

Alexander Farquharson of Brouchdearg and his Farquharson Genealogies

THE period between the Restoration and the 'Forty-five' was prolific of genealogical work in Scotland. It was the period of students and collectors such as Martine, Sibbald, and Macfarlane, and it witnessed the production of most of the clan and family genealogies which have appeared in print, as well as others which are still only in manuscript form in private hands, but are well known to the initiated. Among these latter, not the least important or deserving of consideration is the 'Genealogy of the Name of Farquharson' down to the year 1733, by Alexander Farquharson of Brouchdearg—commonly known as the Brouchdearg MS.—in which the writer traces the descent of practically all the members of his clan in his time, scattered though they were through four counties, with a completeness and accuracy which leave little to be desired, and with a modesty and frankness not always observable in such performances.

Alexander was the only son of Robert Farquharson of Brouchdearg, the fourth of a line of Farquharsons sprung from a younger son of Finla Mor (the founder of the clan, killed at Pinkie in 1547), which had been in Glenshee since about the middle of the sixteenth century, and had held the lands of Brouchdearg and others there since at least 1588. Robert was killed at the Moss of Forfar in January, 1673, in an affray with some of the Mackintoshes *alias* M'Comies of Forter, with whom he had been at feud for a few years previously. Details of this feud and of Robert's death are found in the second volume of the *Justiciary Court Records from 1661 to 1678*, published by the Scottish History Society. At his father's death Alexander was a child of about six years of age, and his affairs fell under the administration of two of his uncles in succession as tutors. These affairs were at the time gravely complicated, owing in great measure to the feud with the M'Comies and the heavy legal expenses arising therefrom, but due also to bonds and engagements which had been entered into

by his father. The complication was increased by his mother, who had married again within a few years of her widowhood, and in 1678, apparently oblivious or destitute of parental feeling, actually raised an action in the Court of Session against her young son for full satisfaction of the provisions of her marriage contract with his father, and obtained judgment. The result was that by decret of 6 January, 1683, all his lands—Brouchdearg, Coul, and Dunmay in Glenshee and Downie and Dalnakebbock in Glenisla—were adjudged from him, for debts amounting to £4501 16s. 8d. Scots, in favour of a certain Andrew Small, who had acquired the numerous outstanding bonds upon them, and the young heir was left to fight the battle of life with such aid as he might receive from friends and well-wishers, who, however, were fortunately not lacking.

Although from the genealogy compiled by him, and from other circumstances to be noted, we are enabled to gain a fair insight into his individuality, there is still much of obscurity surrounding his career, and this is not illuminated by the legends which have gathered round his name. Some of these may be seen in the 'history' of him given on pp. 224-5 of *Legends of the Braes of Mar* (1876), all of which, with the sole exception of the appellation 'Fear na Bruaich,' is pure myth, while the statement that 'the young man was one of the Prince's surgeons' in 1745 is discounted by the fact that at that time he must have been nearly eighty years of age, besides being in all probability a dependant on the laird of Invercauld, who was opposed to the Rising. It is possible, however, that he had accompanied Invercauld as surgeon in the Rising of thirty years earlier. But gleams of light are obtained from his occasional appearances in record and from a Memorial and Claim by Francis Farquharson of Finzean addressed to the Lord Lyon in 1774—less than thirty years after Brouchdearg's death. In this it is stated that Alexander was 'bred and educated with the late Invercauld [John] and his brother William at schools and colleges, and remained mostly in the family of Invercauld and died in the house,' from which it may be assumed that after the death of his father in 1673 the young laird had been removed from the danger zone of Glenshee and his turbulent relatives there, and taken in charge by the amiable and clannish Alexander of Invercauld, whose family had come to be regarded as chiefs of the name. The boy must have been a few years older than Invercauld's sons, the eldest of whom, William, was born in 1671, but in the

