

THE LANDS OF BALDRIDGE

BY

REV. J.M. WEBSTER



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LANDS OF BALDRIDGE

DUNFERMLINE

BY

JAMES MOIR WEBSTER

FROM

**NOTES HE LEFT WHILE WORKING ON HIS
DUNFERMLINE ABBEY**

Published in 1948

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Baldrige from the west

It is estimated that, about the time of the Reformation, something like half the wealth of Scotland was in the hands of the Church and that of the Church's share the monasteries accounted for more than half. It is also safe to assume that much of this wealth consisted of land or burdens laid on land.

The reason for land bulking so largely is not difficult to understand. For many a day the amount of money in circulation was very limited and ready money often difficult to lay hands on unless land was available as security.

When a church was erected and ready for dedication, it was the invariable practice to endow it with lands for its support. It was, in fact, an essential preliminary to the service of dedication.

Where a parish church was concerned, the obligation lay on the principal proprietor in the parish. In the case of a monastic church, the liability was generally met either by the king or one of the nobility.

When, for instance, the Nave of Dunfermline Abbey was dedicated in 1150, David I in addition to provision already made by his parents, endowed it with a liberal gift of lands, and several of his successors made additions to the list.

It is also to be remembered that when wealthy people wished to secure sepulture in a church or to have prayers offered there for deceased relatives or friends, the request was almost invariably accompanied by a gift of land, as when Randolph, Earl of Moray, to ensure that prayers should be offered in perpetuity in Dunfermline Abbey on behalf of his uncle, Robert the Bruce, gave to the monastery the lands of Cullalo near Aberdour.

Dunfermline Abbey, being a monastery of early foundation, and one of the most important in the country, had lands scattered here and there almost from the Moray Firth to the English border, and the administration of these lands, with communications difficult and uncertain, must have been a problem of real magnitude.

Some of these lands, retaining only the superiority, it disposed of to lay-vassals, under conditions that frequently included such liabilities as national defence and service, as members of assize at regality courts. Some of them it retained entirely in its own hands, being not only superior, but actual possessor.

It is in this latter case that we find the lands of Baldridge.

Strangely enough, as at first sight might appear, most of the lands to the north and north-west of the burgh were in the same position. None of them were held by lay-owners under the abbot. The abbot was both superior and owner.

When one of the abbots contemplated providing the burgh with a Common Moor, he was naturally restricted not only to land that was suitable and near, but to land that was in his full possession – otherwise he would have had to reckon with the owner, even though that owner held the ground from himself as superior – and his choice fell on the land immediately to the east of Baldridge.

Again, when George Durie, the last of the abbots, had to find a place of residence for Catherine Sibbald, his unofficial wife – the Abbot House being entirely out of the question – his choice also was confined to a holding of which he himself, as abbot, was both superior and owner; and his choice fell upon Craiguscar, immediately to the west of Baldridge.

And when, some years, later, he found himself confronted with the necessity, in view of the Reformation which he now knew to be inevitable, of making some permanent provision for his wife and family, his thoughts again turned to the lands on the north side of the burgh; and it was from Craiguscar and Baldridge that most of the provision was derived.

The lands of Luscar, further west, were in quite a different position. Gifted by King Duncan, son of Malcolm Canmore, in 1094, they had, long before George Durie's day, been in the possession of laymen holding under the abbot as superior.

The same applies to nearly all the lands on the south side of the burgh, and, indeed, to most of the monastery lands. The superiority lay with the abbot, the ownership with laymen.

How are we to account for this?

The material at our disposal is too scanty to justify confident conclusions. But at least three possibilities suggest themselves.

(1) The natural fertility of the land on the north side was less than that on the south and, from the nature of the land, the cost of clearance so much higher than laymen may quite well have looked askance at it, being of opinion that the prospective gain would not justify the cost.

(2) It may be that the monastic authorities were aware of the mineral wealth that underlay the lands on the north side and were anxious to retain them in their own hands. There is nothing unreasonable in this suggestion. The monks, or their `men`, had been working coals at Pittencrieff since the close of the 13th century and afterwards the Baldrige seams proved very profitable.

(3) The monastery itself may have seen in this somewhat unpromising area a suitable field for pioneer work in agriculture.

At first sight this may seem a suggestion so far-fetched as to be unworthy of serious consideration, but, in the light of known historical facts, it is by no means so fantastic as might appear.

