

OFF THE WALL ART IN PRESTONPANS



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OFF THE WALL ART IN PRESTONPANS

from John Lindsay, Roy Pugh, Andrew Dallmeyer and Ian Nimmo



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ISBN 978-0-85011-065-4

Prestoungrange University Press with Burke's Peerage & Gentry for Prestoungrange Arts Festival & The Battle of Prestonpans 1745 Heritage Trust

227/229 High Street, Prestonpans
East Lothian, Scotland EH32 9BE

Additional photography from Garry Menzies

Design & Typesetting by Chat Noir Design, France
Printed & bound in Great Britain

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INTRODUCTION

by Dr Gordon Prestoungrange, *Baron of Prestoungrange*

This volume is deliberately intended to be a manifesto for history and the arts *beyond our acclaimed mural painting*. It is a manifesto for what the arts '*off the wall*' can and are doing in Prestonpans. It greatly understates what has been achieved by myriad such artists over the past decade since the Prestoungrange Arts Festival was launched, not least by omitting the triumphs that are the Prestoungrange Arts Classes, the Pans Bands, the Three Harbours Festival now held each year in Prestonpans, Port Seton and Cockenzie and the achievements of local novelists and children's authors. It only gives a glimpse of what we are determined hereabouts shall happen more and more over the next decade not only in poetry and theatre as recorded here but also in music and literature generally.

Some call it simply 'Living History through the Arts' but our intent is more subversive than that by a mile. Our goal has always been to take the hollow rhetoric of so many contemporary politicians that communities must be free to flower and flourish in their own idiosyncratic ways and actually to do something about it – with or more often without the support of the rhetorical ones. In this way it is our demonstrated belief that we can so liberate the creative instincts of Panners and those close by that both our community and individual self-esteem go sky high and our town shines and blazes again. We want visitors, humble and high brow, to want to come as they now increasingly do simply to see what the fuss is all about!

In this audacious process, history is the key. Once upon a time Prestonpans operated the nation's first chartered coal mine, created great wealth through its salt pans, opened the world's first sulphuric acid works, led the nation's pottery industry. It was an astonishing place to be although it would have failed to impress today's environmentalists.

History has a unifying magic for communities everywhere whether it was good or bad for those who experienced the events recalled. And history like ours in the Pans is dynamite. Our Pans Witches had the most appalling time as they were tortured, garrotted and burned. Our miners having thrown off the yoke of virtual slavery in the 1790s had to wait until the 1950s for a BathHouse to use on company time to wash up before they went home. But from 1908 they had the consolation of a Gothenburg pub whose spirit lives again today and has twice drawn the Lord Mayor of Gothenburg to its bar in the 21st century. The redcoats at our Battle on September 21st 1745 took an early morning pasting from the Highland clans under Bonnie Prince Charlie but the wounded were well cared for whilst Cope's dragoons fled south as fast as they could gallop. The town's salters worked in the most abominable conditions for nearly 1000 years but for at least three hundred of them

they had Fowler's Ales and Glenkinchie whiskey to hand when work was done – as did the town's potters who brought the first great flowering of popular art and craftsmanship to The Pans in the 18th and 19th century.

The town's feudal lairds were finally done with in 2004 when the entire Baronage of Scotland lost its links to the lands from which it drew its names. No more stocks for miscreants or 40/- fines could be handed down by Barons Courts fenced by their Baron Sergeants although theatre could be had from the passing. Scotland's last such Courts and their use of the stocks by the undersigned and by Julian, neighbouring Baron of Dolphinstoun, were here in the Pans that year and the whole nation's baronage now celebrates its downfall with us on November 28th each year. The most famous local Baron perhaps of all, William Grant Lord Prestoungrange, who stayed long ago at the Royal Musselburgh Golf Club, was Lord Advocate after the '45 and led the prosecution in the Appin Murders. That occasion, with more than a little debt to Stevenson, lives on with us in theatre and the Alan Breck Prestonpans Volunteers.



As I observed above there have been myriad artists at work this past decade and this volume does justice to just a few. But they are respected artists we all wish to acknowledge and whose work we wish to make as widely available as possible. For they are stars hereabouts. Roy Pugh volunteered to write a trilogy of Witch plays to commemorate the 81 who died and remind us for ever of that extraordinary episode in our history. John Lindsay, whom we rejoice in proclaiming as the town's Poet Laureate, has managed to capture so many people's imagination that whenever a significant event comes along they invariably ask: will John be penning just a few words for us again? Our dear friend Ian Nimmo, Chairman of the Robert Louis Stevenson Society, gladly volunteered to write *The Greening of David Balfour* to be presented at Prestoungrange House and then the Fringe. He later penned the factitious life of *Alan Breck* for our 1745 re-enactment. And Andrew Dallmeyer has taken on the mantle of dramatist to the Battle of Prestonpans writing *Battle of Pots and Pans* which this year toured East Lothian and also went to the Edinburgh Fringe.

We all owe these artists a most particular debt for settling to their task when none had gone before, for being willing to aspire to being creative, for making it happen whatever it might be and in our eyes being a great success. We know they have inspired the young and the old hereabouts. They are worthy heirs to our potters and our sulphuric acid makers and our miners and our brick makers and our salters and our brewers. May the fun long continue and may our community and self esteem continue their renaissance. Prestonpans was, is and will always be a great place to stay as every Panner knows but the rest of Scotland sometimes overlooks.



Finally, we take the opportunity in this volume to share the most recent murals that grace our town, bringing our total above 40 works of art and consolidating yet further our proud title as *Scotland's Mural Town*.

East Lodge, Prestoungrange House
April 1st 2008

**THE
WITCH PLAYS
TRILOGY**



WITCH!

by

Roy Pugh

**ANE ASSIZE CONVENED TO EXAMINE THE
CONFESSIONS OF AGNES KELLY
AND
MARJORIE ANDERSON**

Induellars of the parish of Prestonpans accused of witchcraft, 1678 with the declaration of David Cowan of Winton, pricker and utheris called upon to depone in ye trial to be held on 18th May 1678 in Prestonpans tollbooth Judge presiding – Sir Alexander Morrison of Prestoungrange a trew examination of the said women discovering how they bewitched utheris, cause seiknes and death in beasts and fowles and such uther heinous crimes the like of which have not be heard of in this toun for mony years.

ane = a
uthers = others

induellar = resident
trew = true

utheris = others
seiknes = sickness

depone = give evidence



MEMBERS OF ASSIZE

Commissioners and Court Officers

Sir Alexander Morrison of Prestoungrange
Patrick Broune, Sheriff Depute, Haddington
Robert Martin, Clerk of Court
*Serjand
*Doomster or dempster
*Lockman
David Cowan, witchpricker

In attendance

James Buchan Ma, Minister of Prestonpans Kirk
Accused:
Agnes Kelly, relict [widow] of one Broune, Prestonpans
Marjory Anderson, her servant

Witnesses

Janet Kemp, relict [widow] of William Robison, Prestonpans
Robert Robison, her son
Barbara Spence, spinster
Martha Simpson, spouse to John Grieve, portioner [tenant farmer]
William Colme, carter
Janet Wylie, spouse to William Colme
Margaret Johnston, spinster

*Serjeand = officer to keep the peace and guard the prisoners

*Lockman= jailer and executioner

*Doomster = officer of the court who pronounces the verdict and sentence

INTRODUCTION

What you are about to witness today is a reconstruction of the trial of two women, Agnes Kelly and her servant Marjorie Anderson indwellers of Prestonpans in May 1678. It is only one of countless trials held in parishes the length and breadth of Scotland during the seventeenth century. These kangaroo courts – for that is what they were – were commissioned by the Privy Council in Edinburgh, the Scottish Executive of the day. Holding local trials was a useful and inexpensive way of dealing with local nuisances like witches; these also relieved pressure of the high court in Edinburgh and the circuit courts or Justice Ayres which travelled about the country. The propaganda was of inestimable value to Kirk and state alike, as well as the local communities themselves. Justice was seen to be done by the parishioners, the trials often ‘discovered’ other witches in the area, the Kirk could exercise more control over the people and the so-called magistrates could demonstrate to the local people that they would be severely dealt with if they too practised witchcraft or consulted witches. There was no jury; only the assize which usually consisted of men who were landowners – and importantly, pillar of the church as heritors – with only biased witness appearing to give evidence. It was no wonder that so many trials ended with a guilty verdict, the accused being summarily executed within a day of the hearing to keep down costs of feeding the prisoners etc.

Suspects were first interrogated by the local minister and Kirk Session – the elders – who while unable to use torture instruments – these were strictly controlled by the civil magistrates – could impose other more subtle forms of torture like sleep deprivation and a restricted diet of bread and water. After a few days of this treatment, suspects were so confused that they would confess to anything. Once the session had extracted a confession, the suspects were handed over to the civil authorities for trial under the witchcraft act of 1563, signed by Mary, Queen of Scots.

This then was the background to the witch hunt in Scotland. Suspects were usually pricked by the local witchpricker who endeavoured to locate the devil’s mark on the person’s body. There were two infamous prickers in East Lothian – John Kincaid of Tranent and David Cowan of Winton. It was a lucrative profession. A pricker was paid six shillings for every person pricked, twenty shillings more if the person was found guilty.

Prestonpans was at the forefront of the first phase of the Scottish witch hunt which lasted from 1590 to 1727. In 1590, an attempt was made on King James VI’s life and that of his new queen, Anne of Denmark. The trial of over 120 people included many from Prestonpans – just how many is in some doubt but the figure is in the region of 70 or 80. Known to history as the case of the North Berwick witches – because they held their covens there – most of the accused were executed for having caused violent storms which threatened King James and the Royal Fleet on its outward journey to collect Anne, then again on their return to Scotland. The plot was masterminded by Francis, 5th Earl of Bothwell whose family had cast jealous eyes on the crown for three generations. What began as a treason trial became one of witchcraft, which was also a capital offence under the Witchcraft Act of 1563.

Now we are about to witness the proceedings which took place in Prestonpans tolbooth in the month of May 1678. Although no records survive indentifying the charges made or the evidence brought against Agnes Kelly and Marjory Anderson, these are based on common accusations and other trials, records of which do survive to this day. I leave you to draw your own conclusions about the legality of the proceedings and the justness of the sentence passed on these two unfortunate women.

SCENE I

[A dimly-lit stage occupied by a long trestle-style table, a small side-table, each with chairs and a row of seven chairs to one side to accommodate seven witnesses. The serjeand bearing a lochaber axe enters and stands at side door to admit the assize]

[Loud knocking. Serjeand opens door to admit the assize members led by Sir Alexander Morrison of Prestoungrange; behind him is Patrick Brown of Coulston, Robert Martin, James Buchan and the Doomster. Serjeand moves centre stage and addresses audience]

Serjeand All present be upstanding in the presence of his Grace, Sir Alexander Morrison of Prestoungrange and Maister Patrick Brown of Coulston, sheriff-depute of Haddingtonshire and procurator fiscal to this assize.

[Audience rises. Morrison et al are seated.]

Serjeand Pray take your seats. Hear ye, hear ye. This assize now being in session, all shall come to order.

[Audience sits]

Sir Alexander Thank you, serjeand. Pray command the lockman to bring forth the accused.

[Serjeand moves to side door to admit the lockman leading Agnes Kelly and Marjory Morrison in chains. They stand to one side of the trestle table or bench facing the audience. The lockman stands between the two women, one hand on each woman's shoulder. The serjeand stands beside them]

Sir Alexander I now call upon Maister Robert Martin, Clerk of Court, to intimate the terms of the commission lately granted by His Majesty's Lords of the Privy Council in Edinburgh. Pray proceed, Maister Martin.

Martin

From my Lords Privy Councillors in Edinburgh received by Sir Alexander Morrison's hand upon ye fourth day in May in the year of Our Lord sixteen hundred and seventy-aught. To wit: *[Reads from document]*

'Charles, by the Grace of God, King of Great Brittain, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, to all and sundry our liedges and subjects whom it effeirs, greeting. Forasmuch as the Lords of Our Privy Council are informed that Agnes Kelly, relict of one Broune in Prestonpans, and Marjorie Anderson, her servant, are apprehended and imprisoned in the Tolbuith of Prestonpans as suspect guilty of witchcraft by entering a paction with the Devill, renouncing their baptisme and committing several malefices, and, to the effect the said matter may be made manifest and justice administrat theirintill conforme to the laws of this kingdom, wee, with advice of the Lords of Our Privy Council, do hereby make and constitute Sir Alexander Moriesone of Prestoungrange, Patrick Broune of Colstoune, Shireff Deputt of Haddingtounne ... and apoynts Maister Robert Martin, Clerk to the Justice Court, to be clerk to the said commissioners, with power to them to meet at such times and such places as they shall think expedient, and then and there to affix and hold courts, create serjeands, dempsters and other members of court needful, to call ane assyse and witnesses of persons best understanding the truth of the said matter, absents to amerciat, unlaws and amerciaments to uplift and exact, and in the saids courts to call upon said Agnes Kelly and Marjorie Andersone and putt them to the tryall and knowledge of ane assyse, and, if they shall be found guilty upon voluntary confession without any sort of torture or indirect meanes used against them to bring them to ane confession ... and cause justice to be administrat upon them that conformes to the lawes of the kingdome ... the verdict of the court to be recorded in the books of adjournall.

Given under Our signet at Edinburgh, the second day of May, sixteen hundred and seventy eight, and of Our reign the threttieth year ...

Sir Alexander

I now call upon Maister Patrick Broune, sheriff-deputt of Haddingtonshire, appointed Procurator Fiscal to this assyse, to read the indictments against the accused.

[Broune stands and faces the audience, reading from a document]

I, Patrick Broune of Colstoun, Procurator Fiscal lay the following indictments and charges upon Agnes Kelly, and Marjory Anderson, indwellers of the parish of Prestonpans who are accused of witchcrafts, sorcery, charms and other devilish practices offensive to God,

scandalous to the trew religion and terrifying and abusing the poor, ignorant people of the toon of Prestonpans and other residenters nearby. The charges are brought against the accused be Maister James Buchan, Minister of Prestonpans Kirk and the bretheren of the Kirk Session. Maister Buchan had lately acquainted Sir Alexander Morrison of Prestoungrange in his capacity as magistrate of this toon and heritor and benefactor of the Kirk of the charges made against these women and that the two women had confessed themselves guilty as witches afore the Kirk Session upon the first Sabbath day of the month of April in this year. Whereupon Sir Alexander, in accord with his duties, did seek to obtain a warrant from His Majesty's Privy Council in Edinburgh for to try them in ane assyse.

The charges under consideration of this assyse conforme to and are in accord with the Witchcraft Act of the year fifteen hundred and sixty three, in the third year of the reign of Her Gracious Majesty, Mary, Queen of Scotland, she of blessed memory. Further, the said minister and brethren have heard the testaments of the sundry persons who have been maligned and abused by the accused. Their testaments shall be pled in the course of this assyse.

[Turning now to the accused]

Ye, Agnes Kelly and Marjory Anderson, indwellers of this parish, having shaken off all fear of God and respect for the laws of this nation, by habit and evil repute callit be the name of witches and long suspectit of witchcrafts, ye have used uncouth words, gestures and practices, charms and spells that convinced the good folk of Prestonpans that ye are witches. Further, ye having continued under that ill fame and evil repute for mony years without complaint to any magistrate of this parish that ye were callit witches, ye did not cease to use lewd words, devilish spells, incantations and wicked charmes and other witchcrafts to terrify the people of Prestonpans in and furth of the toon to their loss of beasts and the deaths of two parishioners. Forbye, ye baith did threaten and wreak damage upon those that stood against ye, whereof ye have deluded the people of Prestonpans by rendering them so superstitious that they doubted Almighty God for a time. The same people, being feared of your evil ministrations and witchcrafts, did seek solace from the Kirk and prayed so hard that they might protect themselves from ye.

This day, it is the duty of this assyse, a duty granted by His Majesty's Lords of the Privy Council to decide upon your guilt or innocence in the matters aforementioned.

I now call upon the clerk of court, Maister Robert Martin to read out the charges made against ye.

[Martin stands and reads from a document]

Martin Agnes Kelly and Marjory Anderson, ye are togidder chairged with the following offences, namely:

- Item For renouncing your baptisms
- Item For abusing and cursing Janet Kemp and laying ane heavy disease upon her son Robert Robison
- Item For causing the death of Margaret Johnston, her horse
- Item For causing the death of Barbara Spence, her chickens and laying ane heavy disease upon her
- Item For slandering Martha Simpson and causing her spouse John Grieve his death be a spell
- Item For slandering William Colme and his spouse Janet Wyllie and causing the death of their son John Colme.

[Martin sits]

Broune Agnes Kelly, how do ye plead to these charges?
Kelly No' guilty
Broune Marjory Anderson, how do ye plead to these charges?
Anderson As ma mistress sayed.
Broune The prisoner shall answer in the proper manner.
Anderson No' guilty
Broune The Clerk of Court shall enter the pleas in the book of adjournal. I now call upon Maister James Buchan, Minister of Prestonpans Kirk

[Buchan stands before the bench]

Broune Now Maister Buchan, I remind ye of the terms of this assyse, its conditions. To wit, that no tortute or strict dealing was employed to gain confessions from the accused. Do ye swear this to be the truth?

Buchan I so swear, sir. They were keepit in the kirk spire, though no harm came to their flesh, nor was any instrument used upon their bodies.

Broune In what manner were they keepit?

Buchan In the ways of those that are accused o' witchcraft. In the precise manner prescribed by the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland. They were ta'en to the spire where they were keepit gently, tho' on a strict diet o' bread and water, as is laid down. They were

denied all company save those of the watchers, lest they infect others with their foul contagion.

Broune For how long were they kept there?

Buchan For fourteen days and nights. They were watched by the elders and brethren in the usual manner, for fear that they might do unto themselves a mischief and thereby escape the justice that awaits them for their wickedness. The watchers began their duty at six hours of evening until six hours of morning. Then others took the place of the night watchers until six hours of evening and so forth for fourteen days. Sleep was denied them, as is the custom, for 'tis when the servants of the devil are asleep that the devil may enter their souls.

Broune That is in order. Now Maister Buchan, we shall –

Buchan May I say a few words, sir?

Broune Ye may, though make them brief Maister Buchan. We have much work to do upon this day.

Buchan Weel, sir, in the time of the watching, I was put to many thoughts and prayers, wherein I did engage myself to God, that I might find a way to give me and this assyse clearness, either by the accused's ain confession or otherways deemed just by the Good Lord. I recall that I prayed that Providence might aid me in the task. I promised the Lord that I should remark upon His advice as a singular favour and act of mercy. And after fourteen days and nights, Providence found a way, for it brought Agnes Kelly and Marjorie Anderson to their confession of guilt, which did convince me that it was the will and work of God manifest in their flesh.

Broune This assyse thanks ye for these words. Now Maister Buchan, I call upon ye to speak on the charges made against these women, that this assyse may learn of the proceedings while the accused were in the custody of the brethren. But first, shall ye inform us of the time of your incumbency of the Kirk of Prestonpans?

Buchan Since the year sixteen hundred and seventy six. Afore that, I was minister of the Kirk in Skirling Parish.

Broune How came ye to be avised of the evils of which these women are accused?

Buchan By word of mouth, sir. From diverse and sundry parishioners in my care. Several sought comfort from the Kirk as they were feared for their lives. They were of the names Janet Kemp, relict of William Robison, Robert Robison, her son, Barbara Spence, spinster, Martha Simpson, relict of John Grieve, portioner, William Colme, carter, Janet Wyllie his spouse and Margaret Johnston, all residents and indwellers of this parish.

Broune The Clerk of Court shall set down these names in the book of adjournal. Now, Maister Buchan, when did ye first have knowledge of the complaints against the accused?

Buchan 'Twas in the month of March last. I recall it was the fourteenth day, for I informed the Session and set down the matter in the Kirk Session book. I have the book. *[Holds up a heavy tome]*

Broune I now charge ye to read from the book, that this assyse might be avised of the matter and the manner in which the Session proceeded.

Buchan By your leave sir. *[Opens book and reads from it]*
This day, the fourteenth of March, the Session Clerk – who is myself-acquainted the Session at their sitting of a scandal and slander made against Janet Kemp be Agnes Kelly. The said Janet Kemp had come to the Session Clerk two days afore to complain that Agnes Kelly had ill-used her good name and cursed her. Forbye, her son Robert Robison made a complaint against Agnes Kelly, her servant, Marjorie Anderson who had threatened him and made lewd suggestions that might have led to illegal fornication. Forbye, he stated that she did bewitch him further by laying a heavy disease upon him that he could neither eat nor sleep for days in case she came to him in the night, they being neighbours. He was taken by the sweating sickness and lay swooning for a week until the curse was lifted by Agnes Kelly.

Broune In what manner was the incantation lifted from Maister Robison, his body?

Buchan By the manner of an incantation said at the bedroom window of his house.

Broune For what reason did Agnes Kelly abuse Mistress Kemp?

Buchan Twas on the matter of sweeping the dung from the front of their houses. The one said twas the other who should do the duty. Mistres Kemp swore that twas the turn of Agnes Kelly to sweep the dung. Agnes Kelly then callit her a slatternly slut and that the devil would see to her, for twas her turn to attend to the matter. The Session judged themselves bound to do something in these affairs and did therefore for that end appoint Mr Buchan to confer with Mistress Kelly and if need be, bring them to comply with the discipline of the church. The matter concerning her servant Marjory Anderson was more serious and would have to be investigated by the full Session and perhaps the Presbytery. Mr Buchan duly visited Mistress Kelly who gave her account of the cause of the slander. Agnes Kelly said it was not she who had slandered Mistress Kemp, but that it was the other way. She said she had sharp words with Mistress Kemp for not cleansing the street when it was her turn so to do, it being the custom that they took turns each week. Mistress Kelly had called upon her servant, Marjory Anderson to bear witness to the fact. I spoke with the servant who admitted she had shaken a besom or broom at Mistress Kelly to remind her of her duty and that she might remove herself from her mistress' doorstep. Whereupon Robert Robison came out of the house and took the besom from her hands and brake it upon his knee saying these words:
'Witch, ye sall not abuse my mither so'.

Whereupon Agnes Kelly said he would repent of his actions in time comings and that she would see to it herself.

Broune Pray cease one moment, Maister Buchan. What were the words that Agnes Kelly said?
Buchan They are not written in the book. I cannot recall them. Perhaps Robert Robison may recall the words.
Broune Serjeand, pray bring Robert Robison before the assyse.

[Serjeand does so]

Broune Pray state your name, age and occupation.
Robison Robert Robison, son of William Robison who is deid, of age 20, by trade, weaver.
Broune Do ye recall the quarrel that took place upon the day your mother and Agnes Kelly had words about the cleansing of the street?
Robison That Ah dae, sir. Ah sall not forget them all ma days.
Broune Can ye tell the assyse what Agnes Kelly said that day?
Robison Agnes Kelly callit ma mither a hoor an' that Ah wis a hoor's son for brakin' her besom. That the brakin' o' it wad bring me ill luck and that the Deil wad see that Ah sufferit the fires o' Hell.
Broune And what said ye to that?
Robison Ah said she kenned a'about the Deil for she was ane o' his servants.
Broune And how did she reply?
Robison She said 'See that nane hear ye say Ah am witch, as others have said, for they hae sufferit for it.'
Broune What said ye next?
Robison Ah telt Agnes Kelly that if ony herm cam the way o' ma mither or me, it wouldnae be the Deil takin us, bot me takin' ma haund ower her face. Then her servant Marjory Anderson sayed that were she a man, she wad maister me bot bein' a weak lass she had uther weys o' dealin' wi' me.
Broune Did ye ask of her the manner of these ways?
Robison Nay, sir, for Ah wis in a temper. Bot twa or three days efter, she bewitched me. She was in the dryin' green a-washin' the linen. She had her clouts pu'd up till her breech as she trampled the claes i' the tub. When she saw me, she showed her forkin' tae me and ...
Broune Do ye allude to her female nature which common folk call forkin'?
Robison Aye sir, her Jenny Willocks, as the country folk say in they pairts, beggin' yer pardon, sir. Then she said she wad tak the power oot o' me be the power in it, pointin' at her forkin'.
Broune Are ye suggesting that she offered to fornicate with ye?

Robison Ah canna richtly say sir, though mony a man wad hae said twere so. Then she laughed at me, sayin' she wad yet bring me tae shame for fearin' her mistress.

Broune Did ye at any time touch her person?

Robison Nay, sir. Ah went ben the hoose bot Ah wis tremblin' and shakin' wi' the fear and shame on ma thinkin' o' whit she had sayed and done. For days and nichts, Ah couldnae pit her oot o' ma mind, the wanton witch.

Broune Did ye have further words with Marjory Anderson after the incident?

Robison Nay, sir. Ma mither made me swear Ah wad hae naught tae dae wi' her an' frae that day tae this, nae words or doins' hae passed atween us.

Broune Marjory Anderson, I call upon ye to speak on this matter of lewdness. Was it in your mind to have illicit and abominable fornication with Maister Robison, a man who is not much more in years than yourself?

Did ye have intent on him that he might risk his Christian soul in scandal of illegal fornication? Answer me.

Anderson Ach, he's touched in the heid. He has nae wits aboot him. He's nobbut a mither's laddie. Ah did nae sic a thing that he has sayed. Twas a' in his fancy, for he couldnae keep frae starin' at ma nakedness. Ah doot he had ever seen a wuman's pairt afore. A Jenny Willocks, as he sayed.

Broune Ye are familiar with the term Jenny Willocks? Ye know what it means?

Anderson *[laughing brazenly]* Aye and weel ye ken whit it means yersel, a man o' your years. Mayhap ye hae seen a few in yir time!

Broune Hold your evil tongue, woman! Ye are lewd and filthy spoken. I remind ye this is a court of law. If ye do not behave, ye shall be dealt with severely. Ye do your case no good by these impudent words. Now Maister Buchan, pray continue.

Buchan I heard the two sides of the quarrel and informed the parties I would report my findings to the Session in due course. I said they would be compeared to attend the Session upon the following Sabbath Day, upon its next sederunt or sitting, where they would answer for their behaviour.

Broune Pray enlighten the assyse as to that hearing.

Buchan *[Reading from the session minute book]* The Session, after hearing the words of Janet Kemp and Agnes Kelly, Robert Robison and Marjory Anderson rebuked all who had used the Devil's name, though it may have been in ill humour and temper. The Session bade the parties to shake hands and to undertake to be good neighbours in the future. Mistress Kemp and Mistress Kelly thereupon shook hands as did Marjory Anderson and Robert Robison. The Session declared themselves satisfied but warned them against further incidents that were contrary to neighbourliness and God's peace.

Broune And that was the end of the matter?

Buchan Nay, sir. An elder, the Dominie Brown heard Agnes Kelly say at the Kirk entrance as she was leaving that was but acting in obedience to the Kirk Session and that she would settle the score herself in her own time. It was said by some in the toon that Mistress Kemp bore Agnes Kelly ill-will, that William Robison, her husband had once lain with Agnes Kelly when she had bewitched him be a spell. That was three years past. The Session had no knowledge of it, so it is not recorded, for it may be but idle street gossip. It was before my incumbency in Prestonpans Kirk, so I have nothing to say on the matter.

Broune Maister Buchan, I thank you for your testament. Pray be seated. I may call ye again in the matters of those witnesses who are come here today to give their testimonies. I now call upon Maister Cowan. Serjeand, pray bring him before the assyse.

[Serjeand goes to door and escorts Cowan to the Bench]

Broune Pray state your name, age and occupation.

Cowan I am callit David Cowan of Winton, of age 50, occupation, servant o' Seaton of St Germain's, lately in the service of Lord Winton as pricker of witches, now in the service o' the justice court in Haddington.

Broune Now, Maister Cowan, how came ye to examine the accused?

Cowan Twere on the instructions of a magistrate in the parish.

Broune Pray give his name.

Cowan Seton of St Germain's. Ah wis callit be Lord Seaton and Maister Broune two weeks syne, for to examine the bodies o' the accused for the deil's marks that might be upon their persons. Ah wis tae'n be the lockman tae thir cell in the Tolbuith tae conduct the search. The lockman wis present in the search a' the whiles. He may swear to this, my testimony, which follows. Ah had wi' me ma brass preen – beggin' yer pardon, sir, Ah mean ma pin which be the lawfu' instrument o' ma trade as pricker.

[Holds up the pin which is nine inches long with a wooden handle]

The peen or brod as tis otherwayes callit is needed for the examination of they that are accusit o' witchcraft. Ah examined Mistress Kelly furst. Ah fand the deil's mark upon her ridge-back. Twas a blue mark. Whereupon Ah pressed the preen until it. Agnes Kelly wis nae sensible o' the the preen nor did she feel ony pain. Nor did blood follow when Ah withdrew the preen from her body. Maisters, this is proof that a witch hae been detected. Ma Maister, him that teachd me ma skill, John Kincaid o' Tranent, teachd me weel. Ah nixt examined Marjory Anderson, her body. Twere mair difficult, the fandin' o' hir mark. For twas upon her forkin' or near it as Ah sould say, hidden be the hair that is

natural in that part. Marjory Anderson was nae sensible o' the preen that Ah put intil her, nor did ony blood flow when Ah drew it oot. Ah askit Agnes Kelly how she cam be her mark. She sayed that she didnae ken, bot that she had been gripped be a foreign man in a close in Prestonpans mony years syne. She confessit that efter he held her, she wis in great pain for a whiles efter.

Broune And did ye ask the same of Marjory Anderson?

Cowan Aye, sir. She couldnae say the way of it getting' it, for though twere near her forkin', she hadnae kenned congress wi' ony man, for she sayed that mayhap if she had, twould answer the fact o' its bein' there.

Broune The lockman shall approach the bench

[Lockman nods to Cowan as he does so]

Broune Lockman, ye have heard the testimony of David Cowan, the witch pricker. Shall ye swear it is a true testament of the proceedings that ye were witness to in the Tolbooth?

Lockman Aye, sir. Ah so swear it.

Broune Pray let the record state this testimony. *[Turning to Sir Alex]* May it please your Grace, that this assyse may retire to consider these testimonies?

Sir Alexander Thank ye, Maister Broune. This assyse shall adjourn to consider the statements and depositions and other matters pertaining to this trial. Thereafter, the assyse will hear the testimonies of diverse witnesses that are brought here this day to advise the court upon the charges laid against the accused.

[Sir Alexander and the court officials rise and leave the stage in procession. Sir Alex leads, Patrick Broune follows, then Robert Martin and John Buchan. The serjeand goes to centre stage]

Serjeand All rise! This assyse shall be convened in due time.

[Curtains close]

Roy Pugh Ladies and gentlemen, may I draw to your attention that in the course of this part of the trial, particular attention was given to the fact that the confessions of Agnes Kelly and Marjory Anderson had not been extracted from them under torture. The judge was at pains to establish this fact. It was unusual for torture instruments not to be used but the fact that the Privy Council had expressly forbidden the use of torture indicates that a more enlightened view was emerging in the matter of prosecuting so-called witches. However, may I also remind you that when the suspects were held by the Kirk

authorities, they were denied sleep for eight days and nights and restricted to a poor diet. Any modern physician will tell you that after 8 days of this treatment, the victim becomes disoriented and will confess to anything just to be allowed to sleep. So there was indeed a form of torture employed against the two women.

There will now be a short remission for refreshment. The assyse shall reconvene in thirty minutes, when we shall hear the depositions of the several witness brought to bear evidence against the accused. Please resume your seats in half an hour from now

SCENE 2

[Curtains open to a stage containing the seven seated witnesses, the serjeand, the lockman and the two prisoners. Loud knocking at side door takes the serjeand across stage to open it and lead the assyse on stage. As before, Sir Alexander precedes, followed by Patrick Broune, Robert Martin, James Buchan]

[Serjeand moves centre stage]

Serjeand All rise! Hear ye, hear ye, this assyse is now in session.

[The assyse is seated]

Serjeand *[To the audience]* Please be seated.

Sir Alexander This assyse will now hear the testimonies and despositions of the witnesses. The clerk of court will read their names.

Martin Here present this day to give witness to this assyse: Janet Kemp, Robert Robison, Barbara Spence, William Colme, his spouse Janet Wyllie, Martha Simpson and Margaret Johnston, indwellers and residenters of the parish of Prestonpans.

Sir Alexander Thank ye, Maister Martin. I now call upon Maister Patrick Broune, procurator fiscal to resume the proceedings.

Broune Thank ye, sir. All witnesses present shall rise.

[They stand]

Ye here gathered this day shall speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Do ye so swear?

Witnesses *[In unison]* I so swear

Broune I call the first witnesses, Mistress Janet Kemp and Maister Robert Robison.

[Kemp and Robison approach bench]

- Broune As ye have both spoken before at this assyse, we may dispense with the preliminaries. The assyse is also acquainted with the quarrel that took place between ye and Agnes Kelly. Mayhap ye wish to add to your earlier testimonies concerning the incident about whose turn twas to sweep the dung and filth from your houses, their doorsteps and the pavements.
- Kemp Twas as the minister sayed and whit he had wrote doon in his buik. Bot Ah didnae tell him a' that day he spoke wi' me.
- Broune So ye have more to tell this assyse?
- Kemp Aye, sir. Agnes Kemp cried me an' ill-getted bitch, a slut, a slattern. Ah cried her a liar and telt her she had ideas above hir station, for she wis bot a widow-wummin as masel'. We wis baith in sair humour that evil day, bot twere hir that started it. She cried me ane incarnate de'il and that the de'il wad pey me oot, for he was hir maister.
- Broune These were her precise words? Ye did not say so before?
- Kemp Ah forgot, sir.
- Broune And what was your answer?
- Kemp Ah sayed she wad have nae luck and that the maisters wad see tae it that she were punishit fur her slander o' ma guid name. Then hir servant Marjory Anderson cam' at me wi' a besom and callit me names. Ma son Robert cam oot the hoose and tak frae her the besom an' he brake it ower his knee, saying 'Witch, ye sall not abuse ma mither so.' Whereupon Agnes Kelly said he would repent o' that.
- Broune Will the clerk of court consult the book of adjournal that he may verify the words?
- Martin *[Leafing through the pages]* Aye, sir, these were the words spoken be Maister Robison.
- Broune And does the record show the names Agnes Kelly called Mistress Kemp and her son?
- Martin Aye, sir. Agnes Kelly called Mistress Kemp a hoor and Robert Robison a hoorson for breaking her besom. And that the Devil would see that he suffered in Hell. Agnes Kelly nixt said these words:
'See that none hear you say that I am a witch, as others have said, for they have suffered for it.'
- Broune Maister Robison, what did ye say next?
- Robison Aye, sir. It is as Ah said a whiles ago, when Maister Buchan the meenister was readin' frae his buik. She wis a wanton bitch for tae shew hirsell' in sic lewd manner
- Broune Now, Maister Robison, what befell ye after the argument?
- Robison Why sir, Ah fell seik bot a week on. Ah wis ta'en wi' the sweatin' seikness. That same nicht, as Ah got up tae attend a call o' nature, Ah lookit oot the windae and saw Marjory Anderson in the back gren jinkin' and jowkin' l' the grass, shoutin' inco words, liftin' up

her claes and waivin' her airms. Ah heered hir say 'Ah telt ye, Ah telt ye that ye wad be peyed oot fur hermin' ma mistress. Ah shook ma fist at hir bot Ah was that seik, Ah couldnae leave the hoose to deal wi' her. Then the seikness got worse an' Ah cannae recall whit happened in the nixt days and nixts. Ye maun ax ma mither the wey o' it, how the seikness clouded ma mind.

Broune
Kemp

So, Mistress Kemp, shall ye avise the assyse on this matter of your son's sickness?