circumstances of his family it is hardly likely that he would have had much if any advantage over them educationally. In 1681 his patron, Invercauld, died, presumably not without making provision for his maintenance and education. It does not appear where his education was obtained, whether at home or abroad, but its main purpose was probably to enable him to earn a living as a surgeon, and with this in view he may have been sent abroad, though, as he styles himself a 'country surgeon' and seems to have spent nearly all his life in Braemar, it is likely that he was merely one of the tribe of 'chirurgion apothecaries' whose qualifications were chiefly a three years' apprenticeship to one of the fraternity and the ability to 'bleed and give a clyster, spread a plaister, and prepare a potion,' as in Roderick Random's case. But apart from this, it is evident, both from his being 'at schools and colleges' with Invercauld's sons and from his quoting Virgil and Juvenal, that his education included the usual classical instruction of the period as afforded by the grammar schools, while a reference to the *Tatler* and *Spectator* of Steele and Addison, whom he describes as 'followers at a distance of the good old Roman moralist,' shows that he was not unacquainted with the literature of his own day. The mere fact of his having devoted so much time as must have been necessary in the preparation of his genealogy shows that he was a man of refined tastes and studious habits.

From the references to him in contemporary documents, as well as from the intimate knowledge of family history and genealogy which he displays, it may be assumed that the whole of his manhood was passed in and about Braemar, and the statement of Finzean, already referred to, that he 'remained mostly in the family of Invercauld' is probably quite correct. It is somewhat curious that he does not appear in the list of Pollable Persons in Aberdeenshire made up in August, 1695, and revised in April, 1696, but in October of the latter year he is found in the country, on the 26th, at Aberarder, witnessing an assignation by Elizabeth Mackintosh, widow of Alexander Farquharson of Invercauld, to her son John of Invercauld, of some bonds for money due to her by her brother, the chief of Mackintosh. The document, which is preserved at Moy Hall, bears the signatures as witnesses of Mr. Arthur Farquharson of Cults, bailie of the Regality of Mar, Charles Farquharson of Balmurraile, Alexander Farquharson of Brochdargue, and Mr. John Shand, preacher of the Gospel. Eight years later, in the list of Apostats, Popish Priests, etc.

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furnished on 10 May, 1704, to the Presbytery of Kincardine O'Neil by the Rev. James Robertson and printed as an Appendix to the preface of Blakhal's *Breiffe Narration* (Spald. Club, 1844), he is set down as a witness concerning James Michy in the Muir of Tullich. As already suggested, he may have accompanied Invercauld on the march of the Jacobites into England in 1715, but if so, as he does not appear in the list of prisoners taken at Preston, he may have been among the 'great many' who, according to Patten, 'found means to escape.' Anyhow, he is found in Braemar ten years later, unfortunately under circumstances of a regrettable character. The records of the Kirk Session of Crathie and Braemar show that on 7 March, 1725, Isobel Coutts admitted herself to be with child, and 'y^e y^e Bruchderg is y^e father y^of'; on 5 April Alexander Farquharson of Brughdearg confessed his guilt, and on the 18th was rebuked before the congregation, the minister being appointed by the Session 'to discourse Brughdearg,' who on 4 May 'payed in his penalty,' £5 6s. 8d., 'appeared before the congregation professing his repentance and was absolved from y^e scandal.' Isobel Coutts made a similar appearance and profession on 6 June, and was rebuked and admonished.

The next date which can positively be connected with him is that of his MS. Genealogy of the Name of Farquharson, which, as its heading states, is 'from their first taking that surname to the present year 1733.' The close and accurate knowledge of the Farquharson families at the time in and about Braemar shown in the MS. could scarcely have been obtained unless the writer had been long resident there, and from the corrections and additions made to one of the copies after 1733 it is tolerably certain that he remained there. Finzean's Memorial of 1774 says that he made his home with the Invercauld family, and that 'he was a man *universally known in this country* to be of as great knowledge and integrity as ever was in his name or any other name.' From 1733 nothing further is found concerning him until after his death, which, according to Finzean, took place in the house of Invercauld in 1747 or 1748, at the age of eighty years. Probably among the valuable and interesting papers in the Invercauld archives might be found some evidences of his connection with the place, but nothing beyond a rather vague allusion appears concerning him in the *Records of Invercauld*, published by the New Spalding Club in 1903: the volume, however, is admittedly not exhaustive.

Of his ability and success as a healer nothing definite is known, though it is said that his fame still lingers in the Braes, and that some of his recipes are still in use. His title to the grateful recollection of his clan and of all interested in its history rests chiefly on his elaborate genealogy of the whole race of Farquharson, known generally as the 'Brouchdearg MS.' and even this has not always been placed to his credit. For a long time the prevalent belief was that its writer was the 'Tutor of Brouchdearg,' Alexander's uncle and namesake, who became 'of Brouchdearg' by purchase of the property in 1700. The assumption on which this belief was founded was perhaps a natural one in view of the preponderance of the elder Alexander's interest in Brouchdearg and the almost entire ignorance which prevailed as to the younger one's career; but there is no doubt that the younger Alexander, and not his uncle—who died some twenty years before the date of the MS.—was the writer, and this is explicitly stated in Finzean's memorial of 1774. The MS. was written in 1733, when Alexander was about sixty-six years of age, but a love of genealogical and historical pursuits usually begins much earlier in life, and there can be little doubt that he was the compiler of a Farquharson Genealogy of some thirty years before, of which three copies are preserved at Invercauld, and that he was the 'scribbler' and this genealogy the 'rapsodie' on which Sir Æneas Macpherson in 1704 made his famous and terrific onslaught in *Vanitie Exposed* (Scott. Hist. Soc. vol. 41). To make this sketch of Alexander Farquharson complete, therefore, it seems necessary to say a few words on this earlier genealogy and on Sir Æneas Macpherson's strictures.

The genealogy mentioned is indicated by the letter C in *Records of Invercauld* (p. 1), and according to the editor 'seems to be the document on which all the others are founded'; of two copies, which the editor marks D and E, one contains 'some variations and notes,' while in the other 'the original is not closely followed.' The heading of the principal genealogy is given in the *Records* as follows: 'Genealogy of the Family of Farquharson of Invercauld from the original Manuscript History of Gentlemen's Families in Scotland wrote about the time of the Union by . . . found in the Repositories of the late Baron Maule and now in the possession of Mr. David Deuchar, Seal Engraver, Edinburgh, No. 109 of the Manuscript.' David Deuchar flourished as a seal engraver towards the close of the eighteenth century, when he superintended the execution of the shields of arms in Douglas' *Baronage*

(1798), while 'the late Baron Maule,' in whose repositories the MS. History of Gentlemen's Families was found, was evidently John Maule of Inverkeillor, of the Panmure family, who was one of the Barons of Exchequer in Scotland, and died unmarried in 1781. Thus the document at Invercauld is merely a copy, and affords no means of tracing the authorship of the original, 'wrote about the time of the Union'—that is about a century before. The 'Manuscript History' itself might possibly give a clue, but it has so far escaped my search, and does not appear to be among the MSS. preserved in either the Advocates' or the University Library in Edinburgh or in the Lyon Office. I would suggest, however, that the compiler or collector of the various family histories—which must have been numerous, that of the Farquharsons being No. 109—may have been Sir Robert Sibbald, the well-known antiquary, who died in 1712, and who would appear from the genealogy of the Maules in Macfarlane's Collections (ii. 153) to have been in close communication with some of that family. Whether by Sir Robert or another, the MS. History was presumably a collection of family histories supplied to the collector by members of the families dealt with, a collection, in fact, somewhat similar to Burke's *Landed Gentry* of our own time, and the most—or only—likely person to furnish a history of the Farquharsons of Invercauld at about the close of the seventeenth century was Alexander Farquharson of Brouchdearg, who had been brought up in the family, and, as his subsequent production shows, had the enthusiasm and literary ability required for such a task. That he had some responsibility in the matter seems to be implied by the introductory words of his genealogy of 1733, as will be more particularly noticed later. It is not unlikely that the writer of the earlier genealogy had some assistance from information left by Robert Farquharson of Invercauld and Wardes, the father of Brouchdearg's early patron, who is described by Sir Æneas Macpherson (*Van. Exp.* p. 235) in his usual inflated style as 'the greatest genealogue and antiquarian in the whole kingdom,' and in the Brouchdearg MS. of 1733, more modestly, as 'a man much esteemed for his wit and learning.'

The date of the genealogy cannot be definitely stated, but it can be narrowed within the compass of a few years. It is given on one of the copies as 'about the year 1707'—an obvious paraphrase of 'wrote about the time of the Union'—but the real date must be placed a few years earlier. Its giving the blazon of a coat of arms granted by the Lord Lyon to Invercauld in July, 1697, is

proof of its having been written after this date, while a comparison of the extracts quoted from it in *Records of Invercauld* (pp. 4-13) with those quoted by Sir Æneas in *Vanitie Exposed* leaves no room for doubt that it was the 'genealogie' which came under the knight's lash, so that it must have been written before 1704, the date on the title-page of *Vanitie Exposed* and a year before the death of Sir Æneas. As has already been shown, Alexander of Brouchdearg was in the Farquharson home country in 1696 and 1704, and it may reasonably be inferred that he was there in the intervening years, while his intimate connection with the Invercauld family would facilitate his acquisition of information and would account for much of the tendency shown in the genealogy to magnify that family.

This genealogy of 1697-1704 appears to have been submitted to Sir Æneas Macpherson for his opinion, perhaps as one known to be acquainted with Highland clan history and as a connection of the family of Invercauld. In all probability the person who submitted it was the compiler of the 'Manuscript History of Gentlemen's Families,' and if this was Sir Robert Sibbald, as has been suggested, the two knights might easily have become acquainted during the period 1702-4, as both were then in Edinburgh, Sir Robert as a permanent resident and Sir Æneas—previously in hiding in London—having taken up his abode there after the passing of the Indemnity Act of March, 1702, and apparently being still there in 1704, the date of *Vanitie Exposed*.

Although much of what Sir Æneas says in correction of the 'Genealogie,' especially the early part of it, is fully justified, some of his remarks are both inaccurate and unjust, and can only be accounted for either by his ignorance of the facts¹ or by his unwillingness to allow any credit to the Invercauld family—even although

¹ Thus he scoffs at the idea of Finla Mor's having anything to do with the royal banner (or 'standard,' as he calls it) at the battle of Pinkie in 1547, except that as a 'common soldier' he may have 'snatched it up upon the standard bearer's fall.' Yet, looking to known facts, there is nothing improbable (rather the contrary) in the genealogist's statement as to Huntly's 'procuring him the banner royal to carry' in the battle, and Sir Æneas' elaborate arguments are worthless. Not only was Huntly, the Scots commander-in-chief, as administrator of the Earldom of Mar, Finla Mor's overlord, but Finla was his bailie or representative in the Earldom, and as such would presumably have the leadership of his Highland vassals (it is well known that a force of Highlanders was present at Pinkie); while Queen Mary's commission of lieutenantandry of the North, granted to Huntly on 30th March, 1543, gave that noble '*plenam potestatem . . . nostrum vexillum gerendi, levandi, et explicandi,*' and for him to place the banner under the charge of his own officer and his Highlanders would be a most natural thing to

it was the family of his own mother. And there is no ground for the warmth of temper which he displays, or for the depreciatory and even contemptuous tone in which he refers to the Farquharsons. But he was nothing if not perfervid—like Bob Acres, he ‘must be in a passion’—and his writings generally convey the impression that he was so puffed up by a belief in his own infallibility and importance, and in the antiquity and glory of his clan—these latter in the main the offspring of his own exuberant imagination—as to lose all sense of proportion when treating of other persons and other clans. As a consequence his writings abound in misrepresentations and audacious flights of fancy and are disfigured by gross egotism and assumption. Besides those of them which have been printed by the Scottish History Society (vol. 41), he furnished an account of the Clan Chattan and Macphersons for Jeremy Collier’s *Great Dictionary* (1701), and wrote a genealogy of the Macphersons, still only in MS., which, so far as the historical part of it goes, *i.e.* from the sixteenth century, is all that could be desired. But we have only to read the earlier ‘history’ in the *Dictionary* and in this MS. genealogy to see at once that the writer was either a most credulous enthusiast or a most audacious romancer. The man who could gravely try to palm off such an ‘Arabian Nights’ story as that of his assumed ancestor Muirich—priest, Highland chief, palmer, king of Leinster, and founder of a royal dynasty—was scarcely in a position to throw obloquy on the comparatively mild ambition (if ambition at all, and not honest blundering) displayed in claiming for the Farquharsons a more direct descent from the Earls of Fife than he himself acknowledged—that is, through the Mackintoshes. And in this connection it is curious that the very fault which he charges against the Farquharson genealogist is charged against himself by the Rev. Lachlan Shaw, who, referring in his *History of the Province of Moray* (1775) to do. Then the genealogist has a short paragraph concerning Colonel Finlay Farquharson, a grandson of Finla Mor, who served in Buckingham’s Expedition to the Isle of Ré, and was killed at the battle of Worcester fighting for Charles II. Sir Æneas, because he had never heard of Colonel Finlay and had not seen his name in a list of Buckingham’s officers, implies that there was no such person, and declares that ‘this whole paragraph is nothing but a sham and downright imposition, this Colonel being brought in by this vain scribbler to make a false muster of his loyall gentlemen.’ The genealogist, however, had not said that Finlay was a colonel in Buckingham’s Expedition in 1627; but that he was a lieutenant-colonel twenty-four years afterwards at the time of the battle of Worcester is certain. See references to him in *Spald. Club Misc.* v. 340; Macfarlane’s *Genéal. Coll.* ii. 250.

the story in Collier's *Dictionary*, remarks: 'I am sorry the author of it *discovereth more vanity* than historical knowledge... the sending one of the clan on a pilgrimage through a great part of Europe and Asia, and then making him King of Leinster in Ireland is such knight-errantry as none but the Irish should commit to writing, and yet not one of their Historians mentioneth it.' Then the contempt with which Sir Æneas seems to regard the *status* of the Farquharsons—'a family of their standing'; 'but sixty years or thereby since any of them had a foot of heritage,' etc.—not to mention his attempts to defame their origin, seems somewhat ludicrous in view of the facts that the founder of the Farquharsons appears in record as a 'King's tenant' in Braemar, and a person of distinct and ascertained importance there, more than fifty years before the first appearance of the Badenoch Macphersons in record, and that Invercauld and other Farquharsons had several years' start of the Macphersons as heritable proprietors.¹ His heading to *Vanitie Exposed* states that it is 'by no enemy of theirs [the Farquharsons] but a friend to truth.' He may not have been an enemy of the Farquharsons, but his remarks concerning them can scarcely be termed friendly; that he was 'a friend to truth' is apparent only from the considerable liberties which he takes with it in his writings.

Whether the 'Genealogie' of 1697-1704 was a youthful performance of Brouchdearg or not, it is tolerably evident that that individual had an opportunity of seeing what Sir Æneas had said of it, for he prefaces the later and more complete 'Genealogy of the Name of Farquharson' in 1733 with the suggestive words: 'I shall give an account of their marriages, possessions, and descendants, *leaving all that's controverted or obscure* about their descent from the Thanes of Fife and their actions and alliances at their first appearance to such as can find clearer evidence for them

¹ Finlay Farquharson is mentioned as occupying Invercauld, Keloch, Cluny, and part of Inverey in the list of King's tenants in Aberdeenshire in 1539 (*Exch. Rolls*, xvii. 656-7) and previously, as a King's tenant and a principal man in Braemar, in 1527, 1532, and 1538 (*Chiefs of Grant*, iii. 68, 71, 365). The first distinct appearance of the Badenoch Macphersons is in 1591, in a band to Huntly (*Spald. Club Misc.* iv. 246). The Farquharsons of Invercauld, Allanaquoich, Inverey, and Monaltric obtained feus of their lands in 1632, having previously held them on wadset from 1611, while none of the Macphersons in Badenoch acquired wadset rights until 1626 or feu rights until 1638, and even Macpherson of Cluny was merely a removable tenant in Cluny until as late as 1680, when he became feuar.

than I am able to get by conversing with the oldest men [cf. the 'oldest and wisest' men of Sir Æneas] and *comparing what has been wrote before* on the subject.' So timorously careful is he that he not only omits the controverted and obscure particulars which he mentions, and which were those specially dealt with in *Vanitie Exposed*, but he does not insist on or repeat others which he might easily have justified. More than this, he refrains from any reference even to the cadency of the Farquharsons from the Mackintoshes and from the renowned Shaw Sgorfhiachlach of Robert the Third's time, although these were matters of common knowledge and fully admitted by the critic of 1704. It is evident that he had been thoroughly frightened, and was determined to avoid saying anything which might afford the smallest target for objection. He accordingly opens the genealogy with the plain unvarnished statement that 'Farquhar Shaw, whose name first gave rise to this surname, came over from Rothimurcus and took up his residence near the Linn of Dee'—a statement in which Sir Æneas himself could scarcely have found a word to question.

His work throughout shows evidence of great industry and care in the collection and ascertainment of his facts, as well as a scrupulous desire to be honest and to give the fullest particulars of the various families and the actions of their members without anything which might seem like glorification of the race. It may, indeed, be thought that he has been unnecessarily modest in this respect, and that he might with advantage have enlarged on the doings of such distinguished Farquharsons as Donald Og of Monaltrie, Montrose's captain, or John of Inverey, the famous Black Colonel, the latter of whom he probably knew personally, and the recollection of whose stirring career must have been still fresh in the district when he wrote. But he dismisses Inverey, after mentioning his marriages and family, with the brief statement that he 'was Colonel of the Marmen at the Revolution under my Lord Dundee,' and is scarcely more communicative concerning the Jacobite services of the Colonel's brother and sons. Not only is he reticent in regard to matters on which he might reasonably have been expected to expatiate—though perhaps his reticence may have been in deference to the Whig views of his friends at Invercauld—but he is not ashamed to include in his genealogy members of the clan occupying very humble positions, as shoemakers and other craftsmen. Honesty, indeed, may be said to have been one of his characteristics; it is apparent in some measure in his conduct on the occasion of his 'lapse' in 1725; and if he

was the writer of the genealogy of 1697-1704 we may perhaps fairly absolve him from any desire to deceive, and put down the errors and extravagancies in that production to misinformation or misunderstanding. Testimony to his honesty is borne by the laird of Finzean in the memorial to the Lord Lyon in 1774 already referred to, in the statement that 'notwithstanding all the strong obligations' he was under to Invercauld's family, 'he would not deviate from telling the truth of the genealogy of his name' even although it showed that family to be of junior descent among the Farquharsons.

It remains only to say a few words on the MSS. of the 1733 genealogy, of which there were at least two. The earlier of these, for a long time kept in the Finzean family, was produced in evidence in the Breda Succession Case in 1859, when a leaf (pages 5 and 6) was declared to be missing from it and it was shown from another paper produced to be an '*original* manuscript' which had been given by Brouchdearg himself to the laird of Finzean. Unfortunately this MS. cannot now be found, but an old and perhaps almost contemporaneous copy, without any portion missing, is in the possession of Lieut.-Colonel W. Lachlan Forbes of Inverernan. The other original MS., belonging to Andrew Farquharson of Whitehouse, also formed part of the evidence in the Breda case. It is described in the 'process' as 'a stitched manuscript book of the shape of a small quarto, paged as containing thirty-four pages and upon every one of which pages there is writing.' It, too, is missing, but several copies are in existence, made from one belonging to the late Dr. John Stuart, Secretary of the Spalding Club, about fifty years ago. It is more full in some of its details than the earlier MS., and has the additional difference that it refers to persons and circumstances of several years' later date than 1733, and omits various particulars of description and other matters which then no longer held good, a difference which seems to point to the fact either that it was written at a later date than 1733 or that its writer made additions and alterations on his original, so as to keep it up to date.

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