

The Search for a Chief - 3rd of 3 Trip Reports

By Stu Robinson

The author left the States on 1 November 2006, in pursuit of information in support of the search for candidates for the vacant Chiefship of Clan Galbraith. It was to be a 3-week trip with the first and third weeks to be in Scotland and the middle week to be in Ireland, both in Northern Ireland and the Republic.

Summaries of the first 2 weeks were published in the *Red Towers* of February and May 2007. Embarrassingly, notes for the third week were mislaid and not recovered in part until recently. The report follows.

I flew from Belfast to Glasgow on the morning of 16 November. I planned to attend a meeting that evening of the Balftron Historical Society. Balftron is the next parish west of Fintry, the location of Culcreuch Castle, residence until the early 1600's of many generations of Galbraith Chiefs. In the eastern part of Balftron, just west of Culcreuch, lies the ruined manor house of Balgair, perhaps the next most important Galbraith holding after Culcreuch.

Balgair had been brought to the Galbraiths with the marriage of Thomas, Chief 12, to Agnes Cunningham, heiress of the family, which held large areas of eastern Balftron. However, when Thomas was hanged for his part in an insurrection against the forces of James IV, Balgair reverted to the control of the Cunninghams rather than to Thomas' successor, his brother James, Chief 13. While not the owners until a Galbraith descendant bought Balgair in 1687, Galbraiths were tenants of many of the eight farms of Balgair.

I had visited the Balftron Library during the first week of the trip and had been told by the librarian that the monthly meeting of the local historical society was coincidentally scheduled for the day I tentatively planned to return to Scotland. She had introduced me to Mrs. Thomson, Secretary of the society, who said I would be welcome. The library itself had little information of value to the search except for a good set of maps from the early days that identified many of the farms of relevance.

Balftron itself has no remaining B&Bs, but I was able to find a good one in neighboring Drymen (pronounced "Drimmen"), had dinner and returned for the meeting.

As is true of many local historical societies, the Balftron society is interested in regional history, but not really in genealogy. The topic of the meeting was a Glasgow dance hall. I asked the chairperson for permission to give a short talk on my project after the scheduled lecture. I received a polite listening,



gave a brief summary of the search and the connection with Balftron, including the names of many farms once worked by Galbraiths and related families. It was clear that the attendees, while polite, were little interested in the subject.

I did get some useful information, such as that all the farms I had mentioned were still being worked. I also was given the name of the only Galbraith living in Balftron. I followed up on the information later in the week.

The next day, I had arranged to get together with two old friends. Those of us who attended the 2002 gathering at Culcreuch will remember Etta (Galbraith) Wilson and her friend David Smillee, neighbors in Renfrew. (Before the deaths of their spouses, both couples had been close friends. David and Etta continued

to be friends and had been getting together weekly, usually for some special activity. I joined them for this week's get together.) David had helped me on a previous trip and had volunteered to provide further support; Etta was in contact with a cousin who was developing her family history, which I was hopeful would prove relevant to the chief search. She had given me a copy of the partially completed family history. As mentioned in the Week 1 Report, her cousin had traced the ancestry to the Galbraiths of Raphoe Parish, Donegal, which was the destination of sons of Robert Galbraith, Chief 17. Any ties established to Raphoe Parish are of great interest to the chief search.

Before meeting Etta and David for lunch at Lomond Shores, I spent some time at the Drymen library, which had copies of many relevant documents (e. g.,



David Smillee and Etta Galbraith Wilson

Strathendrick). While nothing was new to the search, I did copy several pages I hadn't copied earlier.

After lunch, we went to Dumbarton. I had heard that it had an excellent library and research librarian (Graham Hopner), which proved to be true. (Dumbarton was important in Galbraith history, including having served as the ancient capital of Strathclyde, origin of the clan.) While there were no breakthroughs found, there were a few new relevant Galbraith items (e.g., a newspaper article (*Title of New Scots Peer Lord Strathclyde of Barskimming, Glasgow Herald, May 5, 1955*), which indicated that "Commander T.D. Galbraith, the new Minister of State, Scottish Office" was to be introduced to the House of Lords on the following day. It provided details on the choice of title by the new Lord Strathclyde. He had chosen that title in recognition of the earlier Lord Strathclyde "who died in 1928 after a brilliant and stormy career in politics and the law, was Alexander Ure." The new peer was the grandfather of the current Lord Strathclyde, Thomas Galbraith, who many of us met at Culcreuch in 2002. Most of the other articles discussed early Galbraiths and their arms, none relevant to the chief search, as well as the well-documented legal battles over ownership of Balgair.

Due in part to health and family issues, neither Etta nor David had made progress on the projects they had started for us. Etta's cousin, who was developing her family history, had died, having made little progress since my previous visit. David seemed as vigorous as when we met him at Culcreuch where he was the star of the after-banquet dancing. It was misleading. This past December, I got the sad news from Etta that David had died.

That evening, I returned to the Tambowie Farm B&B in Milngavie (pronounced "Mull guy"). I had been there the first week in hopes of finding information about a Galbraith family headed by a Galbraith Chief descendant. I had followed the line into the early 20th century when the father and his family were working at Tambowie Farm, but had been unable to follow it further. The current owner of the farm, including the B&B, was only the second since the time of our Galbraiths, but professed that there were no employment records still available from the relevant era. It was wishful thinking that a few days later something more might come to mind. No luck, but it's an excellent B&B with a fine view of the area.

As implied, there remains an opportunity for much further useful research. The Galbraith family, which worked at Tambowie Farm, was headed by John Galbraith, a 6th generation descendant of John Galbraith, who is best remembered as the 7th substitute in the entail of James Galbraith, first Galbraith owner of Balgair. Early Galbraith historians (e.g., Graham Easton, W. H. J. Galbraith, Pirie Gordon) identified the line as at one time being the holder of the logical Chief of the Galbraiths but inexplicably agreed that the line had become extinct in the early 19th century, leading many Galbraith historians to believe that the primary candidates for Chief were to

be found among the descendants of George Galbraith, 8th Substitute, next younger brother of John, 7th Substitute.

Our research discovered that at least two male descendant lines of the 7th substitute could be followed into the 20th century. This lineage was discussed in several Chief articles in *Red Towers*. As discussed later, one of those lines did apparently become extinct in 1939. However, the second line is the one we have traced to Tambowie Farm. Descendant John Galbraith (born 1842) had two sons, James (born 1880) and John (ca. 1885). John the father died in 1900 at Tambowie Farm. The last information we have on his wife and children is from the 1901 census according to which they were living at Tambowie Farm. We have found no further information since then in Scottish national or local records, implying that they may have emigrated.

This remains another fruitful subject for further research, as is follow-up on several possible additional descendant lines of the 7th substitute, not yet definitively researched and ignored by researchers.

The following day, 18 November, was an especially busy one. I had a morning appointment with a prominent genealogist, Ian Devlin of Bearsden, with whom I had had a long phone conversation during the first week. He had been completing review of the manuscript of a book he had written, which he had finished in the interim. He had done some relevant reading since we talked earlier, including the Burke's article on the Galbraith descendency leading to Lord Strathclyde, Thomas Galbraith. We had a long, far-reaching conversation. Among the many points he made were that his intuition told him that the best line to follow was that of the Cappahard (Cappard) line. (This was before I told him of my progress in researching that line while I was in Ireland.) Ian also mentioned that the Office of Lord Lyon was tightening up its procedures after strong criticism for a recent Chief approval.

I then called Esther Galbraith of Bearsden, the Galbraith family historian whom I had talked to by phone in week 1. She had been identified by Ian Brown as the only local person he knew who was researching Galbraiths. It was a very pleasant visit. She is a serious researcher in the heritage of her husband but his Galbraiths were clearly not descended from late-enough Chiefs to be relevant to the search. They were from the Kintyre Peninsula and seemed



likely to be related to Ken Galbraith's Galbraiths. I later passed on the contact and information to Ken.

I spent the afternoon and evening in the Balfron area following up on information from the Balfron Historical Society meeting. First, I decided to confirm a B&B for the night. I contacted the B&B where I had stayed in Drymen and, although it was booked, the proprietress recommended a B&B in Buchlyvie, a community just north of Balfron. Showing the customary kindness, she called them and confirmed the reservation.

I decided to check in before making any visits, and then headed to Balfron to meet the only Galbraith in the town. It was another pleasant visit. He was a relatively recent arrival to the area, although his wife had grown up not too far away. He had not been interested in family history but he was able to give me enough of what he knew to convince me that it was unlikely that he was connected to any of the relevant chief branches. He could not provide the names of any other Galbraiths in the area.

I then drove on to some of the farms where Galbraiths or their relatives had lived many years earlier. I had hoped that I'd be able to get leads on current descendants. I made several stops at farmhouses in eastern Balfron, which had been farmed by Galbraiths or in-laws, including Hill of Balgair, Easter Balgair and Harveystown. Again, pleasant visits but no useful information for the search was gained.

Nineteen November brought me to Helensburgh to see historian Stewart Noble who has written books about Helensburgh and Loch Lomond. I had met Stewart on an earlier trip and we had stayed in touch, including a visit he and his family had made to Boston.

Some of the Galbraith holdings had been in or near Helensburgh, which is northwest of Dumbarton along the coast road on the north side of the Firth of Clyde and a relatively short ride from the southwest shore of Loch Lomond, passing the former Galbraith holding of Bannachra, which I had visited on an earlier trip.

At the time of the Galbraith holdings, the area now known as Helensburgh was known as Millig. It was later held by the ever-acquisitive Colquhouns and received its name from that of the wife of a Colquhoun Chief. As far as we have discovered, it was the Temple Lands of Millig, held by the notorious Robert Galbraith, Chief 17, and his son James, generally described as Chief 18, that was their final holding—lost due to the debts and misadventures of Robert.

Stewart's book on Helensburgh (*200 Years of Helensburgh, 1802-2002*) did not reach far enough back in history to include the Galbraith era but he has promised to include us if he writes an earlier version. Fortunately, he asked our advice when completing *By the Banks of Loch Lomond* and included Galbraith information in his published version.

Stewart had located some sites of early Galbraith farms and took me by them but there was now no connection. He had also found some information I had been looking for. On a previous trip, I had found correspondence by a

Quintin Galbraith of Helensburgh, which indicated that he was interested in Galbraith history. I had located him in directories for Helensburgh and Glasgow but nothing about possible current relatives or his lineage. Stewart had located a great-granddaughter of Quinton's, Maureen (Galbraith) Kidd, employed at the University of St. Andrews. I made tentative plans to visit her later in the week and headed for my favorite B&B in Edinburgh.

I planned to spend most of the remaining time on the trip doing research in Edinburgh with one day for visiting Sterling and St. Andrews.

Twenty November was spent at libraries, most of it at the library of the Scottish Genealogy Society and at the National Library of Scotland. I had been at both locations before but there is a wealth of data at both, especially at the latter. Among its holdings is a large file from the Galbraiths of Blackhouse. While that branch itself is far down the seniority list of descendants of Galbraith chiefs, the collection contains useful data concerning other Galbraith branches. I had looked through much of it on an earlier trip and this time I reviewed it all, finding items I had presumably overlooked earlier.

Two of those were items, which added to the Cappard/Balgair story. We had earlier located a copy of the Petition for Authority to Sell Balgair (technically, a petition for "Authority to Record Instrument of Disintail") from heir James Galbraith of Portage La Prairie, Manitoba, dated 30 October 1913. In the petition, James indicated that he had knowledge of only one other heir, William Galbraith of Elm Cottage, Clifton Vale, Bristol, entitled to succeed to the entailed lands. He stated that he had been unable to locate other heirs (not a difficult task since we have identified dozens of relatives alive at the time).

One of the "new" items was a document signed by an aunt (Sarah Galbraith of County Galway) and cousin (Alfred Bell of Dublin) of James', certifying that he was the heir to Balgair. Our copy is not dated but, from other information, may have been in 1909. The other "new" item was a copy of a letter dated 2 September 1912, from the aforementioned William Galbraith of Bristol, England. It was written to a "Mr. Galbraith" (not otherwise identified, although from the context he may have had his office in Edinburgh) thanking him for information about Balgair. From the context of the letter, the information may have included the document signed by Sarah Galbraith and Alfred Bell. He had not known before receiving the information that James' father had died in 1905, establishing James as the heir. In the letter, William, although indicating his continued interest, commented "... I am getting on in years and have no heir at present, do not care to throw away good money in fighting the case...."

Although outside the scope of this trip report, we have subsequently come across what appears to be an important part of the puzzle of the sale of Balgair. The records of Ellis Island list the arrival on 30 July 1913, aboard the Olympic out of Southampton, England, of a James Galbraith of Portage La Prairie. His age was listed as 29

years, 9 months (not identical to James who was born on 14 September 1884). It seems likely that this was our James and that part of his travel was to convince William Galbraith not to contest James' petition. This presumably would explain the listing of William as the only other known heir.

The first stop on 21 November was in Stirling where I revisited Tony Murray. Tony is head of the "Central Scotland Parish Family History Project". He has been collecting family histories of Stirlingshire families. (Stirlingshire was the home of most early Galbraith families.) The benefactors for the project have been the Wilson family of Bannockburn, a prominent local family.

Most of the Galbraiths in the project files are related to the Galbraiths of Blackhouse, a line related from more than one marriage to the Wilsons. The Wilsons had almost no ties to other Galbraith Stirlingshire branches. (There were many Galbraith=Wilson marriages in Kilkeel, Northern Ireland, and New Brunswick, but that's another story.)

I had first met Tony on my 2004 trip. We had exchanged data after that visit. His data was related to Galbraith=Wilson ties. I had provided an amount of data on certain Balgair Galbraiths with the offer of much more. He hadn't responded to the offer.

In the latest visit, we brought each other up to date on our activities since the last meeting. He provided me with additional data on Galbraiths of Stirling, although we were not able to tie this data to any of the families in my database.

Tony felt that there were ties between Galbraiths and the Gibbs family of Stirling, a family for which he had much data. (As an aside, as an example of the many false trails we travel in this research, at the time I thought I had tied a John Galbraith, a 5th generation descendant of George Galbraith, 8th substitute, to a Gibbs family in Campsie, Stirlingshire. With the help of Edwin Galbraith's "Galbraith Settlers in Ontario" I felt that I had traced them to Ontario. Although there seemed to be remarkable correlations, a genealogist in Ontario helped convince me I had the wrong marriage, leaving John [27] and Janet [21, maiden name unknown] "frozen" in time, childless in Buchlyvie at the time of the 1851 census, with the only candidate Stirlingshire marriage found to be a different Galbraith couple.)

Tony had heard from only one other person interested in the Galbraiths, a 23-year-old researcher in Australia, Gineen Ruth Galbraith. She had provided no data. He also provided a new theory of his that families in Stirlingshire whose names were spelled "Culbrugh" or "Coalbray" in available records were actually Galbraiths. They were most notably found in Ellrig, a community above Falkirk. (Few of the ties have been found between the many Galbraiths of Falkirk and other locations in Stirlingshire.) In our discussion of various historians, Tony indicated that much of historian Guthrie Smith's material was in a collection at Glasgow University. (I didn't have time to

follow up on that.) He also provided me with a copy of a history of Stirling written by a Dr. Galbraith. (It didn't further identify the author or contain any new information on Galbraiths.)

I then drove to St. Andrews where I met Maureen (Galbraith) Kidd. She filled me in on her great-grandfather, self-proclaimed Galbraith historian Quintin Galbraith (1842-1927).

On an earlier trip to Scotland, I had come across two letters from Quintin in the Blackhouse file that caught my attention. The first was written to Thomas Littlejohn Galbraith of Blackhouse, suggesting that the two of them cooperate in providing Galbraith information to Guthrie Smith who was completing his book *Strathendrick (Valley of the Endrick)*. A year later, he wrote to Thomas again repeating his offer.

Note: Guthrie Smith, a noted local historian, had died before completing Strathendrick, his second major work (Strathblane was the first). It is one of the best sources of information on early Galbraith history. His friends decided to complete the book and have it published. One of the incomplete sections concerned the Galbraiths of Blackhouse. It was completed by Quintin's correspondent Thomas L. Galbraith. Thomas was Town Clerk of Sterling and Sheriff-Clerk of Stirlingshire. Blackhouse, just north of Harviestown, was finally sold by Thomas' son William. The Galbraiths had rented out Blackhouse while living at Little Kerse.

Thomas was credited in *Strathendrick* for the section on the Galbraiths of Blackhouse. Quintin was not mentioned.

Maureen had quite a bit of Quintin's material, including his family history chart and a memoir he had written, and told me quite a bit more, including a new one to me. Apparently, Quintin felt he had a claim on the island of Inchgalbraith in Loch Lomond but after several years of litigation had not been able to win his claim. His family history, unfortunately, did not tie into later Galbraith chiefs. It included three earlier ancestors, all John Galbraiths, residents of Ayrshire. Maureen understood that still earlier generations might have come from the Western Isles, perhaps Gigha. His memoir was mostly about his work history, with several copies of photos of him and his immediate family. No family history was discussed and Inchgalbraith was not mentioned.

Maureen had made copies of what she had from Quintin. Much more of Quintin's Galbraith data, including information on Quintin's claim to Inchgalbraith, is in the possession of a relative of his in Belfast. Maureen expects to be able to access it and promised to copy me when she did.

On the way back to Edinburgh that evening, I suffered another car problem and experienced another act of kindness. One of the tires had been damaged and went

flat. I managed to get to a safe place to pull over but did not have a phone and maybe wouldn't have known where to direct a rep of the car rental company. I took my only option—to stand behind the car and wave forlornly. Before too long, a couple stopped. They had a phone and called the number I had and directed the repair truck to where I was. The tire was replaced and I was on my way back to the B&B.

Twenty-two November was to be spent at the New Register House (NRH) in Edinburgh, the archives for all birth, marriage and death records in Scotland since the official requirement began in 1855. It also has censuses from 1841 to 1901, the earlier church records, primarily those transcribed by the Mormons, and other miscellaneous data. The Office of Lord Lyons also is located there. I had earlier made an appointment to meet this day with Mrs. Roads, manager of the office, who had been quite helpful on a previous trip. I reviewed some of our understanding of the rules of the Office of Lord Lyon and asked for clarification on one additional relevant aspect, that is, the rules regarding illegitimate births.

One of the branches having relatively high primacy (Pirie-Gordon: "The Pantler's Line"), was headed by James Galbraith, "natural son" of Humphrey Galbraith ("The Tutor"), second son of James Galbraith, Chief 13. (The older son was Andrew, Chief 14, whom Humphrey tutored during part of Andrew's minority.) According to Pirie Gordon, Humphrey's son was legitimated in 1558. He was a member of the King's household staff, reaching the prestigious rank of Archpanitor, Master of the King's Pantry, to James VI.

His son James also had an illegitimate son named James. We do not have information yet on whether this James was legitimated. In any case, he also served in prestigious positions in the King's household. He was promoted from the King's Pantry to the position of "Avenarius Regis", that is, Keeper of the Meal Store.

Mrs. Roads indicated that legitimization would be approved when the parents of a "natural child" became married. Lines that had a link through a "natural son" who was not later legitimated would not be able to justify a claim to a Chiefship.

This line has been followed only to the early 1600s and may be fertile ground for further research, especially because so many were involved in the King's household.

I had accomplished quite a bit at the NRH during week 1 as noted in that trip report. The NRH has continued to improve its automation, making it quite easy to use. I was also fortunate in being assigned a desk next to an experienced genealogist who was very helpful when I had questions.

I managed to add a considerable amount of data at the NRH on many of the branches descended from later chiefs, although much of it was data on individuals already identified. As indicated earlier, one of the branches of relatively high seniority in terms of the Chief search was

followed until all the descendants who had been identified as living into the 20th century were found to have died "without issue". Attempts to find information on members of the Tambowie Farm Galbraiths (including marriage and death records) later than the 1901 census failed, providing an implication that members of the family may have emigrated.

Among other important branches followed was the one likely (although not without controversy) having the highest primacy of the branches descended from George Galbraith, the 8th Substitute in the entail of James Galbraith, first Galbraith owner of Balgair. It was headed by his grandson George Galbraith. Among Galbraith references, it has been mentioned only in the Burke's article on the descendency of Lord Strathclyde. I have been able to track descendants only into the early 19th century.

Much more research should be done on the descendants of this branch.

In conversations with the genealogist, he disagreed with the statement by Mrs. Roads concerning legitimization. He asserted that the authorities had the ability to legitimize "natural children" independent of the marriage of their parents. I haven't attempted to reconcile the two positions.

In the evening, I returned to the National Library to pick up requested copies and review more relevant books.

In the morning of 19 November, I headed to the Glasgow Airport. While there, I continued a habit of calling Galbraiths, chosen at random from the phone book but, as before, I got no useful information by this approach. (I still think it could be of value.)

The Chief Search has been an enjoyable and challenging project. I thank those who have contributed, including those whose encouragement has been much appreciated.

While I was surprised and disappointed at the lack of interest by the membership, I continue to feel that the search should be important to CGA and may be revived by others some time in the future.

As for me, one of the things I have been able to return to has been tracing descendants of the Galbraiths of Kilkeel—a search that now includes over 9,000 relatives, including several CGA members. I expect to continue to follow-up on a few items of special interest from the Chief Search, especially concerning the Galbraiths of Cappard and the sale of Balgair. ~~~~