Oh, aye, sir. Ah wis that feared for ma laddie's life. He wis sae ill fur the nixt seven days and nixts. Why, upon the fourth day, Ah watched him meltin' awa like a burnin's caundle afore my een. Upon the fifth day, he opened his een and he sayed these words: 'She telt me the faggots o' hell wad burn me, that hell's cauldron wad seethe me and use me up, though I be a Christian God-fearin' man.'

Then upon the sixth day, he did sit up in his bed and did tak a bowl o' ma broth, the sweatin's broke. And he sayed that he heered Agnes Kelly say tae him in his sleep 'Ye foul thief, that braks a widow's besom and insults ma servant. Nane sall tak ma precious burd Marjory frae me, no, nor dae unto her mischief, for she is ma fine burd, mair like to be ma dochter than ma servant.'

Broune

Marjory Anderson, did ye or your mistress or together, lay the sickness upon Maister Robison?

Anderson

Nay. Twas his ain doin' for he is wont tae sit oot in the cauld at his weavin. He hasnae the wits tae sit be the fire on a cauld day.

Broune
Kemp

Have ye anything further to say, Mistress Kemp?

Aye, sir. Ah heered Agnes Kemp and Marjory Anderson mak a charm. Ah wis at ma lad's bedside feedin' him broth upon the seventh day when Ah heered baith Agnes Kelly and Marjory Anderson chantin this charm in the back green whiles they hung oot the linen:

'He's lyin' in his bed
An' he is sick and sair,
May he lie anudder day
An' then lie there nae mair.'

Broune
Robison

Maister Robison, was that the charm or incantation ye heard?

Aye, sir.

Broune
Kelly

Agnes Kelly and Marjory Anderson, did ye make this incantation?

Ah cannae recall it.

Anderson

Ah cannae recall it. The man wis seik an' oot o' his wits, o' which he has nae muckle. Even when he isnae seik

Broune I have warned ye afore to keep a civil tongue, woman! I put it to ye both once more. Did ye make this incantation upon the day afore Maister Robison rose from his sick bed?

Kelly Ah disremeber.

Broune How say ye, Marjorie Anderson?

Anderson Tis as ma mistress sayed. Robert Robison is addled in his heid.

Broune Let the clerk of court record the incantation and the accused's denials. I call upon the next witness, Margaret Johnston.

[Johnston approaches the bench]

Broune Pray state your name, age and occupation

Johnston Margaret Johnston, spinster o' age 50 years, cairtin' saut.

Broune So Mistress Johnston, ye carry salt from the salt pans in this parish?

Johnston Aye, sir, syne Ah wis a young wumman.

Broune Ye will advise the assyse how the accused put mischief upon ye?

Johnston Twere in the year past, when Ah owed Agnes Kelly sax pennies for plants Ah had bocht off her upon May Day.

Broune So ye were in her debt?

Johnston Aye, sir, bot the bargain struck wis that Ah should pey her upon Candlemas Day

Broune That being the first day of February of this year, is it not?

Johnston Aye, sir. Bot she cam tae ma door axing fur the money at Yule, full six weeks afore the sum were due her.

Broune And what did ye say to her?

Johnston Ah reminded her o' the bargain, that the money wisnae due until Candlemas.

Broune And what did she say?

Johnston She said she wadnae move from aff ma step until she got her dues, the money owin' tae her. Again, Ah reminded her o' the bargain. Whereupon she flew into a rage, callit me a thief that uses auld widow women that cannae defend thirsels. Ah lost ma temper and Ah cried at her:
'Awa ye frae ma door, ye witch carlin'. Devil a farthing sall ye get until the day tis due.'

Broune And what did she next?

Johnston She went awa but cam back at nicht, whereupon she sat on ma stair a'the nicht, makin's ane grit and fearful noise, wailin' unco words, her long hair in her haunds, tearin' at it. She sayed Ah wad ne'er thrive and cursed me an' ma bairns, saying they wad gae without meat afore long. She cursed me an' sayed that ma horse – him that Ah uses tae cairry the saut wad ne'er get hame on the morrow, for its leg wad be broke. Ah wis in sic

fear an' tremblin' that Ah gied the saxpence there and then for her to quit ma doorstep. As she went awa', she said twas too late tae save ma horse an' that it wad dee the morn. And what came to pass on the morrow?

Broune
Johnston Ah was deliverin' saut tae the fisher fowk at Seton when Ah had tae leave the cart tae attend a call o' nature. When Ah cam back, Ah saw Agnes Kelly and Marjory Anderson staunin' be ma horse. They were whisperin' in his ear, the horse. Ah telt them tae leave him alane and they walked awa' laughin' and bletherin'. Then on the road tae Seton, ma horse did fa' and brake its leg an' the beast had tae be pit doon, for there was nae savin' o' it. Twas as Agnes Kelly had said twould be.

Broune
Kelly What have ye to say to this, Agnes Kelly.

Ah am verily sorry that Mistress Johnston, her horse wis killed. Ye see, Ah had gaun tae her hoose for to get ma money owed that Ah micht pey Mistress Simpson, the widow o' John Grieve for ane boll o' oats that Ah had bocht aff her fur ma ain horse. Mistress Simpson had callit at ma door for her siller, which was sax pennies. Ah said Ah had nae money i' the hoose bot that Ah wis owed the amount be Mistress Johnston. Mistress Simpson swore at me, for Ah had been owin' the money fur a whiles back. She said she wad get ane boll o' coal tae burn me with, which was whit she said Ah deserved.

Broune
Kelly And what did ye next?

Ah got intil a sair humour and cursed her tae the De'il that she wad come upon a poor widow's hoose upon Yule Day, the day of the Lord's birth, tae get her money. Ah cursed her in ma ill humour and said she and hers wad ne'er threave. That was afore Ah went to Mistress Johnston, her hoose, for tae get the siller she wis owin' me.

Broune
Kelly And when Mistress Johnston refused ye the siller, ye cursed her horse and caused it to fall and break its leg upon the next day?

Nay sir, twere not the wey o' it. The horse did brake its leg on the morrow bot it was the snaw and ice that did for it, an' the heavy load Mistress Johnston made for it tae bear.

Broune
Kelly Ye and Marjory Anderson were seen beside the horse, saying words to it that very morning the horse broke its leg. What were the words?

They were bot words o' comfort, sir. An' Marjory had ta'en it some stale breid for tae feed it, for it is weel kenned that Mistress Johnston starved the brute. We wis bot soothin' the puir beastie that had tae labour sae sair upon the Lord's Birthday.

Broune
Kelly Be that as it may, but ye foretold the horse would come to grief upon that very day. Twas sayed in ill humour.

Broune But ye said it nonetheless and it did come to pass. Let the record state that Agnes Kelly has admitted her guilt in the matter of Mistress Johnston, her horse. The witness is dismissed.

[Turning to Kelly and Anderson]

Broune Do ye and your servant Marjory Anderson celebrate Yule as a holiday? I remind ye that ye are on oath.

Kelly Nay, sir, for abody kens the Kirk forbids it, for it is a festival only celebrated by them o' the auld religion.

Broune Ye mean Papistry?

Kelly Aye, sir. An' me and ma servant are nae Papists. We worship the true religion

Broune Perhaps we shall presently learn the nature of the religion ye speak of.
I next call upon Martha Simpson, relict of John Grieve, portioner of Prestoungrange Farm.

[Simpson approaches the bench]

Broune Pray state your name, age and occupation

Simpson I am Martha Simpson, of age 56, relict o' John Grieve, portioner at Prestoungrange ferm.

Broune Your deceased husband John Grieve was a portioner or tenant farmer of Sir Alexander Morrison?

Simpson Aye sir, that he was and a verray guid maister he was to me and mine.

[Sir Alex nods to her]

Broune Will ye relate the circumstances that brought ye to Agnes Kelly, her door?

Simpson Aye, sir. Agnes Kelly comed tae the ferm for tae purchase ane boll o' oats for hir horse bot that she couldnae pay for the oats until she wis payed money owin' till her by another. Ma husband John that de'ed six months syne said he wad wait a whiles for his siller, but no' for lang.

Broune Did ye hear her say that she would not be able to pay your spouse John Grieve until Candlemas Day?

Simpson Ay, sir. She did bot say that when the siller was in her ain hand, she wad pay me the very same day she had gotten it. Ma man had waited on the siller since Lammas Day last an' thocht it was lang owerdue which is why I callit upon Agnes Kelly, in her hoose, upon Yule Day evenin'. When Ah got tae her door, twas her servant, Marjory Anderson that opened it. Ah stated ma business and askit tae see her mistress.

Broune In what manner did she reply?

Simpson She said her mistress was no' at hame and askit whit manner o' Christian called upon a widow wummin for tae seek siller on the eve o' the Lord's Birthday. Ah said the day

meant naught tae me, for Ah follow the true religion that frowns upon sic Papish holidays. Ah askit her were she ane o' that persuasion, that she took it ill that Ah wis seekin' ma ain money upon the day?

Broune
Simpson

And what said she to that?

She sayed her religion wis her business and it mattered nane in whit manner she served God. Then she sayed again Ah wis nae Christian that wad seek tae gain siller upon the eve o' the Lord's Birthday. She sayed she was a follower o' the true religion an' that her Maister wad look efter her and Agnes Kelly, the baith o' them.

Broune
Simpson

Did ye ask of her the name of her Maister?

Aye, sir, Ah did.

Broune
Simpson

What did she then?

Why, sir, she flew intil sic a rage and sayed that her Maister wad see tae me and mine in time comin' and that Ah wad niver threave, nor ma wife and bairns. She sayed ane o' them wad suffer the agonies o' Hell an' that faggots wad be lichted in the belly o' someone o' mine. That he or she micht ken a wee bit o' the sufferin' o' them that are askit fir siller on an ill-gotten debt upon the eve o' the Lord's Birthday.

Broune
Simpson

And did the curse come to pass?

Aye, sir, it cam near a sixmonth after, as Sir Alexander Morrison weel kens, for ma man that wis servant tae Sir Alexander deed in the month o' March this year.

Broune
Grieve

And what was the cause of his death?

He took tae his bed complainin' o' grit red-hot paines i' the belly. Ah sent fur the doctor but he could dae nuthin', though he did confess that in his seikness, ma man had telt him she had seen the face o' Marjory Anderson. He de'ed the next week an' was buried be Maister Buchan bot five weeks' syne.

Broune
Anderson

What have ye to say to this charge, Marjory Anderson?

Ah micht hae sayed whit she says Ah sayed. Ah cannae write and even if Ah could, Ah widnae keep a book on what Ah said.

Broune

Woman, keep a civil tongue. I have warned ye for the last time on your insolence and your contumacy! Now, do ye practice the true religion and that ye celebrate not Yule, which is a Papist festival?

Anderson
Broune
Anderson
Broune

Whit Ah practise is atween me an' ma God.

[Enraged] Will ye give answer or be damned?

Ah wis baptised in the name o' the Lord, as befits the true religion.

Ah, I am pleased that ye have spoken of your baptism, for ye are charged with the renouncing of it. Ye cannot follow the true religion, which is the religion of the Kirk of Scotland if ye have renounced your baptism. Is that not a contradiction in terms? Do ye practice of the true religion?

Anderson Ah sayed whit Ah practice is atween me an' God
Broune Will ye answer aye or nay?
Anderson Aye or nay.

[Broune quivering with anger leaps to his feet]

Broune Confess that ye are a true Christian follower of the true religion! If ye do not, I shall have the serjeand and the lockman take ye from this assyse where they will flog it out of ye. I order ye to tell this assyse the manner of your religion!

Anderson Ah attend the Kirk o' Scotland, as does my mistress.

Broune And ye worship in the manner prescribed, in the manner of the true religion?

Anderson Ah have said as muckle.

Broune Not to my satisfaction or this assyse. Maister Buchan shall ye say whether these women are regular church attenders?

Buchan Weel, sir, no' regular. There have been lapses. Both women have been disciplined for their lack be the Session. They were rebuked on the stool of penitence and fined as is required

Broune Now, Marjory Anderson, as to the matter of your baptism. Ye are charged with the renouncing of it. Have ye reconciled yourself to God since ye renounced it?

Anderson Nay, Ah hae not.

Buchan *[Gaspin]* Oh Lord have mercy upon her! Sir Alexander, may I intervene? I kenned that the accused had renounced her baptism but she said that she had resumed it at the hands of the former minister, a man who is gone to his maker and therefore cannot bear witness. The same was told to me by Agnes Kelly. The Session is not at fault, nor am I myself. We are diligent about such things. I took these women at their word.

Broune Sir Alex, may I resume questions?

Sir Alexander Pray continue, Maister Broune.

Broune How came ye to renounce your baptism Marjory Anderson?

Anderson Twas on the day ma mither was tae'n frae me in seikness. Ah was bot a bairn. Ah renounced it through grief. When Ah was tae'n in by Mistress Kelly whae wis ma mither's best freend, she said she wad renounce hir baptism as weel, and that she and no' the Lord wad care for me.

[At this, Janet Wyllie, wife to William Colme jumps up, shrieking]

Wyllie They are evil, they are baith witches! They are unclean and the Deil's servants. They cause tae droon ma son, John. Why dae ye bother wi' a trial, Maisters? They are guilty witches an' they maun be punished.

Broune Mistress Wyllie, ye will come to order. Pray be seated. Ye must compose yourself. The assyse will hear your testimony in due course.

Wyllie Ah am sorry, Sir. In ma sorrow an' grief.

Broune Never fear, Mistress. Justice shall be done this day. *[Turning to Agnes Kelly]* I put it to ye that as this young woman's employer, twas your Christian duty to see that she renew her baptism and attend the kirk each Sabbath day. But ye saw fit to do nothing, even unto renouncing your own baptism. That is an evil which cannot now be put right. Have ye anything to say?

Kelly Aye, Ah have. Mony years syne, Ah was the freend o' Marjory's mither an' a promised her that Ah wad tak care o' the wee lass, should onythin' come tae pass that she should become orphan. Twas a promise upon her death bed. She, Marjory, has aye been ma precious burd syne that day tae this. She micht be servant but she is mair like ma dochter, for Ah never had a bairn o' mine ain.

Broune So much the more ye should have protected her against the workings of the Devil by having her baptism restored to her, that her soul may be saved and kept pure. The fact that ye also renounced your baptism proves much and explains her and you own behaviour, behaviour which has brought ye afore this assyse in the first place. I have no further questions. Will the clerk of court record that the accused made no attempt to restore their baptisms and that they stand unclean to this day, at the mercy of the Devil and his disciples.

Broune I call upon the next witness, Mistress Spence.

[Barbara Spence approaches the bench]

Broune Pray state your name, age and occupation.

Spence Barbara Spence, of age 60, spinster and hen-wife.

Broune Ye keep the hens and market eggs at the mercat cross each market day?

Spence That I do, Maister. An' Ah hae providit Sir Alexander Morrison wi' mony a fat chicken for his denner.

[Sir Alex smiles weakly and nods to her]

Broune Will ye inform this assyse how ye come to be here this day?

Spence Aye, Maister. Ah come tae speak against the evil wrought upon me an' ma chickens be Agnes Kelly an' her servant, Marjory Anderson.

Broune And what is the manner of that evil?

Spence Weel Maister, twa summers syne, Agnes Kelly bocht aff me a score o' pullet chickens. A

twelvemonth syne, she cam tae me, at ma hoose and sayed the chickens were puir layers, that she had gotten few eggs aff them an' that Ah had selt her a weak clutch o' the creatures. Ah askit her if she had bocht ane cockerel tae serve them aright. She said she had bot it had seikened and de'ed. So Ah sez till her, mayhap twere the cockerel that wis at fault, no' ma burdies. Ah sayed Ah could sell her a fine cock bot she flew intil a distemper, sayin' twas ma hens that were seikly. Ah sayed that they had been guid layers in ma care. She wis sair ill-humoured and cursed me for a cheat an' a liar that had selt her dud guid. She sayed for that Ah wad niver threave. She said the Deil wad pey me oot. Then she went hame.

Broune
Spence

And what happened next

A few weeks syne that day, Ah saw her servant, Marjory Anderson at ma henhoose door. She had a bag o' meal in her haund. Weel, Ah thocht twas meal bot when Ah went tae her, she closit it up. Ah cannae swear tae it bot Ah thocht it wis some concoction she had contrived frae the hedgerow flooers. Oft hae Ah seen her gaitherin the wayside flo'ers an' herbs for tae mak some concoction. Ah askit her aince whit she did an' she sayed twere nane o' ma business bot that the flooers and siclike went intil her stew for tae taste it. Then she said 'Aye, and tae gie others a taste o' something else if they harm me or ma mistress.'

Broune
Anderson
Broune
Anderson
Broune

Marjory Anderson, is this the way of it?

Aye, for ma mither teachd me aboot the herbs that can pit a flavour in ane stew.

And others that might cause harm?

Ah ken naught what ye mean.

I think ye well ken it. Now Mistress Spence, after ye saw Marjory Anderson at your hen house, what transpired?

Spence
Broune
Spence

Beggin' yir pairdon sir?

What happened next to the chickens?

Oh, Maister, ane by ane they a' de'ed in bot a week. Ah went tae Agnes Kelly tae ask her whit it was that hir servant had done tae ma burds an' she jist laughed and sayed that she had kenned a' along that Ah had seik chickens. Ah said she wad regret that and damned her for a witch. She sayed this tae me:

'If Ah were a witch, ye and yours wad hae better cause tae callit me sic.'

Broune
Spence

And what followed?

Weel, Maister, a nicht efter that cam a muckle grit toad intae ma hearthside and sat be the fire an' fixed its een on me. Ah took ma besom and sweepit it oot the hoose, rank evil brute that it wis. As a wis sweepin' it awa, a sair pain gripped me in the side. Twas that sair Ah had tae sit doon tae get ma breath. The pain stayed till the nixt day when Ah saw Agnes Kelly in the street. Ah callit tae her and sayed her servant had been tae visit

me. She made tae say that her lass Marjory had niver been ower the door for twa days an' that Ah must be mistaken. Ah said not that twere nae her lass but hir uther servant, the toad that cam frae her maister, the De'il and hae pit pain intae ma side. She laughed in ma face. She sayed this tae me.

'Weel Barbara, ye maun noo consider the evil o' yir weys, bot Ah took yir advice. Ah bocht a cockerel twa weeks past an' the pullets are layin' weel. So the pain shall leave ye presently.'

And ye ken, Maister, the pain twas gone in thrie days.

Broune Thank you Mistress Spence. Pray be seated. The clerk shall record that sickness was laid on the witness then taken off as Agnes Kelly had said it would. I next call upon William Colme.

[Colme approaches the bench]

Broune Pray state your name, age and occupation.

Colme William Colme, age of 46, carter in employ of Prestonpans Parish.

Broune Pray state your dealings with the accused.

Colme Weel, sir, twas when Ah first cam tae Prestonpans frae Tranent for work. That wis twa years past. In my post as carter, tis ma duty tae keep the streets clean. Ane day, Ah wis shovellin' the dung frae Agnes Kelly, hir hoose front when she cam tae her door wi a besom an' bucket tae sweep up the dung oot o' the road. Ah sayed it wis her title tae shovel the muck at her doorstep but the muck in the road belonged tae the toon.

Broune How did she answer ye?

Colme She sayed it wis hir due, that it lay afore her door and the ither carter had let her hae the sweepins' fur her gairden. Ah sayed that wisnae the wey on it, that it was toon property for sale tae the fermers. Ah remindit her that the money wad be set against the rates, so she and other parishioners in the toon wad gain frae the sale.

Broune What happened next?

Colme She said 'Fie on ye Maister Colme, liar that ye are. Tis for yir ain gairden. Or mayhap ye sall sell it tae yir freend Jock Grieve, the fermer up at Prestoungrange. For Ah hae seen ye daen business wi' him and siller chinging hauns.'

Broune William Colme, is it not your bounden duty to collect the road sweepings' and deposit them in the toon's yard, that the burgh council may decide the manner of its disposal?

Colme Aye sir.

Broune The accused has said that she saw ye take money from Maister Grieve in the street. Is that right and proper? Should not the burgh treasurer or his clerk receive the money?

Colme Aye sir. Bot on that day, the treasurer was seik an' his clerk was havin' his denner, so Ah wis obleeged tae tak the siller as Maister Grieve wished tae be on his wey. He sayed he had crops tae pit doon an' that he had nae time tae await a wee snotty-nosed creature o' a clerk. They were his words, sir.

Broune And ye did hand the money to the clerk?

Colme Aye, sir. Twid be mair than ma job's worth tae withhold the toon's siller.

Buchan *[The Minister, rises]* May I say a word on behalf of this man, Maister Broune?

Broune Ye may.

Buchan In the time I have known William Colme, I can say that the man is honesty itself. Why sir, he found two shillings in the kirkyard that a parishioner had lost and he handed it in though no one witnessed the find. That occurred in the first month I was incumbent in this parish.

Broune My thanks to ye, Maister Buchan. Let the record show that this man is honest and above reproach. *[Turning to Colme]*

Colme So ye sold the sweepings and Maister Grieve carted it away?

Colme Ah sold them bot Maister Grieve, his cart, had cast a wheel so Ah took it tae his ferm in ma cart. On the wey tae the ferm, Agnes Kelly wis oot walkin' and she followit me tae the ferm, abusin' me, sayin' that Ah wis sellin' her widow's mite tae ane fermer wi' mair money than she wad ever see in her life. She said Ah wad be dammit tae Hell for ma thievin' an' that Ah wad never threave. Maister Grieve was witness tae her abuse, God rest his puir soul. He telt her tae get aff his land or he wad hae the Maisters on her. As she went awa', she sayed if Ah crossed her again, Ah wid be sorry for it. That wis the first time we had words.

Broune And the second time?

Colme Twas a few weeks on, when she cam tae ma hoose and askit if she micht graze her two three sheeps in the common land, on the loan. Ah telt her she couldnae as the land wis tae be kept fallow on the orders o' the toon clerk, Dominie Broom. He had sayed the gress wis ower grazed and it needed to restore itsel. She swore at me an' sayed if I done her wrong a third time, me an mine wad suffer. Then she laughed an unco coarse laugh that made me a-feared and sayed ma son should tak care whiles he was aboard his ship that wis leavin' that week for the Baltic.

Broune Did she curse your son?

Colme No' in words. Twas her laugh that made me feared, for ma son was takin' ship that verray eve.

Broune Did ye go to the quay to say farewell to your son the day he went to sea?

Colme Nay sir, Ah had work tae dae. Ye maun askit ma wife Janet on that matter.

Broune I call Janet Wyllie.

[Wyllie approaches bench]

- Broune Please state your name, age and occupation.
Wyllie Janet Wyllie, spouse o' William Colme, of age 43, housewife.
Broune Ye are acquaint with the matters that passed between your husband and Agnes Kelly.
Wyllie That Ah am. And mair, muckle mair.
Broune Pray advise the assyse of the other matters.
Wyllie Twas only ane, bot sic a sair ane, for Agnes Kelly caused ma son, John, his death at sea.
[Cries of 'Shame! Burn the witch!' come from the other witnesses. Sir Alex wraps on the table with his gavel]
Sir Alexander Ye will come to order! Silence, so that Maister Broune may establish the matter of this charge.
Broune I am indebted to ye, sir. Now Mistress Wyllie, pray continue.
Wyllie Upon the nicht that John took ship, Ah went tae Seton for tae say farewell tae John. He was but 18 years of age and sae gled that he wis embarkin' on that ship, his first on the sea. The ship wis bound fir the Baltic a far country John had niver seen, so he was that gled tae see the warld, for his faither had niver been oot o' Haddingtonshire. *[She breaks down and points at Kelly screaming in her grief]* That wumman kilt ma laddie! An' a' the bonnie Christian lads frae Prestonpans and Seton that went doon wi' the ship! Her evil did fur that bonnie ship and ma bonnie lad that wis on it.! May ye burn in the fires o' Hell, ye rank witch!
Broune Pray compose yourself, Mistress Wyllie. Ye may be seated while giving your evidence.
[She, weeping quietly, sits] Shall I continue, Mistress Wyllie? Do ye feel able? *[She nods]*
Wyllie Aye, sir, Ah sall, for the stayin' o' the coort's haun gies her longer time on this earth. Ah'm fine.
Broune Pray inform the assyse of the events that took place upon the night your son John boarded his ship.
Wyllie Twas growin' dark as the skipper cast aff. Ah embraced ma son an' sayed goodbye tae him. Tho' it wis dark, Ah saw Agnes Kelly and Marjory Anderson staunin' on the quayside. They wis makin' oot that they were present for tae buy fish. Bot as Ah said goodbye tae John, they wis that close that Ah heered Agnes Kelly say tae Marjory Anderson: *'She maun tak a long whiles tae say farewell, for it sall be a long goodbye.'* Then they walkit awa tae the foreshore. Ah waved ma lad awa then Ah followit them. Alang the foreshore. Ye see sir, Ah kenned in ma hert that they meant tae dae ill tae John and his shipmates. Ah kenned Ah wis richt tae follow them. Ah hid ahent a rock at the foreshore so they thocht they were on thir ain, wi nane tae witness whit they did there.
Broune And what was that?

Wyllie Agnes Kelly brocht frae under her apron ane deid cat and she did cast it upon the waters, sayin' that it was her loved puss that the rank fiend William Colme had kilt under his cairtwheels that very day. As she sayed it, she said jist as William Colme had kilt ane in her hoose, she wad kill in his. She sayed unco words the manner o' which Ah cannae say, then as she cast the cat upon the waters, she orderit her servant tae cast stanes upon the waters.

Broune *[Turning to Colme]* Ye did not advert to this in your testimony, Maister Colme. Did ye kill Agnes Kelly, her cat?

Colme Aye sir. Bot Ah didnae ken twas her cat. If Ah had, Ah widnae hae hermed the beast for fear o' ma son. The cat it rin oot frae ane hedge richt intil ma cairt wheels. Ah didnae ken twas Agnes Kelly's cat, for twas black, like mony others in this toon.

[Turning to Wyllie]

Broune I accept what your husband has said. May the record show it also. Did Agnes Kelly say further words?

Wyllie Aye, sir. She sayed the stanes wad cause a grit storm and that nae salt water wad bear the weight o' that ship. She further sayed that it wad gae tae the bottom o' the sea an' that the partans wad eat of the crew, their flesh.

Broune She said that the crabs at the bottom of the sea would devour them?

Wyllie Aye sir.

Broune Mistress Wyllie, can ye recall the precise words that Agnes Kelly said, that they may be recorded in the book o' adjournal? Tis a most important point.

Wyllie Aye, that Ah can, sir. Agnes Kelly, she did say they words:
'May the salt water seas no' bear the ship upon which John Colme sails. May the partans feast on the crew at the bottom o' the sea which sall become wild as Hell's cauldron afore the dawn break.'

Broune The Clerk shall enter these words in the book of adjournal. *[Turning to Agnes Kelly]* Were these your words upon that night.

Kelly Ah cannae recall them, though Ah confess that upon that nicht, Ah took ma dear puss Tibbs tae the sea, her body for tae bury, her that was cruelly slain be William Colme, his cairt.

Broune And did ye order your servant Marjory Anderson to cast stones into the waves?

Kelly Aye, that Ah did. For twas tae keep the puir wee beastie in the sea, that it didnae cam oot agen for that wad hae grieved me sair, seein' it deid.

Broune Is that the wey of it Marjory Anderson?

Anderson Aye. Twould hae broken ma mistresses hert for tae see the beastie deid.

Broune I put it to ye that the stones were cast into the water to create a storm. Tis a well kent ploy of those that are witches. Why did ye not weigh the beast with stones?

Anderson Ma mistress wadnae hear o' it.

Broune Let the record show that the ship carrying John Colme and other Christian souls perished furth of the Isle of May in the German Ocean upon the night of departure from the port of Seton. That it perished in a great storm which the skies had not forewarned of the night the ship set sail. I have no further questions for ye Mistress Wyllie. May I thank ye for your forebearance in this matter, for the loss of your only son, John. I have no further questions for the witnesses.

Sir Alexander This assyse shall now retire to consider the evidence and to decide upon the verdict. *[He stands and bids the others to follow him, leaving only the lockman holding the accused and the seven witnesses on stage. The serjeand moves centre stage]*

Serjeand All rise. Ye sall await the decision of this assyse in due course.

[Curtains close]

FINALE

[AFTER A FIVE MINUTE BREAK]

[Curtains open. The serjeand admits the assyse and moves centre stage]

Serjeand All rise for his grace Sir Alexander Morrison of Prestoungrange and Maister Patrick Broune. This assyse is now in final session.

[Serjeand returns to the accused who are still held by the lockman]

Sir Alexander This assyse has heard of the misdemeanours of the accused Agnes Kelly and Marjory Anderson. The assyse has taken great care of the pertinent points and the blasphemy of the accused who admitted that they renounced their baptisms and that their mortal souls have been in grave danger for many years. That danger hath allowed the Devil to enter them and cause them to commit the evils of which they are rightly accused. At no time did Agnes Kelly and Marjory Anderson make attempt to restore their souls to the Kirk and therefore our Lord God. This alone damns them. The assyse has taken due notice of the witnesses testimonies and depositions. The assyse which has been legally constituted by His Majesty King Charles the Second, his Privy Council in Edinburgh toon

has considered the testimonies of the witnesses called to give evidence against the accused. The assyse has been at pains to establish that the confessions of the accused were not brought from them under torture. All who have testified against the accused came freely and of their own accord to this assyse.

Having duly considered the testimonies of seven persons that have suffered at the hands of the accused, together with the testaments of Maister Buchan, Minister of this Parish and Maister David Cowan, pricker who had found the Devil's marks upon their bodies, the assyse concludes that the accused are guilty of the charges laid against them. Furthermore, I remind ye that in the time of our Gracious Sovereign, James Sixth of Scotland, he of blessed memory, witches at North Berwick were known to have caused a storm by throwing upon the waters a dead cat and stones. These witches were dealt with according to the law. Now, the accused shall approach the bench to hear the verdict of this assyse. I now call upon the doomster to read out the verdict and the sentence.

Doomster

This assyse hae reached a decision upon the accused. Agnes Kelly and Marjory Anderson, ye have baith been declarit guilty of the charges laid against ye, namely, being in paction with the Devil, using witchcrafts, sorcery, incantations and charms upon diverse residenters and indwellers of the parish o' Prestonpans. This assyse finds ye guilty of these charges and other devilish practices offensive tae God, scandalous to the true religion and hurtful to the good and Christian subjects in the parish of Prestonpans. The judge, His Grace Sir Alexander Morrison of Prestoungrange ordaines that ye, Agnes Kelly and Marjory Anderson be taken be the Lockman tae the foreshore of Prestonpans, this being the site of the Baronial Court for the dispensing of justice to all wrongdoers dwelling in the parish. The lockman shall carry ye there, where ye shall be strangled to the dead, your bodies thereafter burnt to ashes.

Sir Alexander

Let the record show that the goods and gear of the accused shall be forfeit to the parish and sold by public roup, the money thus obtained shall be expended upon the expenses of this assyse, the costs of keeping the accused in the kirk and in the tolbooth in the weeks afore this trial. The money obtained shall be dispensed in payment of sending a man on horseback to Edinburgh for to obtain the Privy Council's warrant to try the condemned; for to pay the watchers in the kirk for eight days and nights; for the fee of the pricker, David Cowan; for food and drink consumed be the condemned for ten days and nights within the Tolbuith; and in compensation to Mistress Spence for the loss of her chickens and Mistress Johnston for the loss of her horse. Also, there shall be drinksiller for the lockman, as is the custom. Now

[Martha Simpson stands up]

Simpson Beggin' yer pardon, sir. Micht Ah say a word?
 Sir Alexander Ye may, but make it brief, Mistress Simpson.
 Simpson Weel, sir, there is still the maitter o' the debt o' saxpence owin' me be Agnes Kelly for ane boll o' oats.
 Sir Alexander Ye shall be paid the sum. Maister Martin, pray enter the debt that it be settled. Now Maister Broune, shall ye sum up and address the guilty parties?

[Broune stands and faces Kelly and Anderson]

Broune Do ye repent of the wickedness ye have wrought upon the good parishioners of Prestonpans? Mistress Kelly, ye may answer first as befits your station.
 Kelly Thou hast willed it that Ah sall dee. So be it, for Ah'm auld an' weary o' this sair life. Bot sall ye no' spare the lass, for she is bot young an' has a' her life afore her, a lass of but twenty summers.
 Broune Ye should have thought upon that afore ye made of her your accomplice in evil. Have ye aught else to say?
 Kelly Ah sall presently appear afore God who art a greater judge than thee, or thou, Sir Alexander Morrison o' Prestoungrange. A lee may damn ma soul, so ah wad not say a lee tae him that is on most high Ah am clear o' witchcraft. The folk o' this toon are mair set gainst witchcraft than ony other wickedness here. An' there be muckle o' it i' this parish. The meenister Maister Buchan kens whit Ah mean. There is muckle corruption and wrang-daeing amang the burgh council. Bot that profits me and mine naught. If aince a person be callit witch, tis hard tae get aff the accusation o' it, the given name o' witch. Ah am nae witch. Ah am a wummin that is ill used for Ah am weak and hae nae man tae speak up for me. Forasmuch as it may please God, Ah –

[Broune cuts her short angrily]

Broune This assyse has heard overmuch of your evil tongue, woman. Ye have confessed enough to damn yoursel thrice. Ye have said naught of your repentance of the wickedness ye have caused upon the witnesses that stand here to testify to that wickedness. Ye served the Devil and there is an end to it. Now, I call upon your servant, Marjory Anderson to repent of her wickedness.
 Anderson Ah hae naught tae say to ye, sir. Ma mistress has sayed it a'. If it is the Lord's will that ah be taen frae this earth afore ma time, then so be it. Ah am nae feared tae meet ma maker, for when Ah meet wi' him, surely Ah sall meet wi' ma beloved mithier. Bot this ah say to ye gathered togidder this day. Ye are a' sinners. Some are mair sinners than

uthers. Them that hae siller and guid claes for the wearin'. The lairds and meenisters that are set above humble folk sall no' escape the Lord's justice. Ye are a' gaun intae the earth in time, yir wealth sall not save ye. The Lord God on high sees whit ye dae an' he will tak ye in his ain time. Ah gae tae ma death in hope o' seein' ma mither, she that Ah loved.

Sir Alexander Let the record state the words of the accused. Let them also state that Agnes Kelly and Marjory Anderson made no repentance of their crimes. This assyse is terminate. May God have mercy upon the souls of Agnes Kelly and Marjory Anderson, who shall presently be execute.

[Sir Alex leads the assyse from stage. Serjeand moves centre stage]

Serjeand This assyse is terminate. May all here gathered go in peace, that justice is served upon this day.

[Curtains close]

EPILOGUE

Ladies and gentlemen, may I say a few words on this trial. The records state that these women, Agnes Kelly and Marjory Anderson were executed. The fact is confirmed by Lord Fountainhall's Historic Notices of that time. The entry in his account appears in volume 5 page 189 which records that

'Two witches confessed at Salt Preston or Prestonpans upon ane address, the councill *[The Privy Council]* granted a commission to Prestoungrange, Seton of St Germaines and Colstoun (for the Duke of Lauderdale *[then the Secretary of State for Scotland]* excluded Maister John Preston, as one inclined to burn too many witches to try and judge these witches who had confessed, but not those whom they delated *[or informed upon as other witches and blackened their characters]*, thir twa, on their own confession, no wayes extorted under physical torture were burnt.' The fact that the prejudiced John Preston was excluded from the trial is proof that the Privy Council were concerned enough to ensure that justice was done by those it considered less prejudiced than rednecks like Preston.