Roman Catholic writers have always maintained that, in the early days, the Church was not only the liberal patron of the arts but an outstanding pioneer in many of the crafts. Even Protestant writers, though not so lavish in their praise, have not infrequently admitted that there is substance in the claim.

In recent years, however, there has been a notable tendency on the part of historical students to submit the available evidence to more critical scrutiny, with the result that many the claims heretofore admitted are now proved to be quite without foundation.

Amongst the scholars in this country who have been engaged in this study there is no more outstanding figure than the late Professor C. G. Coulton of Cambridge University who has exposed so many mythical claims of the Roman Catholic Church that no one who is acquainted with his writings on the subject will suspect him of partiality towards the monastic life.

But even Professor Coulton frankly admits that not all the traditional claims were baseless.

As regards Horticulture, for example, he is quite prepared to admit that the monks were unquestionably pioneers. Confined for life, as most of them were, to a very limited space, with a good deal of free time at their

disposal, subsisting on a severely restricted and, for a considerable part of the year, hopelessly monotonous, diet of salted food, it was but natural that they should seek to supplement it with fruit and vegetables of their own cultivation.

As members of an Order with settlements not only in various parts of the country but also on the continent, and with occasional, if not frequent, intercourse between these settlements, it was quite a possibility for them to effect interchanges of seeds and plants and even trees, with the result that not only did the monastic gardens set an example to all in the neighbourhood; the day came when the monasteries made it a condition of tenancy of their lands that the tenant must plant a specified number of fruit shrubs and trees.

No student of horticulture today seriously questions the fact that churchmen were pioneers in this respect.

Monastic leadership in agriculture may not be so self evident, but it would be foolish to disregard such evidence as is available. When we read, for instance, that the great Cistercian monastery of Rievaulx had not only 150 monks but an agricultural colony of 600 lay-brethren, one is more or less compelled to take note of it. Even when one makes due allowance for possible inflation of numbers, the fact that there was such a colony attached to the monastery is too significant to be ignored.

In our own land we have no lack of evidence of forest land being cleared and marshes drained by the monasteries and of encouragement to this effect by the Pope who freely promised exemption from tithes for all clearances effected by any of the monastic Orders, or their `men`. Sometimes the monks co-operated with prospective owners, both sides sharing in the profits that accrued.

It is quite true, as Professor Coulton says, that monks were not the only men to clear forests and drain marshes. Laymen often set their tenants or men to the same work.

“Yet the monasteries” – he goes on to say – “were incomparably richer, and at first more far-sighted, than any but the most exceptional layman; and therefore it is to them that we owe most of the clearings.”

Who, but the abbot, drained the marshes in the vicinity of Holyrood? Did not the abbot of Cupar-Angus in the 15th century make it a condition of tenancy that land still undrained must be drained?

It would be easy to multiply examples.

The work or reclamation might well cover a considerable period and be accomplished in instalments. To judge by the terms of William de Oberville's grant authorising the monks to work coals at the close of the 13th century, whilst part of Pittencrieff was arable, part of it was not yet cleared.

Sometimes only a small portion was cleared at a time.

Newlands, for instance, a holding of about 12 acres a little south-east of East Baldrige, apparently got its name from the fact that it had recently been reclaimed from the wild.

Historians assure us that to the north and north-west of Dunfermline the land was once primeval forest; and the inscription on the Burgh Coat of Arms "Inaccessa nisi feris" (inaccessible except to wild beasts) seems to confirm it.

Only the king or a great churchman could have undertaken the reclamation of such land on any scale and, whilst one cannot speak with any great degree of confidence, one might, in view of the Pope's offer of freedom from tithe for all clearances effected by any of the monastic Orders or their men, hazard the suggestion that some, at least, of the work carried out to the north of Dunfermline may have been done by the monastery's bondmen. It was not too far away and nobody else would have felt justified in undertaking it.

Part of the ground in question, as we know, was given to the burgh as a common moor for grazing, which would not necessitate the same amount of clearance. The rest would come into cultivation as it was cleared; and that might well take considerable time.

When or how the lands of Baldrige came into the possession of the monastery is unknown. Presumably they came from the king, but the name does not appear in any recorded list of royal gifts; nor does the Chartulary make any reference to them prior to the Reformation. The Burgh Records, it is true does mention them in 1522, but all that the reference amounts to is that the south-west boundary of the Moor was `Badrik dyk`.

From the time of the Reformation, if not before, they consisted, apparently, of three separate holdings: - Wester, Easter and Middle Baldrige, the relative rentals being £1, £2, and £4.6.8.

