

The Search for a Chief - A Trip Report by Stuart Robinson

Part 1

The project to find candidates to the position of Chief of the Galbraiths was approved at the biannual gathering of Clan Galbraith Association held in 2002 at Culcreuch Castle, Fintry, Scotland, home to several generations of Galbraith Chiefs. I was asked to head the search and agreed. The approval culminated several years of laments from members about the lack of a chief.

The last chief resident at Culcreuch, Robert Galbraith, Chief #17, deeply in debt as well as having been accused of numerous crimes, had mortgaged Culcreuch to his brother-in-law, was unable to repay, lost the property and, after failing in the attempt to murder the mortgage holder, is said to have left Scotland for Ireland in the 1620s. His son James has been considered to have been Chief #18 (reportedly the first landless Galbraith chief) and this James is said to have had a son James who was thought to be Chief #19. The trail from either James has not been followed in the numerous documents which address Galbraith history, although we have received some informal family histories that describe such descendancies that we've been trying to verify.

Most authors who have addressed the question of the identity of current candidates to be Chief of the Galbraiths have despaired of finding such candidates among descendants of Chief #17 and have turned instead to descendants of earlier Chiefs, most prominently those of Andrew Galbraith, Chief #11.

From the start of the project, we had decided that the effort should be both thorough and transparent. Progress was reported quarterly in the pages of the Red Tower. Early reports focused on existing documentation and genealogy databases, particularly that maintained by the Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormons). The work of several researchers into the Galbraiths of Ireland contributed much to the search.

In the Spring of 2004, the author traveled to Scotland for 3 weeks, with a side trip to England, which included visiting most major research sites and several local libraries of relevance to the Galbraiths, as well as meeting with several individuals connected with the Galbraiths and attending annual meetings of genealogical societies. Progress was made on several branches of descendants of chiefs. Among the significant additions to our reference files was the most useful document, a history of the Galbraiths by the eminent genealogist, Harry Pirie Gordon, provided by Thomas Galbraith, Lord Strathclyde. Among the best library holdings was at the National Library of Scotland, the so-called "Blackhouse Papers" (Blackhouse was a Galbraith estate in Kippen Parish. The file, while containing much trivia about household accounts, contains many papers of historical interest not limited to just the Blackhouse

line). The files of the New Register House added the most information of the facilities visited.

The project was briefed at the 2004 gathering on Cape Breton Island, where an ad hoc committee enthusiastically complimented progress and endorsed continuation. The attendees agreed that the search did not have to consider branches of lower seniority than that of Lord Strathclyde, thus eliminating many well documented lines, including the Galbraiths of Dalhilloch, Blackhouse and Ryefield.

Those of us supporting the project were later surprised to discover that our enthusiasm was not matched by a large majority of members, including members of the Executive Committee. The project was put on hold pending discussion at the Salt Lake City gathering. While the gathering seemed to confirm that support in general was lukewarm, there was sufficient support to warrant restarting the effort.

The next step was to be a return to Scotland. Besides the continuation of the chief search, other objectives were to determine the status of the sale of Culcreuch Castle and to meet Galbraiths, whether or not they were relevant to the search.

This time, I included a week in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Several branches descended from Chiefs had emigrated there, in some cases prior to moving on to North America and other destinations, including Australia and New Zealand. I had been concentrating on Scotland while relying on documentation and the research of others for information on the branches in Ireland. With the number of loose ends and controversial information about the Galbraiths of Ireland, Bill Gilbreath and I agreed that I should include sites there in the trip.

This is the first of three trip reports and will cover the first week, spent in Scotland. In 2004, the least expensive route was by way of Amsterdam. This time it was by way of Manchester, England. After arriving early afternoon, 2 November, at Glasgow Airport, I confirmed a 4 pm meeting with Andrew Haslam at Culcreuch, rented a car and drove to Culcreuch. Except for 2 nights at Culcreuch, I spent all nights at Bed & Breakfasts.

The purpose of the meeting with Andrew was to determine the status of the sale of Culcreuch as part of the decision process on the possibility of returning there for the 2008 gathering. I felt that in the meeting with Andrew, he provided an honest assessment of the status of the sale. In summary, there were two "finalists" and he expected that either would keep the property, at least in part, as a hotel but likely with extensive renovations. He could not predict when the "winning" buyer would establish rates and begin taking reservations for 2008. As reported elsewhere, we have decided that lead-time would not exist for proper planning and the desired worldwide publicity and that a return to Scotland would have to be postponed.

Among the several items of discussion, Andrew said that at least 2/3 of the Galbraith-related guests during his

tenure had been members of our organization. In the hotel lobby, I noted prominently displayed photos with captions of our Clan Bagpiper, Jim Austin, his father and grandfather, also pipers. I enjoyed a good Haggis dinner the following evening.