Thus we see a reluctance to burn witches; the Privy Council in Edinburgh was by 1678 becoming uneasy about the so-called existence of witches, so much so that it sanctioned

proper juries in courts to decide upon the guilt or innocence of the accused. A trial in Prestonpan which followed that of Agnes Kelly and Marjory Anderson in the same year acquitted the suspect. That trial concerned Katherine Liddell of Prestonpan. She challenged her accusers and surprisingly, the court found in her favour. This was on the grounds that she had not given her consent to be tortured – which she was – and that the witchpricker David Cowan of Winton was a proven charlatan and cheat. The Privy Council found Katherine Lidell not guilty although they released her on caution and bail of 500 merks in the event that she might be accused in future of offences of witchcraft. Sense at last was beginning to prevail

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to thank you for coming here today to witness an unfair and biased trial against two women who lived in Prestonpan 327 years ago. I earnestly hope that we shall never see the like of that trial again. I thank you for coming along today to witness the trial of two women in Prestonpan who were never witches but only people who were victims of their own personalities, their attempts to survive in the face of the prejudices of their time.

THE CAULDRON

BY

ROY PUGH

Prologue

Act 1 – The Players

Mary, Queen of Scots
David Riccio
William Maitland of Lethington [Lennoxlove]

Prologue

Act 2 – The Players

Reverend Patrick Cook, Minister of Salt Preston Kirk
Agnes Aird
Margaret Auchinmoutie
Kirk Elders
Hector Wood
Robert Drummond

Act 3 – The Players

Rev Patrick Cook
Hector Wood
Robert Drummond
Agnes Aird
Margaret Auchinmoutie
Christian Blaikie
Margaret Butter
Martha Butter
Helen Gibson
Janet Gray
Margaret Hall

Finale – The Players

As for Act 3

Epilogue

PROLOUGE

You are about to witness events which took place several centuries ago in Edinburgh and in Prestonpans. The first Act takes place in the year 1563, when the Witchcraft Act was signed by Mary, Queen of Scots that was to set in motion the witch hunt in Scotland. Acts 2 and 3 describe the events which led up to the trial of eight particular women in Prestonpans in the year 1661.

It is important to remember that while a similar act against witchcraft was passed by Elizabeth I of England, witchcraft there was regarded as a crime against society and therefore was treated as a felony under the civil law; those found guilty in England were punished accordingly, not always by capital punishment. On the Continent and in Scotland, the notion of witchcraft was fundamentally religious and involved Satan, the Anti-Christ, the enemy of all mankind. His followers – witches and wizards (warlocks in Scotland) were believed to have given up their immortal souls in exchange for supernatural powers. In doing so, they were considered to have renounced Christ's teachings, rejected his love and given up their salvation, which was rewarded by immortality in the after-life. On the Continent, witchcraft was heresy, an offence against the laws of both God and man. The Continental view came to Scotland with Protestant reformers such as George Wishart and John Knox in the 16th century.

Those who practised witchcraft would burn in the fires of Hell, having lost their immortal souls to the Devil. Thus it was a crime against both man and God and it was punishable by death in Scotland. Those that were guilty were 'werrit' [*strangled or garrotted*] then their bodies were consumed by fire, as no witch could be interred in consecrated ground.

It is also important to recognise that the victims of the Scottish witch hunt – shadowy figures of which we know little other than their names – were consigned to their fate largely because of hysteria, hypocrisy, superstition, jealousy, greed and anti-social behaviour. The male-dominated Kirk of Scotland denounced witches as abominations, the weaker vessels who were more prone to the Devil's influence by their very nature. Unacceptable behaviour such as bearing bastard children or taking other womens' husbands from them was proof of witchcraft. This is important, for both occur in the play you are about to witness. The Scottish witch hunt was partly a result of confrontation between the reforming fathers of the Scottish Kirk and John Knox in particular and the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots. Catholicism was heresy in Knox's eyes; so was witchcraft. It could be said that Mary was the arch-architect of the witch hunt. I believe that with his bitter and unrelenting attacks on Catholicism – heresy – Knox undoubtedly had a hand in the Witchcraft Act of 1563 in Scotland.

ACT I

[Scene: A dimly lit stage with small table and 3 chairs. Scene opens with Mary Queen of Scots kneeling at prayer with her rosary. There is a gentle knocking stage left. She rises, kisses her beads and sits at the table]

Queen Pray enter.

[David Riccio enters stage left, bows to her and stands upstage]

Queen Good Davey, tis pleasure to see thee but the hour is late. Wherefore come ye here?

Riccio Pray forgive me your Highness. David Riccio begs his liege's pardon and her forgiveness for troubling you at your devotions at this late hour. But I have of words with you before the morning.

Queen Tis of little consequence good Davey. My devotions are complete. Shall you partake of a little wine, or supper?

Riccio Nay, my lady for I have already supped and would keep my head unfuddled for the tidings I bear. I am come to warn you that Secretary Lethington is near. He seeks an audience with your gracious Majesty.

Queen Know you the nature of Secretary Lethington's visitation at this late hour?

Riccio Tis concerning the Parliament which meets on the morrow, when your Highness shall attend to give assent to several Acts of Parliament to be enforced within your kingdom.

Queen *[wearily]* Yet cannot the matter be resolved on the morrow? I would be abed at this hour.

Riccio Nay, my Lady. Secretary Lethington urgently wishes to confer with your Majesty upon one Act of the Parliament, that concerning the law regarding Witchcraft and those that practise the abominable craft in the service of the Devil. Secretary Lethington would warn you that there are those in the Parliament that are evilly counselled. Such counsellors would confound you before the Parliament in this matter, for as your Highness knows, there are many that speak against your Catholic person.

Queen I follow you not, Davey. The Parliament has prepared an act that will outlaw Witchcraft and witches, for they are abominations in the sight of the Lord. Tis but a simple matter. As Sovereign of the realm, I gladly give my assent to this Measure, for twill protect my subjects and God's holy church.

Riccio But that is not the whole of it, your Majesty.

Queen How so?

Riccio Your Majesty speaks of God's Holy Church. There are those who would challenge ye as to

the meaning of these words. Some of those of the Reformed Church of this realm would seek to confound ye in this matter. Tis common knowledge that your Majesty openly celebrates Mass in the Chapel of the palace.

Queen *[wearily]* Must I be tormented yet more about my faith? This constant bickering wearies me. Have I not suffered enough at the hands of Master Knox in the matter? *[She thumps the table]*. I shall not be dictated to by a commoner, nay nor his brethren. I worship in the manner of my ancestors, my mother and father that are lately dead. I do not force my religion upon my people. I do not order them to worship as I do. So why should they seek to force me to worship in their way?

Riccio Tis well known how Master Knox has vexed your Highness. Secretary Maitland fears that he will endeavour to tamper with the Witchcraft Act in a manner that it may be invoked against heretics as well as witches. For Master Knox makes no secret of his views regarding the Catholic faith and those that follow the teachings and trappings of the Church of Rome, whom he publicly and daily denounces as heretics. Tis upon this point that Secretary Lethington wishes to consult your Majesty. He fears that Master Knox will seek to include heretics in the new law.

Queen *[angry]* Will no man in this realm rid me of this troublesome priest?

Riccio Mayhap Secretary Lethington shall address that matter, my Lady. Shall I bid him enter?

Queen *[wearily]* Aye, bring to us, good Davey.

[Riccio exits stage left and returns immediately with Lethington]

Queen Good Secretary Maitland, ye are right welcome even though the hour is late. Pray be seated. Davey has acquainted me upon the fears for the morrow, when I shall put my name to the Witchcraft Act framed by the Parliament. How say ye the matter shall be resolved?

Lethington Your Majesty, I have no intelligence upon the attendance of Master Knox at Holyrood upon the morrow but tis certain that his followers shall be present. They wish to discomfit ye. The ploy is this. The act anent the witches that are known to walk abroad in this realm rightly condemns those that practise sorcery, witchcraft and necromancy. Those that have put forward the law that shall be brought against them consider a witch as a heretic, yet that word does not appear in the act. Ye know that Master Knox believes that those who worship in the form of the Catholic faith, those that attend Mass are heretics. Ye know this from his preachings. To permit the inclusion of the word heretic in the law would consign to death every Catholic in this realm. And ye know that would include your Majesty herself as well as Master Riccio, who is of like faith.

Queen I see it plain, yet ye have not offered anything that would resolve the problem. Have I not

been lenient with my people, allowing them to worship in the manner they choose? Countless times Master Knox has vexed upon this matter, with his foul threats and impudent behaviour. Tis I, not he, who is sovereign of this realm. I shall not be his servant, nor shall I be treated as a common whore, which name he uses of me. The whore of Rome. I have the body of a woman but I have the stomach of a man. I shall not allow him nor his like to challenge our authority.

Lethington

Knox or his man shall argue that witchcraft is heresy in the eyes of God. That is right. They will further argue that those who refuse to adhere to the true reformed religion of Scotland are heretics and no better than the witches this act shall condemn.

Queen

I am well apprised of this, for ye have stated it before. How shall we answer the charge?

Lethington

I shall put this to Knox and his men. The Witchcraft Act is writ in such manner to effect the will of your Majesty's government. I shall argue that the act is not the law of God, which is to be found in Holy Scriptures. Tis the will of your Parliament whose law does not masquerade as God's Law.

Riccio

Yet they shall surely counter this by insisting that these laws are one and the same. Tis what the Protestants believe in Europe, though not in England, our neighbour. And the Reformation came to Scotland by way of Europe. The Protestant teaching of John Calvin of France was seeded in this realm by Master Knox.

Lethington

Tis as ye say, Master Riccio. But I shall argue against the detractors in this manner. In Holy Scripture, in the Book of Genesis, it is writ in Chapter 22, verse 18 that God ordained this:

'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live'

Holy Scripture does not say thou shalt not suffer a heretic to live. Those men of Knox's mind cannot argue against that, for the Witchcraft Act enshrines the word of God. But I know naught of God's mind upon the treatment that shall be meted out to heretics. Perhaps he was lax in the matter, or he may have handed down words to the Prophet Moses that were dark or were obscured. For Moses was concerned that his people should follow the Lord. They were not heretics, even if at times they practised evil. Your Majesty, I put this to ye. Though Catholicism may be abhorrent to Master Knox, its adherents love the Lord Jesus Christ. They cannot be accused of heresy thereby. Witch heretics are the enemies of Christ, the followers of Satan. Master Knox and his followers shall be reminded of this on the morrow, when ye put your name to the act that shall make outlaws of those who practise the Black Arts.

Queen

[Clapping her hands] Well spoken, Secretary Maitland! I am reminded of how faithfully ye served my mother, Mary of Guise. Now ye serve me in equal and admirable fashion. Bravo. My counsellors did well to appoint ye as one of my principal ministers. Shall ye partake of wine, to celebrate the victory over Master Knox and his evil men?

Lethington Nay, your Majesty, for I have much work to achieve by candle light, even though tis almost Midsummer. The morrow is the fourth of June, when daylight is almost of equal light to the night. Twill be a long morrow.

Queen As you wish, good Maitland. I am much pleased with your counsel. But pray advise me upon the witches in this realm. Are they in great number? I know not of their numbers, I regret to say.

Lethington Tis said that there are such creatures in the shire of Fife, in the Lothians and in the Borders, that area which we call the Debatable Shire in Scotland. Some say that the whole of your realm is afflicted by the Creatures, though I have no intelligence upon the matter. There are many others not guilty of the witchcrafts this act of Parliament shall remove from our midst, those who would seek to depose your Majesty from her rightful throne. But there are those among your subjects that would come to your side and that will protect ye from human harm. This act of the Parliament ye will sign on the morrow shall protect your subjects from the Devil and his servants.

Queen I am well pleased with ye, Secretary Lethington. Ye have shewn yourself a true servant of your queen. Good Davey, let this be known among my counsellors. God be with ye both, Davey and Lethington, my true friends.

Riccio/
Lethington And with ye your Highness. Can I get you a drink, Madam?

[They bow and walk backwards from the stage. As he reaches the door stage left, Riccio bows yet again]

Riccio Good night, my Queen, my protector, my lady. May God attend ye in sleep and upon the morrow. May he watch over ye this night and the many nights that lie afore ye.

Queen *[moving towards him and kissing the fingertips of his right hand]* Sleep ye also well, my good Davey. I would have ye at my side upon the morrow but it cannot be, for there are those who are jealous of ye. No matter, we shall share wine tomorrow eve, when the work of Parliament is done. Begone now, for ye should be abed, as should I. Goodnight, my faithful servant, may ye rest in peace.

[Lights dim gradually as Mary, Queen of Scots exits stage left]

ACT 2

It is the year 1661, almost a century after the passing of the Witchcraft Act by Mary, Queen of Scots. The Reformed Church of Scotland is now firmly established as the official state religion and therefore no longer faces the threat of a Catholic backlash, as had been possible in Mary Queen of Scots time. By now, witches are no longer perceived or described as heretics as were Catholics; they are now regarded as the Anti-Christ, in league with Satan. In the intervening 98 years, several thousand people of Scotland have been put to death for the supposed crime of witchcraft. Few were guilty, for only a small minority believed they possessed supernatural powers. A good proportion of the victims were herbalists or wise-wives, midwives, servants and beggars. By far the greatest number were ordinary people, neighbours who quarrelled with one another over some petty domestic matter and cursed one another.

This case concerns a feud between two groups of women over marital infidelity and the production of two illegitimate children. One group accuses the other, which responds with counter-accusations, a common feature. The Kirk of course aided and abetted this, as it was in its interests to control the population and bring supposed suspects to account for their bad behaviour. It was done in the name of God.

I now invite you to imagine you are the congregation of the Parish Kirk of Salt Preston, as Prestonpans was then called on a Sabbath morning in the year 1661. The minister of the day, the Reverend Patrick Cook, has just finished his sermon and will now address the congregation on the matter of witchcraft in the parish. In the congregation are two women, Margaret Auchinmoutie and Margaret Hall.

[Hall and Auchinmoutie enter. Their faces are hidden behind shawls and they sit at the back of the hall. Lights come up. At a table on the dais are seated the Rev Patrick Cook flanked on either side by elders Hector Wood and Robert Drummond]

Cook Here endeth the lesson. Now tis my duty to advert to an unpleasant matter. Ye who are Christians that dwell under the Lord's love and follow the true Religion of this realm, know ye this. Witchcraft, that abomination against the Lord daily increaseth in this parish, evidence of which I shall endeavour to bring to your notice. For tis my bounden duty as the Lord's servant to bring to justice they that are witches. *[Thumps the table]* Why, this very day, the abominable creatures walk among ye in the streets of Salt Preston without let or hindrance and ye do naught to bring them to the Kirk's attention, nor do ye inform upon them. I call upon Brother Wood to enlighten us upon the matter.

Wood Thank ye, Maister Cook. Twas lately reported to me the names of diverse women in the parish that are suspectit o' witchcraft by habit and by repute. Some do say that Salt

Preston is a veritable cauldron in which seethes the souls o' mony a Christian man and woman, that they are cast into it by the loathsome creatures callit witches.

Cook A cauldron ye say? Near every dwelling place in the parish has a cook pot. What makes this cauldron different from the cook pots?

Wood Tis hard to say, Maister, though some say tis fashioned with the images o'serpents which as ye ken are the Deil's servants. We would hae tae seek it in every dwelling hoose in the parish and even then, are no' likely tae discover it, as the witches would hide it.

Cook Are there none in the congregation that have knowledge of this cauldron? Or the creatures called witches? Have any here present this day discovered them? Surely there is someone-

1st Voice *[Hall]* Aye Maister, Ah ken a few.

2nd Voice *[Auchinmoutie]* As do I, Maister.

Cook Shall ye not approach the pulpit or show yourselves?

Both Nay, Maister.

Cook Why do ye hesitate to come forward or stand and be recognised?

Wood For we are feared that there micht be some o' their friends present l' the Kirk that shall betray us to the coven, that they micht torment us again.

Cook I understand ye. But do ye know there is a box in the Kirk where ye may write their names on a paper, though ye are not required to sign it.

Hall Aye, we ken it Maister, but me and ma neighbour cannae write.

Cook Tis a sad business. Shall ye remain behind after divine service then? That ye may speak with the Brothers and me?

Auchinmoutie Nay, Maister, but we shall come l' the kirk efter dark some nicht. For there are some in the parish o' Salt Preston that watch us.

Cook So be it.

[Lights go out for a few seconds, then come on again. Standing are Cook, Wood and Drummond. Hall and Auchinmoutie stand before them]

Cook Tis upon evil night of rain and wind that ye come to us.

Hall Aye, Maister, there are nane but us abroad. Twas why hae we come tae ye this nicht

Cook Sisters, holy kirk shall protect ye from all evil. Ye need fear naught for ye are baptised and walk in the ways of the Lord, are ye not?

Both Aye, Maister.

Cook Now to the business. Shall ye give us the names of the evil ones that torment ye?

Auchinmoutie *[softly, a little afraid]* Aye, Maister. They are callit Christian Blaikie, Margaret Butter, Helen Gibson, Agnes Aird and Janet Gray.

Hall Margaret, ye hae forgot Martha Butter, Margaret Butter's kinswoman. She wis accusit o' witchcraft twa years syne in the parish o' Travernent though she wis set free, for they said there wis nae proof o' her wickedness.

Cook Master Wood, ye shall write the names in the defaulters' book.

Wood Tis done, Maister Cook. I ken these women and the Butter woman that was accusit in Tranent in the year sixteen hunnert and fifty nine. They said there was no' enough evidence to prove her guilt. She and the ithers are backsliders. They are oft absent frae the Kirk on the Sabbath on accoot o' their habits.

Cook And pray inform me of the nature of these habits?

Wood Why Maister, they smook and drink small beer at the parish inns. Maister Drummond and I hae aft warned them o' the consequences. They heed us for a whiles, that they might be excused frae sittin' on the penitential stool, then they sin again.

Cook Were they at service upon the Sabbath past?

Drummond Nay, Maister.

Cook Ye must discipline them again. But I put it to ye, Brothers. These may be sins and bad though they are, they warrant only a term on the stool. Their habits do not make of them witches. [*Turning to Hall and Auchinmoutie*]. There must be other crimes and sins of which they are guilty. Speak sisters, for ye have called them witches. For what reason? Worry not, the kirk shall protect ye.

Hall We wis feared tae speak upon the Sabbath past, lest Ah be tormented again. They are strong in evil, these women, michtily strong.

Cook Come Mistress Hall, ye may speak freely, for the Kirk shall protect your name and your person. What is the nature of their sin? Is it so that these women have ceased to believe in doctrines of the Kirk and are not afraid of its discipline? Have they renounced their baptisms?

Hall Ah ken nocht about these matters.

Cook Do they speak against the Lord and disdain to adore Christ? They are regularly absent from divine services, so we may take it that is the case.

Hall As ye say, Maister.

Cook What other proof have ye of their wickedness?

Auchinmoutie Ye maun ask them when they last received the sacrament, for tis weel kened that witches cannae take the holy breid and the sacred wine.

Cook Have ye any knowledge of this, Brothers?

Wood and Drummond Nay, Maister Cook.

Cook Mistress Hall, ye said that ye were afraid they would torment ye again. They have done so before?

Hall Aye, Maister. Upon Candlemas Eve this year, the first day o' the month o' February. A'budy kens that nicht is ane when witches forgather to make their mischief an' their spells an' charmin's.

Auchinmoutie Mistress Hall speaks truly, for Ah was there that nicht.

Cook And what was the nature of the torment?

Hall Weel Maister, the nicht was dark as tis i' that month, it bein' winter. Ah was sat at the fireside wi' ma bairn, warmin' her afore Ah laid her intil the cradle. Ah heard a noise ootside in the yaird. It wis like rats claws scraitchin' on the stane stair. Ah pit the bairn tae her bed and went oot tae the stair wi' a caunle tae licht me. There was naught tae be seen. Then as Ah was turnin' tae the door, oot o' the shadows steppit Christian Blaikie and Helen Gibson. Ah sayed tae them "Whit dae ye here at this oor o' nicht, when guid Christians are a-bed?" They hissed at me like cats, and snakes then they pointed at me. Then Christian Blaikie did say that Ah wid seethe in the cauldron that they had lit for me. She sayed twas Hell's cauldron, intil which witches the like o' me were put. When Ah askit for why she wad cry me a witch, she sayed "Weel ye ken. For ye hae laid the glamour upon ma man and the men o' ma freends"

Cook What is the meaning of this glamour?

Wood Tis bewitching and chairming, Maister, the ploy o' witches that wish tae lead Christian men into wickedness.

Cook Ye mean evil and unlawful fornication?

Wood Aye, Maister. Ye ken that Margaret Hall and Margaret Auchinmoutie hath borne bairns oot o' wedlock, for which they were chastised upon the stool o' penitence a year or so syne.

Cook Ah, yes, I recall it.

Auchinmoutie [*Shamefully*] Aye, Maister, Ah am ashamed tae admit it wis so but Mistress Hall an' masel hae done oor penance. We hae niver fallen syne that time.

Cook But ye never named the fathers. Twas a sin not to name them, for the Kirk would have disciplined them also for their lewdness. Shall ye name them this night?

Hall Nay, Maister. We cannae, for tis the men o' them we callit witches whae faithered oor bairns.

Cook Ye mean that there were not two men but several? Ye have named six women. God save us! There is much boiling in this cauldron of sin. What more is there?

Auchinmoutie Nae mair, Maister, Ah swear it. Mony the nicht Ah prayed for the Lord's forgiveness, for Ah' m that ashamed.

Hall As hae I, Sir.

Cook And so ye should, ye are likened to the whore Mary of Magdalen, whom Christ saw fit in his mercy to forgive. How many men hae ye lain with?

Hall Some that are spouse tae the women we hae named.

Cook *[Looking appalled]* Tis no wonder they called ye witches. Did ye bewitch them by this glamour ye speak of? Did ye take them into your beds for unlawful intercourse willingly and wilfully?

Auchinmoutie Nay, Maister, we didnae put the glamour upon them. They comed tae oor dwellings wi' mony tales o' their womenfolk's wickedness an' their coldness, sayin' that they lacked Christian charity. They sayed they were witches that had gien their souls tae the Deil, for they were without a heart an' a soul.

Cook Did they themselves call their spouses witches?

Hall Aye, Maister, twas their word. And mair than yince, as Ah recall.

Cook So they would admit it in an assize?

Auchinmoutie Ah dinnae ken, Maister. But Ah wad.

Cook So be it, but twould go better if the men did so. Now, ye have brought bastards into the parish. Did ye do this willingly? Or did the men force themselves upon ye. Speak up, for tis an important point.

Hall *[sobbing]* We did it willingly, Maister, for we hae nae men o' oor ain.

Cook *[thumps the table with his hand]* Ye are evil creatures that are worthy of the name witch. How many men did ye permit into your beds?

Hall There were twa cam tae me.

Auchinmoutie Twas three that cam tae me, Maister.

Cook *[Angrily]* OH! OH! May the Lord have mercy on ye. Ye are as wicked as those ye denounce as witches!

Hall Oh, dinnae say it Maister, we were ashamed and we hae payed the price. Forbye, we hae sinned nae mair and gang tae the kirk every Sabbath.

Cook Shall ye tell us of your transgressions, Mistress Hall?

Hall Ah shall but Ah shall not gie their names. The first was a young man. He wis kind tae me and brocht me a ribbon for ma hair. The second wis a man of mair years than masel'. He aye had partaken o' ale for he sayed he wis ashamed o' his wickedness bot that he wished some kindness in his miserable life. He sayed his wife was cauld and wouldnae lie wi' him. He kneeled afore me an' pit his heid upon ma lap. He wis weepin' and said that Ah had yince smiled upon him at Salt Preston market an' that twas the first smile he had kenned in mony a year.

Cook Tis no reason for ye to have sinned.

Hall Ah ken that sairly, Maister. Yet that nicht, Ah took peety upon the puir man for his een was richt sair frae weepin'. Kind eyes he had, yet he was troubled. Ah took him intil ma bed, tae comfort him. Mayhap he is faither tae ma bairn though Ah dinnae ken for sure. Only the guid Lord kens.

Cook Woman! Ye are a sinner indeed! Margaret Hall and Margaret Auchinmoutie, ye have disgraced yourselves in the eyes of the Lord and in the Kirk. Ye have transgressed with several unnamed persons whose spouses have rightly accused ye of bewitching their menfolk. In their sight, ye are witches if not by repute, by your habits. However, ye have already confessed your sin to the Kirk and have suffered the discipline that it imposes upon such as ye. But now the Kirk shall have to investigate this new accusation of bewitching, that it may be dealt with in proper fashion.

Hall *[falling on her knees]* Oh, Maister Cook, Ah'm nae witch, nor is my neebour Mistress Auchinmoutie! We are but foolish women whae hae mended oor ways. We hae brocht twa bastard bairns intil the warld. There is but ane noo, for ma bairn fell seik efter they women visited ma hoose upon Candlemas Eve. The wee thing seikened and de'ed but a few weeks efter. Tis they that should be brocht tae justice, no' us. They hae callit us witches but they hae mair than the death o' an innocent bairn for tae answer tae the Lord.

Cook Explain yourself.

Hall We hae seen them gaun oot tae the wids efter dark, tae gaither herbs for their spells.

Auchinmoutie Aye, an' mair. They lichtit fires and danced wi' the Deil, chantin' unco' words. They sayed that they went oot at nicht tae get herbs for the cauldron, for tis weel kent that certain herbs gaithered at midnight are stronger and better for their purpose. Ah wid like tae ken for whit purpose they gaithered the herbs. Ah think twas no' for a stew or rabbit or cushy doo. Why, Maister, Ah believe twas for evil. Mistress Hall's bairn wis healthy and fat that nicht o' Candlemas. The nixt mornin' twas seikly and lookit as though twere shrivelled like an auld man. They had pit upon it a spell, tae punish us for oor transgressions against their menfolk, which we hae admitted in the Kirk. They wished tae destroy the bairn for twas livin' proof o' their mens' unfaithfulness. Ah feared for ma ain bairn, though thankfully, twas spared on account o' the baptism twas given be yir ain guid hands. Mistress Aird's bairn wis ta'en afore twas baptised, as ye ken.

Cook Ah, yes, I recall it. Mistress Hall, ye were given added discipline for the sin. Ye know that the child's soul went straight to the Devil for it lacked the protection that Kirk baptism bestows upon those born in Jesus. Shame upon ye, that ye consigned an innocent bairn to Hell.

Hall *[weeping]* Oh Ah ken it sair, Maister! Ah hae lived wi' that terrible sin they past months.

Cook Now, I wish to confer with my Brothers about this business. *[He motions to Wood and Drummond to accompany him stage right, where they whisper for a few moments. The three then return to the table]*

Cook Mistress Hall and Mistress Auchinmoutie, if these ye have accused for witches are

proven to be so, then ye have done much service to the Kirk. We shall speak them in due course. If they be witches, they could not pray nor attend divine service for fear of discovery. Tis true they are backsliders and they are not fair in countenance, being not good to look upon. But these things do not in themselves make of them witches, so we shall interrogate them to learn more of their wrongdoing. Now ye maun depart, for Masters Wood and Drummond and I have need to consult the Session. We shall speak again, after the Session has convened. Ye have done a Christian duty this day, yet ye are not blameless in this matter. Depart and go with God. See that ye sin no more for God is watching you.

[Hall and Auchinmoutie exit stage left]

Cook Now then, what shall we make of this evil that is in our midst?
Wood Tis clear tae me Maister Cook that there is mair tae this than meets the eye. Ah'm of a mind tae say that the women Hall and Auchinmoutie are themsels guilty o' witchcraft.
Drummond As am I. Tis bad enough they hae brocht bastards intae Salt Preston. Tis the manner of their bringing that distresses me.
Cook I agree. But this is a matter for the Session, not for we. And what of the others that are accused? Are they guilty also? I am thinking that this is indeed a cauldron, yet of a different kind fashioned to make soups and stews. Did they not threaten to seethe Hall and Auchinmoutie in their cauldron? Twas hardly said lightly. Twas in the nature of a curse.
Drummond These wummin say they do not belong tae a coven, yet the one lot hae accusit the other o' the crime o' witchcraft. Tis ane side o' the coin tae absent themsels frae divine services upon the Sabbath tae drink small beer, smoak pipes and sing and dance. Tis anither tae curse and threaten wi' spells and charms. An' the glamour. They are a' the ploys o' them that practise the Black Airts. An' forbye, there is the death o' the bairn Hall. They are nane o' them free frae sin an' evil. They are a' tainted and they shall taint others in Salt Preston. Maister Cook, ye ken whit the Guid Book says. Thou shalt not suffer a witch tae live. Tis found in Exodus chapter 22 verse 18.
Cook Ye have no need to remind me, Master Drummond. Now, we maun call a meeting of the Session that we may examine the entire business. Ye are agreed upon the matter?
Both Aye.
Wood Aye an' as soon as is convenient, Maister. We hae nae time tae lose. The creatures are abroad in the streets, workin' mair evil for all we ken.
Cook Ye shall act as witnesses in the matter of Hall and Auchinmoutie. But ye maun visit the other women that we may learn of their side of this abominable tale. We shall have need

of their testimonies before the Session meets, that all know the names and the natures and doings of all that are involved. Go ye with grace and speed, with God in your minds and hearts.

[Lights dim as they exit stage left. Lights go up again]

ACT 3

[A dimly lit stage where six women are seated at a table. They are Christian Blaikie, Helen Gibson, Margaret Butter, Martha Butter, Janet Gray and Agnes Aird]

Blaikie Sisters, we are gaitherit here this nicht for evil hae been done tae us be Margaret Hall and Margaret Auchinmoutie, whae are rank witches. Ye maun ken that they hae handit us intil the Kirk, saying we are witches. We ken whae the real witches are. Them that put the glamour on oor menfolk and took them intil their beds. An' they gien birth to twa bit bairns that were proof o' their bewitchin' an' their wickedness.

Margt Butter Aye, Mistress Blaikie, we ken the maist o' it. The witches Hall and Auchinmoutie hae gien oor names tae the Meenister. Noo we await a visitation frae the elders. Twill follow as day follows nicht, for the Kirk has oor names.

Gibson They are rank evil witches, baith o' them. They wranged us through oor menfolk. Noo they wrang us through the Kirk. Whit can we dae aboot them? Shall we no' gaun tae the Kirk and hae oor say afore the elders come?

Gray Aye, Ah think we should.

Aird Fie, Janet. Ah wad rather settle the score in the wey o' ordinair folk. Tis surely the best wey.

Martha Butter Mistress Aird,. that wad be foolish, for the Kirk wad say we were as bad as they. Forbye, ye forget that me an' Mistress Gibson were accusit o' witchcraft in Travernent but twa years syne. We were let aff, but the Kirk has a lang memory.

Blaikie Mistress Aird, hoo wad ye go about the matter?

Aird We should gaun tae their hooses again like the last time. On Candlemas Eve. We should knock upon their doors an' gie them a guid hidin', then we should warn them that there must be nae mair said aboot us for bein' witches, or else the Auchinmoutie bairn will gaun they wey o' the Hall bairn.

Margt Butter Och save us frae this daftness! They i' the Kirk will say we torment them mair an' that we are richtly accusit o' witchcraft. As Martha sayed, she an' Helen Gibson hae a'ready been

accusit twa years syne. The maisters hae lang memories, they forget naught. Forbye, the name Butter is no' common in Salt Preston.

Gray

So we dae naught then?

Blaikie

Aye. Let us await the visit frae the elders, when we maun make oor plea. Tis the best by far, that we keep the maisters sweet. Wrangit innocence is oor best wey. The maisters shall be mair kind tae us thereby. Tis oor best protection.

Martha Butter

Weel spoken. But me and Helen Gibson ken anither wey tae silence the bitches Hall and Auchinmoutie.

Blaikie

Whit wey is that?

Martha Butter

We maun mak likenesses o' the baith o' them. In caunle grease. Shall ye store yir caunle grease for the ploy?

Blaikie

Ah hae heard o' this afore, a ploy that witches use tae rid theirsels o' them that torment them. They say that some roast the likeness ower an open fire, while ithers stick preens and bodkins intil it.

Gibson

Nae matter how tis done, tis secret. Twill ne'er be fund oot. Tis the best wey Mistress Blaikie. Ma mither tocht me the wey o' it. Twas the wey she rid hersel' o' ma faither, whae abused her. Aye and me as weel, when ma ain man wis cruel tae me, damn his ill-getted soul. *[She spits on the floor]*

Blaikie

Ah dinnae care for this. If we were fund oot-

Martha Butter

In Travernent parish, Ah did the same. An' Ah wis freed. But the guilty yin Ah tormented perishit. She wis guilty

Blaikie

Sisters! We maun vote upon the matter! Are ye agreed upon the ploy?

All

[save Blaikie] Aye!

Blaikie

Ah like it not but the turn is done. Martha and Helen shall await yir caunle grease, that they micht fashion the images o' Margaret Hall an' Margaret Auchinmoutie.

[Lights dim for a few seconds then go up again. Martha Butter and Helen Gibson are seated at a table. Each has a waxen image or doll in their left hand. They are sticking pins into the images. Watching them are Margaret Butter, Agnes Aird and Janet]

Gray.

Christian Blaikie enters from stage left]

Margt Butter

Tis richt guid that ye come, Christian, we maun bide the gither.

Martha Butter

Ye are richt welcome. *[Holding up the image]* This is Margaret Hall.. A foul fiend that took ma man frae me.

Gibson

An' this is Margaret Auchinmoutie, that took mine. May they baith see the in Hell's cauldron!

Blaikie

Hae a care sisters! Twould gae agin us were the Kirk session kent whit ye dae this nicht!

Martha Butter Ah care nocht for they creatures. They cannae right the evil that hae been done tae us. But we are able. Come Christian, shall ye no' stick a preen in the doll, for ye hae been wrangit like we. Or mayhap ye wad like tae licht a caunle under it, for they say twill bring on the sweatin' seikness.

Blaikie Ah'm feared tae dae it. For the maisters hae fowk abroad, keekin' in the windaes, watchin' fowk like we.

Martha Butter Ach, awa' wi' ye. They ken nocht. Tis late. They are a' abed.

[There is a loud knocking at the door stage right. A voice calls out. 'Hae nae fear within, for tis me Hector Wood an Robert Drummond, come tae speak wi' ye. Are ye hame?']

Blaikie *[snatching the dolls from the two women and hiding them under her apron]* Margaret, lass. Let them in!

[Margaret Butter opens the door stage right. Wood and Drummond enter. They doff their hats and bow to the women]

Margt Butter Why Maisters, tis richt kind o' ye tae visit, though at sik a late oor. Micht Ah ken for why ye come sae late?

Wood Weel, Mistress, Ah wis feared for ye. For there be twa weemen that are lately evilly disposed tae ye. Yet Ah see ye hae the company o' freends this nicht. Tis guid. But Ah hae some questions tae ask of ye and your freends, for there hae been lodged l' the Kirk a severe chairge upon ye here this nicht.

Gray Tis richt kind that the Kirk cares about me an' ma freends. Whae has gien ye a chairge agin us?

Drummond We are no' allowed tae say at this time. But ye ken them, for they are residenters in Salt Preston.

Blaikie Tis weel ye care for us, Maisters. But tis a cauld nicht. Shall ye no' hae some broth frae the cauldron? Ah hae a fu' pot o' it ben the hoose.

Wood Ah thank ye, Mistress, but we cannae bide lang, for we hae ither Kirk business this nicht.

Gray Ah ken ye wark mony days and nichts fur the Kirk. Twas kind o' ye tae come tae ma door. But ye dinnae say why ye come.

Wood Tis ma sad duty tae tell ye we come on the orders o' the Session, for ye an' yir friends hae been accusit o' a terrible crime.

Gray Ye stunner me. Pray whit is the crime ye speak o'?

Drummond Tis a fell sair crime. Ah'm saddened tae say tis the crime o' witchcraft.