These figures may not be particularly informative as to value, but at least they suggest the relative size of the holdings.

There is even an occasional reference to a South Baldrige, consisting, seemingly, of lands on the south side of Carnock Road, running from about Mounthooly to the neighbourhood of Woosers' Alley.

But in time this land, or some portion of it, became identified with Middle Baldrige.

MIDDLE BALDRIDGE

The lands so-called had both a `fortalicium` and a gallows; but Baldrige never was a barony. The `fortalicium` was the residence of the owner and the gallows belonged to the Regality of Dunfermline, within which the lands of Baldrige lay.

Soon after the Reformation, West Baldrige and Middle Baldrige seem to have been conjoined, although part of West Baldrige was, about this time, evidently acquired by a Laird of Pittencrieff and continued in the possession of his successors till it was recovered by Charles Mitchell of Baldrige, who purchased it from Colonel Forbes of Pittencrieff.

Another, if not the same, part, one is surprised to find, consisting of a portion known as the `Mason Lands`, now known as Broomhead, lay to the very eastern limit of East Baldrige.

But, indeed, the whole question of nomenclature as applied to these lands is a source of constant worry and vexation.

Fortunately, it becomes much simpler towards the end, with only two portions: - East and West.

To the lands for long known as Middle or West Baldrige, the first claimant, following the upheaval that accompanied the Reformation, was Peter Durie, second son of the late abbot.

But he was not the only one. Several others, no exact dates being given, sought to establish counter-claims: - Robert Horn, Robert Bruce, and John Betoun of Capildray, the son of a former Bailie of Regality.

The situation is somewhat mystifying; but the explanation is doubtless to be found in the unsettled conditions that prevailed at the time. With the connivance of the Commendator, each of them had, it appears, acquired a title of a sort: - a lease, a feu, or a charter. Each of them knew that his title, as it stood, was incomplete and invalid, but they advanced it in the fond hope that, through family influence, or otherwise, it might be preferred to that of any of the others.

The winner was Robert Bruce (1585-), who made a contribution to the repair of the Nave.

On 5th February 1585/6, the king confirmed a charter of deceased Robert Pitcairn, Commendator, giving to Robert Bruce, brother-german of Alexander Bruce of Airth, and his wife, Helen Drummond, the lands of Middle Baldrige and the Mason Lands adjoining, - the said lands being then in the occupation of Robert and his sub-tenants.

An entry in the Burgh Records, under date 12th April, 1611, forbids neighbours to allow their sheep or other cattle to pasture on the lands of Robert Bruce of Baldrige between 1st March and 1st November. The significance of the dates mentioned lies in the fact that from 1st November till 1st March owners were free to let their cattle wander

anywhere, without a herd in charge. It was not till the reign of Charles II that owners became bound by law to herd their cattle and keep them from wandering, both summer and winter.

Robert Bruce was succeeded by Robert Livingston of Balrounie (- 1634), who also had reason to complain of intruders.

On 26th April, 1624, he reported to the Town Council that sundry neighbours and inhabitants of the burgh were stealing and carrying away coals from his coalheugh to his great prejudice.

The provost and bailies strictly forbade anyone to steal or carry away his coals either by night or by day, or to receive and pay for them, under pain of a fine of twenty shillings; ordaining, in case of inability to pay, that the offenders be banished; - this Act to be published throughout the burgh `be sound of bell`.

From this it is clear that, by the date mentioned Livingston was not only in possession of the lands but working the coal seams.

His tenure, however, like that of his predecessor, was not of very long duration.

On 24th December, 1634, he disposed the lands (Middle Baldrige and the Mason Lands) to Robert Ged of Gedsmill, but was still working the coals in 1646.

For eighty-seven years members of this family were in possession – a family of both gifts and character – and more than one of them has left his mark.

The first member of the family that can be traced is John Ged, who, with his wife, Christian Boswell, received, on 18th April, 1559, in assedation (lease) from Dunfermline Abbey, the Mill of Kinghorn Wester (Burntisland), afterwards called Gedsmill, and on 19th November, 1573, received a Charter of the mill and lands.

They had issue: - (1) John, of the Royal Bodyguard; (2) William. John Ged's successor in Gedsmill was his younger son William, the elder brother having resigned his interest in favour of the younger on 25th April, 1568; and the first Ged of Baldrige was Robert, son of William.

The first Robert Ged of Baldrige (1634-1657) had a son named William, and soon after their arrival at Baldrige, both he and his son – generally referred to as `Fiar of Baldrige` - were made burgesses of Dunfermline. In 1646 the son is mentioned as an Elder in the Parish Church. But five years before that, both father and son had a definitely unpleasant experience.

On 21st May 1641, the Council had under consideration a report that for years back they and their predecessors had suffered great loss through the carrying away of cattle manure from the Common Moor for sale to the owners of the adjacent lands of Baldrige, with the result that the

town's land had become for most part sterile and barren. To put an end to this, it was enacted and ordained that no inhabitant of the burgh, whether free or unfree, shall hereafter carry away or sell such manure to anyone, - this to be openly proclaimed 'be took of drum' so that none hereafter may pretend ignorance. That same afternoon, William was charged with uttering 'disdainful, barbarous and inhuman speeches against the bailies', to the effect that he would break a baton on the bailie's head at the Market Cross. Summoned to appear, he denied some of the utterances charged against him, but repeated that, if the Committee of Presbytery would give him warrant as a Colonel, or any other officer of war, he would break a baton on the bailie's head.

On which, the Council agreed to defer consideration of the matter and ordered him to be summoned by letter to attend the next meeting. With a week to think things over, his ire abated and no further reference to the incident can be traced.

William predeceased his father, who was succeeded by William's son, Robert, the second Robert Ged of Baldrige (1667-1721).

This Robert was known to be actively interested in the Covenanting Movement, as many in the neighbourhood were, and, in time, as he no doubt expected, he had to reckon with the consequences.

The first evidence of local trouble of the sort is to be found in the Burgh Records under date 16th July 1670: -

“Considering y^t the parliat is to sitt down the 28th instant, apoynts the Provost, as Commissioner for this toun, to attend the same, also y^r being severell nyghtbors sumond befor his majesties privie counsall for the conventikle at the Hill of Beath, Therefor the nyghtbors sua cited for bringin y^m aff, having gon ignorantlie to the sd. qventikle.”

The names of the individuals concerned are to be found in a Minute of the Privy Council, 5th July 1674, wherein Andrew Simpson, Town Clerk of Dunfermline, Robert Halkett, Robert Ged of Baldrige, John Kinnaird, Schoolmaster at Dunfermline, Peter Kennedy, Doctor of the Grammar School, and Mr. George Walker, Chamberlain in Dunfermline, are charged with attendance at Conventicles.

According to this minute, Mr. George Walker, Andrew Simpson, John Kinnaird and Peter Kennedy are “alleged by some in their name” to be prisoners in the Tolbooth of Dunfermline, and the Magistrates are given warrant to release them on caution being found for each of them, under penalty of 500 merks, to appear before the Privy Council on a specified date.

But neither in the records of the Burgh nor in those of the Privy Council is there any indication as to whether or not they were found guilty, or what penalty was imposed.

Robert Ged appeared before the Privy Council on 5th July 1674 and acknowledged attendance at two conventicles in house – one at Mr. Henderson of Fordell's and one at Logie – and at two field-conventicles. The penalty prescribed by Act of Parliament for offences of the sort by a land-owner was as quarter of his valued rent for each house-conventicle and half his valued rent for each field-conventicle. Being found guilty, he was returned to prison till the valued rent was ascertained and the fine paid.

At a meeting on the 21st inst. it was reported that the County Clerk declared the valued rent of his lands to be £766:13:4.

The fine was accordingly fixed at £1533:6:8, - the houses conventicles being evidently regarded as field-conventicles because of people standing outside.

What happened to the others cannot be clearly traced.

Andrew Simpson, the Town Clerk, notwithstanding the report that he was committed to prison, so far as can be gathered, was never absent from a meeting of the Town Council; but there can be little doubt as to his sympathy with the movement. His wife was a daughter of Agnes Mitchell, wife of James Wardlaw of West Luscar, who was a well-known Covenanter and had suffered much in the cause.

And when Robert Ged had difficulty in finding ready money to meet the huge fine imposed upon him, we find Andrew Simpson acquiring the Mason Lands, part of West Baldrige property, - no doubt in security of sums advanced.

Kinnaird, the Master of the Grammar School, simply disappears and is never again heard of. Kennedy, though his post was vacant for a time, apparently returned, for, according to the Kirk Session Records, he was still Doctor of the Grammar School at Whit-Sunday 1682. He died in 1704.

This second Robert Ged of Baldrige had a brother William, who was clearly of the same mind in such matters as himself.

For having opposed the induction of a Mr. Taylor as minister of Dron, he was fined and sentenced to transportation.

His name appears on a list of those who sailed from Leith in the vessel of Mr. George Scott of Pitlochrie, bound for the plantations of East New Jersey on 5th September 1685.

Wodrow, in his History (iv. 332/3) writes of them as follows:

“The prisoners lay some time in the road of Leith before all was ready and sailed the 5th of September.....

“After they had turned the land-end, the fever began to rage in the ship, especially among such as had been in the great vault of Dunottar. Not a few of them were sick when they came aboard, and no wonder, considering the barbarous treatment they had met with..... In a month’s time the fever turned malignant and few or none in the ship escaped it. Most of the ship’s crew, except the captain and the boatswain, died

“Pitlochie, who had freighted the ship, with his excellent lady, died likewise, and so enjoyed nothing of the produce of near a hundred prisoners gifted him by the council; and near seventy persons died at sea.... I have before me a list of the passengers and prisoners who died at sea (including the name of Mr. William Ged).”

As a result of the Revolution Settlement (1688), the tables were completely turned and the men who had previously been persecuted were now put in authority.

In 1689 an Act of Parliament was passed authorising certain noblemen and gentlemen to raise such fencible men as they knew to be well affected to the present government, with power to choose their own officers and to supply the men with arms.

Amongst those commissioned for Fife were Sir Charles Halkett, the Laird of Pitliver and Ged of Baldrige. Robert Ged had a similar commission for the parish of Carnock.

The last thirty-odd years of his life thus passing in comparative quiet, he died at Baldrige, 13th October 1721; and his widow married, as his third wife, Robert Wellwood of Touch, who had also been present at the Hill of Beath Conventicle and had been fined 500 merks, with a threat of having to pay 2,000 merks should he attend another.

He was succeeded by his son Robert – the third Robert Ged of Baldrige (1721). Of him practically nothing is known except that, early in the 18th century, he married Janet Wardlaw, sister of Henry, seventh Bart. of Pitreavie, that they had a son Robert, born 12th October 1721, and that, within a month of his succession, he sold Middle Baldrige and the Mason Lands to Henry Wellwood of Touch, and the lands of Gedsmill in 1751 to David Knox, Maltman in Kirkcaldy.

It may be of interest to follow the fortunes of other two members of this family, though neither of them held the lands of Baldrige.

The third Robert Ged of Baldrige, like his predecessors, had a brother William who became a Goldsmith in Edinburgh and the inventor of stereotype. It is believed that he made a mould by pouring gypsum (plaster of paris) over a page of type and allowing it to set. In 1730 he went to Cambridge and made plates for a Bible for the University, but the

plates were deliberately spoiled by the printers. He returned to Edinburgh in 1733 and eventually died in London in very poor circumstances.

For further particulars concerning him, see Article in the Dictionary of National Biography.

The William had a son James, who seems to have inherited something of the spirit of his Covenanting grandfather.

Espousing the cause of Prince Charlie, he was captured, and imprisoned, like so many others, in the Castle of Carlisle, where he was condemned to death.

According to "Prisoners of the '45" he was a Captain in the Duke of Perth's Regiment and had been a Printer in Edinburgh, his father, James (?) Ged, having been a Jeweller there, reported to have been a man of ingenuity and to have invented a new method of printing by copper plates in lieu of type.

Apparently the University of Cambridge came to know of the extreme danger in which the young man stood and the Master of Trinity College sent a plea to the authorities that he be reprieved on the ground of his father's services to the state.

His name does not appear amongst the "unconditionally pardoned," but some were pardoned on condition of transportation for life, or that they shall remain in such place or within such district as His Majesty shall be pleased to direct. Whether transported or not, he died in Jamaica.

Dr. Chalmers writes as follows: -

"The misses Ged – These ladies Were of some consequence of old in Edinburgh society, and, according to Mr. Robert Chambers, were descended from the family of Ged of Baldrige, near Dunfermline; and their establishment was chiefly supported by the Jacobite families of Fife."

Henry Wellwood of Touch (1721 -), as far as we can gather, was the only member of this family to hold the lands of Middle or West Baldrige; though other members of the same family, as we shall see, were in possession of East Baldrige for many years. They were all, however, much more interested in the minerals than in the land. According to Dr. Chalmers, the second Robert Ged of Baldrige nearly ruined himself by his unsuccessful search for coals; whereas Henry Wellwood, on his accession, speedily found them and cleared about £30,000 in ten years.

