



# THE SCOTTISH GENEALOGIST

**MARCH 2014**

**A Knight in Newhaven  
Captain Thomas Graham  
The Howff Cemetery, Dundee  
Two Naval Ancestors  
Mortimer**

**QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE SCOTTISH GENEALOGY SOCIETY**

---

**Vol. LXI No. 1**

## CONTENTS

SAFHS 25th Annual Conference .....	1
A Knight in Newhaven - <i>Ramsay Tubb &amp; John D. Stevenson</i> .....	3
Captain Thomas Graham - <i>Fraser Paterson</i> .....	8
Howff Restoration Group - <i>Karen Nichols</i> .....	15
Two Naval Ancestors - <i>Jean Lindsay</i> .....	17
Mortimers of Scotland 1126-1700 - <i>John G.M. Mortimer</i> .....	23
Member's Query .....	31
Book Review .....	32
Recent Additions - <i>Joan Keen &amp; Eileen Elder</i> .....	33
Dates for your Diary .....	35

### SAFHS 25th Annual Conference and Family History Fair



The Carnegie Conference Centre,  
Halbeath Road, Dunfermline,  
Fife KY11 8DY

Saturday 26 April 2014,  
9.30am to 4.45pm

*Speakers include:*

**Martyn Gorman, David Holman, Ian Leith and Ken Nisbet**

*Other short talks and workshops by:*

**Kirsteen Mulhern, Lloyd Pitcairn, Jim Ryan and others**

Plus a Children's Workshop!

Costs: Full Conference (incl. lunch and refreshments) £32  
Family History Fair only £2

Programme and Booking Form from: [jb.bishop@btinternet.com](mailto:jb.bishop@btinternet.com)

See also: [www.safhs.org](http://www.safhs.org)



---

Published by The Scottish Genealogy Society. ISSN 0300-337X  
Printed by Printing Services Scotland Ltd., Dunfermline, Fife.

# Captain Thomas Graham

Fraser Paterson

I'm a freelance writer and one of my specialties is Scottish history. I'm also a volunteer guide at The Georgian House for the National Trust for Scotland. Spending many hours in various rooms at No 7 Charlotte Square, the stories behind the portraits that adorn the walls began to fascinate me. When I was selected for a six-month career development programme with the NTS, I decided to spend half that time researching a family whose portraits can also be seen at Gladstone's Land on the Royal Mile, another NTS property.

That family were the Grahams of Airth. Airth is in the Falkirk area of Stirlingshire and lies on the banks of the River Forth. Judge James Graham (8th Dec 1676 to 5th Nov 1746) purchased Airth Castle from a Jacobite family, the Bruces, who were forced to sell after the failure of the 1715 rebellion. He styled himself 'of Airth' from 1721. The Judge too had Jacobite beliefs and was closely associated with Bonnie Prince Charlie. He was invited to attend council at Holyrood in the days immediately following the Battle of Prestonpans. Indeed, three of his children are buried in Holyrood Abbey. However, his story is for another day.

## Thomas Graham 1768-1836

This article is about one of his grandchildren, Thomas Graham (1st March 1768-1836), who became a Captain in the East India Company. The NTS kindly permitted me to take photographs of the family portraits and also to use some they have. They permitted me also to use the small amount of information they have on each family member, as a starting point for my research. Sadly some of it proved inaccurate. However, much more fascinating information was discovered. My fully referenced findings have been passed on to one of their curators, Alastair Smith.

Much of my work centred on the family manuscripts which are held at the National Library of Scotland. As you can see from the bibliography, I was also given very helpful guidance by the SGS in finding other sources within the library at Victoria Terrace. Much of what follows are extracts from family letters.

Captain Thomas Graham was well liked and respected by those he sailed with, and was a caring man. However, he also had an unpleasant side to his character, in that he thought nothing of purchasing a fatherless child, as you will see.

His father was William Graham of Airth. He married Caroline Mary Home in 1807, and had several children including William, Thomas and Carolus. In reading the family correspondence, I felt I was intruding into the private affairs of others, but it was for a worthy purpose: to reveal their story for future



generations. Much of what follows are diary extracts, which give an intriguing insight into the life of a successful member of the landed gentry in Scotland.

### **Life at sea and in India**

On 17th July 1782 Thomas wrote very poignantly to his father, stating that he "hopes we will live long enough to see each other face to face". The solitary nature of life on the waves was clearly affecting him. His father passed away eight years later.

Another letter shortly after this date refers to correspondence he received from the General "by Mr Dundas. I answered it immediately. He ordered me to draw upon him for to which I have done...laid it out on jewellery and books as an adventure".