Gray Oh ma God! Dae ye hear this sisters? They hae accusit us o' witchcraft! *[She puts her*

hands to her face, as does Martha Butter and Helen Gibson. In doing so, Christian Blaikie drops the images she has been hiding under her apron]

Blaikie *[trying to kick them away]* Oh, Maister Wood, whae has accusit me an ma freens o' the evil?

Wood *[looking down at the images on the floor]* Weel, twas Margaret Hall and Margaret Auchinmoutie. But pray Mistress, whit hae we here?

Martha Butter *[snatching the images from the floor]* Tis but playthings for oor bairns.

Drummond Micht Ah look upon the playthings, Mistress?

Gibson Ach Maister, tis but dollies we fashioned for the bairns.

Wood That may be the wey o' it. Mayhap tis so. But ye ken weel enough that the Kirk forbids images o' any kind. Why, did we no' rid the Kirk o' images near a hundert years syne, when the reforming faithers pit them tae the horn? Graven images are the wark o' the Deil an' his man in Rome, the Pope.

Blaikie But Maister, tis but bairns' playthings.

Wood So be it, Mistress Blaikie. The playthings o' bairns. Weel, Maister Drummond, we hae seen enough. We maun gae upon oor wey. Good nicht tae ye all here gaithered.

All God be wi' ye, Maisters.

[Wood and Drummond exit stage right]

Blaikie Ah am richt gled they are gone. Martha and Helen, shall ye no' tak the images and pit them in the fire or the cauldron? We maun rid oorsels o' the things, for Maister Wood and Maister Drummond shall report this tae the Session.

Martha Butter Ye are richt, Mistress Blaikie. Twill be done on the morrow.

[A loud knocking at the door draws Christian Blaikie to the door stage right]

Blaikie Tis the Maisters! They hae come back! Quick, Martha, quick Helen, rid us o' the playthings. Cast them intae the fire!

[The door bursts open. In walk Wood and Drummond. They stride up to Martha Butter and Helen Gibson and snatch the images from their hands]

Wood Ye foul fiends! Ye shall no' rid yerselves o' the evidence. Gie up the images for we maun hae them for the Session. Ye hae tormented twa wummen in Salt Preston. They hae accusit ye o' witchcraft. Ah'm thinking the yin is as evil as t'ither. Ye shall a' be ta'en! Ye are a' witches! Ye are blasphemers, backsliders, drinkin' an' smoakin' upon the Sabbath.

They that accusit ye are whores that bewitched yir men be witchcraft. Ye are a' evil. Margaret Hall hae accusit ye o' murderin' her bastard bairn. Ye are guilty o' the crime o' witchcraft, all o' ye!

Drummond

An' Ah'm witness tae the foul deed!

Gray

[falling to her knees, clasping her hands] Nay, nay Maisters, twas but a harmless ploy. We fashioned the bit dolls for the bairns!

Wood

Then why cast them intae the fire? Answer me wumman or Ah shall tak a rod tae yer back.

Margt Butter

Oh, Maisters, Mistress Gray tells ye the truth. She was gaun tae burn the bit dolls lest the bairns thocht they were sugar dollies and wad come tae grief in the eatin' o' them.

Wood

Then why mak' them at a'? There is mair tae this than meets the eye. Come, Maister Drummond, we maun tak' the evil things tae the Session.

[Martha Butter barrs the door stage right with her person]

Margt Butter

Oh, please Maisters, let us hae them back that we can pit them tae the fire.

Wood

[threateningly] Or perhaps the cauldron ye keep in which ye seethe Christian souls? Noo get oot o' ma wey afore Ah tak' a besom tae yir back. Ye hae been accusit o' witchcraft afore Mistress Butter-

Martha Butter

But Ah wis set free!

Wood

Then if ye are nae witch, ye hae naethin' tae fear frae the Salt Preston Kirk Session. Noo get oot o' ma road, wumman! Ah command ye!

[She steps aside and allows Wood and Drummond to depart. Helen Gibson and Janet Gray are weeping into their aprons, Margaret Butter and Christian Blaikie are consoling them. Agnes Aird is slumped in a chair by the fire. Margaret Butter goes to the door and listens for a few seconds]

Margt Butter

Wheesht, wheesht! *[This to the weeping women. After a few seconds, she turns to them]* Aye they hae gone this time.

Gray

But no' for lang. They will come back. We shall a' be summonsed tae the kirk tae appear afore the Session upon the coming Sabbath.

Blaikie

[wringing her hands] Oh, Martha and Helen, why did ye fashion they dolls? We are nae witches. Tis Margaret Hall and Margaret Auchinmoutie that are the guilty yins. They be the witches.

Margt Butter

Aye, that they are, for they took oor men frae us. Noo sisters, we maun stick the gither and say the same words tae the Maisters when we are summonsed.

Blaikie

An' we maun pray earnestly that nocht ill befalls Hall and Auchinmoutie afore the

summonsing, lest they think twas ill that we hae causit them. Tis why we cannae cast the dolls into the flames for tis weel kenned that when witches dae that the man or wummin they wish tae torment aften fall seik or dees.

Gibson

Oh, whit hae Ah done, makin' graven images?

Blaikie

[moves to her side and puts her arm round her] Wheesht, now, twill be fine. We are nae witches. There is nae testimony agin us barr that o' Margaret Hall an' Margaret Auchinmoutie. We are six tae their twa. The Session will surely gie us credit fur that.. We hae nae powers, we are nae witches. If the Hall and the Auchinmoutie wummin become seik, tis no' o' oor daen'. Fever aft comes at this time o' year.

Gibson

Aye, we ken it but the Maisters will say twas oor evil that brocht it. Shall we no' gaun the gither tae the Minister i' the mornin' tae plead oor case? Ah wid gladly sit upon the repentance stool this very Sabbath if twould help.

Blaikie

Nay, Helen, tis ower soon. They wad think we had somethin' tae hide. They wad think it proof o' guilt. Nay, tis no' wise. We maun await the pleasure o' the Maisters, when they call us afore the Session. Are we a' agreed upon the matter?

All

Aye, Christian.

[Lights go out for a few seconds. When they come on again, the Minister, Patrick Cook sits at a table flanked by Hector Wood and Robert Drummond. The six women, Blaikie, Gibson, the two Butters, Agnes Aird and Janet Gray are standing on the stairs]

Cook

Come ye forward and stand before us.

[The six women move towards the table and stand in a row before the seated men and bow]

Blaikie

Good day, Maister Cook. An' to ye Maister Wood an' Maister Drummond. We are come here this morn tae plead for oor souls an' oor lives.

Cook

And why should ye do so?

Gibson

Oh, Maister, we ken that there are some in Salt Preston that hae accusit us o' witchcraft. Tis a rank lee. Mah friends an' me, we are nae witches.

All

Aye, tis the truth.

Cook

Then why did ye make graven images out of wax? Ye cannot deny this for Masters Wood and Drummond have borne witness to the fact. They have told me all of the other evening. What say ye to this?

Gibson

Maister, it wis but an innocent ploy, a daftness. They were but wee dolls for the bairns. There wis nae herm intended, nor did we wish tae make a nuisance o' oorselves afore the Session.

Cook The Session has yet to sit in judgement of ye all. Mayhap ye are aware that Mistress Hall was brought down with the sweating sickness two days syne. Mistress Auchinmoutie has suffered evil pains in her side syne yesterday. Is it not so, Brother Wood?

Wood *[nods]* Aye, Maister Cook. They are baith outworkers in the fields at Butterdean. Monday wis a cauld day an' they were sair wetted wi' the rain. But fever and pain dae not come on sae soon. The first, Margaret Hall fell seik the very nixt day efter Brother Drummond and I visited the hoose o' Helen Gibson. Margaret Auchinmoutie fell seik the day efter. Twas the nicht we fund Helen Gibson and Martha Butter wi' the images that they cry dolls for bairns.

Cook What was the likeness of these images?

Wood Ah cannae say, Maister, for they were badly formit. But tis ma opinion they had bore the faces o' Margaret Hall and Margaret Auchinmoutie.

Cook So be it. Is it a coincidence that these women have lately fallen sick? There are many in the parish that suffer from the sweatin' sickness.

Drummond Aye, that be so, Maister, but no' as quick as they women.

Cook So what have ye to say on the matter Helen Gibson?

Gibson Oh Maister, Ah ken nocht why this should be. Ye maun say that me an' ma friends sought tae wrang they wimmen be the fashionin' o' images. Please Maister, twas but a daft ploy for tae mak the bairns content.

Cook Then why did ye seek to destroy the images in the fire?

Gibson For fear they hermed the bairns, that micht hae suckit them as though they were sugar dollies, they bein' fashioned frae the white caunle grease.

Cook So ye cast them into the fire after ye were discovered with them?

Gibson Aye, Maister. But we had made tae dae that afore the maisters came tae ma hoose.

Cook *[shaking his head]* So say ye, yet when the Brothers came not once but twice, ye still had them. I put it tae ye Mistress that ye were of evil intent, ye and Martha Butter and your other accomplices. *[He thumps the table]* I put it to ye that ye consort with those that deal in the black arts. It is well kent that ye go to the woods at dark to gather herbs. And that ye make fires and dance and sing lewd songs and cavort.

Gray *[sobbing]* Oh Maister, tis me an' Mistress Blaikie that gathers the herbs for the pot, for tis said they are at their best at the hour o' midnight.

Cook Silence, woman!

Blaikie *[defiantly]* Ye ken whae the real witches are! Ye ken they are Margaret Hall and Margaret Auchinmoutie! Why dae ye persecute me an' ma freends whae hae been wrangit by these evil weemin? Is it no' so that the Kirk is for oor protection against the lewdness o' ithers an' that those that hae been fund tae be guilty o' unlawful and evil fornication are punished?

Cook Silence! If ye have been wronged by these women, why did ye not come to the Kirk. That was your Christian duty, yet ye chose to take the law into your own hands. Ye threatened the women, then they claimed ye put a curse upon Mistress Hall's bairn, that died afore it could be baptised. The soul therefore went straight to Hell and the Devil. Do ye not repent of that? Ye invoked evil to answer evil. Tis not the way of the Kirk, nor is it to be found in the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. Is that not so, Brothers?

Wood and Drummond Aye, tis the Christian wey.

Cook Have any of ye renounced your baptisms?

All Nay, Maister.

Cook Do ye attend divine service every Sabbath day?

All Aye, Maister.

Cook Do ye partake of the Communion regularly?

All Aye, Maister.

Cook *[raging]* Ye are liars! I have depositions from the Brothers Wood and Drummond that ye often are absent from divine service, that ye enter alehouses and smoke pipes, singing and dancing when ye should be in Kirk! Answer me, ye liars!

Blaikie Weel, Maister, mayhap Ah missed the service a time or twa.

Gibson An' me. But Ah didnae smoke nor partake o' ale.

Cook I do not propose to examine each and every one of you this morn, for that is a matter for the full Session. But it seems to me that ye have lit a fire beneath a cauldron of hate and have accused two women of witchcraft. That is a damnable business and it maun be addressed. Your transgressions against the Kirk have been noted and written down in the book of sederunt, so we shall discover the nature of your laziness and backsliding.

Blaikie Ah'm sorry for what Ah hae done. As are ma friends and neighbours. Are ye no' sorry?
[Turning to the others]

All Aye!

Cook Tis too late for that. Christian Blaikie, Agnes Aird, Margaret Butter, Martha Butter, Helen Gibson and Janet Gray, ye are to be examined by the Session in due course.

Aird Micht it please ye, Maister, but may Ah be excusit? Ah'm but lately come tae this business and-

Cook *[angry]* Silence woman! Ye were seen at the door of Margaret Hall's tenement upon Candlemas Eve, when the business begun. None shall be excused! As for ye Mistress Aird, I cannot recall seeing you at Divine Service for some time.

Aird Weel, Maister, Ah bide far frae Salt Preston. But Ah say ma prayers every Sabbath.

Cook Tis not enough. Were ye, Margaret Butter and Helen Gibson not lately accused of witchcraft in the parish of Travernent but two years syne?

Margt Butter Nay twas ma kinswoman, Martha. She and Mistress Gibson were set free.

Cook Upon insufficient evidence against them, I believe. Perhaps they bamboozled the assize upon that occasion. There were some from that trial in the year of sixteen hundred and fiftynine that had relatives among the suspects, some with names that seem uncommonly familiar to me. Witches often engage the ploy of changing their names as well as their appearances.

Wood It may be that we should speak on the matter with the Brethren in Travernent, Maister.

Cook Tis too late for that now, the assize is long disbanded. Forbye, I have written to the minister of that parish and he informed me that the papers upon the assize are destroyed. No matter, we shall address this present outbreak in our own parish. Ye women are all suspectit of witchcraft. That will be the decision of the Session, for the Brethren have already heard of these matters. Tis but a formality. And the women Hall and Auchinmoutie are also suspectit. *[Turning to Wood and Drummond]* We shall presently have the decision of the Session. However, ere that, we have need of the testimony of those that have accusit those that are here gathered. Master Drummond, ye shall bring in Margaret Hall and Margaret Auchinmoutie that they may answer for themselves.

[Drummond exits stage left and returns with the two women. The six women hiss at them. Christian Blaikie calls out.]

Blaikie Ye rank witches, ye are evil, the baith o' ye! Hoors and witches! Ye are foul fiends that daur show thirsels in this place!

Cook *[thumping the table]* Silence. I shall have none of this in the Lord's House!

Gibson Look at them, the spawn o' Satan! They took oor men intae thir beds be the glamour!

Margt Butter May ye seethe in Hell's cauldron and be roastit be the faggot's in Satan's fires!

Cook *[standing up and beating the table with both fists]* I shall have silence! Or else I shall have the magistrates to ye all. Ye shall have your say presently. *[Turning to Hall and Auchinmoutie]*. Now Mistress Hall and Mistress Auchinmoutie, shall we proceed. What is the precise nature of the charges ye bring against these six women?

Hall They did threaten us upon Candlemas Eve. They laid a spell upon ma bairn that de'ed a few weeks efter their visitation.

Aird *[shouting]* Twas just punishement for the wrang ye did tae me and mine! Ye bewitched ma man David Bald that he came tae yir hoose and yir bed.

Gray Aye, ye did the same wi' ma man, John Clorrat. For ye pit the glamour on them baith, and led them intae sin.

Hall Twas not we whae brocht them tae us, twas ye yirsels. We didnae pit the glamour upon them, for they cam for pity and comfort. They sayed ye had a' lain wi' the Deil and kent his caress, that ye were nae longer able to lie mortal men. An' the nicht o' Candlemas, ye cast spells upon me and Mistress Auchinmoutie. Ahe askit ye that nicht "Why come ye tae ma hoose at this oor o' nicht?" an' ye said twas tae punish us, aye an' tae bring hairm tae oor bairns for they were bastard bairns, born oot o' wedlock.

Auchinmoutie Tis true Maister Cook. They are cauld and hertless, that wad seek tae tak the life o' a babe in airms. They hae enterit intae a paction wi' the Deil. Ask their men, whae havenae lain wi' tir wives for a twelvemonth. Tis ye that are the foul fiends, that daur show themselves in this holy place!

Cook Enough! I shall not have this kind of talk in the Lord's House!

Gibson Tis ye that are the foul fiends! May ye seethe in Hell's cauldron!

Cook Shall ye be silent? Tis the last warning ye shall have. *[turning to Christian Blaikie]* Now Mistress, is it true ye and your neighbours have entered a paction with the Devil?

Blaikie Nay Maister Cook, Ah swear it. Ah'm a Christian an' Ah love the Lord.

Gibson Maister, she speaks the truth. We are a' Christians, even though we hae sometimes been absent frae divine services. The witches here are Margaret Hall and Margaret Auchinmoutie, the ill-getted bitches that are nae better than hoors!

Cook Yet ye have been found with graven images in your possession, images that are said to have been likeness of the two women that have accusit ye. Answer me for why ye did that, for tis a habit of witches.

Gibson Twis wrang o' us tae dae so.

Blaikie Aye, twas, as Ah sayed tae them at the time. Ah wisnae for makin' the images, but the turn wis done.

Cook Aye, twas so. I have heard enough. Ye shall all of ye appear afore the Session to answer for your behaviour. Master Wood, master Drummond, they shall be treated in the usual manner prescribed for those suspectit of witchcraft.

Drummond Aye, maister. They shall be lodged I' the Kirk spire as is custom. Already, Ah hae the names o' a dozen Brethren whae hae volunteered tae watch over the women day and nicht.

Cook Thank ye, Brother Drummond. *[Turning to the eight women]*. Now depart. But I give ye warning. If ye should attempt to leave Salt Preston, twill be seen as proof of your guilt. For the moment ye are free to go to your homes. Now I have much work to do. Good day to ye.

Blaikie When shall we ken o' the Session's decision, Maister?

Cook *[writing at the table does not look up]* Ye shall be informed when the time is right. Now go ye and let me get on with the work of the Lord.

[Lights go out]

FINALE

[Lights go up. Seated at a table are the Rev Patrick Cook, Hector Wood and Robert Drummond]

Cook Dearly beloved gathered here in the name of the Lord this fine Sabbath morning, ye may rejoice. For I have good news to bring ye. Lately, I spoke to ye on the terrible curse of witchcraft that has arisen in our parish of Salt Preston. Twas no rumour, for there were indeed several of the abominable creatures discovered in our midst. Thanks to our good Brothers in Christ, Master Hector Wood and Master Robert Drummond, whose efforts in finding the creatures have been robust, the Kirk Session seen fit to examine eight suspects who are residents in the parish. Shall ye proceed Master Wood?

Wood Thank ye Maister Cook. Maister Drummond and me first examined two women who had accusit six ithers o' havin' bewitched them an' laid upon them spells. Ane spell carryit aff a bairn that was no' baptised when it de'ed. As ye ken, the soul o' a bairn that is unbaptised and deid gangs straight tae Hell and the Deil. The crime was abominable, that a puir wee bairn become fodder for Hell. But that wisnae a' that these six women did. Shall ye speak Maister Drummond?

Drummond Aye, that I shall. Maister Wood and masel went tae visit the six weemin in the hoose o' ane o' the ringleaders. She an' anither were discoverit wi' wax images o' the twa weemin that had accusit them o' witchcraft. They had been stickin' preens intil the images for to cause them pain, then they roastit them ower a cauldron fire tae bring on the sweatin' sickness. The twa weemin were shortly efter gripped wi' the sickness and terrible pains in the body. Tis the usual ploy o' witches that wish tae torment their enemies.

Cook Thank ye Master Wood and Master Drummond, ye have been most explicit. But the truth is that not six witches but eight were discovered. The other two were the accusers themselves. After brief examination by Master Wood, Master Drummond and myself, we had sufficient evidence to lay before the Session, then the Presbytery itself, so fearful were we for the wellbeing of the good parishioners of Salt Preston. While in custody of the Kirk, when they were kept awake for sixteen days and nights, four of the creatures confessed to renouncing their baptisms; four others confessed to making spells, images,

charmings and incantations. All eight duly confessed they were witches. Master Wood, shall ye inform the congregation of the subsequent proceedings.

Wood

Right gladly, Maister Cook. Ah wish tae say that their confessions were given freely upon the sixteenth and seventeenth days o' their bein' watched be the Brethren. At nae time wis ony strict dealin' gien tae them. They confessit be their ain free will. Maister Cook wis orderit be the Presbytery tae report the matter tae the magistrates in Salt Preston. They an' no' the Kirk are the richt folk tae tak the proceedings further. They did so. They applied tae the King's Privy Council and the Parliament in Edinburgh toon for a warrant tae try the suspectit persons. A commission tae try them wis receivit frae His Majesty's Privy Council a week syne. A further commission wis receivit upon Friday past frae the Committee o' Estates o' the Parliament tae try ithers. Ah shall noo read oot the nature o' they commissions, that ye here may be comfortit be the knowledge that these evil weemin are tae be dealt wi' be oor ain magistrates in time cummin'. Ah shall noo reads frae the papers that hae been put intil the hands o' the Presbytery.

[He puts on his spectacles and reads from two papers]

'Forasmuch as Helen Gibson and Christian Blaikie have confessed abominable crime of witchcraft in entering into paction with the Devil, renouncing their baptisms and many otherways as their depositions under the hands of Mr Patrick Cook, Minister, William Robertson, Baillie, John Hamilton, Baillie, John Clerk, Robert Drummond and Hector Wood, elders of the parish of Salt Preston, it being necessary that the kingdom be purged of such vile sin and justice administered on the offenders, the King's Majesty with advice and consent of the estates of Parliament gives full power and commission to Robert Cockburn of Butterdean, John Hamilton of Falsyde, John McMorran in Preston, George Hepburn of Addieston, Ninian Henderson in Preston, Ninian, William Robertson Baillie there, John Hamilton Baillie there, Mr Andrew Rutherford, schoolmaster in the Pans, Mr James Oswald there, Thomas Home and Alexander Henderson Baillies there or any five of them to meet at such times and places as they shall think fit and hold courts. And whereas Margaret Butter, Margaret Auchinmoutie and Margaret Hall are suspect and dilate guilty of witchcraft, the said commissioners shall secure them and such others as are or shall be dilated guilty and bring them to a confession of their sins. Further to this, Janet Gray, spouse to John Clorrat and Agnes Aird, spouse to David Bald in Preston are to be examined, their confessions being under the hands of the said commissioners.

Cook
Wood

And what of Martha Butter, the eighth woman accused?

Though she be not named, she is to be examined as dilated guilty, for she hae already been dilate in a trial at Travernent in the year of Oor Lord sixteen hunert and fiftynine.

Cook I thank ye Master Wood. Tis clear to me and to the Kirk that the evil that is within our parish shall be dealt with according to the law of our late sovereign, Mary, Queen of Scotland, she of blessed memory. For in her wisdom, Queen Mary saw fit to protect the subjects of her realm from the abominations of witchcraft. Though she did not worship in the manner of the true Kirk of Scotland, she loved her subjects and detested witchcraft, which she knew was a crime against the laws of man as well as the laws of God. Master Wood, shall ye again read out the names of the accused, that we may know all of them and thereby shun them.

Wood They are named as this. Agnes Aird, Margaret Auchinmoutie, Christian Blaikie, Margaret Butter, Martha Butter, Helen Gibson, Janet Gray an' Margaret Hall, all residerents o' the parish o' Salt Pans.

Cook I own that there has been much harm done to worthy and innocent persons in the common way of finding witches in the past but tis clear to me that these eight women are guilty of abominable sins that were instilled by their paction with Satan. Neighbour has defamed neighbour which is proof that Satan lives for tis his purpose to destroy God's cratures upon this earth.

Drummond Maister Cook, mony deny there are those that we cry witches, though we have it expressly contained in the Word of God. For there tis wrote that there was a witch at Endor that Saul in his distress resorted tae consult. Today, we hae the abominable creatures in oor midst, them that did perpetrate evil. Twa hae brocht bastard bairns inta oor parish, ane of which died unsigned in the Lord, so it's soul went straight tae the Deil. Others hae made graven images that brocht seikness an' near death.

Cook Thank ye Master Drummond. These vile creatures have brought a cauldron of evil into this fine parish. I am thinking that tis not an ordinair cauldron that is used in every dwelling place. Tis a cauldron that is forged for hate and evil.

Wood We hae sought this cauldron ye speak of. Tis said it has serpents upon its sides. Maister Drummond and masel hae sought it but it cannae be found.

Cook Mayhap tis but a wife's tale. Yet it has dwelt here and was used for fostering hate and evil. We shall never find it. I am thinking it does not exist. Mayhap tis wrought in the minds of evil creatures, never forged by blacksmith. Mayhap twas forged by black souls.

Drummond Me an' Maister Wood hae sought it oot these past few weeks. We hae failed tae find it.

Wood Ah doot we niver shall, for the witches that hae fashioned it hae hid it.

Cook Tis of no consequence. A cauldron is a cauldron. Tis the wickedness that it seethes that concerns the Kirk. As for these eight women, may God Almighty have mercy upon their souls. Shortly, they shall be taken from the House of the Lord to the House of Man, in Salt Preston Tolbooth, where they shall be judged and found guilty. Thus shall the Lord's will be done as he has commanded in His Holy Scriptures which are found in the Book of

Exodus, chapter 22, verse 18.

Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

So tis done. We are the servants of the Lord and we have done our duty. May ye go in peace and sleep well in your beds this night. Amen.

[Lights go out]

[Lights on]

EPILOGUE

Ladies and gentlemen, it is without doubt that during the last, terrible epidemic of the witch hunt in Scotland, these eight women were put to death. They were victims of prejudice, hypocrisy, sexual misconduct, jealousy and hysteria. Accusations made were answered by counter accusations in the hot, narrow intimacy that was uppermost in Scotland's post-mediaeval social structure. The Kirk of Scotland at the time was only too ready to encourage people to accuse one another, for it suited their purpose. That purpose was simple. The Kirk was determined to control the population, to keep it obedient by instilling the fear of God into every person. The population of that time was largely uneducated and then as now, exceeded the Maisters. The threat of witchcraft was one way of controlling the people. The threat of execution kept them in check. And an accusation of practising witchcraft was one way of ridding the population of beggars and unmarried women who for one reason or another could not support themselves.

**THE
DEVIL'S
CRAFT**

BY

ROY PUGH

Prologue

The Players

Act 1, Scene 1

James VI of Scotland
Chancellor John Maitland of Thirlstane

Act 1, Scene 2

Reverend John Davidson of Salt Preston Kirk
David Seton, Magistrate, Tranent (Travernent)

Act 2

Francis Stewart, 5th Earl of Bothwell
Dr John Fian, Schoolmaster, Salt Preston
Agnes Sampson
Euphemia McLean
Geilie Duncan
Bessie Thomson
Janet Stratton
Meg Bogton

Act 3, Scene 1 Trial

James VI
Judge Blinksheils
Chancellor Maitland
Rev John Davidson
David Seton
Agnes Samson
Euphemia McLean
Geilie Duncan
Janet Stratton
Bessie Thomson
Meg Bogton

Act 3, Scene 2 In Edinburgh Tolbooth

Geilie Duncan
Bessie Thomson

Epilogue

PROLOUGE

It is the year 1589. James VI, King of Scotland awaits anxiously the arrival of his bride Anne of Denmark. Great storms force the Danish fleet carrying Anne to Norway. James decides to sail himself to bring her to Scotland. Further storms nearly swamp his vessel; the royal couple are obliged to remain in Denmark until the Spring of 1590.

During the King's absence, Scotland is rent with rumours of a Catholic uprising led by Earls Bothwell and Huntly. These rumours are largely the work of Chancellor Maitland in what has become a bitter political feud between himself and Bothwell. Maitland circulated a rumour that Bothwell dabbles in the Black Arts, is head of a large coven of witches and warlocks who regularly meet in the ruined Kirk at North Berwick. Blame for the terrible storms is put on Bothwell and his coven, known as the North Berwick Witches. Of the 120 members of the coven, over 50 are from Salt Preston [Prestonpans].

When the royal couple arrive in Scotland in May 1590, the seeds of Bothwell's supposed rebellion are now bearing fruit. At first James VI believes that Bothwell and his coven are guilty of treason, then he

changes his mind. It is the Devil's Craft, with Bothwell named as Satan's principle servant. In June, Bothwell escapes from Edinburgh Castle and he is never tried for witchcraft. The subsequent trials of the North Berwick Witches are held in Edinburgh, where many are found guilty and executed for witchcraft.

In this, the third and final play in the Prestonpans Witch Trilogy, we shall witness the turmoil evolving from a period of uncertainty in Scotland's stability. James VI's court is rent with political feuding which is largely laid at the door of the quixotic and eccentric Francis Stewart, 5th Earl of Bothwell and his arch enemy, Chancellor John Maitland of Thirlstane. Bothwell is accused of casting his eyes on the throne; he is accused also of witchcraft, giving the events a somewhat disingenuous air of supernatural intrigue which it does not deserve. The propaganda of the day suggests otherwise. James is convinced that the crime is not treason but witchcraft and sets in motion a trial which results in the deaths of the minor players, the witches and warlocks supposedly in Bothwell's service. Bothwell escapes justice and lives until 1612, dying in poverty in Naples, still the King's rebel and guilty of witchcraft.

The events of 1589-90 form the first of four severe outbreaks of the Scottish Witch Hunt. Witchcraft, sorcery incantation and making spells were foremost in the catalogue of sins which the Reformed Kirk of Scotland saw as concrete proof of the state of lawlessness, moral disorder along with idolatry (as practised by the outlawed Roman Catholic Church), blasphemy, adultery, incest, whoredom, murder and last but not least, breaking the Sabbath. The years 1589-91 were a time of renewed Calvinistic zeal, bent on strengthening the Reformed Kirk's hold on the population. It is against this background that the play is set.

ACT I SCENE I

[Holyrood Palace. Lights on. James VI is pacing up and down, frowning and muttering. Goes to desk, sits, takes up quill pen and begins to write. Enter Chancellor John Maitland, who bows].

James Good Maitland, the hour is late and we are much troubled for the Queen's well being. Do ye bring news of her ship out of Denmark? We are feared by the great storms at sea.

Maitland A thousand pardons, Your Majesty. But I do indeed have news that Shall soothe thee. The queen is safe.

James *[Clutching his breast]* Thanks be to God! How fares my Anne? Is she indeed well?

Maitland I have this very hour received a messenger out of Leith who has lately come from Holland by way of Norway, engaged there upon trade. He brought ill news-

James God in Heaven Maitland! Ye confound us! Ye say that the person of the Queen is safe, yet ye speak of ill news. Is she in fair health?

Maitland *[Soothingly]* Tis well with the Queen. She has safely gained the shores of Norway.

James Norway? How is it so?

Maitland The way of it is this. The Royal Danish flagship upon which the Queen was borne sprang a leak. There was a great storm that drove the Danish fleet to Norway. The Hollander barque that landed at Leith was sorely pressed. Her sails were in rags, her shipmaster barely alive. The storm was so wild that she was blown off course and landed at Leith.

James See to it that the messenger be granted drink siller for his pains.

Maitland Tis as ye command, Your Majesty. The shipmaster said twas the Devil that raised the storm by his servants that are called witches. He did say many a Christian soul perished upon the waves and-

James *[Impatient]* We shall hear naught of the Devil and his witches. The mere mention of his name unmans us. Tis it not the season of high storms?

Maitland Mayhap. But some do say that My Lord Bothwell had a hand in the Matter.

James Good Maitland, My Lord Bothwell hath not the power to prevent sea storms.

Maitland That may be. But mayhap he can raise them through his master.

James What is your meaning, sir?

Maitland Why, tis common gossip in the Lawnmarket taverns that Bothwell openly boasts of the power given him by his master.

James But we are his master. Ye speak in riddles.

Maitland Your Majesty it is well kent that Bothwell serves another. Tis said that he hath abused your name and your lineage. Why sir, he was heard to say but recently that his true master is not of this earth, though tis where he walks.

James Ye mean Satan, the Devil Incarnate?

Maitland Tis so. Bothwell boasts that his master the Devil shall through his craft cast ye from the throne of Scotland. Bothwell hath callit Your Majesty a bastard whoreson, that ye were fathered by the Italian David Riccio, your mother's secretary and a low born man.

James Tis a lie! We are the son of Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley.

Maitland Bothwell openly casts doubt upon the matter.

James Then we shall reprimand him for it in time coming. But what further news of our Anne, the Queen of Scotland?

Maitland She is in fair health. The Hollander shipmaster saw with his own eyes that she steppit lightly from the Danish flagship Gideon and did walk unaided upon the Oslo quayside.

James Thanks be to God! Our Queen is safe and well!

Maitland Aye, Your Majesty. For the moment.

James Why say ye so?

Maitland The Queen is abroad, where tis said that there are many there in paction with the Devil who would harm the Queen. Aye and ye were ye to go to her.

James We have heard tales that those that are in the service of the Devil may put to sea in sieves that do not founder. Tis but child's tales.

Maitland Would it were so, Your Majesty. The witches are legion. Did not your own mother make a law that would punish the abominable creatures within this realm but a score and six years past?

James We shall hear no more of this talk. Tis more fitting that we speak of the Queen and the manner of her coming to Scotland

Maitland Shall ye command the Lord Bothwell to escort her? He is High Admiral of Scotland and tis his duty to obey ye.

James We are confounded by your counsel. Did ye not say that Bothwell is not a true servant? Twould go ill with the Queen were we to place her life in his custody. Nay, we shall act in person. Have we not ordered a fast and prayers said i' the kirks these past weeks for the Queen's safe delivery to Scotland? Good Maitland, take up pen and write this.

[Maitland sits at table with pen and begins to write]

James Write ye these words to our Privy Council. We, James, King of Scotland declare that we are a true prince of this realm, not an irresolute ass that can do naught by himself. Therefore we shall take ship out of Leith in six days for to bring home Anne, Queen of Scotland from Denmark. A true prince can do no less.

Maitland Shall ye avyse Lord Bothwell of this?

James Nay. We shall say that he is needed in Scotland to guard her shores, for that is his duty as High Admiral. Forbye, if tis true that he plots against us, he shall hang himself with his own rope if he should move against us in our absence abroad.

Maitland Bravo, Your Majesty! Ye are truly a great prince that shall confound Bothwell by his own actions. May God bless ye and the Queen and that he keep thee safe upon this venture.

[Bows and leaves the King. Lights out]

ACT 2 SCENE I

[Salt Preston Kirk manse. Rev John Davidson and David Seton, magistrate in Tranent are seated at a table]

Davidson Tis an evil business that we lack the King's person in Edinburgh. Be that as tis, we maun maintain the law. Maister Seton, what have ye to say upon the manner of your servant Geillis or Geilie Duncan?

Seton Tis known that she goes abroad at nicht when good Christians are a-bed
Davidson Ye have nae doot speered her upon the matter.
Seton That I have. She confesses tae visiting the seik and the ailing in Travernent and Salt Preston. She is a kind lass and warks weel in my hoose
Davidson But think ye not that her wanderin' abroad i' the dark is queer?
Seton That I dae. I have askit her about the habit. I hae avysed her that her nightly wanderins are suspectit. But she says that she maun gae oot at nicht for tis only then that she maun visit the seik. She travels far. Travernent, Salt Preston and even North Berwick.
Davidson Tis of her journeys tae North Berwick I wish tae speak to ye.
Seton Aye, sir, I ken
Davidson Lately, my Brothers in Christ hae attended the auld kirk at North Berwick, where tis said that at the hour of midnight, mony eldritch sounds and queer lights abound the place. Your servant Geilie Duncan has been seen comin' and goin' there, along with mony uthers frae Salt Preston. The Brethren say that the door is watched be one named Grey Meal, a powerful man that is feared in this parish.
Seton I have heard on it.
Davidson Tis kent that your servant lass Geilie Duncan, Dr John Fian, Agnes Sampson, Euphemia McLean, Janet Stratton, Meg Bogton and Bessie Thomson and mony other Salt Preston folk attend the kirk. They say near a score.
Seton Tis a sair business richt enough. They say that Fian is also kent as Cunningham. The low folk mak a jest o' the name, crying him Sly Bacon. The shoe maun fit for tis weel kent that Fian is versed in the Black Airts, the servant o' the Deil and o' Francis Earl Bothwell. Did not his late kinsman debauch the late Queen Mary in the castle of Dunbar and force her to marry him, that he would gain the throne?
Davidson Tis as ye say. Now his kinsman casts his een upon the throne o' King James the Saxth. The first Bothwell deed in a Danish prison. Tis strange that oor present King is there this day. Why cannot the Scottish fleet bring the royal fowk hame?
Seton Tis said that Chancellor Maitland puts it about that Bothwell is no' to leave the realm, for fear that he wrecks herm upon the King.
Davidson There is nae smoke without there be fire. Bothwell is rumoured tae lead the coven at North Berwick and that they hae already brocht storms to droon the Queen and then the King himself. Would that I had the power tae accuse him.
Seton Ye micht not hae the power but there is ane that does. My Lord Chancellor Maitland has the King's ear in this matter. He has avised the King that Bothwell is evilly disposed tae him. In time coming, Bothwell shall be brocht low.

Davidson We maun pray for that day. Noo I bid ye goodnicht, Maister Seton, for there is much work to be done.

[Lights out]

ACT 2 SCENE II

[Dimly lit stage with Bothwell and Fian seated at a table]

Bothwell Good John, tis right glad I am that ye have called upon me. There is much work that awaits us. Tis said in court that he that calls himself James the Sixth shall not return from Denmark until the Spring. We have achieved much since his departure but more is needed. I would move against Chancellor Maitland if I but had the strength.

Fian Upon that may I assure ye my Lord? The support for ye grows be the hour. Above six score have sworn allegiance to ye, all humble folk but all well versed in the Devil's craft. I am clerk to the coven that increases daily. Those that serve ye await your command.

Bothwell Ye speak of the Devil's craft. My enemies accuse me of paction with that gentleman. Chief among them is Chancellor Maitland who employs a different craft – lies and deceit which he pours into the King's ear. He will not rest until I am got into the Edinburgh Tolbooth or the Castle. He has openly accused me of witchcraft. So be it, for mayhap the weaker vessels in his employ may waver in their allegiance to him.

Fian I take your meaning, my Lord. Fear of ye and your magical powers may bring these weaker vessels to your side. Or at least they shall not move against ye. Shall ye move now against Maitland or the King?

Bothwell Master Fian, I have laid careful plans to rid Scotland of this King. He is a whoreson, the spawn of his murdering mother Mary that was executed but two years ago in England for her attempts upon the life of Elizabeth the Queen there. This James is the bastard son of his mother and the low-born Italian David Riccio. Good Fian, think ye not that he has the face of an Italian gigolo?

Fian I have never looked upon his countenance but they say tis true that his reputed father Lord Darnley was murdered by his own mother, that she might wed your kinsman the third Earl Bothwell.

Bothwell Aye. And had the courage to despatch Mary, he would have become King and thereby passed the throne to me and mine. I shall have this throne first, then I shall have the guts out of Maitland for his treachery.

Fian I shall serve ye in this. As will thy servants in the Devil. Thy will be done.

Bothwell For this service I shall reward ye and my faithful servants with gold, silver and victuals. All shall enjoy my bounty when the King is gone.

Fian *[Bowing]* I shall make this known to those that serve ye.

Bothwell Shall ye name the chief among them?

Fian That I shall right gladly. First is Euphemia McLean, heiress to the lately deed Lord Cliftonhall, a senator in the Court of Justice. Another is Agnes Sampson, wise-wife of Nether Keith who is well-versed in the making of potions to cure the sick. Then there is the comely lass Geilie Duncan, her that serves the magistrate in Travernent, David Seton. There are others out of Salt Preston that be strong in the Devil's craft. Janet Stratton, Meg Bogton, Bessie Thomson, Robin Grierson –

Bothwell Enough, Master Fian. I have not the time to hear of them all. There is intelligence that the King and his bride shall set sail from Denmark in May month. Shall ye and the followers out of Salt Preston foregather at North Berwick upon my signal when the King sails? Tis is of great import, for I would have ye and the coven rise up a great storm that shall send their ship to the bottom of the sea.

Fian Aye, it shall be as ye command. But not at North Berwick for there are those that have espied our meetings there. I speak of the Salt Preston minister John Davidson and his brethren. Upon this occasion, we shall foregather at Acheson's Haven, Salt Preston, where none shall watch us.

Bothwell Tis best done i' the dark.

Fian It shall be done upon the darkest night of the year. Upon Beltane, the eve of the 30th April, which is called May Eve, a night when all candles and fires are put out for to greet the dawn. Those that serve the Devil may then walk abroad unseen.

Bothwell Good Fian, ye serve me well.

Fian Shall ye attend the gathering at Acheson's Haven upon May Eve my Lord?

Bothwell Nay, for methinks I have other fish to fry that night. But say to the gathered there that Lord Bothwell greets them and that they shall be rewarded by gold and silver and wheat.

Fian Ye may say the words to the chief of your followers, for I have brought them to meet ye, my Lord. Shall ye receive them?

Bothwell The hour is late but bring them before me.

[Fian goes to staircase and brings in Euphemia McLean, Agnes Sampson, Geilie Duncan, Janet Stratton, Meg Bogton and Bessie Thomson]

Bothwell *[Stands and bows to them]*. My good and faithful friends, it pleases me that ye are come to me this night. Now I should know ye by name. *[Looks at Euphemia McLean who bows to him]*. Shall ye come forward?

McLean Aye, my Lord. I am called Euphemia McLean, spouse to Patrick Moscrop, lawyer and adulterer, the kinsman of your enemy David Seton, magistrate in Travernent. I have powers that I would give to you in service.

Bothwell Thank ye, Mistress McLean. *[Beckoning to Agnes Sampson]* Come ye forward, Mistress, name yourself

Sampson I am callit Agnes or Anny Sampson, grace-wife. I am skilled in the making of potions that heal the seik.

Bothwell Tis a noble profession. And how are ye called? *[To Geilie Duncan]*

Duncan *[curseying]* I am but a serving lass Geilis Duncan in the service of David Seton, Magistrate of Travernent. I also heal the seik. I play upon the Jewish harp for it amuses my sisters and brothers when we are within the cauld chambers o' North Berwick's ruined kirk.

Bothwell Shall ye play for us now?

Duncan Nay sir, for I do not have the instrument. I play only when the Deil is present amang us.

Bothwell Mayhap ye shall play it for me upon a favoured hour?

Duncan *[curtseying again]* Twill be my pleasure, sir.

Fian *[Motioning Janet Stratton, Meg Bogton and Bessie Thomson forward]* And here are three other loyal servants my Lord. They are callit Meg Bogton, Janet Stratton and Bessie Thomson. *[They all curtsey]*

Bothwell I have heard of ye Mistress Stratton. That ye were present at the port of Leith when the King set sail for Denmark last October. Were ye not she who cast into the sea the cat that brought forth a great storm that day?

Stratton Aye, sir, I were. As were Meg and Bessie.

Bogton Twas my duty to be there.

Thomson And mine. And Janet did give us strength upon that day, saying that there shall be nae deceit amang us, for we are united in the ploy that shall bring doon a faus King.

Bothwell I thank ye, my good servants. Dr Fian, see that ye nurture these women well. I shall reward ye and they in time coming. Gold, silver and food shall ye all have, for I am bountiful to those that serve me faithfully. And now the hour is late. I bid ye all goodnight.

[All bow as he exits the stage. Lights out]

ACT 3

INTRODUCTION

In May 1590, King James the Sixth and his new bride Anne of Denmark arrived safely in Leith, despite the onset of further storms that delayed their crossing. Six women in Denmark were indicted and executed for witchcraft. On 31st July 1590, August Eve or Lammas, another date revered by witches, the North Berwick Witches met for the last time. On that occasion, they convened at Acheson's Haven. At that convention, Agnes Sampson proposed the death of James the Sixth, Reputedly on Bothwell's orders. At her subsequent trial, she confessed that the Devil had appeared before her, saying that the King would be destroyed by toad's venom and the roasting of his image in wax.

By October that year, James had instituted proceedings against Lord Bothwell and his Coven. The trials of Bothwell, Fian, McLean, Sampson and many others were ordered to begin. Bothwell's trial never took place as his standing required that he be tried by his peers and many declined to attend. In the course of the next few months, Fian was tortured and executed in January 1591; Euphemia McLean was cast alive into the flames on Castle Hill, Edinburgh in June 1591.

Bothwell, incarcerated in Edinburgh Castle managed to escape with outside help in the same month. He fled to the Continent and was never recaptured. His hapless followers, the so-called North Berwick Witches were put to death, Geilie Duncan and her friend Bessie Thomson being among the last to be executed at the end of that terrible year.

ACT 3: SCENE I

[The Tolbooth in Edinburgh. The judge appointed to preside over the many trials is assisted – even directed – by the King in person]

Judge Hear ye, hear ye! This day is foregathered a multitude of persons that have confessed to serving Francis Stewart, Earl of Bothwell who is accused of treason against our sovereign lord, James, King of Scotland. Among those that have served the rebel Bothwell are two score and ten residenters of Salt Preston, men and women that are confessed followers of the Devil. Chief among these are Dr John Fian, dominie, Euphemia McLean, a rank Papist, Agnes Sampson, Barbara Napier and Richard Graham of Edinburgh and sundry others. All are indicted for treason against our sovereign King, James, Sixth of Scotland. I call upon the first witness, Master David Seton, magistrate of the parish of Travernent.

[Seton is brought in]

Judge How are ye called and what is your profession?
Seton David Seton, magistrate of Travernent. My testimony shall be vouchsafed by Master Patrick Moscrop, my advocate and kinsman, spouse to the accused Euphemia McLean.

James *[nods]* We have foreknowledge of ye, Master Seton, aye and of your kinsman. Pray be seated.

Judge How shall ye inform this assize?
Seton In this manner. My servant Geilis Duncan is a witch that goes abroad at night when good Christian souls are a-bed. I have followed her and seen the abominable spectacles that occurrit in the ruined Kirk at North Berwick, where above 5 score folk met the Devil.

Judge Is there one who shall attest to this?
Davidson I shall sir, for I am minister of Salt Preston Kirk and was present with Maister Seton upon several nights at North Berwick, where we did witness the abominable gaitherings there.

Judge Pray be seated Maister Davidson. As ye have knowledge of the coven that met at North Berwick, thy testament shall be used against those that are on trial this day. Pray enlighten this assize upon thy hand in this matter.

Davidson I cannae say all, for I saw not all i' the kirk at North Berwick. Me and the Brethren were obleeged tae remain hidden for there was a man they callit Grey Meal who stood guard at the broke door i' the kirk there

Judge So what saw ye there?
Davidson A gaithering of ower five score, mony o' them frae my parish.

Judge And what did they do there?
Davidson They made homage to the Deil that appeared as a black man wi' the horns o' a black beast upon him. Ah couldna see his face therefore.

Judge What manner of beast's head did he adopt?
Davidson Twas like that o' a ox or bullock. The black man stood upon the ruint pulpit an' invited them assembled to approach him, that they micht kiss his arse be way o' homage.

Judge Did ye witness this foul act?
Davidson Aye, that Ah did. Twas mostly women that kissed the Deil's arse.

Judge Shall ye give their names?
Davidson There were ower mony Sir. But Ah did witness the women callit Sampson, McLean, Stratton, Bogton and sundry others performing the foul deed.

Judge Was the woman called Geile Duncan among them?
Davidson Aye, Sir

Judge Did ye witness other foul deeds?

Davidson Aye Sir. Some o' the women showed their bare breasts that the Deil might suck upon them. Tis weel kent that the Deil favours womens' milk.

Judge Have ye more to tell the assize?

Davidson Aye, that Ah have. That nicht the Deil said he would hae the heart o' the King, that he wad roast it in Hell for he was weel servit be a noble man and his servants.

Judge Did he name the noble man?

Davidson Nay, but those that were present upon the nicht spake o' the name o' Francis, Earl Bothwell.

Judge And what did they then?

Davidson They did take up the corpse o' a black cat and held it ower the sea, then they did dispatch it, saying that twould mak a grit storm that would droon the King.

Judge Saw ye more?

Davidson Nay Sir, for me and mine were sair afraid and would return tae the kirk o Salt Preston, there to pray for oor deliverance be the Lord Jesus Christ, oor Saviour.

Judge Thank ye Master Davidson. Ye may stand down. I call next upon David Seton, Magistrate of Travernent.

[Seton is brought in and he bows to the judge]

Seton I am a humble servant at your service Sir.

Judge Was it not your servant Geilie Duncan that made known the plot to kill the King?

Seton Aye Sir.

Judge Bring in the panel she who is callit Geilie Duncan that she may face her accusers.
[Duncan is dragged in. She has clearly been tortured] Ye are among the chief suspects that have made threat upon the King's life. What say ye to the crime of which ye are accused, that of witchcraft?

Duncan If ye please Sir, Ah'm nae witch. Ah am but a puir lass that has been gien the pow'r o' healing.

Judge And muckle else twould seem. Did ye attend the gathering at North Berwick Kirk?

Duncan Aye Sir

Judge And what did ye there?

Duncan Ah played upon the Jewish Harp for to entertain ma sisters and brothers.

Judge And the Devil?

Duncan Ah ken nocht for Ah saw him nocht, though they say he was present upon ane nicht i' the kirk o' North Berwick

James VI May we question the panel?

Judge As ye wish, Your Highness, for tis thy right.

King Now, lass, shall ye enlighten us on your art and part in this business?
Duncan *[curtseying]* 'Twas my task to play upon the tromp, sometimes kened as the Jew's Harp, that the company might join in a dance.

King And did the Devil dance?
Duncan Aye, sir, but not ower long, for would move amang us and smile upon his favoured servants and them that jiggèd weel.

King And shall ye play the tromp for us this day?
Duncan Nay sir, for the maisters have ta'en the instrument from me.

King Do ye worship the Devil?
Duncan Nay, sir. I worship the Lord Jesus.

King Yet ye were present at the gatherings at North Berwick and Acheson's Haven were ye not?
Duncan Aye, sir. But it was in fear o' my life, for I was bidden there. They said that if I werenae present, my life would be hermed.

King Shall ye enlighten us on those that threatened ye.
Duncan Doctor John and Mistress McLean
King Ye advert to Dr John Fian, sometimes known as Cunningham?
Duncan Aye, sir
King *[whispers to Judge who nods]*
Judge The panel is dismissed. The assize calls upon Dr John Fian, dominie of Salt Preston school. *[Fian is brought in; he has been badly tortured and there is blood on his face]* Are ye John Fian alias Cunningham, servant of Lord Bothwell?
Fian I am, sir
Judge Do ye worship the Devil and practise the black arts?
Fian I recognise but one master and he is My Lord Bothwell.
Judge Tis written that ye have confessed that the Devil has carried ye to high mountains, that ye were transported there in spirit, while your body lay a-bed? Is that so?
Fian Aye. But twas but a dream
Judge Ye were present in the flesh at North Berwick Kirk however.
Fian Aye.
Judge Tis been reported that there ye did blow open the door and lit candles that burnt blue, that the hellish company ye were with could cavort and make free with each other. Is that true?
Fian Aye.
Judge Tis common knowledge that ye have cast spells upon divers women. That they would lie with ye?

Fian They lay with me at their pleasure, not my own

Judge Fie, sir, ye add calumny to your compearing. How many women did ye lie with?

Fian A score and ten [*Gasps from the assembled cast*] But they did not come to my bed by enchantment.

Judge Ye are adulterer and whoreson! Let that be added to the panel's list of malefactions. Now, upon the matter of Lord Bothwell, shall ye confess that he is the Devil's servant and that he uses of the black arts.

Fian I know naught of these matters. My Lord Bothwell is the King's servant and as I am servant to My Lord, then it must be that I am the King's servant also. The Devil's craft is to gain power, that he might destroy what is builden, to cast down what is good, to uproot that which thrives. My Lord Bothwell hath done no manner of such things. I swear this as the best of my knowledge, for I am not party to all that he does.

Judge Yet ye have confessed enough to damn yourself. Your interlocuters have sworn under oath that said ye did give faith to and adore the Devil, that ye gained converts to his cause and administered potions to them. Forbye, ye committed monstrous acts the like of which were thus- the digging up of corpses of children that died without baptism, that ye might use of their bones to distil your potions. That ye destroyed cattle, corn and divers goods. That ye did raise storms and tempests that would harm the King's person upon the high seas.

Fian These are falsehoods.

Judge Then why did ye freely confess to them?

Fian I have never practised witchcraft. I abused the people by putting fear into them. But I am no witch or warlock. I confessed these matters by fear of torture and to save my life.

Judge Silence! Enough of your calumnies! Ye are possessed of evil and ye have earned the reward ye deserve under the law. Ye shall be taken from this place to the Castlehill, there to be werrit and his body thereafter to be consumed by fire. [*The King raps on the table in agreement and shouts out "May God have mercy upon ye!" Fian is led away, his head held high: he is smiling*] I call upon the prisoner Agnes Sampson. [*She is led in. She is unafraid and proud. She looks disdainfully at the judge and then the King*] Pray state your name.

Sampson I am callit Agnes or Anny Sampson, guid-wife or wise-wife of Nether Keith

Judge Ye are also midwife?

Sampson Aye.

Judge Ye have confessed to the crime of witchcraft have ye not?

Sampson Aye, but twas got from me under strict dealing by evil men that ye employ as jailers.

Judge How came ye to serve the Devil?

Sampson Twas after my husband died. The Devil appeared afore me in the likeness of a man. He commanded me to call him my master and that when I was afflicted, to summon him by calling out Hola! Master!

Judge Did he promise ye rewards for your service?

Sampson Aye, that he did. Riches were to be granted to me and mine. And powers to be given me that I might wreak revenge on them that have wronged me.

Judge So ye admit that the Devil promised ye reward. Tis said that ye were promised reward from Lord Bothwell. Let me remind ye of your confession [*Reading from a paper*] “My Lord Bothwell promised me gold, siller and vittles for my service unto him”. Are these your words?

Sampson Aye, but none came to me.

Judge Yet ye deny ye are witch? That ye have turned from the worship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sampson I worship as I am minded to for I bring bairns into this world that are in sair need of succour. Aye and the sick that languish for want of comfort and vittles.

Judge Ah yes, the sick. Ye have skill in the healing of the sick, have ye not?

Sampson I am blessed with that gift.

Judge Ye have cured men, women, children and even animals, have ye not?

Sampson Aye, tis so.

Judge Let us consider divers of those ye have cured. Is it not so that some years past, ye cured an afflicted noblewoman?

Sampson Aye. She was Lady Kilbaberton of Baberton, nigh Edinburgh

Judge How came ye to cure her affliction?

Sampson How else? Be prayer, Maister. For does not the kirk teach us that prayer brings comfort to the ailing, the distressed and the dying?

Judge I grant ye that. But I would enquire of the manner of the affliction possessed by Lady Kilbaberton

Sampson Twas ane heavy disease that was like to carry her off

Judge And ye cured her? It what manner?

Sampson Be my skills.

Judge You advert to the potions ye concoct?

Sampson Aye and the benison of prayer.

Judge Are ye acquaint with one Robert Kerse of the Parish of Dalkeith?

Sampson Aye, I was.

Judge And what was the manner of the acquaintance?

Sampson I cured Robert of a heavy disease that was laid upon him by a warlock out of Dumfries.
 Judge Ah, a warlock. Methinks ye are minded to seek to remove the stain of witchcraft from ye by saying so.

Sampson Tis not true. The warlock was evilly intended and Robert was cured
 Judge And by what means did ye cure Master Kerse of this warlock's disease?
 Sampson Why, I took it upon myself, then I cast it upon a passing dog.
 Judge Tis recorded so. But the dog passed the disease upon another man who died of it
 Sampson I heard twas so. But I did not seek to pass it to another. Twas the dog's doing, not mine
 Judge Mistress Sampson, I admire ye for the play ye make upon words.
 Sampson Tis not a play, tis as it was.
 Judge Let us revisit more recent events. Were ye present at a gathering at the port of Leith in the year of our Lord 1589, when our Sovereign James set sail for Denmark to escort his bride Anne, our Queen, to Scotland?

Sampson I was
 Judge Shall ye give the names of those that were present with ye?
 Sampson Euphemia MacLean, Barbara Napier, Ritchie Graham and Janet Stratton. I disremember the names of others
 Judge And did ye and others cast upon the waters a dead cat and make incantations that would bring forth a great storm.

Sampson Aye. When we were gatherit upon the quayside, Janet Stratton aided me in casting the cat upon the water. I recall she said this: "See that there be nae deceit amang us" for she was feared that there were some in the company that would betray us.
 Judge Were ye also in attendance at meetings in Acheson's Haven and North Berwick Kirk?
 Sampson Aye
 Judge And what did ye there?
 Sampson A picture of the King that was wrappit in cloth or paper was put into my hands. Twas passed among those that were present at Acheson's Haven.
 Judge Did the Devil attend that night?
 Sampson Aye
 Judge What form did he take?
 Sampson He appeared afore us in the shape of a bundle of straw.
 Judge That ye might not witness his countenance?
 Sampson I ken nocht. But he spake from the bundle of straw, ordering that the wax picture be passed among those present.
 Judge Shall ye give us the names of those that handled it?
 Sampson They were Euphemia MacLean, Barbara Napier, Meg Bogton and Janet Stratton. There were four others but I disremember their names.

Judge Let me clear the fog that afflicts your memory. I call upon Janet Stratton *[Stratton is brought in; she shows no signs of torture]* Are ye Janet Stratton, resider of Salt Preston?

Stratton That I am. And prood o' it

Judge Were ye in attendance at Leith in the year of our Lord 1589 when a dead cat was cast upon the waters that it would raise a storm that would harm the King's life?

Stratton Ah was. But the cat was no deid, for it did swim to the shore.

Judge And were ye in attendance at Acheson's Haven upon a night when a picture of the King was passed among those assembled?

Stratton Aye

Judge Shall ye name those that were there?

Stratton Weel, there was Anny Sampson, Euphemia MacLean, Barbara Napier, Geilie Duncan, Catherine Wallace, Meg Bogton and Bessie Thomson. Anny Sampson said the wax picture was of the King, orderit to be consumed be fire upon the orders of a nobleman of the realm.

Judge *[Turning to Sampson]* And did ye give name to this nobleman of the realm?

Sampson Nay

Stratton *[Screaming]* Anny Sampson, ye are a liar! Ye said "This is King Jamie the Saxth consumit at the order o' a noble man, Francis Bothwell! These were your very words! Confess!

King *[Rising to his feet, his right fist clenched in triumph]* Ah, we have him! Though he escaped from our castle of Edinburgh these six months past, he is rightly branded as warlock and our rebel. *[Turning to Agnes Sampson]* When he fled us, did he spare a thought for ye, Agnes Sampson? *[She hangs her head]* Nay. For he uses his servants abominably. He is traitor and scoundrel both. *[To Judge]* You may proceed, sir. *[Judge bows]*

Judge Thank you, your Highness. Now Agnes Sampson, were ye also present at the Kirk of North Berwick upon the eve that Dr John Fian blew open its doors and lit hellish candles that burnt blue instead of white, as Christian candles do?

Sampson Aye

Judge And was the Devil present?

Sampson Aye, that he was. He sprung up i' the pulpit sudden, as though he had been lying there unseen. He was in the likeness of a black man with a black beard the like of which can be seen on any male goat. In his hands, he held a black book and callit out the names in it, saying that those that were his good servants should never want.

Judge Was it upon that night that ye did advise the gathering that yet another storm would be raised that would do mischief to our King and his Queen, coming from Denmark?

Sampson Aye

Judge Ye have confessed that ye spake the words that our Sovereign Lord spake unto his Queen upon the voyage home. Is that not so, Your Majesty? *[The King nods then rises]* “She did say word for word that which passed between us and our bride. Twas witchcraft rather than treason. We know it, for when we sent word to our father-in-law in Denmark, six witches in league with the creatures from Salt Preston and beyond were put to death. Good Judge, pray proceed in this matter of witchcraft. *[Judge bows]*.

Judge So Agnes Sampson, ye were aboard the barque bearing our Sovereign King and his Queen to Scotland? In what otherwise could ye repeat His Majesty’s words to his Lady?

Sampson I was not aboard the ship, yet I heard the words in Nether Keith, when I was a-bed that night. May it please ye sir, My Lord Bothwell meant no harm to Her Majesty. *[The King rises]*

King That is enough to damn ye. Let this creature of Satan remain in the assize that she may learn of what others say of her. Please proceed sir *[this to the judge]*

Judge Thank ye your Majesty. I now call to the stand the panel called Euphemia MacLean. *[She is led in]* Are ye Euphemia MacLean, spouse to Master Patrick Moscrop, lawyer and heir to your umquile father, Lord Clifton of Cliftonhall, he that died a senator of our College of Justice a few years syne?

MacLean I am. But my spouse is not heir to my father’s estate. I am. That vexes him to distraction, that he is forced to bring me to this assize upon the accusation of witchcraft. For he knows that a witch’s goods and property may be awarded to her spouse.

Judge Enough of this. I put it to ye that ye were present at the port of Leith to raise a storm that would drown His Majesty

MacLean I was present. That is all I have to say.

Judge And were ye present at Acheson’s Haven when a wax picture of His Majesty was passed among those gathered there?

MacLean I was. There is no gain in denying it, for others have said I was present.

Judge And were ye present upon divers nights at North Berwick Kirk when John Fian and his hellish legions debased the kirk by their imprecations and spells?

MacLean I cannot deny it, for others have said it

Judge Ye have practised witchcraft for many years have ye not?

MacLean Ye say it. I do not call it witchcraft

Judge Then what shall we call it by another name? Tis known that ye consulted with a rank witch known by habit and repute in Edinburgh, the capital of the realm. It is said that ye were seen often in the company of a woman by the name of Jonet Cunningham, known as Lady Bothwell. Think ye not that this be a strange matter, as ye have confessed that ye served Lord Bothwell?

MacLean *[Smiling]* Her name was Jonet Cunningham. The name Lady Bothwell was but a jest. She was in years aged, and could never have been My Lord Bothwell's wife.

Judge In what matter did ye consult her?

MacLean Twas to obtain a potion of poison to end the life of Joseph Douglas of Pumpherstons who had wronged me.

Judge And that was not the only occasion ye attempted the life of a Christian soul. I put it to ye that ye fell into the company of Agnes Sampson that ye might destroy the life of your father-in-law John Moscrop by means of a wax picture roasted upon a fire. Shall ye answer the charge?

MacLean Aye, twas so. For John Moscrop would take from me my father's estate at Clifton Hall to his advantage. His son, my spouse Patrick Moscrop also seeks to gain it from my death

Judge That is the manner of justification for your crimes and I shall not allow it as evidence in your support. For is it not proven that ye did assist in raising vile storms that would bring to grief our Sovereign Lord James the Sixth of Scotland. Ye are a Papist, are ye not?

MacLean That is naught of your concern, Sir, though it be true.

Judge Papism is known to be heresy as is witchcraft. Ye shall be given the just reward for the heresy. Ye shall be taken from this place to the Castlehill there to be fastened to a stake and burnt to ashes. All and sundry of your lands, heritage, corn, cattle goods and gear shall be forfeit to Our Sovereign Majesty

MacLean Tis just if the accusations against me are just. For if His Majesty shall receive my wealth, I shall be content. I would not have it placed in the hands of my worthless husband Patrick Moscrop, a scoundrel and wife beater who shall meet his end in Hell *[Euphemia is led away, still proud, still defiant]*

Judge I now call upon the panel called Barbara Napier. *[She is brought in and is clearly pregnant]* Pray state your name

Napier Barbara Napier of Edinburgh, a Christian soul.

Judge We shall be the judge of that. Ye are declared guilty of unlawful enterprise against the person of our Sovereign King, James the Sixth of Scotland. But that is not the first attempt ye have made upon our people, for did ye not confess that ye were in consultation with Agnes Sampson, a known witch for many years. I put this to ye. Were ye not in consultation with Agnes Sampson some years before to give aid to My Lady Angus, that ye would keep her from vomiting when she was breeding of a child? How say ye to this?

Napier Twas true. I did succour the lady with the aid of Anny Sampson. My Lady Angus was desperate to give an heir to her spouse and she was in fear of losing her unborn child.

Judge Are ye a qualified doctor?

Napier Nay sir. I am desirous of a child myself, which ye can see may be birthed soon.

Judge That is not our concern. What we wish to prove is that ye have consulted with necromancers to the abuse of the people of this realm by promising them long life. But ye have compounded this crime by associating with witches. These crimes are expressly forbidden by the Witchcraft Act that was given the Royal Assent by our late Queen, Mary, she of blessed memory, mother to our present sovereign. Know ye of this law?

Napier I know of it. What I have done was in mercy for those that are afflicted. I gave them aid. Shall ye hang me for doing my Christian duty?

Judge We shall see. Did ye entertain mischief that would place in peril the King's life?

Napier *[sobbing]* I am shamed by your words, Sir, for I respect the King's person. I did not care for My Lord Bothwell, for he is a man of cold nature. He promised much yet he has beguiled us with soft words. If I am to die because of my service to him, I die without a single groat of gain.

Judge What have ye to tell the assize of your accomplice Agnes Sampson?

Napier I recall at Acheson's Haven or mayhap North Berwick Kirk that she said these words to the devil, who was present:
 'We have a turn to do and we would fain be at it if we could, so therefore help us to do it'
 The devil answered that twould be difficult but we prepared a wax picture of the King. Before that, we were bidden to roast a toad and caught its venom in a cup, then we mixed it with the skin of an adder and the thing that is present on the forehead of a new-born child.

Judge Ye advert to the caul which they say is a charm against drowning. That is of interest to the assize, for the coven at North Berwick was intent upon drowning the King. Why so was the caul added to the hellish brew?

Napier I cannot say. Twas My Lord Bothwell's intent to cast the mixture upon the King's person as he rode through the streets of Leith to embark upon his journey.

Judge And when the hellish potion did not work its evil effects, a wax picture of the King was fashioned.

Napier Tis so.

Judge Are ye with child?

Napier Aye, sir, a Christian man's child. Shall ye spare it?

Judge That is not for this assize to decide. Go ye from this place to await the judgement that shall be passed upon ye. *[Napier is led away]* Now I call upon the woman callit Bessie Thomson. *[She is brought in]* Are ye of the name Bessie Thomson?

Thomson Aye, that I am. I am friend to Geilie Duncan of Travernent

Judge This may damn ye for the saying of it. Were ye present at Acheson's Haven upon the night a wax picture of our Sovereign Lord James the Sixth was passed among the assembly?

Thomson Aye.

Judge And did ye hear Agnes Sampson speak of the picture as ‘the art and part of the turn to destroy the King’?

Thomson I ken it nocht.

Judge Well Mistress, I put it to ye that did hear the words. Ye have been acquaint with the panel Sampson for many years. Twill go in your favour if ye advise the assize on her former crimes.

Thomson Weel Sir, though it be hearsay, tis my belief that Anny Sampson hath done the same turn wi’ a waxen picture some years afore.

Judge Pray advise the assize upon the matter.

Thomson Tis said that she made a picture o’ a noble man, that he would thrive nae mair and perish

Judge Pray tell us of the man

Thomson Weel sir, the way I heered of it was that My Lady Jean Lyons, sometime spouse to His Grace the Earl of Angus did command Anny Sampson for to fashion a picture of her man and work evil upon it, for there was a jealousy atwixt them

Judge And what became of it?

Thomson I ken nocht.

Judge Shall ye advise the assize if upon the eve of Lammastide, Agnes Sampson was present at Acheson’s Haven?

Thomson Aye, sir, that she were. Twas she who said the picture of the King would be roastit until he were nae mair

Sampson *[rising and shouting]* Tis a rank lie! Ye foul fiend Bessie Thomson that ill uses my name so!

Judge *[hammering on the table with his gavel]* Silence, woman! Others have said the same! *[Sampson slumps down in her seat]* Now *[turning to Thomson]* tis said that Agnes Sampson and Euphemia MacLean were offered rewards for their evil by Lord Bothwell. Is that so?

Thompson I ken it nocht

Judge Tis also said that Euphemia MacLean spake with the Lord Bothwell and that she said to him that when the King was dead, the realm would not want for a King. And that Bothwell would give her riches. Did ye hear the words?

Thomson Nay, sir, I ken nocht of that. Mistress MacLean is a woman possessed of much siller. She has nae need of gowd. If offer of gain was made, twas to Agnes Sampson who was promised it if she fashioned a waxen picture of the King.

Judge Twas not the only evil deed that Agnes Sampson would use against the King. Is it not so that she would lay a toad washed in adder’s poison in the King’s path, that he might thereby forfeit his life?

Thomson Aye, I heered it was so
Sampson *[screaming]* Liar! Liar! Twas Euphemia MacLean that would work that turn, not I!
Judge Silence, woman or I shall have ye removed from the assize. Now I call upon Meg Bogton.
[Meg Bogton is brought in] Pray state your name
Bogton I am Meg Bogton, guidwife of Spilmersford.
Judge Were ye present upon Lammastide in the year of our Lord 1589 at Acheson's Haven when the matter of casting toad venom upon His Majesty's person was spoken of?
Bogton I was
Sampson *[screaming]* She lies like her accomplices! Can you not see her false face?
Judge Remove the panel Sampson! She has forfeited her right to be here! Take her to the Tolbooth to await the assize's judgement upon her.
[Turning to Bogton] Were ye also present at Acheson's Haven when the waxen picture of the King was handed from Agnes Sampson to the divers folk that were there?
Bogton Aye, I was. But I did not curse it. Twas given to me from the hands of Janet Stratton and I held it but briefly, for I kent it was a picture of the King, for I had seen him at Holyrood in Edinburgh toun a year past
Judge Ye are of the same profession as Agnes Sampson?
Bogton That I am, sir. But I am nocht possessit of her evil
Judge Ah, we speak freely, now the woman Sampson is gone from us
Bogton Aye sir, for I have aye been feared o' her
Judge Too feared that ye could not give her name to the Kirk authorities and thereby do your Christian duty
Bogton Aye sir
Judge I put it to ye that twas not fear of Agnes Sampson that kept ye from your duty. Twas because ye have renounced your Christian baptism and have turned your back upon the worship of our Lord Jesus Christ
Bogton *[sobbing]* Aye sir. But I was feared o' Anny Sampson tae.
Judge What know ye of the panel Geilie Duncan?
Bogton That she is given to sit with the seik and erstwhiles cure them, though I know naught how she does this
Judge I think ye know it. Did ye not aft accompany the woman Duncan and the woman Sampson?
Bogton Aye sir. They teachd me their skills. For I was wont to give succour tae the seik, as were they.
Judge So be it recordit. I call upon Maister John Davidson, Minister of Salt Preston Kirk
[Davidson is brought in] Now sir, was the panel Geilie Duncan the foremost of the prisoners to be examined by ye?

Davidson She was
 Judge And what did ye jalouse of her healing powers?
 Davidson Why sir, I cannot say. May I speak of a man that was sore afflicted in this parish?
 Judge Ye may
 Davidson Weel sir, within Salt Preston abided a poor man who was diseased with the leprosy. He told me that upon the day of Pentecost in the year fifteen hunnert and aughty nine, Geilie Duncan came to his cottage. There she did gie him a shiel- begging your pardon sir I meant it was a shell- fillit wi' ane ointment. Geilie bade him tae put upon his sores the ointment, saying that it would heal his impostumes, that which ye would cry a growth upon the skin

Judge And what came of the potion?
 Davidson Why sir, the impostume witherit away. Though the leprosy pustules were still there
 Judge Was Duncan payed siller for this cure?
 Davidson I ken nocht. Twas unlikely, for the man was poor.
 Judge What know ye of the business at the Kirk of North Berwick?
 Davidson Ah wisnae present but this was reported to me by ain o' my Brethren in Salt Preston Kirk
 Judge Shall ye advise this assize of the proceedings there?
 Davidson Aye, richt gladly. Ma Brither elder keepit watch upon the kirk . He was blessed to hear the words o' a hellish pact which went thus:
 "My Lord and Maister Lucifer, I acknowledge thee as my god and prince and promise tae serve and obey thee as long as Ah shall live. Ah renunce the ither god, the baptism an' a' the merits o' the Lord Jesus Christ. An' Ah sall serve and adore thee an' if Ah do not pay ye homage thrice a day, Ah gie ye ma life as thine own."