The family had a long connection with Dunfermline and neighbourhood and from early times held office in one capacity or another in connection with the Regality. Notes on the family will be found in the Court Book of

the Regality of Dunfermline under publication by the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust, page 210.

Henry Wellwood was succeeded by Charles Mitchell of Urland in Shetland and Piteadie in Fife, a Writer in Edinburgh, already referred to as having recovered part of the lands of West Baldrige which had been for a time in the possession of some of the lairds of Pittencrieff. He married a daughter of Sir Henry Wardlaw, 5th Baronet of Pitreavie and his sister, Jean, married Sir John Wardlaw, 13th Baronet of Pitreavie.

When he acquired, and when he demitted tenure of the lands is not known, he was succeeded by his son, Andrew, who is said to have been a native of Dunfermline, and became Admiral Sir Andrew Mitchell. Sir Andrew lived latterly at Hill House, but that does not necessarily mean that he had given up the lands. The old house of Baldrige must by this time have been in decay and it never was rebuilt.

In 1794 Captain Mitchell, as he then was, attained the rank of Rear Admiral and four years later the Town Council “in consideration of the well-known professional abilities of Rear Admiral Andrew Mitchell, and of his anxiety to be employed in the line of his profession at this present critical period, unanimously agreed to recommend him to the attention of the Right Honourable Mr. Secretary Dundas and to request him to use his influence with the Lords of the Admiralty.”

Whether due to the Town Council’s intervention or not, the Admiral was restored to active service and on 29th August 1799, the Dutch Fleet in the Texel surrendered to him.

The Town Council “in consideration of this important victory”, resolved to order a full-length painting of the Admiral to be hung on a wall in the Townhouse; and in 1800 Vice Admiral Mitchell presented to the Burgh a set of Dutch Flags which he had taken from the enemy in the Texel. He died at Bermuda, 26th February 1806, leaving three sons by his first marriage, all in the Navy, and one daughter by the second. The last surviving member of the family, Captain Nathaniel Mitchell, died in Dunfermline in the spring of 1843. Further particulars are to be found in Dr. Chalmers’ History (i. 306/7).

Following the Mitchells, we find several members of the Elgin family in possession: -

(1) Thomas, Earl of Elgin, had a Confirmation Charter registered on 21st February 1809.

(2) James, Earl of Elgin, had a Decree of Special Service entered in the General Register of Sasines, 28th July 1862.

(3) Victor Alexander, Lord Bruce, had a disposition (mortis causa) registered in the Books of Council and Session, 7th March 1864.

(4) Following on (2) and (3), a Notarial Instrument in favour of Victor Alexander, Earl of Elgin, entered in the General Register of Sasines, 20th May 1864.

(5) Extract Decree of Special and General Service of Edward James, Earl of Elgin, entered in the General Register of Sasines, 6th September 1917.

In these deeds the lands are described as: -

“(1) All and whole the lands and estate of Wester Baldrige lying on the east side of the centre line of the Parkneuk Road and the road running northwards in continuation thereof, as outlined on annexed map.

(2) All and whole the whole seams of coal and ironstone within those parts and portione of the Lands of Blackburn lying on the east side of Parkneuk Road.”

The Blackburn lands were, at one time, a Templar holding, other possessions of the Knight Templars that in 1611 fell into the hands of the Earl of Dunfermline, as Bailie of Regality, being (1) a Templar Holding in the Burgh containing three rigs of arable land; (2) a tenement in the Netherton, formerly belonging to William Blackburn; (3) the Templar Lands of Pittencrieff, with pasture for three sumpter animals, one brood-sow, one brood-goose, with their followers, and one stud-mare.

It is worth noting that, during the tenure of the lands of West Baldrige by successive Earls of Elgin, three generations of a family of the name of Melrose had a lease of the lands, the last, Robert Hepburn Melrose, receiving a lease in August 1918.

On 9th November 1922 they were sold by Edward James, Earl of Elgin, to Thomas Spowart and Company Ltd., and are now in the possession of the National Coal Board.



EAST BALDRIDGE

Somewhere between 1555 and 1583 – the individual entries in the Chartulary at this time are not dated – Catherine Sibbald, the unofficial wife of George Durie, the last abbot, received, with various other acquisitions, a feu-farm, with precept of sasine, of `eister baidrig`.

It was as complete and secure a title as was possible in the circumstances. Even an abbot could not absolutely alienate church lands, but a feu-charter with precept of sasine, in the absence of a superior, would in time lead to absolute possession; and there is ample evidence that the lands of East Baldrige were held by members of this family for some time.

Following Catherine Sibbald came Henry Durie, the eldest son. But that either of them lived at East Baldrige may be open to question. Catherine Sibbald, we have reason to believe, continued to live at Craiguscar and Henry, as eldest son, succeeded her there. Henry and Peter, already referred to in connection with West Baldrige, were legitimated by Mary, Queen of Scots, and for long the letter of legitimation was preserved amongst the Craiguscar title-deeds, but has now disappeared.

How long Henry retained East Baldrige is not on record – probably as long as he lived. According to the family tombstone in Dunfermline Abbey, he died `about 1573`. This is clearly a mistake. One of his sons was not born till 1588. The family papers state that he died 1st February 1592, his widow surviving him for fifteen years. This is probably correct. We know from the Commissariat of St. Andrews that she died 31st May 1608.

For further particulars concerning him see History of Carnock pp.337-9.

It looks, too, as if he had been succeeded by his eldest son, George of Craiguscar; for on 20th July 1633 the king confirmed a charter of George Durie of Craiguscar whereby he gave to Margaret Bruce, his (second) wife, legitimate daughter of Robert Bruce of Blairhall, the lands of Baldrig Easter, alias Howbaldrig with precept of sasine directed to Patrick Turnbull, burgess of Dunfermline.

On the other hand, on 4th February 1613, the Burgh Court ordered Thomas Walwod to restore to Robert Angus three sheep which had been entrusted to his care at East Baldrige, which had escaped and were smothered in a snowstorm, or pay twenty shillings for each of them. That same day, the court ordered Robert Angus to pay to Thomas Walwod and Patrick Turnbull equally the sum of £4:10/- for grazing rent of thirty-six sheep at East Baldrige the previous summer at 2/6d. each.

From which one would be inclined to infer that Thomas Wellwood, as owner, was found liable for loss due to faulty condition of the sheep-fold; but that profits from grazing, presumably as the result of arrangement between landlord and tenant, were shared.

But how is this to be reconciled with the above entry in the Register of the Great Seal to the effect that in 1633 the ownership of East Baldrige was still in the hands of the Durie family.

Somewhat later we find reference not only to an owner and tenant, but to a sub-tenant: -

“25 Febr. 1647 –

Ordaines David Turnbull to observe keipe and fulfill the conditione of aggriement betwixt him and David Watsone anent ane tack to be sett be the said David off his lands in Holbadrig (Hill-Baldrige) for the space of 7 zeares to the said David Turnbull for the third stouk of all sortis of cornes growing upone the samin, the said David Turnbull leading the samyn yearlie to his awin barne zeard and the said David Watsone giving him the third pairt of the strae ...”

Twenty years later, Thomas Elder calls upon the Town Council to provide two march-stones “betwixt his land of holbaldrig & the toun’s lands” He had, that same day, “in respect of the appeirance of war (w^{ch} God foirbid)” been appointed by the Council Captain for the Crafts, with William Brown, being a merchant, as his lieutenant.

For lack of adequate evidence it is impossible to give with any confidence, a detailed list of owners.

It may well be that, for a time, the ownership of lands and minerals was in different hands, but latterly it is clear that members of the Wellwood family were in possession of both.

Their connection with the lands covers something like 300 years, beginning, so far as we know, with the Thomas Wellwood above referred to.

It would be rash to assume, without further evidence, that he was a member of the Touch family. There were many other Wellwoods in Dunfermline, particularly those associated with Clayacres; but they were all of the same stock and the later owners of East Baldrige were undoubtedly of the Touch - Garvock - Pitliver branch.

Who was the immediate successor of Thomas Wellwood is not certain.

Reference has already been made to the fact of Andrew Simpson, the Town Clerk, receiving from Robert Ged the Mason Lands as security, apparently, for money advanced. Andrew Simpson was succeeded by his son Thomas, who, soon afterwards was succeeded by his younger

brother, Andrew, the second Town Clerk of that name. He is invariably styled “of Broomhead”, and so acquired the lands by purchase from Henry Wellwood of Garvock, - Broomhead, including the Mason Lands, having been by this time transferred from West Baldrige to East Baldrige.

From which we would conclude that, if not the immediate successor of Thomas, he was in the line of succession.

Henry was a son of the Robert Wellwood of Touch, who married as his third wife, the widow of Robert Ged, the Covenanter.

The later tenures are not in doubt.

Before 1787 Robert Scott Wellwood of Garvock was in possession and was succeeded by Alexander Maconochie Wellwood Decree of Special Service, 10 and 16 Aug. 1854, with sasine dated 25 Aug. 1854, and Confirmation, 9 Nov. 1854.

Alexander, in turn, was succeeded by his nephew, John Allan Maconochie Wellwood, 26 March 1886, who secured an Instrument of Disentail of his lands (Books of Council and Session, 22 Jan. 1903) and placed them under Trustees, including himself and two others.

These Trustees disposed the lands of Easter Baldrige and the portions of Middle Baldrige pertaining to it, to Messrs. Thomas Spowart and Company Ltd., Coalmasters, Dunfermline, 9th November 1910 –the lands being defined as: - the lands and farm of East Baldrige as presently let to Mr. William Hill, tenant, including Leadsie, Hawkies Fauld and the Forebanks of Baldrige, and the seams of coal therein as well as those in the lands of Mounthooly, Broomhead and Gallowsbank; excepting those parts and pertinents of the souther part of the said lands of Middle Baldrige and Mason lands sold and disposed by the deceased Henry Wellwood of Garvock to the now deceased Andrew Simpson, Clerk of Dunfermline.

Thomas Spowart had a tack of part of the lands of the Forebank of Baldrige from Andrew Moffat Wellwood as early as 1830, and a tack of the coal in the lands of Middle Baldrige attached to East Baldrige in 1872; and James Spowart had a tack of part of the lands of Hawkiesfauld from Robert Scott Wellwood in 1849.

Dr. Chalmers devotes much space in his History to the family of Wellwood, and with good reason, for they were undoubtedly for long one of the foremost families in the neighbourhood.

But when he goes on to say that their ancestors had been head mayors and officers to the abbey beyond the memory of man, one is inclined to accept it with a little caution.

A good deal has become known about monastic courts since Dr. Chalmers' time, and authorities are now agreed that the office referred to, though a surprisingly large number of designations are used in connection with it – mair, judex, judicator, adjudicator and judicarius – was none other than that of doemster or dempster, including the man who, having received from the clerk the finding of the court went to the stair-head of the tolbooth and, after having rung his bell to attract attention, announced that finding as `doom`. In certain cases, the announcement would be repeated at the Market Cross. Later, it was not unusual for this same official to give effect to the court's `doom` at the Gallows-hill.

It is true that in 1437 a certain William of Wellwood was an “amicable compositour” (arbiter) in a dispute between the abbot and David Halkett concerning the lands of Pitferrane, which would seem to indicate a man of very much higher standing.

But, in matters affecting land, local custom was almost as vital a consideration, in the early days, as law, and one of the considerations governing the appointment of a dempster was his familiarity with local custom.

Time and again a regality court had to be adjourned because of `debilitie of curt`. This does not mean that there was no quorum, but that there was an insufficiency of members in the assize who were familiar with the customs that prevailed in the district where the lands in question lay.

The Regality Gallows, as already indicated, was on the Baldrige lands. In 1587, Hew Watt, vagabond, “is convicted of stealing cattle and condemned to be hangit to the deith on Baldris gallows, or else drownit at will of the judges.”

The last person to be condemned to death by the Regality Court of Dunfermline was James Ramsay, son of David Ramsay, in Lambhill of Corb, Perthshire, at a trial which took place in February 1732. The crimes which the assize found proven against him were stealing four oxen, a quey, and a bee-hive. He was ordered to be taken from the tolbooth to that place of the common muir of Dunfermline called the Witch Loan (on the west side of Townhill Road) “and there, betwixt two and four of the clock Be hanged by the neck upon a gibbet till he be dead”, - the Regality's own gallows at Baldrige being, by this time, apparently out of commission.

The first land known to have been possessed by the Wellwood family was Clayacres. Later they were Portioners of Touch and Lairds of Garvock. For long the people of Dunfermline had been free to cut turf in the Wood of Garvock, the cost of coal being prohibitive for many; but,

following the Great Fire of 1624, so great was the demand for timber that the Wood practically disappeared.

Latterly the family had its seat at Pitliver.

An outstanding family beyond doubt, but there can be little question that the foundation of their fortune lay in the coal seams of Baldrige. There are no representatives of the family in Dunfermline today, and the only place-name suggestive of the family is Wellwood, the village on East Baldrige.

The street once known as Waluot Wynd is now called Bonnar Street.



BEVERIDGE WELL



Painted by Adam Westwood
Dunfermline Carnegie Library.

END