Further correspondence written on 28th February 1787 refers to him having to wait for "a fair wind down channel to pursue our voyage". It later states that he has to interrupt his letter because "there's all hands called. I must away upon deck". He continues, "Our ship is quite full, which is much against me, as being a young officer", and makes reference to where this means is belongings are positioned. He also refers to a good friend Mr Dickson, an old school friend of his, who "may have it in his power to do me marry good". He also refers to thousands of letters he has to give to people in India, a task he views as "rather troublesome", but when he reflects on "what satisfaction I may give some poor soul, I take them with pleasure". Earlier correspondence also makes reference to his getting on well with all his shipmates. From this it is fair to draw the conclusion that Captain Thomas Graham was a very personable and caring man.

In another letter of dated 26th August 1787 he refers to meeting a friend in Calcutta, "I stayed with him for a few hours and drank bottle or two of his cool claret". The same letter refers to friends in Singapore, where he also visited, as having servants for everything they do, and makes reference to one individual who has 60! It must have been a tough life for some.

In correspondence dated 29th October 1788 he refers to enhancing his general seafaring knowledge, as well as going through a course of book-keeping, which "must be of great use to me in my line as a merchant". For his amusement he is "retrieving my Latin with my friend Martin, and reading Guthrie's Grammar, a book which gives a more concise history of the different countries of the globe than we have".

A letter dated 11th February 1789 refers to him working from 6 in the morning until 7 at night, sometimes later. A watch was also kept through the night to prevent the soldiers of the East India Company from deserting.

In other correspondence he asks after his family. In several he also asks for and makes reference to his good friend Jamie Erskine. On occasion he also

requests his father's financial help in acquiring 'investments', promising to return his money in full upon his return.

He was on the ship *Busbridge* at this time. Cargo notes confirm this. The ship's cargo included pickled tongues, anchovies, French olives and claret. It also refers to ten volumes of Johnson's Shakespeare being part of the cargo to Madras that month. The journey would conclude in Bengal. I was rather twistedly hoping to find reference to Georgian drug smuggling, namely opium in the cargo, but alas no joy!

At the young age of just 24 he became an apprentice mason of Lodge Renfrew County Kilwinning. There is a certificate from the Right Worshipful Master of the lodge verifying his entry. It states that he became so "In the Year of Our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety two and of masonry the five thousand seven hundred and ninety second year". Why it has a date of 24th December 1829 written on it in the lower left hand side, in the same handwriting, I cannot fathom.

The manuscripts also contain a bond dated 15th March 1796. It relates to a loan of £2000 he received from Day Hort McDowall of Walkinshaw (he was also an executor for Thomas's father Judge James), payable "on the term of candelmass next", or else he would incur a late payment penalty of £400, plus interest thereafter. It does not state what the loan was for, merely that he was Captain of the *General Goddard* at the time. This was possibly his first command.

### **Naval manoeuvres**

Captain Thomas Graham made a journey to the Cape of Good Hope off South Africa on the *General Goddard*, where he arrived on 31st July of that year. She arrived at Table Bay where Thomas Graham states in a letter that two or three of his men had contracted the fever and died during the voyage. It states of plans to remain there until the second fleet from England joins them. They have no certainty of the Dutch squadron's location. He goes on to state that Admiral Keith Elphinstone is reluctant to let them proceed with so small a force.

In correspondence dated 1st September 1796 he states concerns to an agent, John Pringle, about the safety of the ship due to low army numbers, for the journey to India. Five days later in a letter to Robert Wignam Esq he expresses his frustration at being laid up at Table Bay so long. He makes reference to the fact that suddenly, after six weeks in the Bay, they are asked to set sail without a single ship-of-war to defend them, especially as the French force were known to be very much superior to "the Indiamen". Early on the morning of 7th September they were due to set sail. However due to several fruitless attempts to leave Table Bay, they did not successfully manage to do so until 16th of that month.



Thomas writes to his elder brother James on 15th October 1796, from the *General Goddard*. In it he states, "Our voyage to the Cape from England was fifteen weeks, and upon our arrival there, we had intelligence of a Dutch fleet on their way to attack that place, our troops were consequently disembarked and we detained until their arrival. The Dutch fleet arrived at Saldanah Bay in August and in the (*illegible*) end of the month the whole of them were captured by George Elphinstone [*George Keith Elphinstone was his full name*]. It was the end of September before we left the Cape, our passage hitherto has been remarkably good, but as we are bound to Madras I am afraid it will be yet a very long time before we reach Bengal. I mean to dispose of as much of my will investment as I can at Madras but think I shall bring on some claret and beer to Bengal. Pray write to any of your friends at Calcutta who may be able to assist and advise me in the sale of my (*illegible*)."

