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A Pride of Panners

Bob Hopkins

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About the Author

Bob Hopkins BA (Law) lives in Dunbar in East Lothian, and has a very long-standing interest in those whose lives helped to shape the history of the county. He is a frequent magazine contributor on famous East Lothian figures most particularly in *East Lothian Life* and gives talks to local history groups on famous residents from their own areas.

FOREWORD

This series of historical booklets was quite specifically developed to provide an authoritative briefing for all who seek to enjoy the heritage of what were the medieval baronial lands of Prestoungrange and Dolphinstoun. All are available on the Internet at www.prestoungrange.org the Baron Courts' website.

They have been sponsored by the Baron Courts of Prestoungrange and Dolphinstoun which my family re-established when we gained access to the feudal baronies in 1998 where my paternal great-grandfather, James Park, worked as a miner at the beginning of the 20th Century. But the credit for the scholarship involved in these books, and their timeous appearance, are entirely attributable to the Scottish historians who work with the Baron Courts now led by Annemarie Allan, and the myriad authors concerned.

This particular title tells of the lives and accomplishments of great Panners in whom all can take pride – and from whose example much can be learnt. Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

We were at the outset confident that this series would find a welcoming readership and so it has transpired. But it has done much more than that for it is now providing the historical bases for the Arts Tourism programmes conducted by the Baron Courts through their own Arts Festival Society and in particular the insights required for the murals now being painted.

We thank the authors one and all for their contributions and for a job well done. It is one very practical contribution towards helping visitors and tourists to the town of Prestonpans towards a better understanding of the lives and ambitions of those that went before us all. For better and for worse we stand on the shoulders of our ancestors as we in turn craft our futures and tomorrow's world for our children. So often we see in the pages of history that the cast of characters most certainly changes but the issues that matter and get argued about remain the same.

Dr Julian Wills
Baron of Dolphinstoun
April 1st 2004

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Stained glass at Grange Church to commemorate the life of Dr Patrick Mackay

INTRODUCTION

It is a responsible pleasure to offer these thirteen short biographies of some of the most conspicuously successful people whose lives were associated with Prestonpans. What each one of them achieved in their quite disparate vocations re-lives again here as a beacon to us all of what could be done in their *can-do* worlds. They are indeed A Pride of Panners.

These pages share tales of the battlefield medicine of **Alexander Thomas** at work with Florence Nightingale in the Crimea and the inspiration during **Sir Walter Scott's** youthful convalescence for *Waverley's* recounting of the Battle of Prestonpans. The John Muir Way which passess along the shores of Prestonpans links us with the legendary **John Muir**, the inspirer of America's and later the world's National Parks Movement. They tell of the civic medicine of **William McEwan** aided by his two sons in Prestonpans across 40 years, his role as Provost in ensuring somewhat cleaner air, better education services and the town's new Library. They tell of **Alexander Hume**'s pioneering Latin grammar and the extraordinary benefactions of **James Schaw** and **Mary Murray** providing the burgh with an excellent 18th Century School for Boys and an equally admirable Victorian Girls' School for Domestic Servants.

They tell of Prestonpans' association with two Lords Advocate of Scotland and Lords of Sessions and of the outstanding lifetime contribution of **Lady Susan Grant-Suttie**. These larger than life aristocratic personalities presided as **Lord Prestoungrange** over the post 1745 attainders, served at Westminster in the Union Parliaments and on the Parish Council, ensured the establishment of a Coffee House in the town, the construction of the Town Hall after years of wrangling and the kidnapping of his own wife by **Lord Grange**.

Amidst such tales Church Ministers are not to be outdone. They are represented by **John Davidson** the founding Minister at Prestongrange Church, exiled to the burgh for his opposition to King James VI, and **Patrick Mackay**. Mackay was the second Free Church Minister who was a missionary across the Colonial world whilst conducting his ministry in Prestonpans where he successfully mediated in the Miners' Strike at Prestongrange of 1893.

And they tell most recently of the heroic role that **David Spence** played at Prestongrange in initially establishing the

Scottish Mining Museum there, preserving key features including the pit's steam engines, beam engine, brickworks and shaping the Museum's parklands.

Inevitably there is a host of biographies that could, indeed *should*, have been included here of which we are unaware – some nationally famed some heroes of our local community. There are also many more of which we are only too well aware but they have already been honoured in this series Volumes 1–17 – such as our brewers, our potters and the distinguished founders of our Gothenburg.

For each and every one of these may we hope to understand the meaning of their lives and let us take pride in what they achieved in and for our burgh.

Prestonpans setting of the Alexander statue

1 THOMAS ALEXANDER

Adequate medical care for military personnel in the field regardless of nation is something which is now both expected and taken for granted. Any serviceman or woman, who naturally becomes ill or are injured in the course of their various duties will today receive a high standard of medical or surgical attention. It was not, of course, always thus. The lifetime of Thomas Alexander saw the comprehensive transformation of attitude and actuality.

