

## **Was it due to the weather? Lady Logiealmond's debtors**

### **The Document**

In January 2020 a cache of documents relating to Logiealmond were found among the Murthly Muniments in the National Records of Scotland in Edinburgh. These included some of the long-sought estate papers of the Drummonds, who had owned Logiealmond from 1668. In 1828 the estate passed by marriage to Murthly and Grantully, and in the 1840s was sold to the Earl of Mansfield.

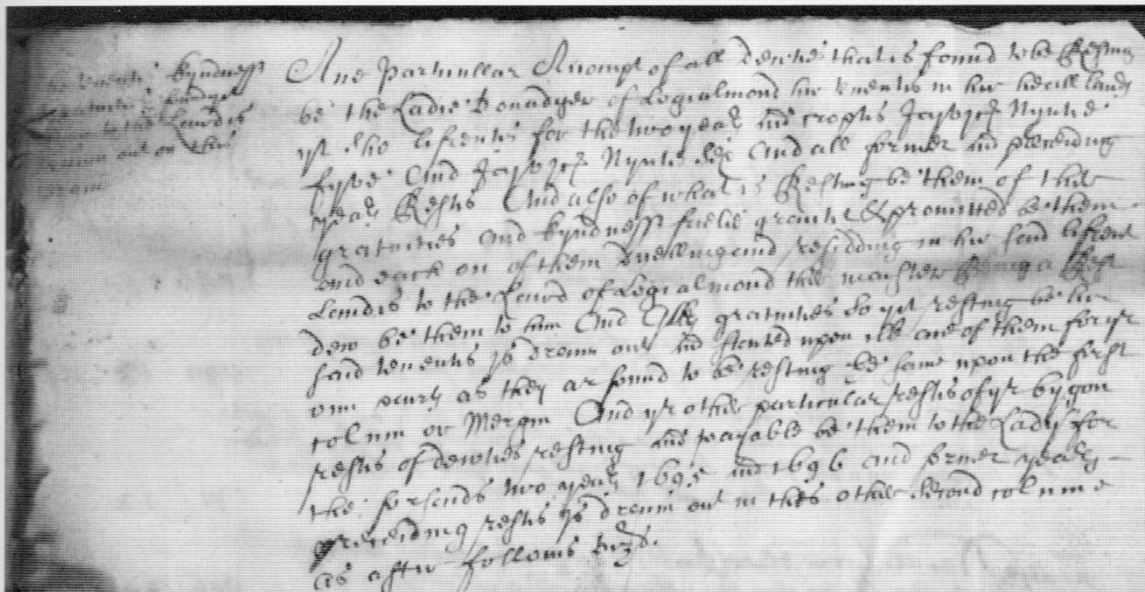
The boxes and bundles of documents amounted to 128 leases, most dating from around 1791 when the young laird of the period came of age, with a few relating to mills and brew seats (places permitted to make and sell ale), these dating to around 1750. The oldest item and the focus of this article is a list of debts owed to Lady Logiealmond in December 1696.<sup>1</sup> It covers most of Logiealmond except Little Glenshee, records the names of the tenants and their places, and details their debts. 'The Lady', as the writer calls her, was Grisel, mother of the then laird, Thomas Drummond, who was 23 at this date, but had inherited the estate from his father when he was five.

The seven-page list of debts was a challenge for several reasons. Though the writing was fairly neat, unlike the later documents it was written in Secretary Hand, so the script and many of the words used were unfamiliar. After struggling to learn to read it during lockdown I asked David Perry of Alder Archaeology Ltd to transcribe it. Even then it took time to understand the terminology and to find the meaning of debts for 'cropt', 'dutie', 'gratuitie' and 'kindness'.

The ninety-four tenants listed under fifteen place names owed a total £3,401 13s 4d in pounds Scots in December 1696, equivalent to about £283 Sterling at that time. Five owed nothing, and five owed over £100 Scots. About half the tenants owed 'the Lady' only for 1696, but the other half had gone into debt in 1695 or earlier. About 10% had debts of more than two years standing.

## Copy of the heading of the original document

National Records of Scotland GD121/1/Box 41, Bundle 121, Number 5



### The transcription by David Perry, Alder Archaeology Ltd

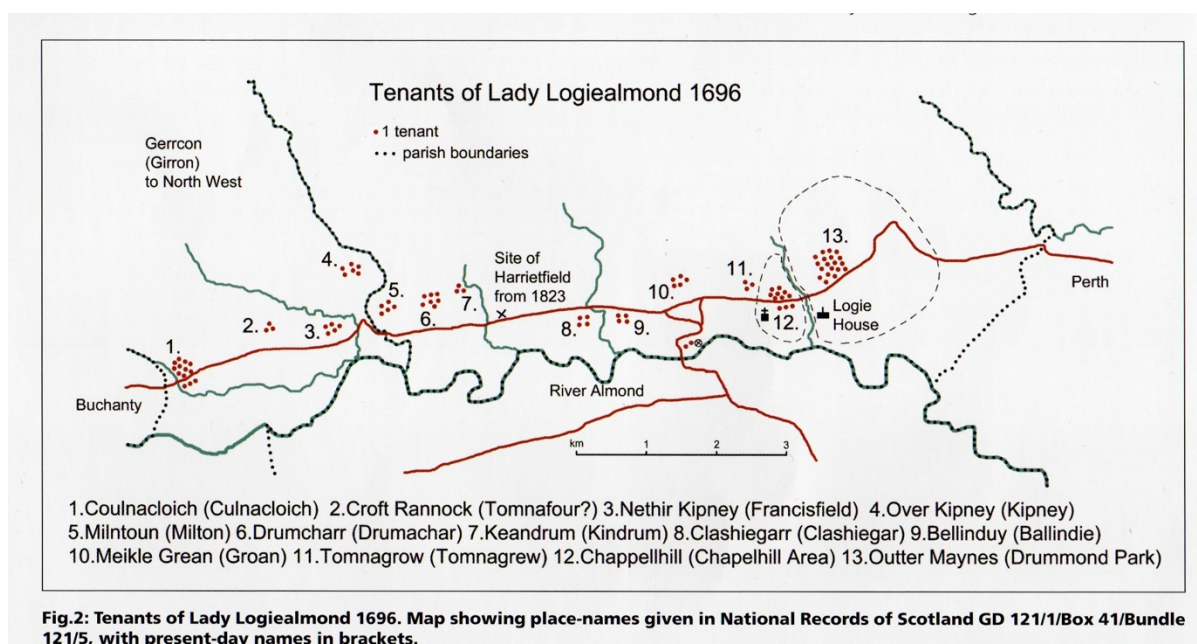
The Rentis kindness Ane  
(gr)atutitis found yit (resting)  
to the Laird is Drawn  
out on this Mergin

The	Ane Particular Accompt of all dewties that is found to be Resting be the Ladie Douager of Logialmond hir tenentis in hir heall land[is] [tha]t she lifrentis for the two year[is] and croptis Jajvic Nyntie fyve And Jajvic Nyntie sex And all former and preceeding
Mergin	year[is] Restis And also of what is Resting be them of ther gratuities and kindness frielie grantit [and] promitted be them and each on of them duelling and residding in hir said lifrent Landis to the Laird of Logialmond ther maister Being a Rest dew be them to him And Q[ui]lk[is] gratuities so yit resting be hir said tenentis is draun out and stented upon ilk ane of them for [the]r oun pairt[is] as they ar found to be resting the same upon the first column or Mergin And [the]r other particular restis of [the]r bygon restis of dewties resting and payable be them to the Lady for the forsaidis two year[is] 1695 and 1696 and former year[is] preceeding restis is draun out in this other second columne As aftir follouis viz.

### Interpretation of the Heading

An account of all that is owed to the Lady Dowager of Logiealmond in all the lands she liferents from the Laird of Logiealmond for 1695 and 1696 and any arrears. Also what they owe in 'gratuities' and 'kindness' that each of them has agreed in the land she has in liferent from the Laird of Logiealmond, their master. And what is due to him from the tenants is in the first column or margin. The duties that they owe to her including for previous years is listed in the second column.

The tenants were listed from west to east and all but two of the place names were easily identifiable (Croft Rannock, possibly Tomnafour, and Little Groan which was linked with Millhaugh). Apart from Girron which lies near Amulree to the north of the hill ridge, the twelve more westerly tenancies lie in a six-kilometre band on the south facing slopes above the Almond, not far from the through road. These places each had three to seven tenants, and in each most of the tenants owed the same 'dutie' or rent for 1696, typical of fermtouns. In several places tenants had the same surname so were probably related, like the seven Gorries in Culnacloch and three Robertsons in Over Kipney.



The two more easterly groups of tenants, eleven tenants at Chapelhill and nineteen at Outer Mains (now called Drummond Park), were different. Those in Chapelhill were loosely grouped around the old kirk and road to Logie House, and the latter, east of the burn, were spread through a wider area around the main house and its two home farms, now called Drummond Park and Drumharrow. Few of these places are named. The range of rents and debts was considerable; a few owed large sums and many small, and none the same.

A proportion of the smaller tenants were probably pendiclers, who rented a cottage and a small plot from the landowner (whereas a cottager rented from a tenant). It is likely some had particular skills and trades, working directly for the estate or providing services needed by the estate and other tenants, and some were older men and women.

The careful accounting of all debts and allowances offers some insights. John Miller was the smith at Kindrum and David Murray at Chapelhill. One of the Tomnagrew tenants owed money on a bond as well as three years' rent, but was due 4 merks (£2 4s 0d Scots) for wintering the Lady's cow and a flock of hers; also 44 shillings for wintering another of her cows prior to Beltane 1695.

James Bell in the Drummond Park area was due to pay the Lady £4 for a boll of meal; £2 8s for six hens a year at four shillings each; and £2 11s 8d for a firloft of meal given him by the Lady at £10 6s 8d per boll. However, he was able to deduct £11 14s 10d for his linen cloth that had been sold in Perth by James Menzies of Chapelhill.<sup>1</sup>

### **The broader picture**

The document gives a glimpse of a landscape and way of life that had been long established, but was to change over the next hundred and fifty years to an environment that would be more familiar today. In the small clusters of houses or fermtouns families co-operated to cultivate unenclosed plots of land and graze their animals. They were self-sufficient in many ways. Grain provided the staple food and a basis for making ale. Change came to Logiealmond in the eighteenth century with a more commercial approach, based on individual farms with much investment in drainage, enclosure, buildings, crop rotations and tree planting. The list of debts provides enlightening detail on the tenants in Logiealmond (apart from those in Little Glenshee) prior to this, but how does it fit into a broader picture of the time?

The decade of the 1690s was a significant and difficult time for Scotland, when several long-running problems and divisions coincided: both political (Jacobite and Hanoverian loyalties) and religious (Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and Episcopalian convictions). It was a time of unrest and challenging conditions, nationally and locally. In addition, it was the lowest point of the Maunder Minimum, the period that came to be known as the little ice age. 'The 1690s were a decade of misery for the Scots with the notorious Lean Years of consecutive harvest failures' (T M Devine).<sup>3</sup>

Ian Whyte has described how the crisis began in 1695 with failure of the harvest. It was so serious that the government had to remove the restrictions on the import of grain. The next year the crop failed again. This

was followed by a better year in 1697 providing some relief. Unfortunately, the next winter was hard and long, and led to a third year of crop failure and lack of feed for stock. Recovery began in 1699, when there was a plentiful harvest. <sup>4</sup> Scotland was not the only country affected. Much of northern Europe suffered, especially Scandinavia and the Baltic. <sup>5</sup>

It is not known what the population of Scotland was before or after the famine of the 1690s, but in her 2010 book, *Famine in Scotland*, Karen Cullen estimates that 10-15% of the population died in this part of the country – even more in the north-east and Highlands, though less in the eastern lowlands. She found evidence that the weather deteriorated from 1692, but that those in Tayside were somewhat cushioned by the recent growth of the domestic linen industry. <sup>6</sup>

The official price of oatmeal, set annually by Perth Sherriff Court, increased almost three-fold, from £3 6s 8d per boll in 1693 to £9 0s 0d in 1699.<sup>7</sup> The government had to import grain to feed the poorest. In many parts tenants were unable to pay their rents, some ran short of seed for the next year and some were unable to feed their stock. Arable farmers, graziers, tradesmen, pendiclors and cottagers found it difficult to support their families. <sup>8</sup>

Many set out on the road to look for work, to seek charity or to return to their original parish where they might expect support. Epidemic disease, such as typhus and smallpox, spread with the migrants whose resistance was low. Parishes were responsible for the care of those born there or who had lived there for a number of years, but many did not have the resources and organisation to cope with the numbers affected, particularly strangers to the area.<sup>9</sup> Because of the removal of ministers sympathetic to the Church of England at the re-establishment of Presbyterianism in the 1690s, some parishes had no resident minister and no records and struggled to offer any support to the poor.<sup>10</sup>

Farming and the people only recovered gradually; the labour force was reduced, skills lost, stock decimated, land not maintained, marriage and birth rates fell. Landowners lost income over four devastating years. The country had had to import expensive grain and had lost potential exports. In 1698-9 it was further impoverished through investment in the Company of Scotland and failed Darien Scheme.<sup>11</sup>

## Logiealmond in context

David Forrester studied the records for the parishes that later became Logiealmond – parts of Monzie, Fowlis Wester and Redgorton. In his local history of Logiealmond, published in 1944, he records that after the Revolution of 1688 that established the protestant monarchs William and Mary on the throne, the incumbent Episcopal minister and elders of Monzie were swept aside and new men sought. When the new Kirk Session found the Poor Box broken open and empty, the civil and ecclesiastical authorities investigated the circumstances. The former incumbent disclaimed all knowledge and referred them to the Box Master of his day. He said that for security while Lord Dundee's Highland army were going up and down the country after the battle of Killicrankie, he had taken the box and hidden it beneath the pulpit in the kirk, but he had told no one and could produce no corroboration. Nothing was found and so 'the poor had to suffer'.<sup>12</sup>

In 1691 after the morning service in the kirk at Chapelhill nine men were appointed elders for the Logiealmond portion of Monzie parish, and allocated responsibility for districts. In 1695 a further four elders were appointed to the more westerly portion of Logiealmond. The names of all their places are familiar today and many of the names of the elders are in the list of tenants' debts of 1696.<sup>13</sup>

Unrest and open war between the government and the Jacobites in Scotland was disruptive for the settled farming population. The armies here and on campaigns in Ireland and on the continent needed money so new taxes were imposed. The records of the poll tax for the Logiealmond area have not survived, but the hearth tax of 1691 lists the tenants of the Laird of Logiealmond. Forty-eight men paid fourteen shillings each with extra for two kilns, and the laird paid £9 16s 0d for his 14 hearths and a kiln (was this all in the 'manor place', or did it include some cottages?). Not surprisingly, it took several years to collect the tax.

Looking at the level of debt in relation to the duty or annual rent where both were recorded (for 74 of the 94 tenants listed) suggests the tenants that were having problems. By December 1696 43% had only to pay that year's rent, but 14% owed a full two year's rent and 16% more than that. John Dow in Tomnagrew paid rent of only £6 6s 8d but owed ten times the amount and John Spindie in the same place owed four times his rent

of £26 6s 8d. Patrick Peddie in Drumachar had rent of £34 13s 4d but debts of £142 15s 2d. And there were more bad years to come.

The list of debts only covers the households with a tenancy, not the whole population, which also extended to subtenants, cottagers, and the landowner's family. Tenants had less security and fewer resources than the landowner, but more than the others. All were affected by the harvest failures: the tenants accumulated debts and did not need the labour of the cottagers and others, and they were less able to buy from the skilled tradesmen. The laird may have had to forgo some of the tenants' debts and provide support for tenants and others. Thomas Drummond like many of his class had an additional problem: he and his brother William of Ballathie, each invested £500 in 1696 as adventurers in the Stock Company of Scotland trading to Africa and the Indies, known as the Darien Scheme, and must have lost all of it on its failure.<sup>14</sup>

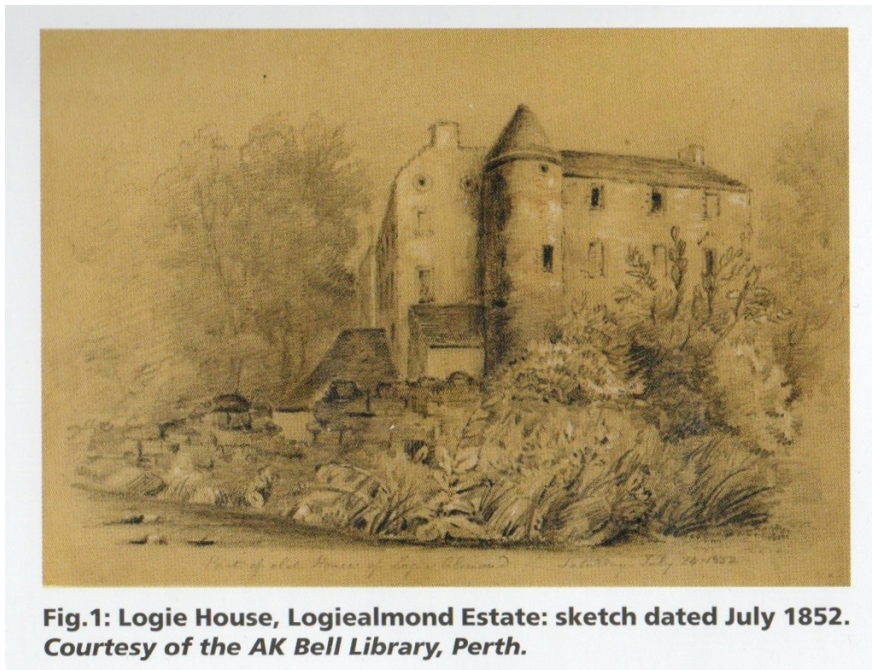
Rosalind Mitchison searched the parish records for her book on *The Old Poor Law of Scotland* and found that the parish structure lacked the resources and organisation to get support to those that needed it in such a major crisis. In Monzie, the largest portion of Logiealmond, in 1698: 'those who attended the [parish] meeting made arrangements for the tenantry to pay four pecks of oatmeal a week, for one estate to give an equal amount, and for another to support its own poor'. But none of the other heritors attended or sent a representative, so it is likely that some parts of the parish were not assessed to provide support for the needy.<sup>15</sup>

The 1696 list of tenants' debts dates from the second year of harvest failure when it became apparent that a crisis had arrived, but before they knew it was to last several more years. Even after a good harvest in 1699 it took time for the people and the country to recover. Perhaps this is why the document has been kept, a reminder of a momentous time.

The trail leading from the 1696 list of tenants' debts towards some understanding of its content and significance has been like a cross country run with obstacles. Problems came from the script and language and from intermittently closed libraries, inaccessible archives and travel restrictions due to the pandemic. It has been a surprising, educational and rewarding route, and may continue when research facilities, particularly the kirk session records in the National Records of Scotland, are again available.



The oldest part of Logie House was probably built by Sir John Drummond of Burnbank and Logie, the husband of Grisel, The Lady Logiealmond of the title.



Thomas Drummond was the oldest son of Sir John Drummond and Grisel, Lady Logiealmond. As he inherited at the age of five, his widowed mother managed the estate with the help of trustees.



**Thomas Drummond of Logie Almond at 62, 1735**  
Etching by Alexander, National Galleries of Scotland



## Notes & References

**Note:** Within days of submitting this to the journal of the Scottish Local History Forum, the kirk session records were added the ScotlandsPeople website <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/record-guides/kirk-session-records> This article was published in Scottish Local History, issue 110, Autumn 2021.

### References:

- 1 National Records of Scotland, GD121/1/Box 41, Bundle 121, Number 5.
- 2 A boll was 140lb/64kg and a firloft was a quarter of a boll
- 3 TM Devine, *Clearance and Improvement: Land, Power and the People in Scotland 1700-1900*, p.29 (John Donald, Edinburgh, 2010).
- 4 I Whyte, *Agriculture and Society in Seventeenth Century Scotland*, p. 246 (John Donald, Edinburgh, 1979).
- 5 Karen Cullen, *Famine in Scotland: the 'Ill Years' of the 1690s*, p. 191 (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2010).
- 6 Karen Cullen, *ibid*, p. 188.
- 7 Perth and Kinross Council Archives. Commissioners of Supply. Extract Fiars Prices for crops B59/31/16.
- 8 Ian Whyte, *ibid*, p.250.
- 9 Karen Cullen, *ibid*, p. 250.
- 10 Rosalind Mitchison, *The Old Poor Law in Scotland: the experience of poverty 1574 – 1845*, p. 30 (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000).
- 11 Karen Cullen, *ibid*, p. 188 - 190.
- 12 David Forrester, *Logiealmond*, p. 109 (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1944).
- 13 David Forrester, *ibid*, p. 107-108
- 14 David Forrester, *ibid*, p. 122.
- 15 Rosalind Mitchison, *ibid*, p. 40.

**Rosalind Pearson**

**November 2021**

---