The last word I could not read. Most frustrating. The letter continues, "If any of your friends have children to send home, recommend them to me, I am a famous hand for that kind of thing....The young ones are really good articles, they drink no claret...."

He goes on in his letter to James, "I had ordered a couple of hounds for you, but my ship being chock full of troops made me countermand them".

There is a document which states the following as sold for ready cash, from the *General Goddard* in November 1796: one six-volume prayer book, one philosophy book, and two dozen packs of cards. It is not too difficult to see where the priorities of the crew lay!

Thomas Graham sent a letter to Robert Wignam Esq. from Madras on 3rd January 1797. In it he refers to their successful arrival on 16th November. The voyage took two months. On seeing a squadron of French ships cruising in the Bay, they diverted to another part of the Bengal coast, Trincomalee Bay, to seek convoy to Bengal.

Further correspondence sent to Robert Wignam Esq refers to the *General Goddard* being in a poor state due to bad weather encountered on the way up from the Cape, the fact it had sprung a leak in a severe gale, and that Capt. Thomas Graham had done his best to locate it. It refers to much additional expense due to be incurred to repair the sails and rigging. Capt. Thomas Graham requests in another letter dated 9th February 1797 of the Hon. Sir John Shore, Governor General in Council permission to bring the *General Goddard* up the river for the purpose of making repairs.

### **Return to India**

Thomas writes again to his brother James on 15th May 1797, from Barrackore, in which he describes himself as "one of the most sober in Calcutta". He also states, "my side pains me a good deal but I persevere with the mercury which now begins to affect me". Liar! Mercury, as readers will know, was not

for a painful side. He continues by advising James, "I do hope your illness is getting better; if your illness is at all serious do leave the country at once – a year or two in Europe would set you on your legs, and without cutting deep on your finances".

Thomas regularly wrote to James. The two were very close right up to James's early death in 1805, only his 44th year. They often had an eye for the same woman – marriage did not stop the Captain – as is proven in correspondence from his brother.

In correspondence of 5th June 1797, and sent from Calcutta, he states with regard to James's removal from his position at Punneah, that "the particular part of your conduct found fault with by government is their being sent to work on the roads without being regularly convicted". This was not the true reason. James lost a judicial position, which had been very important to him, as a result of sentencing a Suk of Calcutta to death for intemperate conduct. Sukes were very important to the British in India, as they were superior to British cavalymen and, as such, James's harsh sentence was politically naïve.

A digital copy of Miss Christian Dalrymple's diaries was very kindly provided to me by Mark McLean, the Learning Officer at NTS property, Newhailes, in Musselburgh. It shows on several occasions from 1798 Capt. Graham visiting for dinner, and often saying overnight at Newhailes. The first reference of this is in her entry of 5th November 1798. "Whist, casino, loo"; and lottery tickets were popular evening games.

#### **Further career**

He was a Captain in the East India Company in the early 1800s, and served on a ship called *Wyndham*. The Asiatic Annual Register of 1804 mentions "a very brilliant achievement" by Capt. Graham, when he captured two French privateers. "The enemy had recourse to their favourite expedient of boarding; his attack was obstinately opposed, as may be imagined. When we add that the first officer was killed, the second officer fell overboard in the confusion and was unhappily drowned, the officer commanding a detachment on board was also killed, whilst the brave Commander had one of his arms shattered, but is said not to have quit the deck."

The *Wyndham* was an armed merchant ship carrying 20 guns but by 1810 had been modified to carry more than 26, probably as a consequence of the Napoleonic wars. These were heavy ships, often between 800 and 1300 tonnes. They could hold their own against pirates and other raiders. However, the *Wyndham* was captured by the French later that same year despite modification, having changed hands four times in ten months. The Asiatic Annual Register of 1809 notes concern for its capture. Thomas Graham was still serving as a Captain with the East India Company in 1825, as noted in a court case of the time.



The Airth papers contain a Charter dated 22nd May 1804 from James, Duke of Montrose, on behalf of King George III, to Thomas Graham, commissioning him to be Captain of a Company in the Eastern Battalion of Stirlingshire Volunteer Infantry. It goes on to state that he was not allowed to take rank unless called into active service. His role was to exercise the officers and soldiers and keep them in good order and discipline. Later in the Charter it is stated that it was given by the Duke under his hand and seal, 6th November 1806.