Dr. Thomas Alexander, C.B., F.R.C.S. (Edinburgh), was born in Prestonpans, East Lothian on 6 May 1812 and spent his entire working life endeavouring to improve the medical and hygiene conditions experienced by service personnel on active service. He was the first child and the only son of William Alexander and his wife Helen Kemp. They had been married at Athelstaneford in East Lothian on 18 December 1809 but lived in Prestonpans where William worked as a flesher; and they remained in the Pans until both died in 1865. They also begat four sisters to Thomas – Isabella, Helen, Jane and Margaret.

Peter McNeill writing in *Prestonpans and Vicinity* asserts that during his early years in the town young Thomas Alexander always intended to become a doctor of medicine. He eventually followed that vocation at both the Universities of Paris and Edinburgh – funded by his father William who was by then a prominent and wealthy salt manufacturer in Prestonpans.

At Edinburgh, his primary tutor was the internationally acclaimed anatomist Robert Knox, who had himself previously served as an army surgeon at Waterloo. Knox had gone on record as being greatly disturbed by the truly basic amenities that were available to deal with the wounded among Wellington's troops in Belgium. It may well have been the influence of Knox, allied to the fact that Edinburgh University boasted a Regius Professorship of Military Surgery from as early as 1806, that persuaded Alexander to make his own medical career in the military. He qualified as a surgeon on 9 June 1831 – at what would seem the extraordinarily youthful age of 19 – and on 10 October 1834 accepted the position of Assistant Surgeon, Second Class, in the British Army. (There was no automatic commissioned rank accorded to army doctors at the time.)

Even on his first posting to the West Indies, where he spent the first five and a half years of his military service, he was appalled by the lack of hygiene and general deficiency of medical provision available to army personnel. From that moment on he made it his primary objective to ameliorate that situation – frequently to his own personal detriment. On numerous occasions during the early and middle parts of his service, Dr. Alexander was threatened by his commanding officers with the possibility that he might lose his post because of the unconventional methods he adopted to aid his patients. But he was seemingly never intimidated and continued to insist on proper sanitary checks and conditions throughout his service. Yet that insistence alone often failed to combat the prevalent disease and fevers which raged in the theatres of war where he served.

He returned to Britain for only a few months after his tour of duty in the West Indies and then spent time in Quebec. He had a serious difference of opinion there with his senior officer concerning the supply of wine to sick troops. Dr Alexander also served in the so called 'Kaffir Wars' in Africa from 1851 to 1853 where he was again dismayed with all the servicemen's living conditions – but particularly those who became sick – and was able to obtain reluctant permission for proper huts and the provision of gardens in which the soldiers could spend time while convalescing.

Over the years, everywhere he went Dr Alexander maintained his high standards relating to the health care of his men. In Bulgaria, for example, when pestilence appeared in his Division and men were sinking fast with little medicine or proper food available, as superintending surgeon, Alexander called the regimental officers to a meeting and said:

> "*Gentlemen, you are to purchase on my authority, at any cost, everything necessary for your sick that you can lay your hands on. You are to pour gold down their throats if it will save their lives; and if the country will not allow the charge, I will pay for it myself.*"

Despite his undisputed surgical ability it took him twenty years to attain the rank of First Class Surgeon. There can be little doubt that this was due to his constant conflict with authority.

At Work in the Crimea

The true watershed so far as Alexander's ambitions were concerned, coincided with the "Eastern Expedition" – or Crimean War. The Doctor travelled with the Expeditionary Force to Gallipoli and Scutari in Turkey in 1854 where he was attached to the Light Division. In medical terms things were extremely bad at these initial staging posts. Typhus and cholera were rife and many soldiers died. At Gallipoli Dr. Alexander again incurred the wrath of commanders by impounding all the available blankets for his sick patients.

During the Crimean conflict, Alexander's efforts were greatly aided by *The London Times* correspondent, Dr. W. H. Russell, who had also traveled to Turkey with the Expeditionary Force and began to file alarming reports of deficiencies in overall organisation, administration and lack of proper medical facilities. In his later reports Russell often spoke favourably of Dr. Alexander's achievements in the field. The correspondent described the surgeon as *"a gentle giant of a Scotchman sitting on a beach with a man's leg on his lap while pouring out the vials of wrath on Sir John Hall (Senior Deputy Medical Inspector General) for landing an army without medical supplies"*. In another report Russell described how *"Dr. Alexander, at Inkermann, for hour after hour, day after day, toiled through scenes which those who have not witnessed a battlefield, and the terrors of a hospital tent, can neither imagine nor conceive, and upheld the noblest sense of duty"*.

At the end of August 1854 the allied armies transferred specifically to the Crimea peninsular where the British contingent was located at Varma although the main hospital complex remained behind at Scutari. Dr. Alexander went with the army to Varma and was shortly afterwards appointed Senior Medical Officer in the field. He remained always at the front line and served with distinction at the subsequent battles of Alma, Balaklava and the infamous carnage of Sebastapol – where the French lost no less than six thousand and the British three thousand men. Following the storming of Sebastapol during September 1855 Russell reported: *"it is most creditable to the medical officers in charge – Dr. Alexander and his surgeons – that all these men were in their bed, had their wounds dressed and their wants attended to, by eight o'clock that same evening"*.

The Doctor was now consistently being 'Mentioned-in-Despatches'. He ministered to those cavalry personnel that

survived – following the ill considered, ill fated 'Charge of the Light Brigade' – 247 of the 'Gallant Six Hundred' died.

One of Thomas Alexander's greatest conflicts with authority arose during the Crimean campaign when he insisted on the use of the new anaesthetic, chloroform, which was still at that time considered unproven. (Dr. Alexander was an Edinburgh University contemporary of its developer, James Young Simpson, and to reinforce his argument for using the new anaesthetic he was able to point out the product's favourable effect on Queen Victoria during the birth of Prince Leopold!)

Dr. Alexander was now recognised as extremely efficient and very often – as with the use of chloroform – a pioneer in new medical and surgical techniques. An excerpt from the 1906 book, *From Midshipman to Field Marshall* by Field Marshall Sir Evelyn Wood, F.M. V.C. shows how the approach of Dr. Alexander was often at great odds with convention.

During the Crimean War, Sir Evelyn suffered severe damage to his right arm while on a gun emplacement. In his own account he states: "*I was taken to a doctor – an Irishman – whom I had known for some time, and was greeted warmly with the exclamation 'sit down, my dear boy', and 'I'll have your arm off before you know where you are'. I steadily, but with some difficulty, evaded his kind attention and was put into a stretcher and carried to camp by four Bluejackets.*"

Sir Evelyn waited in the operating tent for his turn to be seen. He continues: "*When my turn came, I had a heated argument with the surgeons who wished to amputate my arm above the elbow … All but the Senior Doctor wished to take off my arm. … The eight who were for removing the limb declared that it was impossible that any use could be obtained from the arm the elbow joint of which had been shattered. To prove that it was not I, doubling my fist, raised the arm as high as I could until the case shot met the fore and upper arm, on which the Senior Medical Officer decided he would at all events try to save the limb*". Dr. Alexander was the Senior Medical Officer.

In addition to battle injuries the entire Crimean project was continually blighted by diseases including cholera, typhus, scurvy and rheumatism. Loss of manpower was great. Those who became very ill, or so severely wounded that they would never likely fight again, were carried on stretchers to the dock and from there repatriated by ship to the Scutari hospital complex. At least in the early days, that was too often a pointless exercise as the soldiers' constitutions were too weakened to combat the prevailing bad conditions.

Late in 1854 however, Scutari was the locus of an event which proved to be of profound assistance to the endeavours of Dr. Alexander. Florence Nightingale, 'The Lady of the Lamp', arrived there from Britain and brought with her a group of experienced nurses. *The London Times* reports filed by Russell – and letters home from serving soldiers – are often credited with having given Nightingale the key motivation to make that journey.

Initially her presence, although unsought, was tolerated by most of the army authorities. But she was never accepted, indeed her actions were invariably condemned, by the Deputy Medical Director General Sir John Hall. There arose a strong mutual dislike of each other which was to last a lifetime – and from which Sir John Hall was to be an ultimate loser.

Working with Florence Nightingale

The overall tolerance evinced by the military authorities however, soon turned to annoyance. Unlike Dr. Alexander she was in no manner constrained by military rules and regulations, and she took no cognisance of what were considered "normal channels." Florence Nightingale was calm, determined and, despite opposition, usually succeeded in what she set out to achieve. She was also a consummate politician who had a long association with Sidney Herbert, and through him a direct line to Government. Her other long time friend and supporter, Lord Palmerston, became Prime Minister in January 1855 and appointed yet another personal friend Lord Panmure, as his Secretary for War.

On arrival at Scutari, Nightingale had observed that hospital mattresses were infected and unhygienic so she burned them and had them replaced with proper beds – regardless of cost. She also procured new dressings and blankets. Her overall success in improving general conditions can be measured by the mortality rate at Scutari Hospital – it fell from 42% to 4%. She was revered by her patients and not surprisingly became a good friend – and later mentor – of Dr. Alexander.