Judge Tis a mockery of Christian prayer and an insult not only to God and the Christ but to the Kirk of Scotland. Reverend Davidson, pray advise us if ye have more.
 Davidson Weel sir, ma brother in Christ heered the Devil who was present l' the pulpit as a black man. He bade his servants to open graves and tak away bones that they might be ground tae powder for to be used in spells.

Judge Can ye say what passed atween the Devil and his gathering? Were words spoken atween him and the accused?
 Davidson Aye, sir. But ma Brither remembered only Agnes Sampson's words.
 Judge And what were they?
 Davidson She asked the Devil why he hated the King
 Judge And what was his reply?
 Davidson He said twas because he was the greatest enemy he had and that he had nae pow'r against him

Judge Ye are certain that twas the Devil and not Lord Bothwell that was masked as the Devil?

Davidson Ah ken nocht, for Ah wasnae present

Judge *[turning to the King]* Your Majesty, twould be in keeping with the rebel Bothwell to say the words and appear masked, that his servants did not ken him

King It may be so, it may be so. But pray continue

Judge Thank ye your Highness. Now Mistress Sampson, ye have heard the testimony of the Reverend Davidson. Did ye invoke the Devil to appear in North Berwick Kirk, as ye have said in your confession?

Sampson Aye, for I was sore afraid that he had left us to take the blame for his actions

Judge In what manner did ye call him to ye?

Sampson He taught me to say the words that would summon him

Judge And what were they?

Sampson He bade me to cry “Hola Master” and he would appear, sometime in the shape o’ a black dog or a black man and aince a sheaf o’ straw or hay

Judge Agnes Sampson, ye are charged with no less than four score and ten abominable crimes against God, your King, men and women, children and animals. I pronounce ye guilty of heresy and the crime of witchcraft. Ye shall be taken from this place to the Castlehill, where ye shall be werrit at the stake, then thy foul body be cast into the fire that your remains shall be denied a Christian burial. Take her away. *[Sampson is led away. She is defiant and spits on the floor as she is removed].*

Judge Now, I recall Geilie Duncan to the assize. *[She is brought in]* Mistress Duncan, the assize has heard that ye administered to a leper in Salt Preston and that ye cured him of an impostume. Is that so?

Duncan Aye sir.

Judge How came ye by your skills?

Duncan Twas Anny Sampson that taught me

Judge So, Mistress, ye have the gift of healing that doctors do not have.

Duncan Twould seem so

Judge But tis not a gift from God.

Duncan It mattered not to me from whom it comed

Judge Not even if it were the Devil?

Duncan *[breaking down]* Oh maister, I am but a poor serving lass and I ken nocht from where the power comes. But I took nae airt or pairt in evil, though I confess I was present at the meetings at North Berwick Kirk and at Acheson’s Haven. All that I did there was to play the tromp or Jewish Harp that my friends might be made merry.

Judge *[turning to Rev Davidson]* Now Maister Davidson, when the panel was brought before ye, what did she?

Davidson Why sir, she scraiched like a scaldit cat, crying ‘pity me!’ all the whiles. She said she had done nae herm tae man, woman, child or beast.

Judge And what did ye and the Brethren do next?

Davidson We carrit her tae Travernent Tolbooth for to be examined be the magistrates who drew from the crature a confession of witchcraft. She said that her friends Bessie Thomson and Janet Stratton were guiltless.

Judge She named these women but no others?

Davidson Nay sir. Ah mean aye.

Judge Bring in the panel Bessie Thomson and the panel Janet Stratton. *[Turning to Duncan]* Now Mistress Duncan, for why do ye acquit those women above any others in your coven?

Duncan Oh, sir. By naming these two Ah did not seek to abuse the ithers. I answer upon my soul and conscience afore God that Ah have Ah never knew Anny Sampson, Barbara Napier nor Euphemia Maclean for to be witches or use ony sorcery at North Berwick nor Acheson’s Haven against His Majesty’s noble person. No, nor John Fian, though Ah telt he with God and that the women Ah hae named shall presently join him in Heaven

Judge Then why did ye speak of their wickedness before?

Duncan Ah was made to confess be Maister David Seton, the magistrate at Travernent. Twas all lies, for which I crave God’s pardon

Judge And what say ye, Mistress Stratton

Stratton As Ah shall answer tae God, Ah never knew the Earl of Bothwell but to be a noble man and that he never dealt in the black airts as he is accusit, that he micht gain the hurt of ony person.

Judge Yet ye were present at North Berwick and Acheson’s Haven where evil was worked.

Stratton As Ah shall answer tae God, Ah was never in they places, no nor ony conventions nor place where witchcraft was done. Nor did Ah ken o’ the wax picture fashioned o’ the King

Judge *[gasping disbelievingly]* But out of your own mouth, ye have spoken of such evils before.

Stratton *[sobbing and wringing her hands]* Twas fause and feigned for fear o’ ma life and the torment that was put upon Geilie Duncan and the ithers. Ah wis sore feered that the same fate would be mine if Ah didnae confess. That is why Ah said the words, that Ah micht escape the cruel dealin’.

Judge *[turning to Bessie Thomson]* And no doubt ye have the same excuse? What say ye?

Thomson As God be ma witness, Ah never meant ony herm tae the King nor ony ither living soul. Ah confessit Ah was at North Berwick Kirk and Acheson’s Haven, but the things that were said and the deeds done there were fause. For Ah dinnae believe in witchcraft, nor do Ah worship ony ither than oor Lord Jesus Christ.

Judge Well, well, this is a pretty kettle of fish. The Devil's craft is more cunning than any Christian man could fathom. We give him credit for that. It is well kened that he makes of his servants liars and slaves. These three women have proven the turn. *[Getting up from the desk and walking about the stage, to address the audience]* Ye here present this day, know ye that the penalty for crimes that cannot be repaired is death. For witchcraft is an abomination that exists in this realm. When its master the Devil is frustrated in his devices, he resorts to calumnies and falsehoods, that his servants, the witches and warlocks might save themselves from the fire of the law.

King Verily it shall be thus, for witchcraft is not only a sin against man's law but also God's. Pray proceed sir.

Judge The sentence of death shall be passed upon such as those that have been examined in this place, those that are guilty of witchcraft, abusing the people with false remedies to cure them and the use of images and poisons to bring an end to the King's noble life. For that was the intent of the North Berwick Witches, though the most of them are residents of Salt Preston and beyond.

King *[rising up in anger]* Ye speak of those that await their punishment, yet there is one that was set free to roam the countryside, doing her evil upon others. We advert to Mistress Barbara Napier, who was lately and unjustly released on account of her pleading her belly. Shall this assize condemn her in her absence, that she may be brought to the Tolbooth to answer for her crimes?

Judge Your Highness, tis said that the woman Napier has fled the country and cannot be found.

King *[thumping the arm of his chair]* Aye, much to our extreme displeasure, that one that is clothed in her guilt is free to roam the earth and work more mischief. Yet justice will be done, for if she set foot upon the soil of this realm, she shall answer to us in person and be sentenced under the law.

Judge *[bowing]* I humbly comply, your Majesty. It was not I but my colleagues who set the woman at liberty. I was not party to it, for this assize has weakened me in spirit and body.

King *[waving his hand]* Yes, yes, good sir. Yet see that ye are not incontinent in your duty upon this occasion. Is it the will and wish of this our assize that all held in the Tolbooth are guilty of the crime of witchcraft and that they shall receive the due penalty of the law?

Judge It shall be as you command, your Majesty.

King We do not command it, we expect that the law shall be observed. For it is our bounden duty to rid our fair land of the filthy abomination of witchcraft. Does not God's Book instruct us in this matter? His holy commandment is writ clear in Exodus, Chapter 22, verse 18. We shall remind ye of what is commanded. 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live'.

Judge *[bowing]* It shall be as the Holy Book commands. God's will shall be done. And your own, for ye rule this land by God's divine right.

King *[nodding]* Well spoken, sir. Now, we shall adjourn to refresh ourselves in the knowledge that God's will shall be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.

 We bid you good day

Lights out.

ACT 3: SCENE 2

[A darkened stage representing a cell in the Tolbooth of Edinburgh The muted light comes from stage left. Sounds of dripping water in the background, with doors being bolted and distant voices moaning. On the floor lie Geilie Duncan and Bessie Thomson, in chains]

Duncan *[reaching out to caress Bessie's cheek]* Oh, ma puir Bessie, ma true freend. What have Ah brocht ye to? Ye were my good companion when we went to the schule and were brocht to our lessons by Dominie Fian, him that is long deid. We are the last o' the brithers and sisters that hae perished, though they did guid works be their healing gifts. Upon the morn, they shall come for us and lead us tae the Castlehill, where we shall be werrit and cast intil the fire.

Thomson *[sobbing]* Gelie, speak ye no' of it. Ah'm sair afeered for the morn. Ah pray tae the guid Lord that the lockman shall dae his work quickly and that we be not cast intil the fire alive. Aince as a bairn Ah wis burnt be the fire in mah mither's kitchen for Ah did fa' asleep be the fire and the coals fell at ma feet and set fire tae ma claes. Ma mither saved me, yet Ah cannae forget the burning. The picture o' the flames bides wi' me tae this day.

Duncan Why did we pay heed tae the fause words o' John Fian, him that was a man skilled in words? An' the noble man Bothwell, whae promisit much in siller, guids and vittles, yet gave none to us and oors.

Thomson We did so for he was the dominie and feered him, as we feered the man Bothwell, for he was set above us. They men used us in a way that men dinnae use women. They tak us intil their beds and hae their wey. Ma mither telt me Ah wud hae tae bear. A wee pain. Tis less than what we face upon the morn.

Duncan Aye, Bessie. We were ill-used be Fian and Bothwell. A' that Ah enterprised tae dae was to comfort the seik in their beds. An' play the tromp at the meetings to please ma brithers and sisters in their merry making. The puir fowk hae little kindness in their time. Whit herm can a wee bit music dae?

Thomson Aye, the pair hae a hard life. They toil i' the fields and hae little enough to eat to succour their strength. Geilie lass, were I a wummin o' letters, Ah wad write it doon for them that come efter us. We werenae witches, we were twa wummin that cared about the folk that had naethin'. For ye ken we sprang frae the same seed.

Duncan We were fools tae pay heed to the words o' rich men and men weel versed in words. For men that are great in siller gain it be the use o' the labours o' men and wimmen that hae nae siller.

Thomson Ma faither said twas always so. *[She reaches out and touches Gelie's cheek]*. Dear lassies, Ah am rich for the kenning o' ye and the havin' o' your freendship. Ye were aye kind to me and mine. Ah am that feered tae dee but Ah couldnae dee in better company.

Duncan Let us sleep now that we may be strang tae greet the morn and the maisters that shall await us upon the Castlehill. We maun be strong, Bessie. God be wi' ye. *[Lights out]*

EPILOGUE

Francis, 5th Earl of Bothwell died in exile at Naples in 1612, still declared the King's rebel and reputed sorcerer and necromancer. He died poor but at least he lived for another 22 years after the last of his so-called coven met their end. These simple, humble people were the real victims of the first witch hunt. As many of you here tonight know, a moment in the trial of the North Berwick Witches has been impressively painted in a tableau by local artist Tom Ewing, whose work is displayed today in nearby Cuthill Park. I strongly recommend that you pay it a visit

Will you allow me a moment of conjecture? We must ask ourselves why young Gelie Duncan was kept in custody for nearly nine months after the last of the so-called North Berwick witches were despatched. It cost money to her and her friend Bessie Thomson in jail. I can but speculate on the reason. Geilie was raped by the Magistrate David Seton in Tranent. James VI and I had already voiced his extreme displeasure that Barbara Napier, one of the ringleaders of the plot against his life had been set free by 'pleading her belly' ie she was with child. It seems to me logical that the authorities kept poor Geilie in jail until she was delivered of her bairn which was brought about by David Seton's rape. And it would be logical to assume that her friend Bessie Thomson was kept alive so that she could tend to her friend. The authorities didn't want to offend James VI again by releasing a pregnant woman.

**DAVID
BALFOUR
&
ALAN BRECK**

THE 'GREENING' OF DAVID BALFOUR

**SCENES FROM CATRIONA
BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON**

being principally an account of the meetings of David Balfour with William Grant, Lord Prestoungrange, Lord Advocate of Scotland and Baron of Prestoungrange, to seek justice for James Stewart wrongly accused of the Appin Murder.

Narrative Reminiscence written by Ian Nimmo, Chairman of The Robert Louis Stevenson Club with *Scenes* edited by Annemarie Allan for presentation at Prestoungrange House on November 28th 2006 being Barons' Day as celebrated annually by the Barons of Prestoungrange and of Dolphinstoun; played on the first occasion by The Meanwhile Players of The Prestoungrange Arts Festival. They subsequently took an extended version to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in August 2007.

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Scene I: HONOUR

Scene II: BETRAYAL

Scene III: POLITICS

Scene IV: ROMANCE

FOREWORD

The suggestion that this dramatic factitious presentation should be enacted arose directly from the historical agenda of the Prestoungrange Arts Festival since its inception in 1998 by the Barons' Courts of Prestoungrange & of Dolphinstoun. The Lord Advocate, William Grant Lord Prestoungrange, was perhaps the most illustrious holder of these our baronial lands and titles since their original grant in 1189. His great reputation stemmed from the manner in which he played his role as Lord Advocate immediately following the 1745 Uprising by the Highlanders led by Prince Charles Edward against King George II. Whilst he was ever willing to make the hard and pragmatic decisions necessary he took no pleasure in them and this was nowhere better seen than in the case of the trial and execution of James Stewart for the murder of a Campbell rent collector on forfeit lands that James never committed. Stevenson debates the real issues of the times here as he tells of the personal struggle of David Balfour to balance his youthful fight for justice with the pursuit of a successful career in the law. *Catriona*, who gives her name to the sequel novel to *Kidnapped*, provides the love story throughout.

Having resolved to present the Appin Murder story the way the Robert Louis Stevenson recounts it there seemed to be no more appropriate occasion than that day on which we regularly invite all the feudo-Barons of Scotland each year to celebrate their titles and responsibilities, November 28th. And there seemed to be no more appropriate venue than Prestoungrange House itself – today the home to the Royal Musselburgh Golf Club, whose Officers readily agreed to make their best rooms available.

Finally, there seemed no more appropriate individual than Ian Nimmo, Chairman of the Robert Louis Stevenson Club in Edinburgh and former Editor of the *Edinburgh Evening News*, to assist us and to ensure that what we created was worthy of such a great author.

PROLOGUE

RLS

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Let me introduce myself. My name is Robert Louis [pronounced *Lewis* in these parts] Stevenson. Well, not *the* Robert Louis Stevenson, writer. He passed on more than a century ago. But I'm his disembodiment, you could say, his wraith, his shade, his otherworldly self; I'm an apparition, a spectre or, in a nutshell ladies and gentlemen, I am RLS's ghost!

Don't fret! I'm not here to scare you this evening. But you're in my patch. This is home for me. Edinburgh, Prestonpans, Gullane, North Berwick, the Bass Rock, Tantallon's ruined ramparts – they are all my old haunts, so to speak.

And tonight – because you're here and I'm here – I thought I might introduce you to two of my favourite characters. They played important roles in these parts and dominate the pages of two of my best-loved novels – *Kidnapped* and its sequel *Catriona*.

Catriona! It is the name of that grey-eyed Highland beauty, daughter of the rogue and wastrel James More, the no-good son of the famous Rob Roy MacGregor. And although her role here, and indeed in my full original text, was essentially only to provide a love interest, it was powerful enough for me to wish to use her name for my sequel to *Kidnapped*.

You see, I didn't have to invent any of these characters. They were real people. Clansmen, Highlanders, Lowlanders, desperate men, cunning men, law makers and breakers, women of the time. They all stepped their vivid hour on Scotland's stage.

And then there was one who struck fear into the hearts of all who erred outside the law. He was Scotland's principal prosecutor, a man who could wield the law like a broadsword, a man who moved in the higher echelons of power in the land. He was the Lord Advocate, Lord Prestoungrange, and he commanded deference with a snap of his fingers.

But first, ladies and gentlemen, let me introduce to you my central character in both *Kidnapped* and *Catriona*. It is the adventures of this young man of good family that made *Kidnapped* a best seller. He was kidnapped to be sold into slavery in the Carolinas by his bad old Uncle Ebenezer. This young man's adventures in *Kidnapped* were so well received that they had to be further told in *Catriona*.

So, ladies and gentlemen, meet Mr David Balfour – of Shaws.

David Balfour Thank you, Louis. That was a kind introduction. But as my creator, of course, I could hardly have expected less – and I’m always at your command! And as you can see, my attire, the height of fashion in 1753, demonstrates my position is much improved since those desperate days when I was on the run from the red coat soldiers and the Campbell clan. And at my side, always, on the lookout for my wellbeing, my fugitive companion and friend – a kind of James Bond of his day – the real-life Jacobite courier and swordsman, Allan Breck Stewart.

But how did a simple country lad like me become embroiled in foul murder, kidnapping, a shipwreck, clan feud, and a race for my life?

RLS Okay, David, but first let me introduce you all to that other character from real life, the Lord Advocate, William Grant of Prestoungrange. Even today, Lord Advocates remain a frightening breed. No-one is beyond their reach or power if they step outside the law of Scotland. Is that not true, my Lord Prestoungrange?

Prestoungrange Absolutely, Louis, nae quarter given. Where the law is concerned, the Lord Advocate must be a purist. The Lord Advocate is the law. He reigns supreme. His judgement is objective, fair – and final. The law is his bible.

RLS Such perfection!

Prestoungrange It’s no’ about perfection. It’s about the law. It’s about transgression and punishment. It’s about justice being done – and seen to be done.

RLS And yet, and yet, it strikes me, Lord Advocate, it’s not always that simple. I have in mind one of your cases, high profile, a show trial, where justice, it seems to me, played no part.

David Balfour *[cutting in]* Yes, yes, James Stewart! It’s poor James Stewart you’re thinking about . . .

Prestoungrange Come, come, gentlemen, there are times, as you can imagine, when discretion must play a role, discretion by wise and experienced men. Sometimes, the Lord Advocate may see fit, for the greater good, you understand, to bend a little with the breeze. Or make a choice that under normal circumstances he might not have made. Or take decisions that legally may go against the grain. In the greater interests of law and order that is, and the country, of course. But, as I say, justice must be seen to be done, although sometimes perhaps it does not work out perfectly. Otherwise, Louis, we’d be back living in a land of savages.

David Balfour *[cutting in]* Legal decisions of self-interest and expediency, you mean.

Prestoungrange I wouldnae use those terms mysel’, but if the circumstances call for it, sensible judgements by intelligent men of honour in the country’s interests, yes, I suppose I agree.

- RLS Like the hanging of James Stewart of the Glen, you mean. An innocent man dancing on air to your tune on the end of a rope for a murder in which he played no part. You, my Lord Prestoungrange, ensured James climbed the gallows steps. You let an innocent man swing.
- David Balfour Aye, and you could also dance, Prestoungrange – but to the government’s tune. You and your fine words and high ideals. Balderdash! Justice played no part in James Stewart’s trial.
- Prestoungrange Ye know nothing! Do ye not see, man, I saved Scotland from further rebellion. I saved lives. On both sides. Thousands maybe. Civil war – there’s naething worse. And it was high time the days of those warring old lairds, chained to their old feuds and old ways, were over. Progress for Scotland was what mattered. Scotland’s future was more important than the neck of a Jacobite nonentity.
- RLS Okay, okay, calm down! Let’s take this logically, slowly. Let’s examine the facts. Let me tell you first how I came to write Kidnapped and Catriona and discover the Appin Murder, Allan Breck and James Stewart, the Red Fox – and you, too, my Lord Advocate Prestoungrange. And, of course, how I came to invent you, David Balfour.
- David Balfour Yes, I’ve often wondered how I came into being.
- RLS In 1879 my heart had taken me to California, chasing my true love. How romantic! I was 29 and the following year I was married in San Francisco. I returned to Scotland with my wife so that she could meet my parents. They were agog. Here was their dear, only child, sickly, skinny as a rake, dying for all they – or I knew – and the foolish boy had gone and got himself married. Worse. To a divorcee. Worse still. With a ready-made family of two. They were horror-struck! But a wife and family demanded I had to start earning a living. So I began to write – because that was the only thing I ever wanted to do.
- My father and I were up in Strathpeffer to visit an old friend. On our way back to Edinburgh we stopped off in Inverness and my father went browsing to a second-hand bookshop, while I went for a walk. A little, old volume caught his eye on a bookshelf. It was titled The Trial of James Stewart. He noted it was published in 1753. As he flicked through the pages, he found it was the official record of the trial of a Stewart clansman for the murder of a government agent called Colin Campbell of Glenure. Campbell had been shot in the back in the Wood of Lettermore, in Argyll, while going about his official government duties.
- That evening, when my father placed that little book in my hands, it was as if it spoke to me. Somehow I could see the murder scene, hear the crack of the fatal musket shot, see that figure in the short, dark coat as he scrambled up the hillside gun in hand. I could hear Colin Campbell’s last groans – and the creak of the rope

around the neck of poor, innocent James Stewart, as his body swung on the gibbet.

That little volume made an enormous impact on me. Remember, I had trained as an advocate, and the more I read about this foul murder, and the background to it, and the hunt for someone to hang, the more my blood boiled at the injustice, the intrigue, the false witnesses, the vengeful government . . . indeed, it was that little, ancient, priceless volume that made me write *Kidnapped* and *Catriona*. All I did was to weave my fiction into the grim facts.

David Balfour Let me tell the murder story, Louis. Let me tell it. I was there, remember. I saw the murder. I was the star witness never heard.

RLS Very well, David, but stick to the facts. We want the truth, David, the truth.

David Balfour Well then, it was really about a centuries-long clan feud between the Stewarts and their sworn enemies the Campbells and the grim end to Bonnie Prince Charlie's Highland uprising. The Prince's dream of restoring the Stewarts to the British throne came to a red end at Culloden. The clans were slaughtered, the victorious Campbells began to take over the defeated Stewart lands.

To the vanquished, there was only pain, poverty and humiliation. But as the Appin Stewarts watched helplessly while the hated Campbells took over their land and homes, their resentment smouldered.

A government agent was appointed to set and collect rents from the defeated Stewarts. His name, of course, was Colin Campbell, from the small, neighbouring estate of Glenure.

The man who spoke for the Stewarts in the absence of his exiled clan chief was James Stewart of Glen Duror, who had swung his claymore in battle at Culloden. He was a deeply religious, intelligent man, a man of integrity, with a reputation for honesty. Like Glenure he was also a man of calibre.

But then there were problems over the payment of rents. Eventually, a small number of Stewart evictions were to take place in May of 1752. As the day drew near, Appin seethed. The countdown to murder had begun.

Prestoungrange I suppose I had better explain what happened next.

David Balfour No, no, I was there. I was an eyewitness. I saw what happened. I should tell it.

Prestoungrange Ye saw what you saw, David. But you were hardly an impartial observer. You had already taken sides. I stood in court and heard all the witnesses. And ye must agree, James Stewart's trial was fairly conducted.

David Balfour Fairly conducted! Fairly conducted! A 15-man jury and nine of them were Campbells. Trying a Stewart for the murder of a Campbell – you call that fair! And the biggest Campbell of all, The Duke of Argyll, the Campbell clan chief, presiding as Lord Chief Justice. You call that a fair trial! It's the blackest mark on Scottish legal history.

RLS

Enough! I'll tell what happened. Fairly, impartially. The facts are these:

On the day before the evictions, Colin Campbell and three companions made their way from Fort William heading for Appin. They were unarmed. Around 5pm they picked their way along the rough track beside Loch Linnhe.

When they came to the Wood of Lettermore, their path rose high above the loch to avoid a cliff. Suddenly, bang! A shot rang out. With the very sound of it Glenure slumped in the saddle. Then he shouted: "Oh, I am dead. Take care of yourselves. He's going to shoot you."

One of Campbell's companions saw a figure wearing a short, dark coat and carrying a gun high on the hillside. It must have been him! But was it?

In under a minute it was all over. Glenure was dying, Appin was in turmoil, Campbells and Government were about to take a terrible vengeance – and Scottish justice went flying out the window.

James Stewart was arrested next day. On time grounds it was impossible for him to have been at the murder scene, so James was charged with complicity. There was not a shred of evidence against him. He was merely the leading Stewart they could lay their hands on. A Campbell had been killed and, by thunder, a Stewart would swing.

James was held without visitors and without legal representation. The first meeting with his lawyer was the day before his trial. Witnesses had been threatened, evidence perjured or simply vanished. Even the dead man's brother helped to choose the jury.

James felt the rope around his neck from the moment he heard of the shooting.

Ah, but that was only in Appin. In London there was a different kind of shock and horror. The King was informed. Remember, six years earlier the government had almost been overthrown by Prince Charlie's Highland army. Now the government wrongly read Glenure's assassination as the first shot of another Jacobite rebellion.

So the word went out from London and Edinburgh – stop this possible rebellion in its tracks. Act fast. Break the clans. Finish them – once and for all!

Prestoungrange

You talk of perjury, missing evidence, interference with witnesses. These are very serious charges. I assure you, the court knew nothing of these. No one can deny that the proceedings were not properly conducted.

David Balfour

A proper manner, my Lord Prestoungrange, does not mean justice.

Prestoungrange

Ah, weel, David, the world has been searching for proper justice for centuries. Indeed, sometimes today I feel we go backwards rather than forwards.

But I will say this for ye, David Balfour. Ye showed bravery in coming forward and offering to speak as a witness on James's behalf. As I said at the time, it was an act

of great courage or monumental folly to face the Lord Advocate in his den with a warrant out for your arrest. A signal from me, and you could have been strung up beside James Stewart. I gave you the benefit of the doubt, David, and you should respect that.

I took ye on face value, which is not always wise for a lawyer. I recognised your sincerity, David, and your principles and your desire to see justice done for James Stewart. But if I mind right, in the end you were not averse to making a few compromises with your own principles.

David Balfour

[laughing] You have a good memory, my Lord Advocate. And it's true to say I never knew whether I was an idiot or a hero in coming forward. When I came to see you on that first occasion you will recollect you kept me waiting an inordinate time. There were moments before your arrival when I felt like making a dash for it. But we had some interesting conversations, did we not?

[All exit stage in conversation, RLS's arm around David Balfour].

SCENE I: HONOUR

[...in which David Balfour seeks out the Lord Advocate to ensure no miscarriage of justice shall occur in the Appin Murder Case]

[A small room in the lord advocate's house at prestonpans several years earlier. Enter David Balfour and a servant]

Servant I regret My Lord Advocate is not at home. I would ask ye tae wait here, sir, for the time being.

[The servant leaves. Balfour walks to and fro, then throws himself in a chair with his head in his hand. The door opens]

Prestoungrange Is anybody there?" he asked. "Who is that?"

David Balfour I am David Balfour, sir, of the House of Shaws. I bear a letter from the laird of Pilrig to the Lord Advocate. I am anxious to make a declaration, sir, which will ease a matter that is much on my conscience.

Prestoungrange My apologies, Mr Balfour. It seems the lads forgot your presence. Sit ye down, sir, and let us see Pilrig's letter. *[Reads the letter with increasing interest]* I am pleased to make your acquaintance, Mr. Balfour. Let me offer you a glass of claret.

David Balfour My Lord, I have come here on a business of some gravity and I am little used with wine.

Prestoungrange As you will. *[Fills a glass and leans back]* Now sir, how can I serve you?

David Balfour I should begin by telling you, my lord, that I might lay a claim on your lordship for two hundred pounds.

Prestoungrange Indeed, sir? And how might that be?

David Balfour In the sense of a reward offered for my person. 'A tall strong lad of about eighteen. Speaks like a lowlander and has no beard'.

Prestoungrange *[Puts the glass down and sits forward]* I recognise those words. If you have come here with any ill-judged intention of amusing yourself, they are like to prove extremely prejudicial to your safety.

David Balfour My purpose is as serious as life and death, and you have understood me perfectly. I am the boy who was speaking with Glenure when he was shot.

Prestoungrange I can only suppose seeing you here that you claim to be innocent.

David Balfour I am a very loyal subject to King George, but if I had anything to reproach myself with, I would have had more discretion than to walk into your den.

Prestoungrange I am glad of that. *[Begins to pace the room]* Blood has been barbarously shed, Mr. Balfour. It has been shed in direct opposition to His Majesty and our whole frame of laws. This horrid crime is of a dye which cannot permit any clemency.

David Balfour *[Drily]* And unfortunately, my Lord, it is directly personal to another great personage who may be nameless.

Prestoungrange You do not appear to me to recognise the gravity of your situation, or you would be more careful, sir! Justice, in this country, and in my poor hands, is no respecter of persons. The Duke of Argyle -you see that I deal plainly with you - has indeed been wounded in a near place by the late barbarity. But he sits too high to be reached by these aspersions.

David Balfour You give me too great a share in my own speech, my lord. I did but repeat the common talk of the country, which I have heard everywhere.

Prestoungrange Such talk is not to be listened to, much less repeated. It is because it is a Campbell who has fallen martyr to his duty and the chief of that great house happens to be the present head of the College of Justice, that disaffected tongues are set agog in every changehouse in the country; and such a young gentleman as Mr. Balfour is ill-advised to make himself their echo. But all this apart, it now remains that I should learn what I am to do with you.

David Balfour
Prestoungrange I had thought it was rather I that should learn the same from your lordship.
Aye, true. I tell you, Mr. Balfour – and I tell you beforehand that you may be the more upon your guard, your fate lies with me singly. In such a matter I am more powerful than the King’s Majesty; and should you please me –and of course satisfy my conscience –in what remains to be held of our interview, I tell you it may remain between ourselves.

David Balfour
Prestoungrange Meaning how?
Why, Mr. Balfour. if you give satisfaction, no soul need know so much as that you visited my house; and you may observe that I do not even call my clerk.

David Balfour
Prestoungrange I am not at all ashamed of coming here.
And have no cause to be. Nor yet to fear the consequences. If you are careful.

David Balfour
Prestoungrange My Lord, I am not very easy to frighten.
And I am sure I do not seek to frighten you. But let me warn you to volunteer nothing beyond the questions I shall ask you. It may consist very immediately with your safety. I have a great discretion, it is true, but there are bounds to it.

David Balfour
Prestoungrange I shall try to follow your lordship’s advice.
[Places paper on the table and lifts a pen] It appears you were present in the wood of Lettermore at the moment of the fatal shot. Was this by accident?”

David Balfour
Prestoungrange By accident. I was inquiring my way of Colin Campbell to Aucharn.
H’m, true. *[Puts down the pen]* I had forgotten that. Mr. Balfour, I would dwell as little as might be on your relations with these Stewarts. It might complicate our business.

David Balfour
Prestoungrange I had thought, my lord, that all points of fact were equally material in such a case. You forget we are now trying these Stewarts. If we should ever come to be trying you, it will be very different; and I shall press these very questions that I am now willing to glide upon. *[Picks up the pen]* But to resume: I have it here in Mr. Mungo Campbell’s precognition that you ran immediately up the brae. How came that?
Not immediately, my lord, and the cause was my seeing of the murderer.

David Balfour
Prestoungrange You saw him, then?

David Balfour
Prestoungrange As plain as I see your lordship, though not so near hand.
You know him?

David Balfour
Prestoungrange I should know him again.
In your pursuit you were not so fortunate, then, as to overtake him?

David Balfour
Prestoungrange I was not.
Was he alone?

David Balfour
Prestoungrange He was alone.
There was no one else in that neighbourhood?

David Balfour
Alan Breck Stewart was not far off, in a piece of a wood.

Prestoungrange *[Again lays down the pen]* I think we are playing at cross purposes, which you will find to prove a very ill amusement for yourself.

David Balfour I content myself with following your lordship's advice, and answering what I am asked. I am here to lay before you certain information, by which I shall convince you Alan had no hand whatever in the killing of Glenure.

Prestoungrange *[Stares at Balfour in anger]* Mr. Balfour, I tell you pointedly you go an ill way for your own interests.

David Balfour My Lord, As God judges me, I have but the one design, and that is to see justice executed and the innocent go clear. If in pursuit of that I come to fall under your lordship's displeasure, I must bear it as I may.

Prestoungrange *[Rises and walks to and fro, then turns to Balfour, his face grave]* You are either very simple, or extremely the reverse, and I see that I must deal with you more confidentially. This is a political case, Mr. Balfour, and as such very different from one which is criminal only. I tremble when I think what issues may depend from it.

David Balfour Under your pardon, my lord, I would have you to believe nothing but that which I can prove.

Prestoungrange You would have me to believe Breck innocent. But once admitted, the matter of Breck's innocence would destroy the whole presumptions of our case against another and a very different criminal; a man grown old in treason, a fomentor of discontent, and – whoever may have fired the shot – the unmistakable original of the deed in question. I need not tell you that I mean James Stewart.

David Balfour And I can just say plainly that the innocence of Alan and James is what I am here to declare to your lordship, and what I am prepared to establish at the trial by my testimony.

Prestoungrange I can only answer by an equal plainness, Mr. Balfour. In that case your testimony will not be called by me, and I desire you to withhold it altogether.

David Balfour You are at the head of Justice in this country and you propose to me a crime!

Prestoungrange *[Throws himself in his chair]* I am a man nursing with both hands the interests of this country. I press on you a political necessity, for I regard my political duty first and my judicial duty only second. For that reason – I repeat, I do not want your testimony.

David Balfour If your lordship has no need of it, I believe the other side would be extremely blythe to get it.

Prestoungrange *[Rises again]* The Campbells expect vengeance. If this man James escapes that means disturbance in the Highlands, which are uneasy and very far from being disarmed. We may have a '45 again, but this time with the Campbells on the other

side. To protect the life of this man Stewart – which is forfeit already on half-a-dozen different counts – do you propose to plunge your country in war, to jeopardise the faith of your fathers, and to endanger the lives and fortunes of countless innocent persons?

David Balfour

You deal with me very frankly, and I thank you for it. But I am just a plain man – I think only of a poor soul in the immediate and unjust danger of a shameful death, and of the cries and tears of his wife that still tingle in my head. I cannot see beyond, my lord. It's the way that I am made. If the country has to fall, it has to fall. And I pray God, if this be wilful blindness, that He may enlighten me before too late.

SCENE II: BETRAYAL

[...where Lord Prestoungrange, having failed to ensnare David Balfour through the flattering attentions of his own daughters, of whom the eldest Janet is to become Baroness of Prestoungrange and of Dolphinstoun and Countess of Hyndford, seeks to frighten David Balfour into withholding his testimony....]

[The study in the house of Lord Prestoungrange. A man is waiting. David Balfour enters in the company of the Lord Advocate]

Prestoungrange

Here, Fraser, is Mr. Balfour whom we talked about. Mr. David, this is Mr. Simon Fraser, whom we used to call by another title, but that is an old song. Mr. Fraser has an errand he wishes to present to you. [Prestoungrange wanders to a side table, lifts a book and begins to leaf through it]

David Balfour

[Surprised] Are you not, sir, the Master of Lovat?

Fraser

[With a smooth smile] I see you have heard of the Chief of the great clan Fraser.

David Balfour

[Suspicious] I have, sir. I give you good day, though I find it strange indeed that you should be here, in the house of your enemy.

Fraser

I see that you know something of my name and clan, and the damnable example and lamented end of my late father – to say nothing of myself. Well, I have made my peace and here I am with my foot in the stirrup again, sharing the responsibility of prosecuting King George's enemies. I am called to the bar, and designated Advocate-Depute in the Appin murder.

David Balfour

Doubtless a proud position for your father's son.

Fraser *[Angry]* All who would prosper in the future must put a shoulder to the wheel. Look at me! Do you suppose it is for my pleasure that I put myself in the position of persecuting a man that I have drawn the sword alongside of?

David Balfour I suppose nothing, sir. I am here only to state the facts in the case.

Fraser The guilt of Breck is manifest; and your testimony, in which you admit you saw him on the hill at the very moment, will certify his hanging.

David Balfour It will be rather ill to hang him till you catch him, I suppose.

Fraser You are pleased to make experiments in the ironical, I think. But you will not divert me, Mr. Balfour. I have just come from his Grace, the Duke of Argyle, and I am here to discharge my errand in good faith. *[Smiles persuasively]* For a young fellow of spirit and ambition like yourself, a good shove in the beginning will do more than ten years' drudgery. The shove is now at your command; choose what you will to be advanced in and the Duke will watch upon you with the affectionate disposition of a father.

David Balfour I fear that I lack the docility of a son.

Fraser *[Angry]* Do you really suppose, sir, that the whole policy of this country is to be tumbled down for an ill-mannered colt of a boy? Hitherto Prestoungrange has chosen not to combat your allegations; but you must not think they are looked upon without strong suspicion. You say you are innocent. My dear sir, the facts declare you guilty. The evidence of Mungo Campbell; your flight after the murder; your long course of secrecy – my good young man, here is enough evidence to hang a bullock, let be a David Balfour! And be assured, I shall be upon that trial – my voice shall be raised! You look pale, your eyes waver, Mr. David! You see the grave and the gallows nearer by than you had fancied.

David Balfour I own to a natural weakness. I think no shame for that.

Fraser Shame waits for you on the gibbet!

David Balfour Where I shall be even with my Lord your father!

Fraser “Aha, but not so! My father suffered in a great cause, and for dealing in the affairs of kings. You are to hang for a dirty murder about boddle-pieces. I think I can see the looks go round the court when it is shown that you, a young man of education, let yourself be corrupted for a suit of cast clothes, a bottle of Highland spirits, and three-and-fivepence-halfpenny in copper money!

David Balfour That is a lie, sir! I stand by my innocence. I am here in the interests of a greater truth than yours!

Fraser But Mr. Balfour, you must not suppose the Government of Great Britain and Ireland will ever be stuck for want of evidence. We have men here in prison who will swear out their lives as we direct them. Or as I direct, if you prefer the phrase. See here! *[Pulls a paper from his pocket]* Look at the name there: it is the name of the great

David Balfour David, I believe, the ink scarce dry yet. Can you guess its nature? It is the warrant for
Prestoungrange your arrest, which I have but to touch this bell beside me to have executed on the
spot. Once in the Tollbooth upon this paper, may God help you, for the die is cast!"
There is a gentleman in this room! I appeal to him. I put my life in his hands!

David Balfour *[Closes the book with a snap]* I told you so, Simon. You have played your hand for all
Prestoungrange it was worth, and you have lost. I had no expectation of success on your behalf.
I assure you, sir, none of this man's accusations have any truth within them!

David Balfour Your honesty is easily seen Mr. David. And I wish you to believe it was by no choice of
Prestoungrange mine you were subjected to this proof. Neither should you bear any grudge upon my
friend, Mr. Simon, who did but speak by his appointed brief. Call for me tomorrow,
when I may possibly have something for your private hearing and until that time
repeat to me your promise of secrecy.

David Balfour Sir, I have said it already. My life is in your hands.
Prestoungrange Indeed it is.

SCENE III: POLITICS

[....where David Balfour, having escaped from imprisonment by Lord Prestoungrange on Bass Rock arrives too late to give evidence at the trial of James Stewart and proposes instead a strategy that will advance his career with Lord Prestoungrange's support ...]

[A room in a highland inn nearby the courthouse]

David Balfour Am I yet in time?
Stewart Aye and no. The case is over; the jury is enclosed, and will let us ken their view of it
to-morrow in the morning. Oh, it's been a scandal! But now that I have got you again
I'll never despair. Praise God that I should see the day! *[Drags him to the table where
two are already seated]* Sheriff Miller of Colstoun, Mr. Robert Macintosh – meet
David Balfour!

David Balfour Gentlemen, I think you know my story.
Macintosh Aye. You were there. You prove that Alan was on the spot and leave a strong
impression that he was in league with the man who fired. You show him actively
furthering the criminal's escape. The rest of your testimony depends on the bare
word of the two accused. And I need scarcely say that the introduction of a third
accomplice aggravates the accusation of conspiracy. I think we may all be very much

obliged to Prestoungrange for taking a most uncomfortable witness out of our way and placing him on Bass Rock. And I think Mr. Balfour himself might be obliged.

Miller Sirs! There is another view. Here we have a witness in this cause, kidnapped by that old, lawless, bandit crew of the Glengyle Macgregors, and kept for near upon a month in a bourock of old ruins on the Bass. Move that and see what dirt you fling on the proceedings! This is a tale to make the world ring with! It would be strange, with such a grip as this, if we couldnae squeeze out a pardon for my client.

Macintosh And suppose we took up Mr. Balfour's cause to-morrow? We should find so many impediments thrown our way that James would be hanged before we found a court to hear us. The hatred of the name Stewart rages in high quarters. There is nothing here to be viewed but naked Campbell spite and scurvy Campbell intrigue.

David Balfour Gentlemen! You seem to forget in all of this the interest of the person you are here for – James of the Glens.

Miller The world does not come to an end with James Stewart. Mr. David Balfour has a very good ground of complaint. Properly handled and carefully redd out, his is a story that could scarcely fail to have some consequence. The whole administration of justice, from its highest officer downward, would be totally discredited; and it looks to me as if they would need to be replaced. Should we approach Simon Fraser, his testimony, if it could be obtained, would prove certainly fatal to Argyle and to Prestoungrange.

Stewart *[Lifts his glass]* Gentlemen! Here is to Sheriff Miller. His legal abilities are known to all. But when it comes to his understanding of the political! *[Drains the glass]*.

Miller Ay, but it will hardly prove politics in your meaning, my friend. A revolution, if you like, and I think I can promise you that historical writers shall date from Mr. Balfour's cause. But properly guided, Mr. Stewart, tenderly guided, it shall prove a peaceful revolution.

Macintosh And if the damned Campbells get their ears rubbed, what care I? *[Hits the table with his fist]*

David Balfour Sirs! it was not my view to have undergone so many sorrows for the advancement of Sheriff Miller or to make a revolution in the Parliament House! I thank you for your advice and now, by your leave, I would like to raise to two or three questions. There is one thing that has fallen rather on one aide, for instance: Will this cause do any good to our friend James of the Glens?

Stewart It seems to me that James has now no hope but in the King's mercy.

David Balfour To proceed to my second question, then. Will it do any good to Scotland? We have a saying that it is an ill bird that fouls his own nest. Sheriff Miller tells us historical writers are to date from this cause of Mr. Balfour's, as you call it and I would not

wonder. It is only my fear they would date from it as a period of calamity and public reproach.

Miller

Forcibly put, Mr. Balfour

David Balfour

We have next to ask ourselves if it will be good for King George, and that I misdoubt, if the land is brought to conflict by this means. Then we come to those for whom the case was to be profitable, Sheriff Miller includes my own name. I hope he will pardon me if I think otherwise. I did not stand back while there was life to be saved at the risk of not a little danger to myself. But I think it would be a pity for a young man with some idea of coming to the Bar, to gain the character of a turbulent fellow before he was yet twenty. As for James, it seems he has no hope but in the King's mercy. Why not then address our petition direct to his Majesty, shelter the characters of these high officers from the public, and keep me from a position which might spell ruin for me?

Miller

I take it then that you propose a petition to the Crown, such a petition to include the facts of your imprisonment and an outline of the testimony you are prepared to offer? *[Nods slowly]* This plan has elements of success. It is as likely as any other to help our client. Perhaps his Majesty might feel a certain gratitude to all concerned in such a petition, and I think, in drafting the same, this view might be brought forward. *[Reluctantly, all agree]* Paper, then, Mr. Stewart, if you please, and I think it might very fittingly be signed by all of us here present, as procurators for the condemned man.

Macintosh

[Sighs, watching Miller begin to write] It can do none of us any harm, at least, I confess for a moment I had my own sights on the Lord Advocate's post.

Miller

I begin with a recitation of the facts about Mr. Balfour, the reward offered for his apprehension, his surrender, the pressure brought to bear upon him *[Writing quickly]* his capture and imprisonment before arriving at Inverary too late. *[Stops and considers for a moment then begins to write again]* I will now explain the reasons of loyalty and public interest for which it was agreed to keep his testimony to ourselves and complete the document with a forcible appeal to the King's mercy on behalf of James.

David Balfour

I hope, sir you do not represent me as a firebrand of a fellow whom you have but restrained with difficulty. But let that pass, only describe me as ready to deliver my own evidence and that of others before any commission of inquiry. And will you please ensure that I am furnished with a copy of the whole?

Macintosh

Hmm. This is a very confidential document.

David Balfour

And my position towards Prestoungrange is highly sensitive. I must have touched his heart at our first interview, so that he has since stood my friend consistently. But for him, gentlemen, I must now be lying dead or awaiting my sentence alongside poor

James. Therefore I choose to inform him of this appeal as soon as it is copied. You are to consider also that this step will make for my protection. I have enemies here – his Grace the Duke is in his own country, Lovat by his side; and if there should be any ambiguity over our actions I think I might very well awake in gaol.

Macintosh

Well, sir, I take your point. I would not wish you to be underhand with one you hold in honour. Shall we say that we agree, on the condition that you must lay this paper before Prestoungrange with the express compliments of all concerned. *[Looks around. Others nod agreement]* Very well. We will send to the castle where he is dining with his Grace to say a young man of his acquaintance would appreciate a private word.

[All leave except Balfour. Prestoungrange appears]

Prestoungrange

So, Mr. David, you are here after all?

David Balfour

Where I fear I am not overly welcome, my lord. And I would like before I go further to express my sense of your lordship's good offices, even should they now cease.

Prestoungrange

I have heard of your gratitude before and I think this can scarce be the matter you called me from my wine to listen to. I would remember also, if I were you, that you still stand on a very boggy foundation.

David Balfour

Not now, my lord, I think. And if your lordship will but glance an eye along this, you will perhaps think as I do.

Prestoungrange

[Takes the paper, frowns as he reads, then smiles a little] This is not so bad but what it might be worse. Though I am still likely to pay dear for my acquaintance with Mr. David Balfour.

David Balfour

Rather for your indulgence to that unlucky young man, my Lord.

Prestoungrange

And to whom am I indebted for this? Other counsels must have been discussed, I think. Who was it proposed this private method? Was it Miller?

David Balfour

My Lord, it was myself. The other gentlemen were all in favour of a process which should have remarkable consequences in the Parliament House. Before I intervened, I think they were on the point of sharing out the different law appointments. Our friend Mr. Simon was to be taken in for questioning.

Prestoungrange

And what were your reasons for dissenting, Mr. David?"

David Balfour

You have shown me some civil regard, my Lord. Despite our disagreement, I would return the favour.

Prestoungrange

You do me no more than justice. I have fought as hard in your interest as you have fought against mine. Tomorrow, our business here is to be finished, and I proceed by Glasgow. I would be very glad to have you of my party, Mr David.

David Balfour My Lord . . .
Prestoungrange I do not deny it will be of service to me. But I desire even that, when we shall come to Edinburgh, you should alight at my house. If you think I have been of use to you, you can in this way easily repay me, and may reap some advantage by the way. It is not every strange young man who is presented in society by the King's Advocate.

David Balfour *[Smiles]* This is in the nature of a countercheck to the paper you hold in your hand?
Prestoungrange You are cunning, Mr. David. Perhaps, however, you underrate my friendly sentiments, which are perfectly genuine. I have a respect for you, David, mingled with awe.

David Balfour I am more than willing, I am earnestly desirous to meet your wishes. I plan to be called to the Bar, where your lordship's favour would be invaluable; and I am besides sincerely grateful to yourself and your family. But there is one point in which we pull two ways. You are trying to hang James Stewart, I am trying to save him. In so far as my riding with you would better your lordship's defence, I am at your lordship's orders; but in so far as it would help to hang James Stewart, you see me in difficulty.

Prestoungrange *[Bitterly]* You should certainly be called; the Bar is the true scene for your talents. But I will tell you, James Stewart is already a dead man. No paper can help – no defection of a faithful Mr. David can hurt him. There will be no pardon for James. As for myself, am I to stand or fall? I do not deny that I am in some danger. But will Mr. David Balfour consider why? It is not because I pushed the case unduly against James. And it is not because I kept Mr. David prisoner on Bass Rock.

It is because I did not take the easy path, to which I was pressed repeatedly, and send Mr. David to his grave or to the gallows. Hence the scandal – hence this damned paper! My concern for you has brought me in this difficulty. Is the tenderness of your own conscience too great to help me out of it?

David Balfour Sir, there is much of truth in what you say. If you will name the time and place, I will be punctually ready to attend your lordship.

Prestoungrange Let us shake hands on it, then.

[The men exchange the firmest handshake]

SCENE IV: ROMANCE

[....where the David Balfour, now a successful man of the law thanks in no small part to the patronage of Lord Prestoungrange, finally declares his love for Catriona and finds she has always harboured the same love for him]

[An inn in France. David Balfour and Alan Breck in conversation]

- Alan Breck Stewart I cannae make head nor tail of it, but it sticks in my mind ye've made a gowk of yourself with this lass. There's few people that has had more experience than I have, and the way that you tell it, the thing's fair impossible. Ye must have made a terrible hash of the business, David.
- David Balfour I must admit, I am of the same mind.
- Alan Breck Stewart The strange thing is that ye seem to have a kind of fancy for her too! It's this way about a man and a woman, ye see, Davie: a woman either likes the man, and then a' goes fine; or else they just detest him, and ye may spare your breath for ye can do naething. There's just the two sets of them – them that would sell their coats for ye, and them that never look the road ye're on. And you seem to be such a gomer that ye cannae tell one frae the ither. I could easy learn ye the science of the thing; but ye seem to me to be born blind, and there's where the deefficulty comes in."
- David Balfour And can you no help me? You that are so clever at the trade?
- Alan Breck Stewart Ye see, David, I wasnae here. But it sticks in my mind that ye'll have made some kind of bauchle; and if I was you I would have a try at her again.
- David Balfour Would ye so, man Alan? Mayhap ye're right. *[Pulls a kerchief from his pocket and knots it round his neck]* I have her kerchief still – a keepsake I think she left for me on purpose.
- Alan Breck Stewart Let's see that letter that's come tae yer hand one more time. *[David hands him the letter. Alan reads aloud]* 'I have something very particular for the ear of my old comrade Mr. Stewart – at any rate, I would be pleased to meet in with an old fellow-soldier and one so mettle as himself. I make no doubt but we might spend some very pleasant days, and you, Mr. Balfour, and my daughter may divert yourselves in a manner more befitting your age. I beg at least that Mr. Stewart would come here; my business with him opens a very wide door'.
- Balfour Ye see, Alan, it goes against the grain with me to leave the maid in such poor hands.
- Alan Breck Stewart Ye couldnae weel find poorer. But what are ye to do with it? And what he wants with you is clear enough – it's siller. But what can he want with Alan Breck?

Balfour O, it'll be just an excuse. He is still after this marriage, which I wish from my heart that we could bring about. And he asks you because he thinks I would be less likely to come without you.

Alan Breck Stewart Well, I wish that I kent. Him and me never saw eye to eye. Something for my ear, eh? I'll maybe have something for his hinder-end, before we're through with it. *[The door opens and a young woman enters she is pale and distracted]* Wheesht now!

Catriona Mr. Balfour! I am glad to see you sir. *[Looks at the kerchief round his neck and puts her hand to her throat, smiling shyly]* My father, James More, will be here soon. And Mr. Alan Breck! Many a time have I heard Mr. Balfour speak of you and I love you already for all your bravery and goodness.

Alan Breck Stewart Well, well, so this is the young lady at the last of it! David, ye're an awful poor hand of a description.

Catriona What? will he have been describing me?

Alan Breck Stewart Little else of it since I ever came out of France! But cheer up, my dear! Ye're bonnier than what he said. And now there's one thing sure; you and me are to be a pair of friends. I'm a kind of a henchman to Davie here; I'm like a tyke at his heels; and whatever he cares for, I've got to care for too-and they've got to care for me! So now you can see what way you stand with Alan Breck, and ye'll find ye'll hardly lose on the transaction. He's no very bonnie, my dear, but he's a good friend to them he loves.

Catriona I thank you from my heart for your good words. *[The door opens. A voice calls out. Catriona frowns]* That will be my father, sirs. Please excuse me. I will be but a moment.

Alan Breck Stewart Ye muckle ass, Davie!

Balfour What do ye mean by that?

Alan Breck Stewart Mean? What do I mean! It's extraordinary, David man, that you should be so mortal stupid. I told ye there were two kinds of women – them that would sell their shifts for ye, and the others. Just you try for yoursel, my bonny man! But David, I am caring less and less for this man James. There's something no right here, and I shouldnae wonder but what Alan Breck should keep an eye on him this day. You bide here and, as for the lassie, just tell it to her plainly – tell her ye're a muckle ass at the off-set; and then, if I were you, and ye could do it naitural, I would just hint to her I was in some kind of a danger; a' weemenfolk like that.

Balfour Ye think a wee lie might do, then? More like it would come between us.

Alan Breck Stewart The more fool you! Then just tell her that I recommended it; that'll set her to the laughing; and I wouldnae wonder but what that was the next best. She's a good lass, Davie, and awful pleased with Alan, I suspect.

Balfour And is she so pleased with ye, then, Alan?
Alan Breck Stewart *[Stands and moves to the door]* She thinks a heap of me, and I'm no like you: I'm one that can tell. That she does – she thinks a heap of Alan. And troth! I'm thinking a good deal of him mysel! *[Leaves]*

[Enter Catriona. She stands and regards David Balfour]

Catriona Oh, why will you be sending money to that man my father! It must not be!

David Balfour I never sent it for him. I sent it for you, as you know well.

Catriona And you have no right to be sending it to either one of us. David, it is not right.

David Balfour You are right, Catriona. It is all wrong, and I pray God he will help such a dull fellow as I am to make it better. Catriona, this is no kind of life for you to lead; and I ask your pardon for the word, but yon man is no fit father to take care of you.

Catriona Do not be speaking of him, even!

David Balfour And I need speak of him no more; it is not of him that I am thinking, O, be sure of that! I think of the one thing. I have been alone now this long time in Leyden; and when I was by way of at my studies, still I was thinking of that. Next Alan came, and I went among soldier-men to their big dinners; and still I had the same thought. And it was the same before, when I had her there beside me. Catriona, do you see this napkin at my throat? You cut a corner from it once and then cast it from you. These are your colours now; I wear them in my heart. My dear, I cannot bear it without you. O, try to put up with me! Try and bear me with a little! *[Steps over and takes her hand]* Catriona, is it a mistake again? Am I quite lost?

Catriona Do you want me, Davie, truly?

David Balfour I do that! O, sure you know it – I do that.

Catriona I have nothing left to give or to keep back. I was all yours from the first day, if you would have had a gift of me! *[Flings her arms around him]* Davie, O, Davie, is it so that you were caring for poor me! O, Davie, Davie!

David Balfour My little friend! *[Uses a corner of the kerchief to wipe tears from her eyes and then his own]* My little friend, now you are mine altogether; mine for good and always.

EPILOGUE

RLS

In the end, of course, they did hang James Stewart high. A 30ft gibbet was erected on the high ground at Cnap a Cholaise near Ballachulish. The remains of his body was a highly visible obscenity for more than two years, guarded by redcoat soldiers in case the Stewarts might try to cut him down for decent burial. The message was clear: This is what happens to those who stand against the government. The days of the clans are over.

And they *were* over. A brave man had been foully murdered and an innocent man had paid with his life in what has been called the blackest mark on Scottish legal history. The clans were crushed. Many were shipped out to America, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Appin Stewarts found themselves exiled to the Carolinas, where they continued to keep the tartans flying and the pipes a-playing.

The Appin Murder remains the last great Scottish mystery. Who fired the shot that killed Colin Campbell of Glenure? It is the Stewart Secret that has been handed down generation by generation among Appin Stewarts to this day. Ah, yes, indeed, I spy someone in this audience tonight who knows the Stewart Secret.

Good night, ladies and gentlemen, perhaps I'll see you again in a century or two.



Alan Breck's Prestonpans Volunteer Regiment

Raised September 20th 2007

Colonel-in-Chief – Martin Margulies

**Allan Breck: The Man with the
Belt of Gold
An Essay by Ian Nimmo**



The statue from Corstorphine of Alan Breck & David Balfour

Alexander Stoddart's magnificent, larger-than-life size bronze of Alan Breck with David Balfour that now graces the Corstorphine Hill in Edinburgh where they parted at the conclusion of Robert Louis Stevenson's Kidnapped.

INTRODUCTION

Our Regiment was raised on the Command of HRH Prince Charles Edward, Prince Regent, at Holyroodhouse Palace on September 20th 2007 being the commencement of the first re-enactments by the Battle of Prestonpans 1745 Heritage Trust of events surrounding the Prince's Victory on September 21st in 1745.

The Regiment's role for the Trust is to provide supernumerary support to the visiting Regiments which shall act each year as re-enactment 'hosts'. In so acting we have the support as our band the Pipes and Drums of the Royal British Legion in Prestonpans.

It was clear from the outset that being supernumeraries could require participation as Highlanders, on behalf of the Elector of Hanover, the Hanoverian King George II or as French officers and men and since Allan Breck had played all these roles during his military career it seemed particularly appropriate to raise the Regiment under his name. Yet since the role to be played was at best factitious it seemed most appropriate to adopt the spelling of Alan given by Robert Louis Stevenson in *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* rather than the real life Allan Breck's two 'l's.

It was considered a matter of honour that all who join the Muster Roll of the Regiment for the annual re-enactments each September, and such other events as may take place during the year, should be comprehensively briefed on both the history of Allan Breck and Stevenson's characterisation of Alan Breck. And there was never any doubt that the right choice to create that for the Regiment was Ian Nimmo. In 2005 he wrote and Berlinn published *Walking with Murder*, telling how he had personally retraced the footsteps of David Balfour and Alan Breck throughout the saga which is *Kidnapped*; then in 2006 he wrote for the Prestoungrange Arts Festival *The Greening of David Balfour* which was performed by the Meanwhile Players both at the former home of the Lord Advocate in 1751/52, William Grant, Baron of Prestoungrange, and at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2007.

The Regiment and the Trust are delighted to publish Ian Nimmo's Essay, and here confirm that Ian retains his copyright for any other uses which will require his permission.

ALLAN BRECK: The Man with the Belt of Gold

by Ian Nimmo

Who was the real Allan Breck Stewart?

Most people meet Alan Breck for the first time as the swashbuckling hero with the dancing eyes in Robert Louis Stevenson's novel *Kidnapped* or sword-in-hand on radio or in one of the many films based on the book. They assume Alan Breck was a fictional character, a dashing figment of Stevenson's hyper-active imagination – yet not only was there a real life Allan Breck [with two 'l's to his name]. He was centre stage during a vivid period of Scotland's history, a Jacobite heathercat who enraged the Hanoverian government and topped their 'most wanted' list. A hangman's rope awaited him should ever he fall into the hands of the redcoat soldiers.

Sometimes it is forgotten all the main characters in *Kidnapped* – apart from the young David Balfour himself – were real people who played out a dramatic event in the aftermath of Bonnie Prince Charlie's 1745 Highland uprising, which came to a red end on the battlefield at Culloden. Robert Louis Stevenson focused on the historical events in the aftermath of the Prince's defeat and turned Allan Breck Stewart into one of the most colourful characters in Scottish literature.

The real Allan Breck – Stevenson's 'Man with the Belt of Gold' – became a kind of Jacobite James Bond of his day, entrusted to flit in and out of Scotland from France to collect clandestine rents from the oppressed and poverty-stricken Stewarts of Appin in Argyll. After the Battle of Culloden, when Prince Charles Edward Stuart's high adventure to return a Stuart to the British throne ended ingloriously, indiscriminate killings, burnings and looting took place right across the Highlands. The Duke of Cumberland, nick-named 'The Butcher', ruthlessly ensured the Stuart threat was over for ever. Clan chiefs who were caught were unceremoniously hanged, and the lands of those who escaped to France were forfeited.

In Appin, the Stewart clan captain, Ardshiel, had been hunted relentlessly before he, too, reached safety in France. As he was pursued he hid in caves around the flanks of the twin-peaked Beinn a' Beithir, narrowly evading capture on too many occasions, with redcoat soldiers hot on his heels. He had by his side throughout one particular follower, a brave and loyal man, a soldier skilled in mountaineering and the sword – Allan Breck.

It was this loyalty to his chief that won Allan Breck justified respect among his fellow clansmen and his courage and dexterity with the sword brought admiration from his friends but notoriety from his enemies. It was hardly surprising that after Culloden Allan Breck became the Stewart courier between France and Appin, collecting the rents to keep the clan chief in some kind of decent exile in Paris. Taking care of the chief's interests through thick and thin was part of clan tradition.

It is not known how many times Allan Breck spirited himself in and out of Scotland, but he had freedom of movement among the Stewarts in Appin, safe in the knowledge his whereabouts would never be revealed. During these forays in and out of Europe, Allan Breck also carried messages between exiled

clansmen and their loved ones in Appin, and he was even able to persuade a few young men to become recruits in the French army.

Allan Breck's Childhood and Military Career

Allan Breck was born around 1726 in Rannoch in north Perthshire, a wild, hostile area of moor, mountains and lochs, inhabited by people almost as wild. At the head of Loch Rannoch, the redcoat soldiers had built a thatched-roofed barracks at Bridge of Gaur, as part of the process of taming the Highlands and breaking the clans once and for all. An infantry and cavalry unit were part of this outpost to block future Jacobite excursions southwards, should there be any, and to hunt down elements of the Prince's shattered army after Culloden.

Allan Breck's father, Duncan Stewart, a Rannoch man, had his own troubles with the law and handed the young Allan to James Stewart of Glenduror, who took him in as a foster son. James was Ardsziel's right-hand man after Culloden and managed the Stewart estate on behalf of Lady Isobel Stewart and her young family, with her husband in exile. In Gaelic James was known as Seumas a' Ghlinne, James of the Glen.

These were harsh, uneasy times in the Highland areas. Poverty and hate for the Hanoverian soldiers glared from every doorway. Weapons were buried in thatches and hillsides ready for the call that never came. The Hanoverian government's rule was vengeful and designed to ensure Jacobite arms were never lifted in war again.

James Stewart treated Allan Breck as one of the family. But in the hopeless, poverty-stricken circumstances of the vanquished, with Appin on its knees, Allan Breck took the soldiering road and joined the Hanoverian army. His natural loyalties, of course, remained with the Stewarts and Jacobites, but like so many other Scots before him – and as many since – the British Army offered employment, food and clothes. For many of the thousands of Scots who took the king's shilling it was raw economics and not warlike tendencies that brought them into the arms of the military.

It should be remembered, too, for the historical record, that at Culloden it was the British Army that defeated Prince Charles Edward Stewart. This was not Scotland versus England, it was also Scot against Scot, with a number of Scottish regiments fighting on the government side.

Allan Breck first came to attention when General Sir John Cope's ill-prepared Hanoverian army were routed at Prestonpans in September, 1745, a battle that lasted scarcely 15 minutes. As Bonnie Prince Charlie's Highland army drove southwards, Allan Breck had been dismayed to find himself, as he saw it, on the wrong side. Allan was captured at Prestonpans, but quickly joined the Prince's cause. Back where he belonged with his own people he felt his conscience was clear. From the British army's standpoint, however, this was an act of desertion in face of the enemy – and punishable by death.

Among Jacobites, Allan Breck's clandestine forays to his homeland, in the shadow of the gallows, gave him a perspective of courage, guile, loyalty and devil-may-care audacity. Allan Breck's defiance of danger was the stuff of legend. He would make his way from France by boat, covertly put ashore in Scotland, possibly in the Edinburgh area, East Lothian, or maybe the west coast, then strike across country to Appin,

threading his way through Hanoverian forces, all the way to the shores of Loch Linnhe. Had he fallen into the hands of the redcoats at any time Allan Breck would have been given short shrift.

The Appin Murder of Colin Campbell of Glenure, Stevenson's 'Red Fox'

It was during one of these visits the event occurred that made Allan Breck almost a household name. It was the infamous murder of government agent Colin Campbell of Glenure – Stevenson's 'Red Fox' – in the little wood of Lettermore near Ballachulish, Argyll, in 1752. The assassination has been written into Scottish history as the infamous Appin Murder.

Overnight Allan Breck became the most wanted man in Britain, the target of an intense nation-wide hunt. The gunning down of the 'Red Fox' led to the trial and subsequent hanging of Allan Breck's innocent foster father, James Stewart of the Glen. James's hanging has been described as arguably a judicial murder and one of the blackest marks on Scottish legal history.

The countdown to the Appin Murder began six years previously after Culloden. But as the Highlands began to settle down under a vindictive rule, one of the government's key objectives remained constant – to smash the threat of the Jacobite clans forever. The Campbells were an exception, of course, because throughout the Forty Five they had remained loyal to the government – and now they began to reap the rewards.

In Appin, the Campbells took over Stewart farms and properties. Colin Campbell of Glenure, laird of a small estate up nearby Glen Creran, was appointed government agent to administer the forfeited lands, set and collect official rents from remaining Stewart tenants. Glenure was a decent and able man, but his task was thankless. The Campbells were the sworn enemies of the Stewarts, a feud that had spanned centuries, and the Stewarts were witnessing their beloved Appin being usurped, as they saw it, by their hated Campbell foes, with Campbells or friends of Campbells displacing Stewarts.

It was almost more than the Stewarts could bear. Appin was seething. There was a sense of premonition that something awful might happen – and much of the Stewarts' outrage focused on the 'Red Fox', government representative Colin Campbell. One voice raised against the Appin land grab, of course, inevitably was Allan Breck's. In various Appin drinking dens he had been heard to make threats against Glenure.

In this tinderbox situation, with feelings running so high, James of the Glen spoke for the Stewarts. He was an able man, respected by all sides, a good businessman and deeply religious. He and Colin Campbell had even once been friends.

Glenure had tried to be fair in his dealings with them, but as a clansman himself with a Jacobite mother, his political masters doubted his loyalty and gave him no leeway in his dealings with the Stewarts. In the end, Glenure was forced to turn to evictions where rents were being withheld.

The sheer unfairness of the evictions infuriated James. Yet to the end he sought justice only from the law and even travelled all the way to Edinburgh on horseback to try to stay the process by legal argument. Always James talked down violence, not only because he was against it but because he could see the

hopelessness of the Stewarts' position. James knew only too well that Hanoverian retribution would return to Appin accompanied by extreme agony. But when the law failed him, and a small number of Stewart evictions were set to take place on May 15, 1752, any previous friendship between James and Colin Campbell ended abruptly.

On May 14, 1752, Colin Campbell and three companions crossed the Ballachulish ferry into Appin after travelling from Fort William. With Glenure were his lawyer nephew Mungo Campbell, his young servant John Mackenzie, and sheriff officer Donald Kennedy up from Inveraray with the necessary eviction papers. Kennedy was on foot, striding out in front while the others followed slowly on horseback, picking their way carefully over the rough terrain.

As they entered the wood of Lettermore a shot suddenly rang from the hillside. With the very sound of it Colin Campbell slumped in the saddle. Then shouted: "Oh, I am dead," several times over. "Take care of yourselves", he called, "He's going to shoot you." Or words to that effect. A few hours later Colin Campbell was dead.

It was the perfect ambush point. Clearly the killing was carried out as a professional, no-nonsense assassination with a shot in the back. The killer or killers knew Campbell's precise route and had plenty of time to choose an advantageous position. Seconds after the shooting Mungo Campbell saw a figure on the hillside wearing a short, dark coat and carrying a gun, but his first thought was that this figure could not have been the murderer because he was at too great a range.

The Appin Murder was all over in under a minute. But that single shot in the wood of Lettermore, on the flank of a remote Argyll hillside, brought an extraordinary government reaction. The king was advised. The government, of course, was still fearful about any report of Jacobite activity. Only six years previously Bonnie Prince Charlie and his wild Highland army had come clanging out of the mountains and almost toppled the throne. Not surprisingly the government reaction was immediate, vicious, and carried out at speed. It was so apprehensive about further Jacobite rebellion that it misread the killing of Glenure as possibly the first shot in a new uprising. In fact, it was no more than a local feud between two proud clans.

But the command went out from the highest levels in the realm: hunt down the perpetrators and string them up. Fast. Arrest Allan Breck – a thorn in the government's side for too long – and execute him. Use whatever force and means necessary. Once and for all, was the order, smash the clans.

On the day of the Appin Murder, Allan Breck had been sighted several times fishing the burn beside Ballachulish House near the wooden ferry pier. Indeed, at one point he walked down to speak to the ferryman to ask if Glenure had crossed. What with this blatant inquiry, and exposure of his identity and location so close to the murder scene, and the threats he had been heard to utter against Glenure, Allan Breck was immediately made prime suspect.

James Stewart of Appin Tried and Hanged

Glenure's brother, John Campbell, of the Barcaldine estate, threw himself into the murder hunt fuelled by vengeance and hate for the Stewarts. The day after the murder James Stewart was arrested and cast into

jail. He was given no access to legal help or even to his family. He was the only senior Stewart handy. There was not a shred of evidence against him.

Barcaldine represented the government as well as his clan and acted as a private prosecutor throughout. But at a time when Scotland took pride in the fairness of its justice system, the processes of law were given scant regard. Allan Breck was already regarded as an outlaw but now the hunt became a frenzy of government loathing and Campbell revenge.

The imperative for Barcaldine was the hanging of a Stewart. Barcaldine raged and justice flew out of the window. Suppression, perjury and threat played key parts in the preparation of the case against James Stewart. William Grant, Baron of Prestoungrange, was Lord Advocate and the time and personally led the prosecution, whose lego-political dilemma becomes the basis for much of Stevenson's *Catriona* as he argues it through with David Balfour. Of the 15-man jury which sat in judgement on him 11 of the jurors were named Campbell, some even selected by Barcaldine himself. The final insult to justice was that the presiding judge was no less than the Duke of Argyll himself, the Clan Chief of the Campbells. There was no surprise, therefore, when James of the Glen was found guilty.

James was strung high on a 30-foot scaffold erected at Cnap a Chaolais at the southern end of today's Ballachulish Bridge. The location was chosen because it was near the ferry at the most prominent and busy part of the area. The hanging was designed to shock, awe and generate fear. A section of redcoat soldiers guarded James's rotting body night and day for almost two years until only wired bones were left. There was no misreading the message conveyed by that twirling obscenity: this is what happens to those who stand against the government. The days of the clans are over.

But they did not catch Allan Breck. Allan took to the heather – and simply vanished. Around ten months later he re-appeared in Paris. The last sighting in Scotland was in a dram house in Rannoch before he was seen marching southwards. He would have crossed the vast expanse of Rannoch Moor, the biggest and wildest badland in Britain, cocking a snoot at the redcoat cavalry under orders to intercept him. He is known to have stayed for a few days in a relative's house in Rannoch only a short distance from their barracks.

The hunt for Allan Breck was country wide. Even east coast shipping was intercepted. Two mistaken identity 'Allan Brecks' were arrested, one in Annan and another in Leith, but on further investigation the authorities reluctantly had to release them. The real Allan Breck once more had slipped the net and was no doubt enjoying the government's anger and frustration.

Did Allan Breck really shoot the 'Red Fox'?

The answer is unknown, but probably not. Almost certainly he would have known who did or was even part of a Stewart assassination plot. To his dying day Allan Breck maintained his innocence. On several occasions, when in the safety of Paris he could have boasted of his prowess with a gun as well as his sword, he swore his was not the hand that fired the shot.

