

## The Dennistouns of Dennistoun

‘UPON the Grief lies the Barony of Dennistoun, of which the Castle of Finlaystoun was the principal messuage. When the Denzeltouns obtained their lands is not certain ; but that from the proper name of their predecessor they assumed both sirname and designation is without all doubt.’<sup>1</sup> Thus Crawford, in his *History of Renfrew*. In support of his statement he refers to the original charter of the Barony of Houstoun (*temp.* Malcolm the IV. before 1165) which is there said to be bounded with ‘the lands of Danziel.’<sup>2</sup> Hence the name de Danzielstoun, or Denzelstoun, subsequently modified into Dennistoun. Sir Hugh de Danzielstoun was witness to a charter from the Earl of Lennox, *temp.* Alexander III. and the same knight appears in the Ragman Roll as submitting to Edward I. in 1296. He was father of Janeta or Joanna, who married Sir Adam More of Rowallan : their daughter Elizabeth married Robert, the Steward of Scotland, afterwards Robert II., and was mother of Robert III. It was this connection with the Royal House of Stewart that gave rise to the boast of the Dennistouns, ‘Kings from us, not we from Kings.’ Sir John de Danzielstoun, son of Sir Hugh, was Sheriff of Perthshire in 1358, and of Dumbartonshire in the following year, an office he held till succeeded in it by his son Sir Robert. He was also for a number of years Keeper of Dumbarton Castle. He married Mary, daughter of Malcolm, Earl of Wigtown, by whom he had, with other children, his successor, Sir Robert de Danzielstoun, knight, who was one of the

<sup>1</sup> In the map in Crawford’s *History*, which is stated to be copied from Blaeu’s Atlas, Amsterdam, 1654, there are two Dennistouns marked: one close to Barlagow (Barlogan), a little to the S.E. of Kilmakoban (Kilmalcolm), the other ‘Dennistoun Mil,’ near the Gryfe, lying to the south of the first named. These seem to correspond to the North and South Dennistouns, given in the Ordnance Survey Map, on the modern road from Bridge of Weir to Kilmalcolm.

<sup>2</sup> *A General Description of the Shire of Renfrew, including an account of the Noble and Ancient Families, etc.*, by George Crawford, 2nd Edition, p. 94. Paisley : J. H. Crichton. 1818.

hostages, in 1357, for the payment to Edward III. of the ransom for the release of David II. He seems to have held various offices, including that of Sheriff of Levenax, and Keeper of Dumbarton Castle. On his death in 1399 he left two daughters, between whom his large estates were divided, viz., Margaret, who married Sir William Cunninghame of Kilmaurs, and brought into that family the lands and baronies of Danzielstoun and Finlaystoun in Renfrewshire, Kilmarnock in Dumbartonshire, and Glencairn in Dumfriesshire, from the last of which her descendants took the title of their Earldom. The other daughter, Elizabeth, married Sir Robert Maxwell of Calderwood, and succeeded to Mauldisly, Law, Kilcadzow, and Stanley. Owing to this alliance this family of Maxwells quartered the arms of the Danzielstouns, Argent, a bend azure, with their family coat.<sup>1</sup>

While the paternal estates were thus divided between the co-heiresses the male line of the family was carried on by William, afterwards Sir William de Danzelstoun, third son of Sir John, and first of Colgrain. He gives his consent to a grant made by his father, in 1377, in favour of the Church of Glasgow, in which he is designated 'Dominus de Colgrane et de Cambesescan.' He seems to have been of the household of Prince David, and in consideration of his services received a pension of twenty merks. It is supposed that by aid, or in lieu of this pension he acquired the lands of Cameron and Auchendennan, which were long held by his descendants. Of these Cameron was disposed of to the Laird of Luss in 1612, and it seems probable that Auchendennan was also sold about that time. John Dennistoun, who succeeded to Colgrain and the Camiseskans in 1638, was a devoted and influential Royalist, for which he suffered when Scotland was under the rule of the Commonwealth. He held a Commission under the Earl of Glencairn, and died in 1655 from the effects of a wound received in the Highland Expedition. As he left no son the estate of Colgrain fell to the representative of John Dennistoun, brother of his great grandfather. From this time on the property passed from father to son until 1836, when it was sold by Mr. James Dennistoun to Colin Campbell, a son of John Campbell, senior, of Morriston. He was a partner in the well known West India House founded by his father, and brother of Colonel Campbell of Possil.

<sup>1</sup> The Maxwell arms were blazoned as above, but the Dennistouns bear Argent, a bend *sable*.

The Dennistouns of Colgrain were at times closely connected with Glasgow. James Dennistoun, who succeeded to the estate in 1756, was one of the leading American merchants, and during the latter part of his life resided in Glasgow, where he died in 1796. His first wife was a daughter of John Baird of Craigton, merchant in Glasgow, one of their daughters marrying Andrew Buchanan of Ardenconnal. By his second wife, Mary Lyon, he had several children, two of whom were well known in this city, viz., Robert Dennistoun, merchant, who married a daughter of Archibald Campbell of Jura, and was father of James Robert Dennistoun ('Ruffy'), and grandfather of the late Admiral Peel Dennistoun, Mrs. John Guthrie Smith, and Mrs. John MacLeod Campbell of Saddell. The other was Richard Dennistoun, who resided at Kelvingrove House, only recently pulled down, and married a daughter of James Alston of Westerton. James Dennistoun, who succeeded his father in 1796, was convener of Dumbartonshire, and Colonel of the County Local Militia. He married (1) Margaret, daughter of James Donald of Geilston (brother of Robert Donald of Mountblow, Provost of Glasgow in 1776, 1777), by whom he had one son, and (2) Margaret, daughter of Robert Dreghorn of Blochairn, merchant in Glasgow. By her he had four daughters, co-heiresses of their maternal grandfather, and also of their uncle Robert Dreghorn of Ruchill, the well-known 'Bob Dragon.' In the privately printed *Account of the Family of Dennistoun and Colgrain* (Glasgow: 1906) it is stated that his second wife was daughter of Allan Dreghorn, but this seems to be a mistake. According to the *Glasgow Journal* of 25th October, 1764, Allan Dreghorn died on the 19th of that month, while the following paragraph appeared in the *Glasgow Mercury* of 20th October, 1785:—

'On Thursday the 13th inst. was married in this City, by the Revd. Mr. Taylor of St. Enoch's, James Dennistoun, Younger of Colgrain, Esq., to Miss Margaret Dreghorn (Bob's sister), daughter of the late Robert Dreghorn of Blochairn, Esq.'<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Dennistoun was succeeded by his only son, James, in 1816. He married Mary, daughter of George Oswald of Auchencruive, by whom he had thirteen children. In 1828 Mr. Dennistoun, having established his descent as heir male of Sir John de Danzielstoun (see above) was authorized by the Lord Lyon to bear the arms proper to the chief of his house, and thereupon assumed as his designation Dennistoun of Dennistoun.

<sup>1</sup> *Glasgow Past and Present*, vol. III. 89. (Glasgow, 1884).



The arms are blazoned, Argent, a bend sable. Supporters: Dexter, a lion gules, armed and langued azure; sinister, an antelope argent, unguled and horned or. Crest, a dexter arm in pale proper, clothed gules, holding an antique shield sable charged with a mullet or. His son, James Dennistoun of Dennistoun, (1803-1855), was well-known for his literary and antiquarian tastes, while he took a special interest in the genealogy of the old families connected with Dumbartonshire, the results of which were largely embodied in Irving's History of that County. He edited several of the publications of the Bannatyne and Maitland Clubs, including the *Cartularium Comitatus de Levenax*, the *Coltness Collection*, and the *Cochrane Correspondence*. Mr. Dennistoun, who married a daughter of James Wolfe Murray, Lord Cringletie, sold Colgrain and Camiseskan in 1836 to Mr. Colin Campbell, and afterwards purchased Dennistoun Mains in Renfrewshire, the property which gave name to his House. Subsequently he lived a good deal abroad, and devoted a great part of his time to art and art literature, publishing in 1852 the *Memoirs of the Dukes of Urbino*. He died in 1855, and was buried in the Grey Friars' Churchyard, Edinburgh. His manuscript collections, which filled eleven volumes, were left to the Library of the Faculty of Advocates, where they are now preserved.

As he left no children the representation of the family devolved on his death upon his nephew, James Wallis Dennistoun, only son of his brother George. He entered the Navy in 1854, and saw service in the Baltic under Admirals Sir Charles Napier and Sir Richard Dundas, retiring from the Navy with the rank of Commander in 1865. He married a daughter of Henry Gore Booth (second son of Sir Robert Gore Booth, Bart.), and his wife Isabella, daughter of James Smith of Jordanhill. By this marriage he had a daughter, who is married to the Right Revd. H. Hensley Henson, late Dean of Durham, and now Bishop of Hereford, and a son, James George Dennistoun of Dennistoun, Major in the Royal Artillery. This gentleman is now the representative of the old family of Dennistoun of Dennistoun and Colgrain.

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