An enduring relationship of mutual benefit and respect developed between Florence Nightingale and Thomas Alexander. On returning home from the Crimea he was mentioned in a House of Commons address and recommended by the then Director General of the Army Medical Services – Dr. Sir Andrew Smith – for promotion to Local Inspector

General for services during the Russian War. He had not however endeared himself to everyone in military authority – particularly Sir John Hall – and two months after his return to Britain, Dr. Alexander was posted to Canada as Principal Medical Officer, which some thought to be exile and a second class appointment.

But his tour in Canada was very brief. Developments and improvements in military medicine emanating from the Crimea, many of which were directly due to him and had been greatly enhanced by the efforts of Sidney Herbert and Florence Nightingale, had greatly improved his esteem in England. A Royal Commission was established, chaired by Lord Panmure, to examine the standards of hygiene and overall sanitary conditions which should in future be expected throughout the British Army. Florence Nightingale was asked to suggest members for that body of enquiry and her consultations included her personal doctor, John Sutherland. Dr. Sutherland advised Nightingale: *"Get Alexander. Nobody else if you cannot. He is our man."*

So Thomas Alexander was recalled from what would be his last overseas posting to serve on Lord Panmure's Royal Commission. He was especially nominated to formulate the new rules for the hygienic administration of army barracks and hospitals. These proposals and changes, together with their implementation, would occupy him for the remainder of his life.

Director General in 1858

Early in 1858 the Director General of Army Medical Services, Dr. Sir Andrew Smith, indicated his intention to retire. Miss Nightingale, in keeping with her intense dislike which originated in the Crimea, denied Sir John Hall the promotion which he undoubtedly would have expected. Dr. Alexander had the honour to replace Sir Andrew Smith as Director General and was officially Gazetted on June 11 1858. He was also appointed as an Honorary Surgeon to Queen Victoria and created Companion of the Order of the Bath. Of note however, it was a Companion not a Knight that he became – unlike his predecessor. In that same year he was also appointed Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh.

During the final two years of his life he was London based and worked from his study in Norfolk Square. His contact with Florence Nightingale continued and he met at her home

on a daily basis with Sidney (later Lord) Herbert as together they explored new regulations and created reports to allow their implementation. Sidney Herbert considered Dr Alexander *"unquestionably the ablest man in the British Medical Service."*

The pressure of work was great and Dr. Alexander was continuously warned of related risks to his own health. On 1st February 1860, at the relatively young age of 47, he died while working at his desk. The cause of death is sometimes recorded as 'gout and inflammation of the nervous system.' The biographer Cecil Woodham Smith however in *Florence Nightingale,* claims that Dr Alexander died suddenly from a brain haemorrhage and goes on to suggest: *"behind his death lay a history of obstruction and petty intrigue. The departmental machine had been strong enough to break him. Men he had trusted, who had been placed in their positions through his recommendation, had betrayed him."*

Although he had effectively left Prestonpans on becoming an army surgeon, Dr. Alexander frequently returned to visit his parents, siblings and many friends in the town. The Census Return of 1851 shows him spending his leave at home with his family in Prestonpans. He therefore remained well known and appropriately his body was brought to Prestonpans and interred in the small family plot which is located just north of the parish church.

The Doctor was survived by his wife Mary Alice but there is little record of her – or of where they had married and they apparently had no children. The Doctor's father, William, dealt with all the funeral arrangements and issued personal hand written invitations to attend the event. On the day itself local shops and businesses closed as a mark of deep respect and our fishermen did not go to sea. The funeral procession is said to have "stretched the full length of the village".

Memorial in Prestonpans

Shortly after the burial, a memorial was commissioned by the townspeople from a public subscription that reached a total of two hundred pounds. And The Thomas Alexander Trust Fund was established for a triennial essay competition on matters relating to military medicine – the Prize being a gold medal and fifty pounds.

The Prestonpans statue was created by the well known artist William Brodie, R.S.A. It was one of Brodie's first works when

he had then just completed his training in Rome. The sculpture stands some eight feet high, and shows the Doctor wearing full dress uniform of Director-General of the Army Medical Services including all his military decorations and especially the Cross of the Legion of Honour conferred by the French for Crimean Service. His figure has his left hand on his sword hilt and right hooked into the belt and proudly stands on an ornate plinth looking out across the sea. The plinth was also created by Brodie and on each side bears the condensed history of Alexander's service. The memorial is located in well tended gardens adjacent to Prestonpans High Street on ground gifted by his father just to the north of the Doctor's grave.

The memorial statue was the first ever to be erected in Prestonpans. The dedication ceremony on 9th September 1862 was attended by many people from throughout East Lothian and elsewhere. Lord Elcho, a long serving 19th Century Member of Parliament for the County, delivered a speech of dedication. Local politicians were also invited to attend. William Alexander was heard to comment more than once on how much the finished statue captured the image of his late son. Florence Nightingale was also invited but was prevented by illness from doing so. She did however write a letter read by Lord Elcho prior to dedication of the statue, most of which is recorded in the *Medical News* of 4 October 1862.

Miss Nightingale wrote as below and hearing the contents of her letter formed the culmination of Lord Elcho's speech as the statue was uncovered:

"I must be ill indeed, not to say my word for Doctor Alexander … I can truly say I have never seen his like for directness of purpose, unflinching moral courage and honesty … … Everywhere – at Gallipoli, where he seized the blankets for his sick – in Bulgaria where he fought such a fight for his men in the opening prologue to the Crimean tragedy itself he showed the same fearless devotion, incurring thereby a serious personal responsibility, in order that his men might not perish. … … When the "Royal Commission on the Sanitary State of the Army" was issued, Dr. Alexander's service on it was considered so necessary that he was sent for from Canada. He afterwards served on a no less important, though less well known commission … as was predicted more than once to him, he fell at his post as true a sacrifice to duty as if he had fallen in the field … …"

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The author of the following poem, 'C.D.E. Prestonpans, 6 February 1860' is unknown. It was written on the day of Dr Alexander's funeral and subsequently published in the *Haddingtonshire Courier.*

THOMAS ALEXANDER

Lay down now his noble head,
Sorrowing ye who loved him best,
He has fought a gallant fight,
Let him take his quiet rest.

Not mid crowded piles of dead,
'Midst a city's strife and roar,
In an acre of the Lord,
Sloping to a rockbound shore.

Fitting 'tis that he should lie,
In the ancient sea washed town,
Where 'midst needy ones his hand,
Often shed rich bounties down.

Let no show of funeral pomp
Seek to blazon forth his fame;
For the greatness of his worth
Clasps in deathless arms his fame.

Let a grateful country tell,
How he toiled by night and day;
'Mid the dying and the dead
Casting thought of self away.

Let us thank the God who gave
Grace to be and strength to do,
Made him generous, gentle, kind,
Truly brave and bravely true.

2 JOHN DAVIDSON

Among what written history of Prestonpans endures the lasting contribution of the Rev. John Davidson is constantly mentioned. The church of Preston, together with many others in East Lothian, was summarily destroyed in 1544 by a vengeful invading English army commanded by the Earl of Hertford. In his book *Prestonpans and Vicinity* the 19th Century Tranent historian Peter McNeill states: "*There was still no church or chapel, priest or minister, in Preston or Prestonpans district and this state of affairs continued from the destruction of the church in 1544 till the appointment of Maister John Davidson in 1595.*"

Sketchy 16th century records suggest that Davidson was born circa 1549 in Dunfermline. He died in Prestonpans during September 1604. The contention, that Davidson was a 'Roman Catholic priest before adopting the new teachings of the Reformation' is very unlikely. In 1560, when the Reformation began to take effect, he would have been only 11 years of age. However, an extract from McCrie, John Knox's biographer, if taken at face value, appears to cast doubt on Davidson's correct birthday. McCrie states: "John Davidson, who was Melville's predecessor at Glasgow, was a clergyman before the Reformation, and had studied at Paris along with Quintin Kennedy, Abbot of Crossraguel who died in 1564. Having returned to Scotland, Davidson was placed in 1557 at the head of the college in Glasgow." Andrew Melville was certainly Principal of Glasgow University from 1574 so if McCrie is accurate Davidson must have been born earlier than 1549.

It is thought much more likely that he entered St. Leonard's College at St. Andrews in 1567 where he gained his Bachelor in 1569 and Masters in 1570 (which are shown in the records of St Leonard's College). He may well have continued his studies in Paris before returning to Scotland and Davidson was indeed raised initially as a Roman Catholic in Dunfermline. However, prior to leaving that town for St Andrews he became something of a protégé to an early Reforming minister named Ferguson and it was probably at St Andrews that he first met John Knox since he preached there regularly.

At odds with Regent Mortimer and James VI

Apart from debate regarding his birth date there is a consistency about Davidson's lifetime work, achievements and tribulations. Like other prominent Reformers such as Knox and Melville he was constantly at odds with the monarchy and its thoughts concerning church administration. Despite the infant King James VI being educated in a manner intended to encourage his wholehearted adoption of the new religion, attempts were often made by the King, his Regents and advisors to reintroduce an episcopacy to an unwilling people.

Davidson was a prolific, if not greatly accomplished, author of both prose and poetry. Throughout his career, he constantly confronted the monarchy. One of his first poems entitled *Ane Dialog, or Mutual Talking betuix a Clerk and ane Courteour* was responsible for the first recorded serious repercussion of this confrontation.

The Regent Morton had decided to amalgamate several parishes under the control of one Minister contrary to the wishes of the General Assembly. Davidson considered, in all probability correctly, that the real reason for that amalgamation was to provide Morton personally with funds from the church. This motivated Davidson to write his poem which was printed by Robert Leprevick without authority in St Andrews during 1573.

On reading the publication the Earl of Morton was furious. The printer Leprevick was subsequently held captive for a time in Edinburgh Castle. Davidson was called to account in Haddington where he was held captive but for only a day. Davidson admitted authorship of the offending poem but was released in the hope that he would retract his allegations and be censured by either or both the University of St. Andrews or the General Assembly. No such censure occured nor did Davidson ever retract his allegations. He did, however, voluntarily exile himself from Scotland for the next three years to avoid the wrath of Regent Morton.

The Kirk made strong representation to Regent Morton concerning the exiled Davidson and the Regent permitted his return to Edinburgh in 1577. Two years later in 1579 Davidson was appointed to his first church at Liberton, Edinburgh.

Morton fell from Royal favour and while awaiting execution in June 1581 for alleged involvement in the murder of Lord Darnley, he made his peace with Davidson. The disgraced Earl allegedly embraced Davidson and said: "Yee

wrote a little book indeed; but trulie I meant never evill towards you in my pairt: forgive yee me, and I forgive you". That pre-execution statement of forgiveness is said to have reduced Davidson to tears.

Davidson still courted controversy. By his constant condemnation of King James and his court, together with an outspoken opposition to all religion other than the reformed Kirk, he consistently fell foul of the Duke of Lennox, close friend of the King, and the 'Iron Chancellor' James Stewart, Earl of Arran. It soon became necessary for Davidson to abandon his Liberton post and flee first to England, then briefly to the Continent. He returned to Scotland in November 1585 when James Stewart was stripped of the Arran title and post of chancellor. Lennox had also fallen into temporary disfavour with the King

Davidson declined returning to Liberton Kirk. Instead he preached for some years in various city churches then, latterly, at the second charge of Holyrood. During this time, he continued to preach against the King and nobility so that his presence in Edinburgh again became uncomfortable and he was advised by the General Assembly to 'seek a rural charge'.

Arrival in Prestonpans

On November 5th, 1595 the Presbytery of Haddington initiated procedures for Davidson's introduction to the ministry "at South Preston and ye Panns east and west, and ye haill bounds yairabout belonging as well to my Lord of Newbattle as to ye Laird of Preston". (South Preston is now known locally as the Upper Pans and Panns East and West or Salt Preston as the Lower Pans.)

Davidson agreed to accept this rural charge if the people of Preston found him suitable. As a result of sermons delivered to his potential parishioners he was invited to become their minister – the first since the Reformation. Lord Newbattle of Prestongrange provided his necessary agreement and the induction proceeded on 5 January 1596 when Davidson made a lengthy speech to his new congregation, emphasising the importance of prayer within the household. Prayers and graces prepared by Davidson for this purpose can still be found in old manuscripts including *A Memoir* – published in 1876 by Dr. Charles Rodgers.

The Rev. Davidson was installed but was still without a church in which to preach. He applied first to Mark Ker,

Baron of Prestoungrange and Lord Newbattle but Newbattle would not agree to provide any assistance unless the proposed church was built on his lands of Prestoungrange. Indications are that Davidson and Mark Ker were never friendly. The fact that Ker's father made a convenient and swift post Reformation conversion from Abbot of Newbattle Abbey to Lord Newbattle in order to retain Abbey holdings at Prestoungrange would scarcely have helped their relationship. There was also a later incident of Newbattle not allowing Davidson to bury one of his congregation in the West Graveyard with Davidson predicting bad times for his lordship.

On being refused building land by Lord Newbattle Davidson approached George Hamilton of Preston. Hamilton also wanted the proposed church in a preferred location but soon relented and provided, free of cost, land on which to build a church, a manse, and school. The land adjoined 'Pinkerton's Garden' which was soon afterwards adopted as the new graveyard. Davidson met the greatest cost of building the new church and manse by using personal funds which also provided for the new school.

Davidson's health began to deteriorate from 1598 and as a result he was unable to be as actively involved as before in church politics. He continued however to criticise policies advanced by King James through writing to the General Assembly. Davidson's last great confrontation came when the King insisted that church ministers should sit in parliament. On that occasion the Reverend Davidson wrote to the General Assembly which sat in Burntisland during May 1601 renewing his protest against ministers sitting in parliament.

Davidson declined to withdraw his opposition and on 26th May 1601 was sentenced to detention in Edinburgh Castle. He was detained there for his second one day spell in prison but then released on condition that he would never again be allowed to travel outwith his own parish. This restraint applied for the remainder of Davidson's life despite constant entreaties for revocation from both the Haddington Presbytery and by Davidson himself.

When the now bankrupt King James was traveling south in 1603 to assume the now united English and Scottish thrones in London he passed through Prestonpans. The Edinburgh Presbytery suggested to Davidson that he should take the opportunity of meeting the King in Prestonpans to congratulate him on the English accession and to seek personal clemency.

Davidson agreed, even first seeking permission to kiss the King's hand. But King James would not relent and still maintained an intense dislike of this parish Minister. A final attempt to obtain clemency was made by the Provincial Synod but that also failed.

So the Rev. John Davidson now sick and infirm remained confined within the bounds of his rural charge until he died during the autumn of 1604 "being not older than 56 years." Of those 56 years he had spent only eight in Prestonpans perhaps surprisingly given his legendary status in the town. His contribution was undoubtedly substantial not only in building the parish church where none had existed since 1544 but also in creating a school. Throughout his entire turbulent adult life John Davidson was immersed in politics. Overall he lived the life typical of many reforming Ministers in whose minds the power of the church must be absolute and certainly not challenged by monarchs. Many of his copious writings all on a theological theme have been well preserved and are still often items of significant clerical reference.

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3 JAMES ERSKINE – LORD GRANGE

James Erskine, later Lord Grange, was born the second son of Charles, 10th Earl of Mar in 1679. Though not born in Prestonpans he was to have a long association with the town. Here as elsewhere he lived an enigmatic existence which would undoubtedly, without his saving family connections, have seen him executed or at best committed to a long spell of custody.

He studied law but according to Alexander (Jupiter) Carlyle he had "neither talents nor learning nor ability." That assessment may have been harsh for Carlyle was renowned for his unfavourable considerations of everyone but himself, but Erskine's rapid advancement within the legal hierarchy was without doubt due to the influence of his brother and his own position in society not to any demonstrated talent. He became a member of the Faculty of Advocates on 26 July 1705 when still only twenty six years old and thereafter advanced with abnormal rapidity. He was appointed to the Bench in March of 1707 and that same year became a full Lord of Justiciary as Lord Grange.

Such an appointment while still only twenty eight years old was astonishing but his career was to become even more astonishing when on 27 July 1710 at the age of thirty one he replaced Lord Ormiston as Lord Justice Clerk. Even at a time when patronage was an accepted fact of life Lord Grange's rapid progression through the ranks of Scottish Justiciary caused much controversy and created many enemies.

He habitually swore allegiance to the Hanoverian monarchy unlike his brother the 11th Earl of Mar who was quite open in his support of the exiled Stuarts. Lord Grange consistently presented a facade of piety, and facade it must have been when considering his overall way of life. He was held in high esteem by the strict presbyterians and was always involved in the workings of the General Assembly. Despite his own benefits from patronage he presented a staunch assertion that church Ministers should not be constrained by either government or lay patrons. Yet despite this presbyterian involvement enemies often accused him of being both a closet Jacobite and Jesuit.

Meteoric Career Questioned

His association with Prestonpans coincided with his appointment as a Judge. Early in the 18th century he acquired the old Preston House on what is now Preston Road just east of the Mercat Cross from the heirs of the previous owner, Dr. Oswald. This was to be his country residence as he had a town house in Edinburgh. He developed the four acres of garden surrounding Preston House creating a complex maze which took a full two hours to navigate successfully which became an early visitor attraction in Prestonpans. Despite his assertions concerning the appointment of church ministers he was primarily responsible, in 1724 for the appointment of the Rev. William Carlyle, Jupiter's father, to Prestonpans Parish Church. Lord Grange and William Carlyle, with their respective children, were close friends but that friendship waned when Carlyle began to openly disapprove of his mentor's general bad habits and debauchery.

Just before his elevation to Lord Justice Clerk Lord Grange married Rachel Chiesly, described by 'Jupiter' Carlyle who knew her well as "very beautiful but of violent temper." She was also the daughter of a murderer, her father Chiesly of Dalry having earlier murdered Court of Session Lord President Lockhart in Edinburgh's Lawnmarket after that judge had ruled against him in court.

The marriage was not entirely voluntary. The lady had become pregnant by his lordship and in keeping with contemporary requirements, particularly within the clerical circles to which he professed allegiance, a marriage took place. Their eldest son Charles was born soon afterwards on 27 August 1709. The marriage began as a marriage of necessity but despite later turbulence it begat four sons and four daughters by 1720.

Lord and Lady Grange alternated between their town and country residences. Lord Grange himself was also often absent in London or elsewhere on legal business and perhaps covert Jacobite missions. By 1730 Lady Grange with ample cause suspected her husband of infidelity and even employed the equivalent of private detectives to shadow his movements. There were instances of bad behaviour by both partners but that of Rachel was said to have caused her husband a great deal of embarrassment as she drank to excess even in public, and was not above openly accompanying the occasional male friend in the absence of her husband.

Separation was perhaps inevitable and that she achieved together with enforced payment of legal maintenance. Lord Grange paid perhaps because she threatened to report her husband for his treasonable association with the Jacobites. Rachel was also said to be insane, but that was a term then often confused with unconventionality.

Kidnapping his Wife

In 1732 Lord Grange formally announced the sudden death of his wife and arranged an elaborate funeral which was attended by many. There was undoubtedly a burial – but what or whom did the coffin contain? It was certainly not Rachel who was still alive and well in Edinburgh. But the arrangements for the funeral and third party involvement in this tragic farce demonstrate the extent of the influence Lord Grange exercised at that time

Being dead Lady Grange could scarcely be allowed to reside in Edinburgh any longer where she had lodged with a Mrs MacLean. On the night of 22 January 1732 as Rachel was about to leave for London intending to expose her husband as a Jacobite, Mrs MacLean allowed four highlanders in Lovat tartan to enter the lodging place. These men overpowered Lady Grange and tied her securely before taking her to the Linlithgow home of Advocate Murdo McLeod.

That initial brief stopover with McLeod was but the start of a tortuous journey. The unfortunate Rachel, still captive, went next to Falkirk, then to Pomeise, where she is said to have been 'concealed in a closet' for 13 weeks before travelling at night via Stirling through the Highlands, then eventually by boat to the island of Hesker. The entire operation was managed by Alexander Foster of Carsbonny in association with Lord Grange's page, Peter Fraser. In addition, several Highland Chieftains were involved including Sir Alexander Macdonald, MacLeod of Muiravondall and Lord Lovat – Jacobites to a man. According to Carlyle, Lady Grange later claimed that Lord Lovat stole her from her Edinburgh lodgings. While Lord Grange would later try to justify his wife's abduction and detention because of her supposed insanity it was almost certainly Rachel's threat to expose Jacobite intrigues that caused her incarceration. The Clan Chiefs would almost certainly not have been interested in solving a simple domestic problem.

Lady Grange was held prisoner on Hesker for ten months in deplorable conditions before being moved far off shore to St.

Kilda where she remained captive for a further seven years. She was of course no longer locked up there and allowed to move around the island because without assistance escape was impossible. She even had a single male servant who alas spoke little English. Nobody was prepared to help her return to the mainland.

A church minister who arrived at St Kilda during January 1741 and learned of Lady Grange's predicament refused to assist her return to the mainland but shortly afterwards a servant girl did pass details of her predicament to friends in Scotland. By the time a rescue vessel was sent to St Kilda, Rachel's captors had removed her first to Sutherland, then later to Dunvegan on the Isle of Skye, where she died and was buried in May of 1745. The entire abduction story later became common knowledge. Lord Grange provided an explanation of both abduction and false funeral which was apparently fully accepted affording yet further evidence of his position and influence.

Off to Westminster

Following the 1732 abduction of his wife Lord Grange remained at Prestonpans, but now with political ambitions. He fervently opposed the policies of Whig Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, and in 1734 he unwisely resigned his judicial post in protest against a new Act precluding any member of the Scottish Bench from concurrently becoming a Member of Parliament. As James Erskine that same year he was elected Member of Parliament for Stirlingshire. At Westminster on the opposition benches he joined forces with fellow Scottish Bar Member, Dundas of Arniston, in opposition to the policies of Walpole.

Overall his parliamentary sojourn was not a success. For a short time he was Secretary to the Prince of Wales but never achieved his declared ambition of becoming Scottish Secretary. He did not make his Maiden Speech until early 1736, and chose the occasion to produce a pedantic monologue opposing the Witches Bill, a subject on which he considered himself an expert. His library allegedly contained many books on the subject. The speech made him the object of much derision and effectively curtailed any prospect of a real parliamentary career. It is undoubtedly strange that a former senior member of the Scottish Justiciary even in the early 18th century should retain a belief in witches.

With the failure of his parliamentary venture James Erskine returned to the Scottish Bar. However his enemies were still many and work scarce. His brother, 11th Earl of Mar, had also fallen from grace so was no longer able to help the failed Member for Stirlingshire.

James Erskine had by this time formed an enduring liaison with Fanny Lindsay, an expatriate Scotswoman who owned a coffee house in London's Haymarket. He spent the remaining years of his life in London and Fanny became his second wife. Her business seems to have been his only means of financial support. There is no record of when he left Prestonpans but Preston House and the Edinburgh town house had both been sold. What could have been a distinguished legal career with a prominent position in Edinburgh society was lost through ill conceived ventures and political ambition. He died in London on 20 January 1754.

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