His words have the ring of truth. For instance, had Allan Breck been the hit man his military training and experience would have ensured he planned the murder in advance. He would have watched Glenure

crumple in the saddle as the shot rang out, then as a true professional he would have lifted his pre-packed get-away knapsack and left the area immediately to make his escape over moors and mountains. He would not have advertised his presence near the murder scene. His trade was to remain unseen.

As it was, Allan Breck had to hide near Caolasnacoan above Loch Leven for several days waiting for money, provisions and his French clothes to be brought to him. Such unpreparedness was out of character. He knew Appin would be flooded with soldiers and that the Campbell's hunt would be intense and thorough and every hour that passed would increase the chances of his capture.

If it was not Allan Breck, then who did kill Glenure?

The Appin Murder is the last great Scottish mystery. It has remained a contentious, hotly-disputed issue for two-and-a-half centuries. All the old clan rivalries are still raw. There is no shortage of suspects – but there is no firm evidence against anyone. The suspects range from Stewarts to Camerons, even Rob Roy MacGregor's murderous son Robin, or a disaffected Campbell.

One possible explanation is handed down in an Appin tale recorded a century after Glenure's death. It tells of a shooting match in a lonely part of Appin beside Lochan Blar nan Lochan where a number of Stewarts, incensed by the Campbells takeover – and with assassination on their minds – tried to match the best gun to the surest shot. It is said Allan Breck was part of this group which also included a number of young, hot-blooded gentry Stewarts. According to the story the most accurate gun belonged to one of James Stewart's workers and the best shot turned out to be Donald Stewart of Ballachulish House. The legend suggests it was Donald Stewart's finger on the trigger on that fatal day. Of course, it remains no more than a story and there is no evidence against Donald Stewart or even if the shooting match took place.

James of the Glen, it was stated, knew nothing of the plot and those involved were at pains to keep him ignorant because he would almost certainly have tried to stop the shooting. James was an honest, deeply-religious man and a man of the law, although as it turned out his faith in the law was misplaced.

But if there is truth in the legend of the shooting match, it would turn Allan Breck into a clan hero. As a deserter, Allan Breck knew his life was forfeited anyway if government troops laid hands upon him. He knew that after the murder Appin and surrounding escape routes would immediately be flooded with redcoat soldiers and sealed. As soon as the shot was fired Allan Breck knew he would have to quit Appin as fast as possible. So in an act of courage and loyalty to his clan, so the proposition is made, Allan Breck allowed himself to be the Stewart's hunted hare pursued by the Government's baying hounds. His plan would be to draw attention away from the real killer. That is why, it is suggested, Allan made himself so conspicuous near the murder scene, why he even walked down to the ferry point to inquire about Glenure. He wanted to be cast as the assassin.

If this is true, then the plan worked perfectly because once Allan Breck had been identified as the main suspect, John Campbell and the government authorities looked no further for the killer. In the end, however, Allan would pay a high price for his loyalty because he knew he would never see Appin again.

How Stevenson came to write *Kidnapped*

Much of the detail about the Appin Murder is contained in a small volume published in 1753 titled *The Trial of James Stewart*. It was the official record of the court proceedings that convicted James “as an accomplice”. A century later Robert Louis Stevenson read this little book by chance. He had returned from America in 1870 and was keen to write a history of the Highlands. His father found *The Trial of James Stewart* in a second-hand bookshop and promptly bought it for his son as background reading for his history.

Stevenson was fascinated. The on-going mystery, the clan feud, the Appin and Glencoe landscapes and the character of Allan Breck ran riot with his imagination. As a trained advocate, Stevenson was disgusted and angered at the treatment of poor James Stewart and how the law had been twisted to achieve a hanging of, as he saw it, an innocent man. Stevenson had always been a supporter of the underdog as well as a keen historian. He began to weave his fiction into the Appin Murder fact, using the real people as his characters and sticking closely to the history as recounted in the *The Trial of James Stewart*. The result was *Kidnapped*, one of Stevenson’s all-time best sellers.

Stevenson’s account of the events is so accurate, his characters so realistic and finely drawn and the tale so gripping that it is not always possible to know fact from fiction. Stevenson is therefore at pains to point out that *Kidnapped* is essentially a story, not to be taken too seriously by readers or historians, and to this end he gives a number of pointers to readers. As already mentioned, he spelt his Alan Breck with one ‘l’ rather than two, although he knew well enough how the real Allan spelt his name; he sets the year in 1751 and not 1752; he makes his ‘Alan’ Breck into a short, stocky, agile man while in fact the real Allan Breck was tall and gaunt. He introduces a platoon of soldiers at the murder scene, although Glenure and his three companions at the time were on their own and unarmed.

Remember David Balfour’s description of Alan Breck as he clapped eyes on him for the first time in the roundhouse aboard the brig *Covenant* after running down a boat in the fog:

“He was smallish in stature, but well set and as nimble as a goat; his face was of a good open expression, but sunburnt very dark, and heavily freckled and pitted with the smallpox; his eyes were unusually light and had a kind of dancing madness in them, that was both engaging and alarming; and when he took off his greatcoat, he laid a pair of fine, silver-mounted pistols on the table, and I saw he was belted with a great sword. His manners, besides, were elegant, and he pledged the captain handsomely. Altogether I thought of him, at the first sight, that here was a man I would rather call my friend than my enemy.”

When Alan Breck and David Balfour were ‘papered’ after the murder, Stevenson composed a wanted bill that reflected descriptions of Alan’s dress: “A small, pocked-marked, active man of thirty-five or thereby, dressed in a feathered hat, a French side-coat of blue with silver buttons, and lace a good deal tarnished, a red waistcoat and breeches of black shag.”

During James Stewart’s trial the prosecution painted an altogether different picture of Allan Breck in his

absence. He was depicted as a dark, drunken, sinister figure, an irresponsible n'er-do-well not to be trusted.

One of the descriptions of Allan Breck, dated May 26, 1752, issued as a warrant for his arrest only 12 days after the murder, read:

“He is about five feet ten Inches, long visage very much marked with the small pox, Black Bushy Hair, a little Innknee’d, round shoulder’d, about 30 years of Age, came to this country in February last, from Ogilvy’s Regiment in France.

“His Dress when last seen, which was upon the 18 Inst, was a blue Bonnet, a blue coat (Lowland Dress) with red Lynning, Breeches, and a brownish colour’d great coat over all, and with no visible Arms.”

Stevenson’s Alan Breck was intelligent, practical, witty, courageous, honest, impervious to hardship or discomfort, vain, an expert with the sword as well as the bagpipes, who would take umbrage quickly and was slow to forgive. He was a loyal, true friend – and everyone’s favourite uncle.

The government, as could be expected at such a trial, presented the main suspect as irresponsible, debauched, a dirty deserter, reckless, disloyal, a man filled with hate and revenge. Both government and Stevenson described him as being heavily marked by the smallpox. Indeed, in Gaelic the word ‘breck’ means pitted or pockmarked.

So who was the real Allan Breck?

The truth is probably somewhere between these two descriptions. As a trusted Jacobite courier carrying money, surreptitiously being put ashore in Scotland, where the gallows awaited him, moving unseen throughout the country, then returning to France in the same manner, undoubtedly called for courage, guile, loyalty, stamina and trust.

In fact, Allan Breck must have been a man of some calibre. His army service for France saw him receive the Cross of Military Merit, awarded to non-Catholic foreigners (like many other Highlanders Allan Breck was a member of the much persecuted Episcopal Church of Scotland). He was also decorated as a Chevalier of Military Merit which provided a small pension and he received a further pension from his time with Bouillon’s Regiment. It was enough to set himself up in reasonable accommodation in his later years in the Rue de la Harpe in Paris.

There is little else known about Allan Breck. Two accounts exist of encounters with him in Paris in the 1790s when he would be approaching 70 years of age. They refer to a “gaunt, severe, ugly man” who said he came from Appin and stood accused of murdering Colin Campbell of Glenure. He still continued to maintain his innocence and swore by all that was sacred he played no part in the murder, although he confirmed he knew who was responsible. He was bound by an oath of secrecy to keep the secret, he said,

but the truth was in his papers and it would come out on his death. Allan Breck's papers, however, were never found or, if they were, the secret name was first removed.

Robert Louis Stevenson, who had studied the Appin Murder so thoroughly, and continued his researches in the area and by correspondence with a number of local people, did not believe Allan Breck fired the shot. He guessed, however, Allan knew more than he ever gave away.

To the end Stevenson himself remained loyal to his portrayal. When we meet Alan Breck again in *Catriona*, the sequel to *Kidnapped*, he is the same bold adventurer, sword at the ready, a sagacious quip at his command, resourceful, good humoured and David Balfour's guiding star. As Alan leaves Scotland for the last time the pair make a final desperate dash together, with their enemies closing in, from the black centre of Alan's haystack hideway in Silverknowes, by Broughton, the Figgate Whins, Musselburgh and Prestonpans, they raced all the way to Gullane sands where The Thistle, Alan's getaway ship, was hiding behind the little island of Fidra to take him into exiled safety.

In Alan Breck Stevenson created a character that may not be an entirely accurate reflection of the original, but is one of Scottish literature's most vibrant and likeable heroes. Alan and David Balfour have now continued their adventuring and engaged our rapt attention through *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* for almost a century-and-a-half. They have travelled the world on air, stage and screen and they never seem to lose their appeal. The raw material for Stevenson's Alan Breck was, of course, drawn from that little volume which was the official account of poor James Stewart's murder trial. At least some of what Stevenson found out about Allan Breck between its covers is included in the character he created in *Kidnapped*.

In turn, it was Stevenson's Alan Breck that inspired the classical sculptor Alexander Stoddart to create the magnificent, larger-than-life size bronzes of Alan and David Balfour that now grace the Corstorphine Hill in Edinburgh, where the two friends parted company at the end of *Kidnapped* which is captured as the frontispiece of this essay. This is the image of the old Stewart warrior now recognised internationally.

Of course, what makes Allan Breck and the Appin Murder so intriguing is that it is a vivid part of Scottish history – which has its echoes to this day. For the last 250 years the name of the real Appin murderer has been handed down secretly among senior Stewarts in the area. It is known as the 'Stewart Secret' – but it will never be revealed unless a Stewart decides to tell. And that also is a fact.

The Regimental motto *Quihhider Will Zie* translates as *Whither Will Ye*

THE BATTLE OF POTS AND PANS



THE BATTLE OF POTS AND PANS

by

Andrew Dallmeyer

for the Battle of Prestonpans 1745 Heritage Trust
first presented at Prestongrange Church in Prestonpans,
June 8th 2007, thereafter on tour across East Lothian in May 2008
and at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, August 2008



The Kirk

Paul: *[From off.]* It's no locked onyroad.

[Enter Paul and Sean.]

Paul: Naebody here eh?

Sean: Eh?

Paul: Naebody here.

Sean: Aye. I mean no.

Paul: Looks like we're the first. *[Pause. Paul walks round.]* I like the plainness o' the place.

Sean: No like us eh? Wi' oor smells and bells. Oor theatricality ken.

Paul: Oooh! Get you pal. Wi' yir big long words, eh? *[Pause.]* What time did he say?

Sean: Who?

Paul: The Director.

Sean: Oh. Him. Two o'clock. I think.

Paul: You think?

Sean: Aye. I'm no sure. Oh, I've just remembered. I've made a note o' it on ma phone. Aye. Dress rehearsal 'The Battle of Prestonpans'. Two o'clock.

Paul: So we're in the right place, eh? And in plenty o' time.

Sean: They wouldne o' left the door unlocked if they hadne been expecting us.

Paul: Spot on Sean! Genius! *[Paul walks up into the pulpit.]* Great view up here.

Sean: How does it feel?

Paul: Gie us a feelin' o' power. All those years eh? In school across the road. Never once been in here. Often wondered what it was like.

Sean: It would be mair surprising if ye had.

Paul: Eh?

Sean: Been in here.
Paul: What are ye on about, man?
Sean: The Virgin Mary.
Paul: What about her?
Sean: There's no sae much o' her in the Protestant faith.
Paul: True. Do ye ken aw yir lines Sean?
Sean: Eh?
Paul: Yir lines. Fur the show. Do you ken aw yir lines? Are you gettin' dief or am I no speakin' loud enough?
Sean: Aye. I think so.
Paul: Which?
Sean: I do know my lines.
Paul: Good. I'm glad. 'Cos ye didne yesterday. *[They wander around, onto the stage.]* We'll hae tae project, when the audience is in.
Sean: Eh?
Paul: Project. We'll hae tae PROJECT.
Sean: Aye. Project. That's the name of the game. 'Use yir instrument.' That's what he said.
Paul: Who?
Sean: The Director.
Paul: I've heard him say some daft things right enough but I neiver heard 'Use yir instrument'. That's out of order.
Sean: How?
Paul: It just is.
[Pause. Two others enter, Billy and Ally. Ally is listening to his radio on headset.]
Billy: Hi guys. How's tricks?
Paul: No bad. What's wi' the radio man?
Billy: It's the old firm derby.
Paul: Oh aye. So it is. I'd forgotten.





- Billy:** Who are you trying to kid?
- Paul:** No really.
- Sean:** Ye dinne tak aw that seriously surely?
- Billy:** Me? No me. No. But Ally does, ken? Don't you Ally? *[He indicates to Ally to open his Jacket. Ally removes his jacket to reveal a Rangers strip.]* See what I mean?
- Sean:** Yon's an inflammatory gesture. In the Kirk tae.
- Paul:** Red card! Send him off! Come on the hoops! What's the score, by the way?
- Billy:** Sectarian chanting. Have some respect man. Another red card.
- Paul:** What's the score? Come on the Pope's eleven.
- Billy:** There isne one.
- Sean:** Eh? How does that work?
- Billy:** It's nothing each.
- Paul:** When were you last in the Kirk?
- Billy:** Me? I've neiver been here afore.
- Paul:** There ye are then.
- Sean:** Aw these idiots makin' trouble at the football, never go near a church.
- Billy:** Why should they?
- Sean:** They're just using religion as an excuse.
- Billy:** Wait! I tell a lie! I was christened in here. Funny tae think o' me splashing around in the font, eh?
- Paul:** They should o' held ye under. Saved us aw a lot of bother.
- Sean:** It's no total immersion we're talkin' about here. Just a wee dab o' water on his head. By the way, guys, according to my latest researches on the internet, the Highlanders in those days, would have spoken G?llic. *[Long A.]*
- Paul:** You mean Gaelic.
- Sean:** No I don't. I mean G?llic. That's the Irish version. The correct pronunciation is G?llic. *[Long A.]*

Billy: Sounds like garlic.
Sean: Aye. Mair like. Right enough.
Billy: Makes yir breath stink, yon.
Paul: So whit are ye suggestin' Sean? That we speak in a language that canne be understood? Where's the bloody sense in that?
Sean: I'm no suggestin' that.
Billy: Now, now Paul! No swearing in the Kirk.
Paul: No, you're right. I'm sorry..
Sean: Prince Charles would o' spoken in French an' aw.
Paul: Gie us a break Sean.



[Ally suddenly erupts.]

Ally: Yea – one-nil Rangers!
Sean: Are you going to listen to that all afternoon?
Paul: Who got the goal?
Ally: Chris Boyd. Who else?
Billy: Aye. There's plenty to be done. There's the backcloth for a start.
Paul: We could get that up.

[The backdrop will be a banner which can be hung across the organ with ropes. It will be a depiction of the Battle of Prestonpans, or part thereof. Billy, Ally, Sean and Paul will hang the banner. Improvised dialogue (minimal):

*'Get a hold of that'; 'That end, Paul'; etc.
Enter the Laverocks. They set up in their space. Friendly greetings from the cast, though it is clear that the two groups scarcely know one another. An impression of business in preparation. This may continue for two or three minutes.]*



[Enter the Director.]

Director: Sorry I'm late guys, I got held up at the roundabout just before the bypass. Now, you better go and get into costume. Are you going to be with us today Ally?

Ally: *[Removing his earphones.]* How do you mean?

Paul: It's the old firm derby.

Director: A horse race for old nags?

Paul: No. No' exactly.

Sean: The rest o' the cast is no here yet.

Billy: Aye. They're in the dressing room. There are two ways in.

Director: Don't worry about that. I told them to come a little bit later. They'll be here when they're needed. We'll start in two minutes. I better get into costume.

[The Laverocks tune up.]

[The Director plays the part of Narrator, 'The Poet in the Pulpit'. Whenever possible the narration will be illustrated with mime. Enter Prince Charlie, flanked by Hamish and Torquil, two Highlanders.]

The Poet in the Pulpit:

Prince Charlie came marchin' doon the
High Street o' Edinburgh's fair toon.
Naebody kent hoo tae react
Or whither or no tae boo doon.
The locals were aie fur hedgin' their bets
And waiting for which wind wid blow
And fur makin' their minds up
These canny folk have aie bin a wee bitty slow.
But the ladies among them were nae sae cautious

Were nae sae afraid to be stayed.
The ladies among them had nae doots
They were aw fur the white cockade.

Song: The White Cockade

My love was born in Aberdeen
The bonniest lad that e'er was seen,
But now he makes our hearts fu' sad,
He takes the Field wi' his White Cockade.

Chorus

O he's a ranting, roving lad,
He is a brisk an' a bonny lad,
Betide what may, I will be wed,
And follow the boy wi' the White Cockade.
I'll sell my rock, my reel, my tow,
My good grey mare and hawkit cow;
To buy myself a tartan plaid,
To follow the boy wi' the White Cockade.

Chorus

O he's a ranting, roving lad,
He is a brisk an' a bonny lad.
Betide what may, I will be wed,
And follow the boy wi' the White Cockade.





Highlanders: Come and join the Prince's men
Come and join together
Come and be a Jacobite
Marching through the heather.
Come and put the one true heir
Back upon his throne
Put your life upon the line
Your blood and flesh and bone.

[Enter Willy, the dragoon, on his hobby horse.]

Willy: I'm Willy the dragoon
I'm a bit of a buffoon.
I wouldne say boo to a goose.
Truth tae tell, I'm nae much use
And I'm feart, I'm feart
Of yon hairy highlanders
So this very day
I'm running away.

[Clip-clop as he rides away.]

The Poet in the Pulpit:

News soon arrived that Cope and his army
Had landed in Dunbar.
The Prince resolved to lead his army
Eastwards – not too far.
The armies then were face to face
Across a marshy field.
And as night fell each of them wondered
Whether the other would yield.

[Torquil and Hamish sit by a fire on one side of the stage. Tom and Archie (Hanoverians) sit by a fire on the other side. The marsh is between them.]

- Torquil:** We're a long way from home, Hamish.
- Hamish:** Aye, so we are Torquil. So we are. *[Pause.]*
- Torquil:** Did you see the redcoats?
- Hamish:** Of course I saw them.
- Torquil:** And did they frighten you, Hamish?
- Hamish:** Not in the least. They looked for all the world like toy soldiers.
- Torquil:** Or a bunch of carrots. *[They laugh.]*
- Hamish:** Yes, indeed. A bunch of carrots. And when did you last see carrots, Torquil?
- Torquil:** I saw them in Edinburgh. In the Grassmarket.
- Hamish:** And that's not all we saw in Edinburgh is it Torquil?
- Torquil:** No indeed, Hamish. Such sights. Such sights. *[Tutting.]*
- Hamish:** Women with no shame, their bosoms hanging out of their dresses. No sense of modesty.
- Torquil:** And some of our lads flirting with them too. And family men at that. You'd never do that, would you Hamish? You with five children.
- Hamish:** Six as a matter of fact.
- Torquil:** Well, six.
- Hamish:** No, I wouldn't, but if I ever did and Morag found out, she would skin me alive. What else did we see?
- Torquil:** I saw running water coming out of a pipe. A pipe in the ground.
- Hamish:** Then there were the houses in the High Street. Almost touching the sky. Up and up they went. Seven, eight, nine floors. A miraculous sight!
- Torquil:** And have you seen the wooden roadway, leading downhill like a river of wood?
- Hamish:** Oh, where is that?





Torquil: Just across there. *[Hamish gets up to look.]*

Hamish: What can it be for?

Torquil: I've no idea. Some modern invention. New-fangled contraption.

Hamish: We've been left behind, Torquil. Up in the North. No doubt about it. We're out of date.

Torquil: Old fashioned.

Hamish: Very old fashioned. But who cares?

[On the other side of the stage Tom and Archie sit by the fire.]

Tom: Cold! I'm still cold! Haven't been warm for weeks. I'm wondering if I'll ever be warm again.

Archie: It's too early for frost. Only September. You want to try a whole winter in these parts.

Tom: No! I do not!

Archie: Where's your home then?

Tom: Me? I'm from London Town. Spittalfields to be exact. Have you ever been to London?

Archie: No. I'm a local boy. From just over there. Prestonpans to be precise.

Tom: Pots and pans?

Archie: No. Prestonpans. I've only been to Edinburgh once. Colonel Gardiner has called us all to King George's Colours. He's a Hanoverian is the Colonel. A decent employer. Did you volunteer?

Tom: Did I Hell! I'm an orphan, you see. Brought up in an orphanage. Poor little me! I had to choose between joining the army or cleaning the sewers.

Archie: Sewers? What's that?

Tom: Underground tunnels. Rivers of pee and poo. As far as I was concerned it was no contest. Mind you, when I went to

the pub with the recruiting sergeant, they must have slipped something into my beer. I passed out completely. Next thing I knew he was standing over me, shouting at me to get up off the barrack room floor. I was lying on the floor in full uniform. 'Welcome to the army, son.' That's all he said. 'Welcome to the army.'

Archie: What's General Cope like then?

Tom: He's alright. Bags of confidence. Leads from the front.

Archie: Oh, that's reassuring.

[Back to Hamish and Torquil.]

Torquil: And what do you miss most from home, Hamish?

Hamish: What do I miss? I miss the mountains. It's too flat round here. And I miss the smell of a nice peat fire. Coal's all very well but it's just not the same. And of course I miss Morag. And the children. Even though they drive me mad at times. Well, to be honest, most of the time. But I've never once doubted that what we're doing here is just. Our cause is the right one. And soon we will return our Catholic King to his rightful place on the throne.

[Back to Archie and Tom.]

Archie: Have you ever fought in a battle before?

Tom: Who? Me? Yea, mate. Loads of times.

Archie: I never have. And it's making me nervous, I don't mind admitting.

Tom: There's no need to be nervous. That's a waste of energy. If your number's up, then Fate'll take its course. That's the way I see it. I remember my first battle. In Ireland I think it was. I kept imagining what it might be like, but it never turns out the way you expect it to. So now I don't bother. I





just take it as it comes. I've had a few close things, mind. See that scar? I got it off a Frenchman. Came round behind me. Never saw him coming.

[Back to Torquil and Hamish.]

Hamish: Torquil.
Torquil: What Hamish?
Hamish: I feel a bit frightened.
Torquil: So do I, Hamish. You wouldn't be human if you didn't.

[Back to Tom and Archie.]

Archie: Our cause is a good one right enough.
Tom: Don't worry, mate. Don't fret.
Archie: To protect our Protestant King George against the rebels. But I can't help feeling afraid.
Hamish & Archie: Our cause is just
The Lord is on our side.
Tom & Torquil: If we should die tomorrow
We are prepared to meet our maker.
Narrator: And so both leaders spoke to their men,
Inspiring and exhorting them.
Cope: Gentlemen, you are about to fight with a parcel of rabble, a small number of Highlanders, a parcel of brutes. You can expect no booty from such a poor despicable pack. But I have authority to declare that you shall have eight full hours plunder and pillage of Edinburgh, Leith and suburbs, at your discretion, with impunity.
Charles: Follow me, gentlemen, and by the blessing of God, I will this day make you a free and happy people. But if the Providence, O Lord, has ordered it otherwise, and Thou

seest that I should prove one of those Kings whom Thou gavest in Thine anger, take from me O merciful God my life and my Crown. Make me this day a sacrifice to Thy will, but let my blood be the last that is spilt in this quarrel.

[Men of both armies prepare for night.]

The Poet in the Pulpit (Narrator):

And so the men lay doon tae rest
A fitful sleep, forty winks at best.
While sleeping each had a different dream
– A fantasy of the battle scene.
Torquil’s dream, well, it has the feel
Of a country dance, of a surreal reel!

[Five couples line up ready to dance. Music. Song: ‘Hey Johnny Cope’. All dance to the song, whooping and hollering.]

Narrator: Set to the right. Set to the left.
Turn your partners. Round she goes. Etc.

Song: Johnnie Cope

Chorus

Hey Johnnie Cope, are ye waukin’ yet?
Or are your drums a-beatin’ yet?
If ye were waukin’ I wad wait
To gang to the coals i’ the morning
Cope sent a challenge frae Dunbar sayin’
‘Charlie meet me an’ ye daur
An’ I’ll learn you the art of war
If you’ll meet me i’ the morning.’



**Chorus**

When Charlie looked the letter upon
He drew his sword the scabbard from:
'Come, follow me, my merry merry men,
And we'll meet Johnnie Cope i' the morning!'

Chorus

'Now Johnnie, be as good's your word;
Come, let us try both fire and sword;
And dinna rin like a frichted bird,
That's chased frae its nest i' the morning.'

Chorus

When Johnnie Cope he heard of this,
He thought it wadna be amiss
To hae a horse in readiness,
To flee awa' i' the morning.

Chorus

Fy now, Johnnie, get up an' rin;
The Highland bagpipes mak' a din;
It's best to sleep in a hale skin,
For 'twill be a bluidy morning.

Chorus

When Johnnie Cope to Berwick came,
They speired at him 'Where's a' your men?
'The deil confound me gin I ken,
For I left them a' i' the morning.

Chorus

Now Johnnie, troth, ye werena blate
To come wi' news o' your ain defeat,
And leave your men in sic a strait
Sae early in the morning.

Chorus

'I' faith,' qho' Johnnie, 'I got sic flegs
Wi' their claymores an' philabegs;
If I face them again, deil break my legs!
Sae I wish you a' gude morning.'

Chorus

Narrator: Archie's dream of the forty-five
Had more of a feeling of five-a-side.

[Two five-a-side teams line up, facing one another. The Narrator blows the whistle.]

Narrator: And they're off! Charlie's boys against Johnnie's lads.
[Commentary continues ad lib – 'passes to the right, cuts in from the left', etc.] And it's one-nil. One-nil to Johnnie's





lads. *[More ad lib.]* And it's two-nil. Three-nil. This is turning into a rout! Four-nil. Four-nil to Johnnie's lads.(?)

[Maybe, given that it's Archie's dream, the Hanoverians should win!]

Narrator: Five-nil. Five-nil for Johnnie's lads. And Charlie's men are throwing in the towel. And there goes the final whistle!

[Maybe some football chants in this section: 'Can ye hear the English sing? No. No.' 'There's only one Charlie Stewart.' 'Poor Johnnie Cope, whatever can it mean, to be a fat English bastard with a crap football team?']

Narrator: Now English Tom, who makes no plans,
He dreams of the Battle of Pots and Pans.

[Teams line up with pots, pans, spoons, colanders, breadbin lids, any metallic implements. They fight. Mighty clattering. Maybe some slow motion. Perhaps half a minute of this will be sufficient.]

Narrator: But now, at last, the dawn was breaking
And to reality the men were waking.
Time to have a look and see
What happened in reality.
Sailing into Dunbar town came Johnny Cope – full of hope.
Resolved to nip this in the bud – and spill blood.
He stops when he gets to open ground – easily found.
Between Tranent and Prestonpans – suits his plans.
But Lord George Murray's Jacobites – are ready to fight
Along the grassy ridge of Falside – high and wide.
There they lined up facing North – towards the Forth.

The armies matched each other's might – ready to fight.
But everyone has surely seen the marsh between.
Only the mad would risk a slog – across that bog.
As night approaches so both armies lie down calmly.
But the Earl of Murray has a plan – clever man
To take his men right round the bog – through the fog
And catch Cope's army by surprise – before sunrise.
At four in the morning they set out – going round about.
At five the redcoats spotted bushes – thought them
rushes.
Events then slowly dawned on them – slow again.
Cope tried to turn his troops to left – but was bereft.
He was hopelessly outflanked – and soundly spanked.
He let his mortars and his cannon go – a firework show.
Each Highlander then fires his gun – and forward runs
Wielding Lochaber Axes and broadswords – swearing oaths
They charged the enemy and engaged – much enraged.

[Charge!]

[Enter Willy the dragoon on his hobby horse.]

Willy: I'm Willy the dragoon
I'm a bit of a buffoon.
I wouldne say boo to a goose.
Truth tae tell, I'm nae much use
And I'm feart, I'm feart
Of yon hairy highlanders
So this very day
I'm running away.

[Clip-clop as he rides away.]





Tableau – Frozen Pictures

- (1) ‘The Highland Charge.’
- (2) ‘The Redcoat Massacre.’
- (3) ‘The Death of Colonel Gardiner.’

[Smoke – grisly and gruesome depictions.

Horror – but in a Victorian melodramatic way? A peepshow at a fair?

Colonel Gardiner lies dead.]

Song: The Auld Thorn Tree

A Song in Memory of Col. James Gardiner

They’ve been strippin’doon the bodies
‘roon the Hawthorn Tree
and oor wummenfolk are a’ bedecked
in King’s livery

In the field of new-cut stubble
Where the redcoats ran from trouble
There the only bush for miles around’s
The Auld Thorn-Tree

Gallant Gardiner
He was felled abune the Hawthorn Tree
By a claymore or a sickle-
It was hard tae see

Why he stood there at the last-
Tae meet his future and his past!
At the only bush for miles around-
The Auld Thorn Tree

And his faithful servant took him
From The Hawthorn Tree
Tae the Manse above the Brae
And he wis left tae dee

And the brave auld Gardiner's wife
Wasn't there tae see his life
Ebb sae slowly from his body
After the Hawthorn Tree

In the future all ye'll have's
The stump o' the Auld Thorn Tree
Where the Colonel stood
And carved his name in history

He was felled by Hielan' blades-
His Dragoons had run like Knaves
Whiles the Colonel knew that he had deed
For King and Loyalty.

Song: The Lady Frances Gardiner's Lament

A Battle of Prestonpans Song

Oh cam ye doon by Bankton Hoose
Whaur my fine James was slain?
And did ye see his Erse Dragoons
Flee cowardly frae the plain?

But I was safe in Stirling Keep
And lo'ed my mannie dear
Oh cam ye doon by Bankton Hoose
Whaur my man James was slain?





He never thocht his men wad fecht
And made that unco clear
Tho' his pallor on the battle's eve
Wis painted no by fear

My Colonel said:- "I'll face them a'
Could I inspire my men!"
Yet on the morn they fled like hares
And wadnae stand again!

Yet I wis no at Bankton Hoose
On that dread day I fear
Tae see my fine auld Jamesie slain-
Oh how I lo'ed my Dear!

Narrator: Fifteen hundred taken prisoner on that day
Three hundred were dead, and still they lay.
'Twas as if a hurricane had hit a butcher's shop
With arms and legs and torsos all turned to chops
And the groans of the wounded were terrible to hear
As they rose from the battlefield and filled the air.

[The groans of the wounded.]

Narrator: Meanwhile back in Edinburgh – a very different scene
Of joy and mirth and happiness at what had just been.
The Prince is crowned at Holyrood
With plenty drink and loads of food
And parties long into the night
To celebrate the glorious fight.

[We see the Prince crowned. Fanfare.]

[Party time!]

Song: Now the crown it fits sae squarely
On the heid of oor King Cherie
So hail to him that is our King
And may the Fates good Fortune bring.
From o'er the hills we flocked to meet him.
From loch and glen we marched to greet him.
We did not want to disappoint him
And prayed that one day we'd anoint him.
In He alone we put our hope
In He alone we put our faith
Arm in arm and hand in hand
To lead us to the promised land

[Toasts.]

Narrator: But now the King felt duty bound
To plan a march on London Town.
He'd gather followers on the way
Confident he'd win the day.
The glorious victory at 'the pans'
Inspired to make ambitious plans.
For days and days they marched along
At first they were five thousand strong.

[Hamish and Torquil march.]

Narrator: But as they reached the town of Derby
The numbers dwindled in this army.
They became increasingly dejected
It wasn't as had been expected.





They decide to turn and head for home
Aching now in every bone.

[Hamish and Torquil march with difficulty.]

Narrator: For days and days they marched along
Wondering where it had all gone wrong.
At last they reached the Scottish border
Where they hoped to hear the order
That they at last might now disband
Each returning to his homeland.
But alas! Alack! No order came.
Hamish and Torquil must remain.
On, on they marched, tired and sore
Until they reached a barren moor.

[Hamish and Torquil collapse exhausted.]

Torquil: Hamish.
Hamish: What is it Torquil?
Torquil: Are you asleep?
Hamish: How can I be asleep? What a stupid question.
Torquil: I can't take much more of this.
Hamish: Me neither.
Torquil: How many days now on the march, Hamish?
Hamish: I've lost count.
Torquil: When was there last something to eat, Hamish?
Hamish: A long time ago.
Torquil: When was there last a decent night's sleep, Hamish?
Hamish: I can't remember.

Torquil: When will there next be a decent night's sleep, Hamish?

[Silence.]

Torquil: All those miles for nothing.

Hamish: In my view, this is the worst sort of weather there can possibly be. Sleet. Neither rain nor snow. But the bastard child of the both of them!

Torquil: I have heard it said, Hamish, that we have forty different words for forty different kinds of rain. Could that be true?

Hamish: I suppose it could. Torquil.

Torquil: What is it Hamish?

Hamish: Have you ever wondered if this was a mistake?

Torquil: What?

Hamish: Following the King.

Torquil: *[Too vehemently.]* No, never. Never for an instant. *[Pause.]* Hamish.

Hamish: Yes.

Torquil: Where are we now?

Hamish: I've no idea. But I've got a funny feeling that I'm not too far from home. How I long to see my wife and family again.

Torquil: Me too, Hamish, me too.

Hamish: I've no idea where we are, but we've come a long way North, that's for certain. Somebody said it was called Culloden Moor.

Torquil: Never heard of it.

Hamish: Me neither.

[Howling wind. A lone piper. Enter the Prince as an older man.]





Song: Speed Bonnie Boat

Chorus

Speed bonnie boat like a bird on the wing
Onward the sailors cry
Carry the lad that's born to be king
Over the sea to Skye

Loud the wind howls, loud the waves roar,
Thunderclaps rend the air
Baffled our foes, stand by the shore
Follow they will not dare

Chorus

Many's the lad fought on that day
Well the claymore did wield
When the night came, silently lain
Dead on Culloden field

Chorus

Though the waves heave, soft will ye sleep
Ocean's a royal bed
Rocked in the deep, Flora will keep
Watch by your weary head

Chorus

Burned are our homes, exile and death
Scatter the loyal men

Yet e'er the sword cool in the sheath
Charlie will come again.

Chorus

Director: Well done everybody! If we could just do the curtain call. That's it! In a line. And three bows and off. Take it from the centre. That's it. I'll give you notes individually in the pub.
[All troop off.]

Well done Laverocks. You played a blinder. I'd like to buy you all a drink. Coreen?

Coreen: I'm driving.

Director: You're still allowed one.

Coreen: OK. I'll have a glass of white wine, thanks.

Director: Alasdair?

Alasdair: *[Whatever he says.]:*

Director: I'm a bit worried about the ending. Is it not a bit 'cheesy'? What do you think?

Alasdair: I think it'll work.

Director: Some people can't make it to the pub. Buses to catch, etc. I'll just go and give them their notes in the dressing room.

[He exits. The Laverocks pack up and leave. Enter Sean and Billy, back in normal clothes.]

Sean: What did ye think then? Eh?

Billy: Of what?

Sean: Of how it all went. What else?

Billy: Search me.

Sean: What happened in the game by the way?

Billy: I thought ye werene interested.





- