



# Girnigoe

*Newsletter of the Clan Sinclair Society*

*No 9 - April 1998*

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## **Auction Sale**

The Auction sale held on Thursday 27 November 1997 raised a total of £677.50. Many thanks to all who helped and supported the event; Ruby Sinclair especially for her tremendous help in gathering together all the items for sale.

The entire proceeds were donated to the Castles Sinclair and Girnigoe Task Force.

## **Forthcoming Events**

**Lecture "Knights Templar" - Sunday 14 June 1998, Leisure Centre, Thurso (time to be confirmed).**

A lecture on the Knights Templars will be given by Christopher Knight and Dr Robert Lomas.

The Knights Templars play an important part in the history of the Sinclair family - come to the lecture to help put the history of your Clan into context.

### **Halkirk Games and Annual General Meeting**

As usual, the Society will be manning a tent at the Halkirk Games on 1 August 1998, with refreshments available for members and visitors.

Date and venue for the General Meeting will be confirmed in the next newsletter.

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## **Visitors**

Some members of the Society have indicated their intention to visit Caithness in the not too distant future.

Mr Dick Beeching will be visiting from Australia and hopes to track down a few of the graves of his ancestors.

A Miss St Clair will be visiting from Castle Douglas.

Nicholas Cram-Sinclair is an Edinburgh based Genealogist involved with the Friends of Rosslyn Chapel and also hopes to visit the county.

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## **Genealogical Information.**

We are now getting many requests from members about tracing family trees. Unfortunately, the Society does not, at present, have the resources to fund a Genealogist or to undertake complex searches ourselves on behalf of members (although we may know someone who can!) Such searches inevitably cost money which we cannot yet afford. There are, however, many good sources of information of which below are but a few:-

The Dunbeath Heritage Centre has collected a great amount of information on the local population, from census reports, local recollections etc. This applies to the Parish of Latheron and Dunbeath, which includes Lybster and Berriedale

Wick Heritage Centre also have archives which can be viewed by arrangement.

Wick Library employs an archivist who can help with searches, again however at a cost (about £17

per hour). In order to get the most cost effective use of her services, she recommends that people be prepared to do a good deal of preparatory work, preferably going back to at least the mid 1800s.

Register House in Edinburgh is on the Internet. The Old Parish Registers dating from 1553 to 1854 have been converted to a fully searchable index to births, baptisms and banns/marriages. Births marriages and deaths from the statutory index from 1855 to 1897 are also available as is an index to the 1891 Census records. 1881 Census data will be available later in the year. The on line service will be launched by Henry McLeish, Minister of State at the Scottish Office on Monday 6 April 1998, with the on-line service available from 1:00pm UK time. Further details are available from:-

<http://www.open.gov.uk/gros/groshome.htm>.

When you go on line, have your credit card ready; although costs were unavailable at the time of writing, they were expected to be similar to the charges currently charged at New Register House, Edinburgh. Costs will certainly be competitive compared to the cost of going to Edinburgh in person and/or employing a genealogist.

Finally Lorna Gunn at the Latheron Post Office is also the Registrar for the Parish of Latheron and Dunbeath. And, with some warning, would be happy to help visitors go back through the parish records, including copies of older records that she has retained.

As the society's own database of family trees expands, hopefully we can start to be of more immediate assistance to Members.

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## **Member's Family Trees.**

***Leslie and Linda Sinclair, Box 3341, Wainwright, Alberta, Canada T9W 1T3 are seeking information on an Archibald Sinclair who is believed to have been born aboard ship on 16 August 1846 whilst en-route to Canada***

*Archibald Sinclair married Mary Ann Maunder (also from Scotland). One of their children was William Sinclair (born 28 July 1874, Lindsey , Ontario). He married Minnie Vanita Budd, also of Lindsey Ontario, in Cavalier, North Dakota, USA on 24 November 1895.*

*They had nine children, one of which, Daniel Sinclair of Lampman, Saskatchewan, was Leslie's father. Leslie is third eldest of seven.*

*Information on the ancestry of Archibald Sinclair will be gratefully received.*

***Mrs Mary Griffiths (nee Simpson) Stafford St, Pondcroft Rd, Knebworth, Herts, has forwarded part of her family tree:-***

*Mary Sinclair (Born 1795) married James Dunnett.*

*They had a daughter Mary Dunnett (1822-1871). She married William Steven (born 1822) in 1844.*

*William Steven and Mary Dunnett had a daughter Mary Steven (born 1847). Mary Steven was a cousin of Sir Archibald Sinclair.*

*Mary Steven married William Simpson from Stroma. They are the grandparents of Mrs Griffiths.*

*Mrs Griffiths also notes that both her daughters have been*

*Mrs Griffiths recalls that her father used to call her Marguerite/Margarete, because she was the image of his mother, but she does not know the reason why.*

**Editor's Note:-** Is it possible that Mrs Griffiths' grandmother was actually Marguerite/Margarete, rather than Mary? In official records, Margaret (and presumably similar names) could be abbreviated to "Marg" - a simple transcription error then leads to the name "Mary" being written in subsequent records. At least one such error has been found in my own family tree. Where possible, view the original records. If researching, try to anticipate such permutations.

***Mrs Carolyn Vaughan of Lucan, Co. Dublin, Eire is a Scottish born Sinclair and has just started out on the arduous task of tracing her family tree.***

***Dick Beeching, Newport, Victoria, Australia has provided an extensive family tree:-***

*Alexander Millar married Katherine Bain (born 28 May 1749, Wick) on 24 January 1772 at Wick.*

Their daughter Elizabeth Millar (died 25 October 1839 in Wick) married George Sinclair on 24 April 1796 (George Sinclair was recorded as a merchant in Wick). Mr Beeching speculates that this could be a son of Alexander Sinclair, 3<sup>rd</sup> of Barrock, although further proof evidence seems to be required to back this up.

George Sinclair and Elizabeth Miller had seven recorded children

1. **Alexander**, born 13 January 1797
2. **John**, born 16 November 1801
3. **Elizabeth** born 18 August 1803, Wick. She married Robert Thomson (born 11 August 1801, Tain, Scotland. Died 30 October 1838) on 29 July 1825 in Wick. He was a son of Patrick Thomson (born 1780, Tain. Died 1 August 1865, Portobello) and Mrs Janet MacKay. They married on 24 January 1801 in Rogart Manse, Sutherland.
4. **Margaret** born 11 April 1805, Wick. Died 28 January 1887, Wick (unmarried)
5. **James** born 22 November 1808
6. Unnamed daughter who is believed to have married a Fraser (details of descendants currently sketchy.
7. **George**, born 29 September 1811

Robert Thomson and Elizabeth Sinclair had two recorded children

1. **Patrick** born 26 June 1826, Wick, died 26 July 1888 in Ballan, Victoria, Australia. He married Eliza Amelia Fraser (born 30 May 1850, Oban Scotland. Died 3 January 1916 in Hawthorn, Victoria) in Bulla Presbyterian Church, Bulla, Victoria). He emigrated to Australia in 1845 on the 632 ton barque "Eliza" under Captain Snell. Mr Beeching wonders if the ship had some connection with the Sinclair family.
2. **Elizabeth** (born 8 May 1829, Wick. Died 26 October 1829).

Patrick Thomson and Eliza Fraser had four children.

1. **Margaret Livingstone Thomson** (born 25 December 1874 in Warrenheip, Victoria. Died 13 September 1937)
2. **Elizabeth Sinclair Thomson** (born 24 June 1875, died 29 October 1946)
3. **Robert Colin Thomson** (born 7 March 1877 in Ballan, Victoria, died 9 January 1955 in Box Hill, Victoria). He married Dora Caroline Bartholomew (born 18 April 1883 in Sheparton, Victoria, died 13 January 1967 in Barnwood, Victoria) on 1 November 1907 in Trinity Church, Camberwell, Victoria. They were Dick Beeching's maternal grandparents.
4. **Jessie Amelia Thomson**, born 14 December 1881 in Ballan Victoria, died 17 August 1964, Melbourne, Victoria.

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## Which Sinclair Are You?

In this issue, we reproduce extracts from Roland William St. Clair's book "St. Clairs of the Isles" (published 1898), chronicling the genealogy of Sinclairs of Hoy and Oldfield, and the Sinclairs of Borlum, Toftkemp and Thura. This is the last in the series of extracts.

### The Sinclairs Of Hoy And Oldfield.

- I John, Master of Berriedale, granted in 1630 a wadset of Hoy to one **WILLIAM SINCLAIR**, who held also the lands of Cairdscoft, Oldfield, and Hallowtoft, near Thurso. This William Sinclair is a different person from William Sinclair of Hoy and Scotsclader, and is probably "William Sinclair in Thurso East" who is mentioned in the proceedings against the Earl of Caithness and others for the forcible abduction in 1668 of William McKay of Scourie. By his wife, Katharine Anguson, William Sinclair had two sons -
  1. **James**.
  2. **William**.
- II **JAMES**, the eldest son, was fiar of Hoy in 1676, and in Hoy in 1700. He married Elizabeth Sinclair, who in 1730 is described as relict of James Sinclair of Oldfield. James Sinclair of Hoy and his wife disposed the wadset of these lands to Sir George Sinclair of Clyth, through whom it came into the hands of his nephew William Sinclair of Hoy and Scotsclader.
- III The second son of William Sinclair of Hoy and Oldfield was **WILLIAM SINCLAIR**, Commissary of Caithness, who married Elizabeth, eldest daughter of James Innes of Sandside. He had two sons -

1. **William**, who got from his grandfather in 1690 a disposition to Oldfield, Cairdscroft, and Hallowtoft, which he disposed to his brother in 1729.
2. **Robert**, Rector of Bulfen, in Essex, who in 1731 disposed Oldfield, Cairdscroft, and Hallowtoft to William Innes of Sandside.

## The Sinclairs Of Borlum, Toftkemp And Thura.

There is in the South or "Murkle Aisle" of the parish church of Thurso a mural inscription on the north-west wall in the following terms:- "This is the burial place of James Sinclair of Borlum; and here lyes James Sinclair, his eldest son, and his spouse Elizabeth Innes, who left behind them the Rev. Mr. John Sinclair, who was Rector of (James) interred in Leckpatrick, nigh Strabane in Ireland, 1665." "Here lyes Isabel Sinclair, who was married to the Rev. Geo. Anderson, Minister of Halkirk; and Elizabeth Sinclair, married to John Farquhar, Bailze of Thurso; and Margaret Sinclair, spouse to Geo. Sinclair in Ulgrimbeg."

Who James Sinclair of Borlum was, is very uncertain. He may have been a grandson of William Sinclair of Dunbeath, to whom Brubster, Brims, Toftkemp, and Thura belonged; Borlum's name occurs in common with all these places in the county records from 1624 to 1646, or he may have been a son of James Sinclair, first of Murkle, and brother of John Sinclair, first of Assery. There are numerous incidents connecting the descendants of Assery and Borlum. If of the Dunbeath family, he was probably a son of George Sinclair of Downreay, and it is known that there were transactions between James Sinclair and the descendants of William Sinclair of Dunbeath in relation to lands which belonged to the family. In particular, there is mention of a renunciation of rights held by Borlum over Spittal, granted by him in 1649 to John Sinclair of Brims, grandson of Dunbeath, which instrument, if extant, would perhaps throw light on his history.

### I. **JAMES SINCLAIR, FIRST OF BORLUM**, who was killed by Neil McKay between 1648-59, had four sons and a daughter Jean.

1. **James** of Wester-Brims.
2. **Captain Alexander**, First of Bowertower, and afterwards of Telstane, married Isabel, daughter of John Cunningham of Brownhill, and had
  - a. **John** (1683).
  - b. **James**.
  - c. **Katharine**, lady Dun, wife first, of William Sinclair of Dun, and thereafter of Alex. Sutherland of Ausdale.
  - d. (unknown daughter) married John Fullerton.

In 1666 there is on record an inhibition at the instance of John, Alex., George, Elizabeth, and Margaret Sinclair as "lawful heirs" of Alex. Sinclair of Telstane, but without illustration of the relationship.

3. **Major William** had paternal disposition of Thura in 1651. He served in the German wars and fought for the Sinclairs at Altmarlach. He married Margaret, daughter of John Doull of Thurster, and had:-
  - a. **John** of Thura, who disposed the estate in 1702 to his brother.
  - b. **Richard** of Thura, who married Elizabeth, daughter of George Sinclair of Assery, and had a son -  
**Captain John Sinclair**, who in 1754 sold Thura.
  - c. **James**, of whom there is no further account.
4. **Robert**, had a daughter Elizabeth, who married Donald Henderson in Sibster.
5. **Jean**, married in 1658 Alex. Steill, who is designed as "servitor to the Earl of Caithness." Her brothers, Captain Alexander and Major William, were parties to the contract of marriage, and her tocher was 1,000 merks.

### II. **JAMES SINCLAIR OF WESTER-BRIMS** married Elspeth or Elizabeth Innes, probably of the Inneses of Thursater and Wester-Brims. He died before 1659, leaving a son, John, and several daughters:-

1. **John**, minister of Leckpatrick in Ireland.
2. **Isabel**, married the Rev. Geo. Anderson of Halkirk.
3. **Jean**, married Alex. Sinclair, notary public in Thurso.
4. (unknown daughter), married, first, Alex. Abernethy in Swordale.

**Apologies** *This has been the first newsletter since September 1997, thus we have missed one of the promised issues. Many apologies to all members expecting a Christmas Newsletter.*

This newsletter depends on contributions and news from members to keep it viable. Please send your news and articles to the Editor.

*Issue Schedule. Newsletters will normally be issued approximately quarterly at the end of each month shown below. Additional special issues may also be produced from time to time.*

**June**  
**September**

**November**  
**March**

## *Office Bearers.*

H onorary P resident  
***Malcolm, Earl of Caithness***

V ice P residents  
***Margaret, Viscountess Thurso***  
Thurso East Mains  
THURSO  
Caithness

***Lord Thurso***

***Sir Patrick Sinclair of Dunbeath***

S ecretary  
***Mrs Kay Dunnett***  
Cathel Shielling  
LOCHCALDER  
Caithness

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