundee. After the family's arrival in Sydney and move to Newcastle, he continued with the various procedures, spending a lot of time in hospital in Sydney. My mother sometimes spoke about the trips to Sydney - by boat - she and her mother made to visit him.

Schooling was continued at the Junction Public School and Robert was exposed in his free time to the Scottishness that surrounded him through his family and their Scots friends. Not surprisingly, he joined the Newcastle Pipe Band, his uncle, William Webster, already a member. The image (right) shows Robert in full band uniform and his mother Agnes. She is holding the pipes but her instrument was the piano accordion.



This was at a time when pipe bands were a central part of the life in many local suburbs and the sound of people practising was not uncommon.

War broke out in 1939 and, despite the problem with his legs, Robert was eventually able to enlist into the RAAF. Here he trained as an armourer and was posted to New Guinea where he spent his whole time on active service. He took a camera with him and there are a few photos extant of himself and his war-time environment. He often spoke about this part of his life which he obviously found very rewarding and fulfilling.

I remember my mother making fruit cakes, putting them into a tin and dousing then liberally with brandy. They then had a cloth stitched over the tin and were posted to her brother. On arrival we were told that the tin would be carefully opened and the brandy poured out into a glass for appreciative consumption. The cakes were also enjoyed, but then mum made a very good fruit cake.



LAC Robert Cox Heggie

After the war Robert returned to civilian life and took up the occupation of bricklayer. He was also a keen dancer, so the Palais in Newcastle West became almost a second home for him. He never married and lived in the family home in Wilton Street, Merewether, until his final illness. He died 9th November, 1984 in the Concord Repatriation Hospital, Sydney, a Scotsman far away from 'the auld country'.

Near where I live in Merewether there are two houses which were among the last of Uncle Bob's bricklaying jobs. I often pass them and admire the quality of the brickwork. I am also the custodian of his medals and the certificate issued to him by the Newcastle City Council for his service. His name is recorded on a WWII honour board found in the South Newcastle Leagues Club building.

The Orkney Hood

Forwarded by Mel Woodford from Facebook page of *History Piece* dated 26 April 2026

A single piece of woven brown wool, fringed with hand-twisted plaits, found in 1867 in a peat bog at Tankerness on Orkney. The fibres are thin and uneven; the weaver was working without a true loom, possibly on a vertical warp-weighted frame. Radiocarbon dating places its making between 250 and 615 AD.

The Orkney Hood is one of the only complete Iron Age garments to survive from Britain. The cloth was originally woven as a rectangle, then folded and stitched into a hooded shawl. It was repaired several times in its working life, the wool worn at the front and shoulders. It now sits in the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, the textile still soft enough to lift.

Sir Thomas Maitland (1760-1824) - Before Ceylon

Article researched and written by Coreene Kennedy, Tasmania. Last issue Coreene wrote about Sir Thomas Maitland's time in Ceylon. This article covers his time before going to Ceylon. Next issue will include an article covering Maitland's time after Ceylon.

Beginnings

Originally of Norman descent the Maitland clan is one of the oldest in Scottish nobility. Staunch Royalists, family members fought at Flodden and Bannockburn. However, it was in Public Affairs that the family excelled.

According to Walter Frewen Lord (Builders of Great Britain), *'They were ever busy, active public men, with their full share of the unscrupulousness of their age and a considerable gift of successful intrigue.'*

In Thomas Maitland these skills reached their zenith.

Born at Hatton House on 10 March 1760, Thomas was the second son of James Maitland, 7th Earl of Lauderdale and Mary Turner Lombe, daughter of Sir Thomas Lombe, Alderman and Sheriff of London.

Hatton/Haulton House, Ratho, 18kms from Edinburgh was home to the Lauder family. It passed into Maitland hands in 1653 when Charles Maitland, Lord Hatton, later 3rd Earl of Lauderdale married Elizabeth Lauder.



1790 engraving of Hatton House. Collection of The Dicamillo Companion. <https://www.thedicamillo.com/>



James Maitland, 7th Earl of Lauderdale (1732-1859)
Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792)
Art Gallery of New South Wales



Mary, Countess of Lauderdale (1759-1839)
Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792)
Thirlestane Castle

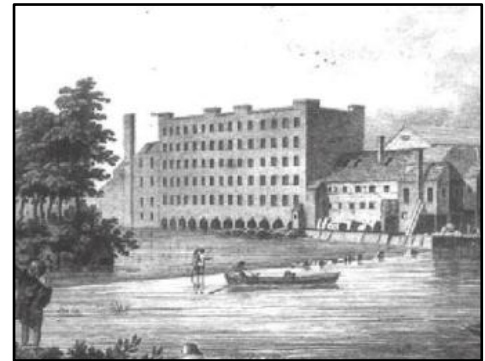
James Maitland sat for the portrait in 1759 and purchased it in 1761 for £80. In 1976, thanks to an anonymous bequest to purchase an 18th century painting, it was sold at Christie's to the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia.

The ghostly white of Mary's face is due to Reynolds not always preparing his materials properly. The carmine has faded completely away.

It might have been thought that James Maitland had 'married beneath himself.'

When Mary married James Maitland, 7th Earl of Lauderdale on 24 April 1749 she brought with her £40,000 (in 2026 £10,480,416.00 or AUD\$14,934,582.00). She also produced six daughters and five sons.

Mary was descended from the Lombe family of Cawston, Norfolk. They were worsted wool weavers and farmers before becoming interested in silk weaving. Using industrial espionage to steal the plans for the Italian method of silk weaving, the Lombe brothers built a factory on an island in the River Derwent, Derby. For the first time in British history a group of employees came together in the one place to work using the river as a power source.



Silk weaving factory of Lombe Brothers on River Derwent, Derby

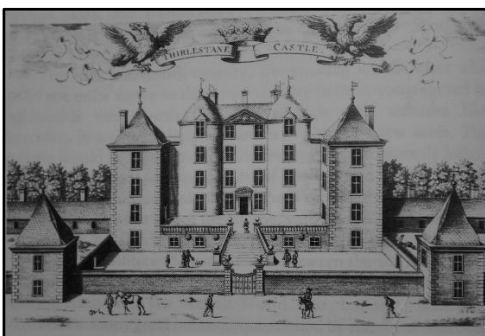
For his efforts, the King awarded Mary's father a Knighthood on 8 July 1727.

Mary was described as:

A lady endowed with all the graces and virtues which can adorn her sex and render a husband happy. She has a fortune, yet has she personal worth and merit - superior to any fortune. And it may be justly said of her that the present age has not produced a woman in whom merit and fortune have joined in a more conspicuous manner.

His Lordship has since his marriage sold out of the army, disengaged his estate from all encumbrances, and extricated himself from a number of lawsuits. And now he lives with his lady and family in the greatest harmony and happiness at the head of an affluent fortune.

This is the Earl, in praise of whose magnificent hospitality at Hatton tradition is still vocal. Among other marks of the high state that he kept there, it is recorded that he maintained the last of the regular old hawking establishments that existed in Scotland.



Thirlestane Castle - Engraving by Johan Slezer, a German military engineer who oversaw the works from 1676 to 1679

Thirlestane Castle was originally built in the 1590s. In the 1670s and flush with his wife's dowry, James set about remodelling the Castle. He began collecting fittings for the interior. In a letter dated 4 April 1671 he wrote that the purchase of six chimney pieces were 'finer than any I see in England. I lighted on them by chance in an Italian merchant's hand'.



Dining room with Maitland family portraits

No records exist of Thomas's schooling. Unlike his older brother James, who did attend school and both Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities, it seems that Thomas was home schooled.



He did enter Lincoln's Inn aged 14 on 14 May 1774. He might have been a Solicitor's clerk and maybe destined for The Bar. However, he did not proceed with that career.

Instead, in 1778 when the 78th Highland Regiment of Foot (Seaforth Highlanders) was raised he was appointed as a Captain. The Regiment spent from 1778 to 1781 in the Channel Islands.

In late 1781 the Regiment sailed for Madras, India arriving in April 1782. Thomas saw active service in Madras, where in 1784, he received distinction in the capture of Palicatchery, (Palachira) India. He served as Brigade Major for Lord Cornwallis in Calcutta.

By the end of 1790 and now a Major he returned to England and embarked on his next career as a Politician.



James, 8th Earl of Lauderdale (1759–1839)

Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788)
Thirlestane Castle Trust

With his brother, James's (the 8th Earl of Lauderdale) influence he was elected as the Member for Haddington Burgh in 1790.

As a Parliamentarian he proved fractious, changing sides if he didn't agree with the Party's stance. He felt that war with India, however successful, was both 'impolitic and unprofitable.' From the British viewpoint he was subsequently to be proven wrong.

Thomas argued against using 'aliens' in the Army, namely émigré French escaping the French Revolution. He also voted against the Army housing the men in Barracks believing that the 18,000 strong Army might stage a military coup against the general population of England. He quit Parliament in 1796.

In 1790, whilst also a Politician he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and joined the 62nd Foot. In 1797 the 62nd Regt of Foot were sent to Saint Domingue to capture the French colony and overthrow the de facto government of Toussaint l'Ouverture.

On 18 April 1797 he was appointed Brigadier-General in Saint Domingue and Colonel of the 10th West India Regiment.

West India Regiments

Having learned that black men seemed to suffer less disease and death in the tropical environments that white men quickly succumbed to, the British Army created the West India Regiments. Between April and September 1795, eight West Indian Regiments were commissioned.

Some members of these regiments were free blacks who were recruited into the Army. Others were slaves purchased from plantation owners. In the years between 1795 and 1808 the Army purchased 13,400 slaves at the cost of £925,000 (AUD\$195m in 2026).

Once bought by the Army the black slaves were entitled to the same conditions as the white soldiers. However, their pay was nine pence per diem against the white soldiers one shilling per diem. After completing their 12 years of service the soldiers of the West India Regiments became free men.

These negro West India troops won the highest encomiums from every British commander under whom they served.

Sir Ralph Abercromby in 1796, Sir John Moore in 1797, Lieutenant-General Trigge in 1801, Sir George Provost in 1805, Lieutenant-General Beckwith and Major-General Maitland in 1809 and 1810, all testified to the gallantry, steadiness, and discipline of the negro soldiers.

Sir John Moore, speaking of the new corps in 1796, said 'they are invaluable', and 'the very best troops for the climate'.



May 1798

With his British troops dying of yellow fever and no hope of capturing Saint Domingue, Maitland negotiated a retreat with French General Toussaint l'Ouverture, (1743–1803).

The agreement stipulated that the British would not become involved in internal matters or attack Saint Domingue.

It also confirmed that British ships would allow supplies to reach Saint Domingue ports.

l'Ouverture promised to do the same regarding Jamaica.

Maitland Convention

On 2 April 1799 Maitland landed in Philadelphia, USA. His task was to persuade the Americans to agree to safe trade routes with l'Ouverture through the Ports of Saint Domingue. Using all his diplomatic skills he managed to persuade the Americans to agree.

In June 1799 at Saint Domingue, Maitland, l'Ouverture and the USA representative Edward Stevens, signed the 'Maitland Convention' that stipulated that the Ports of Le Cap and Port Republican would be open to Anglo-American shipping and facilitate trade.

By August 1799, an exhausted Maitland was living at Berkeley Square, London.

However, he wasn't allowed to rest for too long because in June 1800 his next foray against the French was on Belle Ile off the coast of Brittany, France. When reports of the superior strength of the French Garrison were received the expedition was abandoned.



In spite of having had a meteoric rise in his career, Maitland was dissatisfied with his situation. On 17 November 1800, writing from Lisbon to his friend William Huskisson he complained:

The lowness of my rank in the Army precludes me from looking forward to it as an object of any fair ultimate ambition ...

On the other hand, the line I adopted in politics originally and that which my friends still adhere to preclude me from having any chance of advancing myself out of my profession.

He offered to be employed anywhere under Henry Dundas's (Secretary of State for War) patronage but was disappointed.

In 1802, on returning home he resumed his seat in Parliament, the sitting Member having politely stepped aside.

He remained in Parliament until October 1803. On 1 November 1803 he took the Oath as Commissioner with the Board of Control of the British East India Company. This ended in March 1804.

In 1805 as a Major General, he assumed command of a Brigade in Sussex, England.

The Maitland Plan

In 1783, with the signing of the Treaty of Paris, Britain formally acknowledged America's Independence. However, Britain needed to find new sources of raw materials for its industries. It turned to expanding its foothold in South America.

Although Maitland is credited with the plan to take the Spanish owned colonies of South America, it was a Scot, Nicholas Vansittart who originally devised it in 1795. The British Government initially approved the plan but then cancelled it in 1797.

Maitland, a friend of Vansittart, revised the plan and in 1800 the Government approved it.

Put into effect in 1806, the English tried repeatedly to conquer Buenos Aires and Montevideo. In hand-to-hand combat and fierce fighting, the people of Buenos Aires defeated the 11,000 strong British force.

Who was Thomas Maitland?

The *Clan Maitland Year Book* 2006 says:

He was, as we know, not the typical Regency army officer though aristocratic by origin and habit of command, but uncouth in behaviour.

He slept at unusual hours and was often the worse for drink but it did not affect his judgement.

His style was also commented on as *‘being brutal at a personal level and although he avoided the use of force the threat was there’*.

Others describe him as *‘truculent, combative, cynical, vain, eccentric and a rough despot’*.

Walter Frewen Lord in his biography, *Sir Thomas Maitland, The Mastery of The Mediterranean* wrote:

Throughout an official career of twenty-seven years his labours were Herculean and he had no intervals of learned leisure.

Life to Maitland meant work; work that it would have crushed ordinary men even to attempt. His diversion, his solace, was gross indulgence. He was not a brilliant or a popular man. He was a great human force controlled and driven by a will of iron.

Principles he abhorred; they were to him beneath contempt, never of principles of respect. *‘Detestable principles’ or ‘ridiculous principles’*.

He believed that whatever work he did and its results were always for *‘the safety, honour and welfare of His Majesty and his dominions’*.



Portrait of Lieutenant General Sir Thomas Maitland, (1760–1824)
Painted 1800 by John Hoppner, Royal Academy, (1758–1810)
Courtesy of Thirlestane Castle Trust

Acknowledgements and References

<https://www.scribd.com/document/234483434/Lombe-Biography>

History of Parliament, Vol 1790-1820/member/maitland-hon-thomas 1760-1824

Dictionary of National Biography 1885-1900/Maitland, Thomas

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Maitland_\(British_Army_officer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Maitland_(British_Army_officer))

Builders of Greater Britain, Sir Thomas Maitland, W. F. Lord, Longmans Green &Co, N.Y.

Do you know the answer?

See last page to find out if you're right



In the Scots language what does it mean to 'haver'?

- ☐ Talk profoundly
- ☐ To boast
- ☐ Brood in silence
- ☐ Talk nonsense

Book/Movies/Series Reviews

Recently, our member Dr Kim Gray sent the following suggestion to Mel. *I thought perhaps we could have members write or speak about fiction or non-fiction books/movies/series with Scottish connections they have enjoyed or not! Some may wish to write short reviews to go in the newsletter so others can share what they have enjoyed.*

We thought this was a fabulous idea, so Kim is kickstarting it this newsletter with her review below. We would love to have others write reviews as well. So put your thinking cap on to come up with something to share with us all. You can send your article to either Mel on nfhspresident@gmail.com or Lea at nfhsnewsletter@gmail.com.

A Great Act of Love by Heather Rose

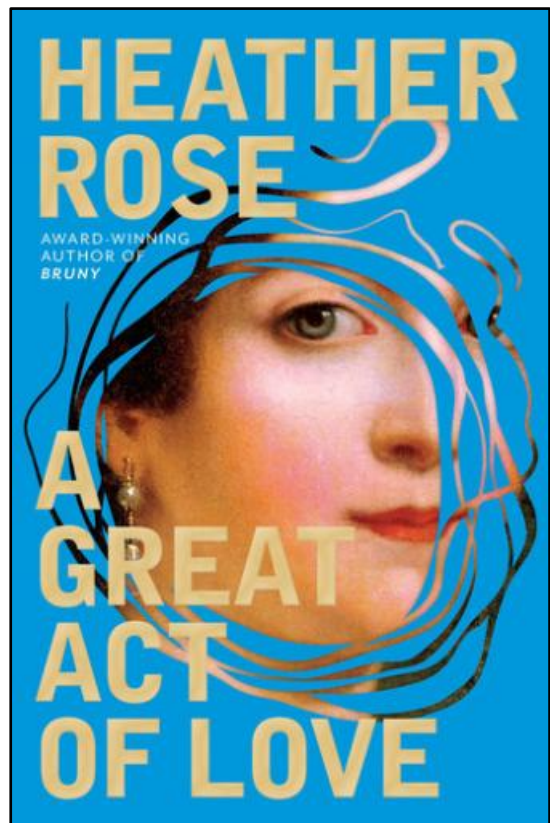
Book Review by Dr Kim Gray

For those of us who enjoy well written and meticulously researched historical fiction based on fascinating stories about our ancestors, Heather Rose's latest novel is just the ticket. And it also has a Scottish connection!

At the recent Newcastle Writer's Festival (NWF 27-29 March 2026), Rose spoke with Jacinta Parsons about her sister's chance discovery in Ancestry.com of a French ancestor, known in the novel as Jacques-Louis, whose violent crime in London resulted in his transportation to Norfolk Island and later, Van Dieman's Land. The family story goes that this man had been destined to become a Duke, that his parents had been beheaded in the French Revolution, he had escaped to Scotland, later settling in London. Rose's extensive research unveiled witness statements telling of her ancestor, a famous apothecary and beloved father who, prior to the murderous crime, walked around London wearing a distinctive black hat to cover a large scar after he had fallen from a roof resulting in what Rose believed to be, a frontal lobe injury. Rose wondered how this seemingly

well-respected man could commit such a heinous crime and spoke about how she felt a great sense of responsibility to the historical record. But the gaps in the family stories and the records allowed her to invent a rollicking good yarn spanning continents and different cultures, the rich historical 'facts' and fiction intertwining in this gem of a book.

At the centre of the novel is Rose's ancestor, Caroline, Jacques-Louis's daughter who is known to have arrived in Van Dieman's Land as a widow in the 1830s, living next door to what was to become a famous vineyard. A friend of Rose, Tasmanian winemaker, Andrew Pirie, had told her the story of

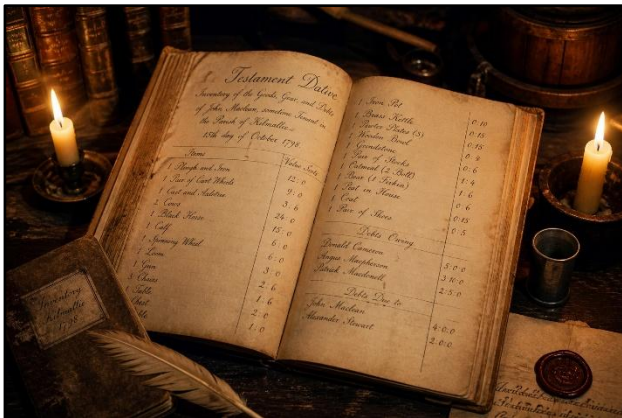


the vineyard that had produced a sparkling wine which won an award in Paris in the early 1800s. This story is woven with the story of her ancestors and a great cast of characters, some real historical figures, others imagined, expertly bringing brutal colonial history in Van Dieman's Land to life. The story of the brutality inflicted on the Indigenous custodians of the land could have been better explored although in the NWF interview, Rose - who calls Tasmania home and spent her childhood in Port Arthur – spoke of her grandfather showing her middens and from an early age being aware that other people had lived an abundant life here, caring for this land long before her ancestors arrived. Rose's love of the natural landscape shines through the novel, her descriptions of the river's edge where '*crabs nestle and periwinkles cling to crevices*' and identifying the birds of the forests '*by their pattern of flight and their particular calls. Currawong, wattlebird, cockatoo, magpie, rosella, robin, parrot, honeyeater, the large forest raven...*'. *A Great Act of Love* is indeed a feast for the senses, an expansive story that will continue to resonate long after you have turned the final page.

Testament Dative - Commissary Courts of Scotland

Lea Harris submitted the following article published on 8 May 2026 on the *Scottish Bloodline* Facebook page

Most people searching for their Scottish ancestors stop at birth records and census rolls. But there's a hidden archive that goes far deeper.



Before 1823, when a Scot died, the Commissary Courts of Scotland recorded something called a Testament Dative — a detailed inventory of everything your ancestor owned at the moment of their death. Every pot, every plough, every debt owed and every debt owing. These documents don't just tell you a name and a date. They tell you how your ancestor lived.

You can find out if your great-great-great-grandfather was a struggling tenant farmer or a prosperous merchant. You can read the names of his neighbours who witnessed the inventory. You can see the exact value of his cattle, his tools, his furniture. It is one of the most powerful genealogy resources in the world, and most people have never heard of it.

The National Records of Scotland has digitised thousands of these testaments, and many are searchable for free through ScotlandsPeople. If your family line traces back to Scotland before the 1800s, this could be the document that changes everything.

Quick tip: Scottish Testaments are searchable by name, date range, and commissary court district on ScotlandsPeople (scotlandspeople.gov.uk). The commissary courts were divided by region, so knowing roughly where your ancestor lived, even just the county, can help you narrow the search dramatically. Some testaments date as far back as the 1500s. If you find one for your family name, you are holding a window into a life lived 400 years ago. That is not just genealogy research, that is time travel.

Culloden - Unexploded Shell

Forwarded by Ken Shilling

This year, on 16 April, marked 280 years since the Battle of Culloden, and archaeologists pulled a fully intact unexploded shell from the battlefield that ended Highland Scotland as a way of life in under an hour.



Further to the above from Ken, the Facebook page of *Culloden Battlefield NTS* published the following on 14 April 2026:

If you've been following the news over the last couple of days, you may be aware of one of the exciting findings from our archaeology week last October!

During the week, we were amazed to discover a 5.5-inch mortar shell. Head of NTS Archaeology, Derek Alexander, who oversaw the week described it as a 'remarkable' find which helps us better understand the formation of troops and concentration of fire during the battle. What makes this discovery even more significant is that it is the first piece of complete government ordnance that has been found on the Battlefield!



Entirely intact and still packed with gunpowder when it was discovered around 30cm deep into the ground, it is thought the shell would have landed on wet ground and the fuse extinguished before the powder could be ignited. It would likely have been fired from one of six Coehorn mortars used by the government troops on the day.

Derek added that items like these can only be found during professional excavations led by experienced archaeologists, so the battlefield remains safe to visitors. The shell has since been cleaned and assessed, making it safe to handle, and go on display.

We are delighted to announce that the mortar shell has gone on temporary display, as we commemorate 280 years since the battle. Be sure to take a look when you visit!

Glasgow Eviction

Lea Harris submitted the following article published on 20 May 2026 on the *Glasgow & West of Scotland FHS Group* Facebook page being copied from the Facebook page of *The Medieval and Modern History Vault*

In the autumn of 1915, if you were a bailiff in Glasgow with an eviction order in your pocket, you had a problem.

The problem was not the paperwork. The paperwork was fine. The problem was what happened when you arrived at the address. The door might be answered by the woman you had come to evict. It might also be answered by 30 of her neighbours, who had been waiting for you, who had been summoned by a bell or a whistle before you reached the end of the street, and who had absolutely no intention of letting you in.

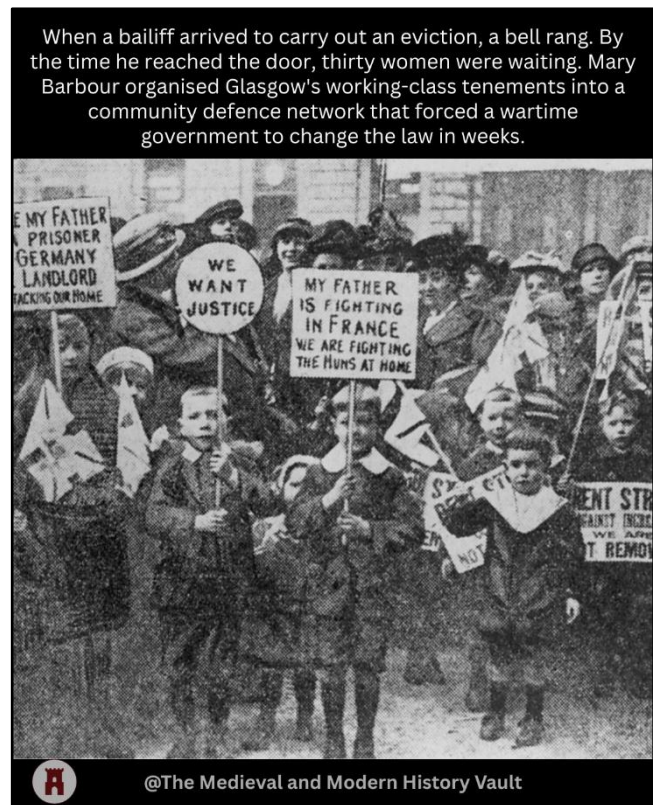
This was Mary Barbour's army. It had no uniforms, no funding, no formal structure, and no connection to any political party or trade union. It had something more useful than any of those things: a network of women who had agreed, in advance, to show up.

To understand how it came to exist, you have to understand what Glasgow's working-class women were living through in 1915.

The war had transformed the city. Men had left for the front in their thousands, and in their place came workers, flooding into Glasgow for the munitions factories and the shipyards on the Clyde. The population swelled. Housing was already scarce. Landlords looked at the shortage and the demand and made a calculation that had nothing to do with patriotism and everything to do with profit. Rents went up. In some cases, significantly up. And the tenants least able to resist were the ones most systematically targeted: the wives and mothers of men currently fighting in France, women managing households alone on reduced incomes, without votes, without union membership, without any of the formal mechanisms through which working men could apply pressure.

The landlords had misread their tenants entirely.

Mary Barbour was a rent collector's daughter from Govan who understood both sides of the housing relationship and had spent years involved in cooperative and labour politics. She understood organising. She understood what a community could do when it decided to act as one. And she understood, with a clarity that the landlords and the government would come to share rather suddenly, that the women of Glasgow's working-class tenements were not isolated individuals. They were neighbours. They talked to each other every day, across closes and back courts and communal washhouses, in the dense social fabric of tenement life that middle-class observers rarely bothered to look at carefully.



Barbour and her colleagues in the Glasgow Women's Housing Association turned that fabric into infrastructure.

The system was straightforward and brutally effective. Women watched for bailiffs. When one was spotted, the alarm went out, by bell, by whistle, by word of mouth moving fast through a close and into the street. By the time the bailiff reached the door, the crowd was already there. Neighbours, friends, women from the next street who had agreed to come when summoned, all of them understanding that their turn might be next and that the only protection available to any of them was the protection they provided each other.

The bailiffs found themselves facing not a single frightened woman but an organised community defence that made eviction practically impossible to carry out. Some brought flour to throw. Some brought other things. Most brought themselves and their willingness to stand in a doorway for as long as it took. The combination of numbers, noise, and absolute determination made the eviction orders effectively unenforceable in large parts of the city.

The strike spread. By November 1915, an estimated 25,000 tenants across Glasgow had stopped paying their rent. The Glasgow Women's Housing Association coordinated across neighbourhoods, shared tactics, and kept the pressure organised rather than letting it dissipate into individual acts of resistance that could be isolated and defeated one by one.

When eighteen strike supporters were summoned to court over rent arrears in November, shipyard workers on the Clyde threatened to walk out. The government was fighting a war with ships built on that river. The calculation changed overnight.

Within weeks, Parliament passed the Rent and Mortgage Interest Restriction Act 1915, freezing rents at pre-war levels across the entire United Kingdom. Not just Glasgow. Not just Scotland. The entire country. A grassroots campaign organised in tenement closes, run by women without political representation, sustained by bells and whistles and the willingness to stand in a doorway, had produced a piece of national legislation in a matter of weeks.

Mary Barbour went on to become one of Glasgow's first female councillors in 1920, the year women could finally stand for local office. She campaigned for public washhouses, nurseries, and birth control clinics, the same practical attention to the material conditions of working-class life that had shaped the rent strike. She served on Glasgow council for over 20 years.

There is a statue of her in Govan now, near the streets where the strike was organised. She stands in bronze with her arms raised, surrounded by the women and children of the community she defended.

The landlords of 1915 thought they were dealing with powerless women.

They were dealing with an army. It just hadn't put on its uniform yet.

Photo credit: BBC

Scottish Land/Building Related Terms

Article submitted by Lea Harris

A little while ago, I spent quite a bit of time looking through Ordnance Survey Name Books, maps and plans which are available to search on the website of ScotlandsPeople <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>. Whilst doing this, I came across many land/building related terms which I thought might be of interest to you.

Runrig (often spelled as run-rig or runrigs, Gaelic *raon ruith*) refers to an ancient system of land tenure, primarily used in Scotland, where arable land was divided into alternating, narrow strips or ridges. Under the runrig system, intermixed areas or alternating ridges of a field were owned or rented by different people. It was designed to ensure fair distribution of good and bad soil among tenants, as a farmer might own several strips scattered across a larger, communal field. It was often linked to small communal townships (*ferm-touns*) where farming decisions were made collectively, and strips might be redistributed periodically. This form of agriculture was common in Scotland in the 17th and 18th centuries before the agricultural improvements and land enclosures began. This system of farming is no longer used, but the marks of it can still be seen particularly on Skye. The system was officially modified or broken up under the Runrig Lands Act 1695, which encouraged dividing these lands into consolidated plots.



Runrig farming outside the town of Haddington, East Lothian c. 1690
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_Agricultural_Revolution

Laigh is a Scots word meaning 'low' or 'low-lying' (land or buildings). Often spelled *laich*, it acts as an adjective, adverb, or noun representing a low-lying piece of land or a hollow. It is often pronounced to rhyme with 'high' or 'eye'. It is commonly used to describe lower floors, such as a '*laigh* shop,' or in geographical descriptions to mean low-lying terrain.

Fermtoun (*ferm* meaning farm and *toun* meaning town) refers to a collection of cottages for the workers on a farm.

Baile - In reference to the history of Scotland, a township is often called a *toun* although before the Anglic language Scots became widespread in Scotland, the word *baile* was more commonly used.

Croft - A croft is a traditional Scottish term for a fenced or enclosed area of land. It is usually small and arable, and typically, though not always, includes a crofter's dwelling. A crofter is a person who has tenure and use of the land, typically as a tenant farmer in rural areas.

Knock - The Scottish Gaelic word *cnoc* (pronounced *krohk* or *knochk*, depending on dialect) means a hill, hillock, or mound. It is frequently anglicised as 'knock' in place names across Scotland and Ireland to denote a small, often isolated, round-topped hill. While *beinn* refers to a large mountain, *cnoc* refers to a smaller, rounded hill. It is frequently found in landscape descriptions and topographically derived surnames.

Knowe - A Scottish *knowe* (pronounced like 'now' or 'know') means a small, rounded hill, mound, or knoll. It is the Scots equivalent of the English word 'knoll' and is commonly used to describe hillocks, particularly in folklore where they are associated with fairy hills. Frequently appears in Scottish poetry and literature, such as in Robert Burns' 'Ca' the yowes to the knowes'. Can refer to a physical hill or used metaphorically to mean a 'heap'.



Knowe of Laird by DrewParsons: The impressive long mound.

<https://www.megalithic.co.uk/article.php?sid=27557>

Burgh - Commonly pronounced like 'burra', similar to the end of Edinburgh, not 'burg'. A Scottish burgh is an autonomous, incorporated town or municipality in Scotland, historically granted specific legal and trading rights by royal charter. Originating in the 12th century, these settlements were authorised to have their own local government, courts, and markets, often distinguishing themselves from surrounding rural areas. They operated as self-governing units until local government reorganisation in 1975 however the name often remains in common usage and in the names of many Scottish towns. Includes Royal Burghs (created by the Crown), Burghs of Barony (created by landowners), and Burghs of Regality. The term is related to Old English *burh* and Old Norse *borg*, meaning a fortified place.

Barony - In Scotland, a barony refers to an historic, titled, and landed dignity that originates from medieval times. While it was once an estate held directly from the Crown with its own jurisdictional powers, modern Scottish baronies are now defined as non-peerage titles of nobility that are considered incorporeal heritable property.

Here is a breakdown of the key definitions of what the term means in a Scottish context:

- A 'Minor' Title of Nobility: Scottish barons are recognised by the Court of the Lord Lyon as 'titled' nobility, but they are not Peers (i.e. not Dukes, Earls, or Lords of Parliament). They are considered the 'minor' baronage or *barones minores*.
- A 'Floating' Title: Prior to 2004, a barony was physically tied to a piece of land (the *caput* or head of the barony). Since the Abolition of Feudal Tenure etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 took effect in 2004, the title is separated from the land. It is now a 'floating' dignity that can be bought, sold, or inherited independently of the land.
- An 'Incorporeal' Property: Because the title is no longer attached to land, it is legally treated as incorporeal heritable property, often referred to in Scotland as 'the dignity of Baron'.

Cill - In Scottish Gaelic, the word *cill* (pronounced keel) means a church, chapel, or graveyard/churchyard. It is commonly found as a prefix in Scottish and Irish place-names, indicating

that a town or village originally grew around a church or cell (hermitage). It is derived from the Old Irish *cell*, which was borrowed from the Latin *cella*, meaning a cell, shrine, or altar.

Bailie - A Scottish bailie (or baillie) is a municipal magistrate or civic officer in Scotland, equivalent to an alderman or magistrate. Historically, they administered burghs, while modern bailies are councillors who act as honorary deputies to the provost in civic duties. Historically, a bailie managed local government, law and order, and taxes in Scottish burghs, similar to a bailiff. Specific types included ‘cow-bailies’ (cattle handlers) or barony bailies (appointed by a baron).

Provost - A Scottish provost (pronounced pro-vost, rhyming with ‘rose’) is the civic head of a local council or burgh in Scotland, equivalent to a mayor. They chair council meetings, represent the area at ceremonial events, and serve as the chief magistrate. In Scotland’s major cities—Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, and Glasgow—the civic head holds the title of Lord Provost, who also serves as the monarch’s lord-lieutenant. Derived from the Old French *prévôt* and Latin *praepositus* (meaning ‘one placed before’), the term has historically referred to heads of burghs since the 14th century.

Hamlet - While the standard English word hamlet (a small village) is used in Scotland, the term often refers to specific, distinct concepts in Scottish, Ulster-Scots, and Gaelic contexts, largely focusing on small, rural, and often churchless settlements. Generally, a hamlet in Scotland is defined as a tiny group of houses, typically lacking its own church or shop, often relying on a nearby village for services. In the Scottish Highlands and Western Scotland, the Gaelic word *clachan* is frequently used instead of hamlet. A *clachan* is a small, closely-knit cluster of houses or a small rural village.

Sitooterie (Scottish origin: sit + oot/out + erie) is a small, often informal, outdoor building or area used for sitting, relaxing, or socialising in a garden. It typically refers to a summerhouse, conservatory, gazebo, or a sheltered, intimate spot, and it is designed for enjoying the outdoors in comfort.

Bothy - A Scottish bothy is a remote, small stone cottage or shelter, usually in the Highlands, used as a free, unlocked shelter for hikers and outdoor enthusiasts. Maintained by volunteers, they offer rudimentary shelter—no electricity, running water, or toilet facilities—providing a ‘glorified camping’ experience, often featuring a fireplace and sleeping platforms. A bothy was originally farm accommodation for itinerant workers. Most bothies are old cottages and at least several hours walk from the public road.

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Bothy: Achnanlach, Northern Highlands

<https://www.mountainbothies.org.uk/>

Miscellaneous

Scottish Special Interest Group

**2nd Tuesday each month at 1pm –
February to November:**

**8 September
13 October
10 November**

**9 February
9 March
13 April**



**All interested NFHS members are invited.
New members to the group are always
welcome.**

If you would like to submit an article or pictures for a future issue of the *Caledonian*, please send them to nfhspresident@gmail.com

Our next *Caledonian* will be the Martinmas issue on 28 December 2026

In the Scots language what does it mean to 'haver'?

Answer

The correct answer is Talk nonsense

In spite of its popularity among Scots speakers today, haver or haiver is a relative newcomer to the language, the earliest quotation in the Dictionary of the Scots Language dating from as late as 1776. (Scots Language Centre)