On Friday, 3 November, I had intended to do research at the libraries at Balfron and Bearsden, to follow-up on a Ken Galbraith suggestion to meet with a Bearsden historian, Robin McSkimming, and to try to trace a Galbraith family, descendants of Chiefs, who were working at a farm (Tambowie) near Bearsden in 1901 whom we hadn't yet been able to trace from that time. I called and set up a meeting with Robin the next afternoon.

The trip was mostly misfortune-free but didn't start out that way. Almost all car rentals in the U.K. are with manual shifts. Automatic shifts cost more, so, unfortunately, I opted for manual. On the way to Culcreuch, while I was stopped for a light, a pedestrian shouted that he smelled something. I didn't (I have a bad sense of smell) and with the 4 pm meeting looming I didn't stop to investigate. The next morning at Culcreuch I got a similar yelled comment. I decided I'd better take it back. I didn't make it. The car got as far as Bearsden on the way back to the airport. In some good luck, the Vauxhall gave out exactly in front of Bearsden's Vauxhall dealer. They were very helpful, confirming that the clutch was gone and letting me use their phone to arrange for the return.

I rode with the U.K. equivalent of the AAA on the way to the repair shop, which was near Glasgow Airport, and was let off at the airport, rented another car, this time with automatic shift, and was able to reschedule the appointment with Robin to later in the afternoon, foregoing the library stops until the next day. The meeting with Robin and his wife Ann was most enjoyable, although not as helpful to the search as I had hoped. Robin is retired, his last position having been as Provost (roughly equivalent to Mayor) of East Dumbartonshire, an entity that includes Bearsden. He has a great interest in local history. He has knowledge of many of the sites, which Ken Galbraith has been researching, including Garscadden and Gartconnell. I was surprised to find that he and the other local authorities had been unable to determine the exact location of Gartconnell, the second recorded home of Galbraith Chiefs, which is known to have been located near a current school in Bearsden. Nothing remains.

Anne McSkimming is a family historian. Neither Robin nor Anne knew of anyone researching the Galbraiths or had a new suggestion on locating descendants of the Galbraiths of Bardowie Farm. Robin did suggest that I meet the man he described as a leading Scottish genealogist, Ian Brown of Bearsden, and extolled the local history department at the main library in Bearsden.

That evening, I phoned Ian Brown and had a long, good conversation with him. He certainly knows genealogy and,

among many other things, the role of the Office of Lord Lyons in the review and decision on the merits of an applicant for Clan Chief. Ian was in the midst of final preparation for publication of a book he had written. We agreed to get together after my return from Ireland/Northern Ireland.

Ian provided the name of the only Galbraith researcher of whom he was aware, Mrs. Esther Galbraith of Bearsden. I called her and confirmed that the family histories she was researching included that of her husband, whose Galbraiths she had traced back to South Knapdale, on the Kintyre Peninsula. Unfortunately, this branch has not yet been shown to be relevant to the Chief Search, but it probably ties into the research being done by Ken on his own family history. Esther does not know of other Galbraith researchers and was enthusiastic about my promise to send her a copy of the Red Tower. (I did meet with her after my return from Ireland.)

Among the other phone calls I made the second evening were ones to Etta (Galbraith) Wilson and David Smillee, well-liked attendees at the 2002 Culcreuch gathering. I had met with them on my 2004 trip. David had accompanied me on a library visit and had promised to stay involved as our agent in Scotland. Etta said she intended to join CGA when a cousin completed a family history that Etta wanted to attach to her application. She provided me with a draft that showed she was descended from Galbraiths of Raphoe Parish, County Donegal (the destination of, at least, some of the sons of Chief #17, Robert Galbraith).

Neither of those expectations was met. David encountered personal health issues and health problems of close relatives he was assisting that prevented him from supporting the search. Etta's cousin had died before "completing" her family history, leaving unanswered the question of descendancy from Galbraith chiefs.

Etta and David, who are close neighbors in Renfrew, spend every Friday together. They invited me to join them on the Friday after I returned from Ireland.

Saturday was a local library research day. I started at Balfron Library. Balfron is the only town in Balfron Parish, the location of many early Galbraith holdings, including Balgair, Hill of Balgair, Wester Balgair and several others and is immediately to the West of Fintry Parish, the location of Culcreuch. The only item of interest was a good collection of early maps, showing locations of most of the known Galbraith holdings (although none of them were identified as such). I had seen them before but hadn't been allowed to copy them - I tried again, but was again rebuffed. All the local librarians are very conscious of protecting copyrights. I did draw a composite map of the location of Galbraith holdings.

The Librarian introduced me to Mrs. Thomson, Secretary of the local History Society. Mrs. Thompson

knew nothing of Galbraith history or historians, but invited me to the next meeting, which was to be held on the evening of the day I was to return from Ireland.

I next went to the public library of Bearsden. They have an excellent local history department. Unfortunately, the research librarian was on "Holiday" but those who were there were quite helpful. Among my copyings were several descriptions of early Galbraith holdings that I had missed last time and several Galbraith listings from directories that went back to the early 19th century. My main interest was locating information on the Galbraiths who were working on Tambowie Farm in 1901. No luck.

I had learned that the farm was now a Bed & Breakfast. I found it in Milngavie (just north of Bearsden) on the road to Drymen and spent the night there. Unfortunately, the owner, the second (unrelated) Graham owner since the early 1900s was sure that no records had been retained anywhere, which would have information about employees of that time. Incidentally, the B&B is excellent.

Those Galbraith employees represented one of two branches descended from John Galbraith, oldest son of the murdered William Galbraith (and 7th Substitute in the Entail of James Galbraith, first Galbraith owner of Balgair), that we had traced to the 20th century. The Burke's descendancy to Lord Strathclyde goes through John's younger brother George. Since I later discovered that the other known branch, which was senior to the Tambowie branch, had become extinct in the male line in the mid-20th century, the Tambowie branch has increased in importance.

Sunday, I headed for Edinburgh for 3 days of research, before heading for Belfast. All day Monday and Tuesday afternoon were spent at the New Register House, which has an increasingly useful and efficient computer system, still under development, which contains all Birth, Marriage and Death records reported since mandatory reporting started in 1855; the Mormon transcriptions of the Old Parish Records from Church of Scotland parishes which stopped when mandatory reporting started and had started at different times depending on the parish, but mostly from the mid-17th century; and censuses from 1841 to 1901. Fees are 17 pounds for full days, 11 pounds for an afternoon. The computer search can lead to the review of original documents. The research is also available as an expensive on-line option.

While other records were also reviewed and much missing data in our records filled in, the top goals this time were to trace the two branches of John Galbraith, the 7th Substitute, past the 1901 census and to try to resolve a serious issue with one of the links in the Burke's article on the ancestry of Lord Strathclyde.

One of the branches of the 7th substitute, the one headed by Archibald Napier and Jessie (McLachlan) Galbraith proved to be extinct in the male line by the mid-20th century (early Galbraith historians had got this

wrong, concluding that descendants of the 7th substitute had become extinct in the male line ca. 1830). James and Archibald Galbraith, the last two males of the line, died unmarried in 1932 and 1939, respectively.

As indicated above, we have found nothing regarding the branch headed by Napier's brother John and wife Mary Edmonds since the 1901 census when John's family (he had died in 1900) was living and working at Tambowie Farm. The lack of records is suggestive of their having emigrated. These are the last descendants of John Galbraith, the 7th Substitute, to have been identified as representing a male line not extinct. Incidentally, there are few records in Scotland with information on emigrants other than the occasional collections that contain "letters home". The records must be found from points of embarkation (e.g., Ellis Island).

The questionable link in the Burke's article on the heritage of Lord Strathclyde remains one of the most significant questions to resolve in the search for Chief candidates. In trying to analyze the available data, most early Galbraith historians got it wrong. In summary, it involves identifying the descendants of Walter Galbraith, second son of George Galbraith, 8th Substitute. (The line of Walter's older brother, William, had gone extinct in the male line after one more generation.) Based upon the erroneous conclusion that the line of the 7th substitute became extinct in the male line in the 1830s, most Galbraith historians have indicated that Walter's line contained the probable chief of the Galbraiths. The following is presented to highlight some of the difficulties in discovering and corroborating descendancies from clan chiefs.

Scottish church records indicate a marriage in 1715, in Kippen Parish, of a Walter Galbraith to an Isobel Harvey. The only child attributed to this marriage was a John, christened in 1729. While there is no other relevant marriage listed for Walter, there are seven children listed for a Walter Galbraith and a Margaret Harvey, the first three in Balfon Parish, the other four in nearby Kippen Parish, the first-born being James, christened in 1716. None of the children of Walter and Margaret are named George or Janet, the names of the parents of George, descendant of the 8th substitute. At a time when the Scottish naming conventions were adhered to almost universally, this brought into question whether this is our Walter. There are also earlier and later Galbraith births listed in Scottish Church records for relevant times and places where the father is named Walter, but no mother is indicated. One of those births was of a Janet. While there was no record of a birth of a George of an appropriate generation, there was a record of a George Galbraith marriage in 1737, which resulted in the births of appropriately named children, indicating that this may have been a child of our Walter.

Early Galbraith researchers came up with a variety of analyses from this and related data, most of them obviously in error. The usual error was to state that George, descendant of the 8th substitute, had married

twice, to Isabel and Margaret Galbraith and that all the descendants were children of one of the two wives. We believe part of this question was answered by Galbraith historian Graham Easton who included Walter and Margaret's family among the descendants of the Galbraiths of Dalhilloch, Kippen Parish. This Walter was the son of James and Agnes (Harvey). He is likely correct, given the names of the children listed in the Old Parish Records. The Galbraiths of Dalhilloch are junior to the descendancy followed in the Burke's article and thus are not being considered in the search for chief candidates (although this may change).

The marriage of a Walter Galbraith to an Isobel Harvey in 1715 with no child attributed to that combination until 1729 and no indication of a marriage between a Walter and a Margaret Harvey but with the birth of seven children of that couple starting in 1716, suggests that Isobel and Margaret may have been the same person, especially if we ignore the fact that there were two relevant christenings just four months apart in 1729 in Kippen Parish in which Walter was the father but the mother's name was Margaret in one case, Isobel in the other.

Turning next to the births of children in which Walter Galbraith was the name of the father but no mother was indicated, we see that two were recorded before 1715: Janet (the name of our Walter's mother) in 1708 and James in 1710. According to Burke's, the line leading to Lord Strathclyde is descended from the James Galbraith born in 1710 whose wife was Margaret Galbraith of Menteith (based upon a marriage record in 1736, although we must substantiate that this is the James born in 1710 rather than the one born in 1716). Burke's further surmises that the George Galbraith (for whom no birth record has been found) who married Helen Chrystal in 1737 in Kippen was an older son of our Walter. The name George is certainly suggestive as is the name of the couple's oldest son, Walter. I have tentatively accepted this assertion and have followed George and Helen's descendants for several generations (The Burke's article only followed those lines that led to Lord Strathclyde). If this George is, in fact, the oldest son of the 8th Substitute's son Walter, then his line has seniority over all other descendants of George Galbraith, the 8th substitute.

At the New Register House, some of the data I gathered was to be used in looking for patterns, such as the names of witnesses to births and marriages (e.g., John McHose was a witness to several of the Kippen christenings of children of Walter and Margaret, including that of their son Alexander in 1729 but not to the Walter- "Isobel" christening of son John, also in 1729). With the importance of the issues involved to the Chief search and other early genealogy, Bill Gilbreath and I have spent considerable time trying to unravel the questions, but haven't been able to reach an agreement on an analysis. My tentative conclusion: Margaret and Isobel are the same person; the Walter who married Margaret is descended from the Galbraiths of Dalhilloch rather than George, the 8th Substitute; our Walter is the father of the

George who married Helen Chrystal as well as Janet of 1708 and James of 1710 and that Burke's is correct in identifying the James who was christened in 1710 as the progenitor of the Galbraiths who included Lord Strathclyde. Further, and this is particularly shaky, these births were legitimate in spite of the missing mother's name (not a unique occurrence at the time in question). More on the question of illegitimacy will be covered in the summary of week #3.

The remainder of the 3 days in Edinburgh was spent at the National Library of Scotland, the Scottish Genealogical Society, and at an Internet service. The New Register House closes at 4:45 and the Scottish Genealogical Society at 5:00 but the National Library of Scotland is open most evenings.

I rejoined the Scottish Genealogical Society while there, after having let my membership lapse. They had nothing new in the Galbraith file from my last visit, but since it contained a copy of Edwin Galbraith's book on Galbraith settlers in Ontario in the 19th Century, I read it again to see if I could see any new connection and discovered a possible connection to a couple I hadn't found at the New Register House later than the 1851 census, John and Janet (Gibbs) Galbraith of Kippen Parish. John has been identified as a descendant of the 8th substitute. Edwin documented a John and Janet (Gibbs) Galbraith, who settled in St. Mary's, Ontario, in the early 1850s. Their origin was indicated only as "Scotland". The ages are off slightly from Old Parish Records. and Scottish census records, but not unusually so. Edwin listed 10 children and a few grandchildren and the name of the provider, Mervyn Milne of St. Mary's. We should be able to follow up on this information.

The rest of the information in the Galbraith file concerned the Galbraiths of Blackhouse (Kippen Parish)— of no benefit to the chief search but useful to our general genealogical research. Several books in the Scottish Genealogical Society Library contained information on Galbraiths of historical interest but nothing of use in the Chief search.

The National Library of Scotland is an outstanding library. Its Galbraith collection is primarily the voluminous "Blackhouse Papers". I had done a hurried review of it during the 2004 trip and found much useful information, including a rough hand-drawn genealogy chart, which was a big contribution to the search. For week one, I deferred a new review of the Blackhouse papers (more on this in week 3 report) and tried to find information on families which had marital ties to the Galbraiths, hoping to find information on the descendants of Galbraith in-laws. I was disappointed. None of the mentions of Galbraiths added to previous knowledge. I'll have a little more on this in week #3.

Thursday morning I headed for Glasgow Airport to catch a plane to Belfast City and a first session at the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI).

To be continued. . . .