In an interesting insight into how Window Tax was addressed by the wealthy, in a letter from William Stirling at Dunblane near Airth, who was working for Thomas at the time, the following line is contained; "I have caused the doors and windows of the (*illegible*) to build up with stone". Thomas was staying at No 2 North Parade in Bath at the time, 5th April 1808.

Captain Thomas Graham latterly changed his surname to Thomas Graham Stirling. Strowan was the estate of his maternal uncle Sir Thomas Stirling of Ardoch. He succeeded to it upon the death of his father William. The estate of Strowan was to go to Captain Graham's second son Thomas, but, being very extravagant, he kept it. Evidence of this is in the manuscripts. His son had to take him to court for it! It seems that much of the land was used for growing crops, as this is specifically mentioned in the family papers.

#### **The purchase of a child**

One W. Houston sends a letter to Thomas at Airth Castle on 7th June 1813. It starts with a very harrowing sentence: "I must confess that I thought you had had from experience more knowledge of the (*illegible*) in existence for the support and protection of that unfortunate class in society, bastard children". As the letter continues it is clear that it refers to the adoption of "James". A section in it quotes thus, "the child's mother might keep the child till it was 14 years of age without giving up any part of her claim against him for its support. The day I was in Glasgow I had the pleasure of an interview with the wicked woman. She said that she would not give James up the child, but that she would give up her claim on him for £32, to be paid by you, which is £4 a year instead of £6 for the remaining 8 years. I think she would take less, and I believe it would be better for James to settle the business in this way". I found this particularly disturbing, not least as I was adopted from a Church of Scotland home in Glasgow. Ouch!

An interesting legal document is a petition brought to the Lords of Council and Session by local farmers and distillers in the county of Clackmannan against Thomas Graham Stirling Esq of Airth, in respect of repair and maintenance of a harbour he owned. Thomas Graham Stirling's defender's agent was James Dundas. The Dundas family of Arniston and the Grahams of Airth had close ties over at least two generations.

There are many legal papers contained in the Airth documents, where James Dundas acts as agent both for and against Thomas Graham.

William Stirling writes again to Thomas on 28th Dec 1822, who is now back at Airth. In it he requests "the honor of Thomas' company to the funeral of Miss Erskine, his sister in law on Thursday next at 12 o'clock from G(*illegible*) to the place of internment..." There are many references to funerals and illnesses throughout the Airth papers.

Amongst the manuscripts I came across a list of members, with rules abridged, for the Wig Club, Edinburgh Royal Exchange Coffee House 1824. The said rules state that the club can have no more than 70 members. The 19th member is Lord Melville. The 58th member is Thomas Graham Stirling of Airth. The third rule states that "the six regular stated meetings to be on the 2d Wednesday of December, the 2d Wednesday of January, the 2d Wednesday of February, the 2d Wednesday of March, the 2nd Wednesday of April, or the day immediately following the regular meetings of the Caledonian Hunt; and the sixth meeting to be upon Thursday of the race week in Edinburgh".

Also amongst the papers was an advert for a lost gold chase watch, "Chasing on the case consists of four heads and four busts. Blue ribbon for chain", and offering a reward for its return. There is no indication that Thomas ever had it returned to him.

This concludes the most recent correspondence specific to Captain Thomas Graham. Clearly he was a very successful and brave man, devoted to his career, and also to the name of his family. He would have been fascinating to meet and talk with, but that is for another life.

#### **Bibliography**

*Airth Family Papers* – National Library for Scotland

*History of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain & Ireland Vol I & II* – Burke

*Or & Sable a Book of the Grahams*, published in 1903 by William Brown of Princes Street Register of Burials in the Chapel Royal or Abbey of Holyroodhouse', 1706-1900, Edinburgh, 1900.

*Asiatic Annual Registers*

*Scottish History Society Vol XXIII 1897*

*National Trust for Scotland General Paintings Information*

*Scots Peerage Vol II*, published by David Douglas 1905

*Bibliography of British & Irish History – Judicial Review 1937 Vol 49:4* by Thomas Miller

Juan Agüero, Warden, Holyrood Palace

Miss Christian's Diaries – courtesy of Mark McLean, Claire Robertson & Anne Munro, at Newhailes

Also with thanks to the Scottish Genealogy Society and the National Trust for Scotland

Fraser Paterson's Scottish History website is [www.fpaterson.wordpress.com](http://www.fpaterson.wordpress.com)

For the opening hours of The Georgian House and Gladstone's Land, visit [www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk)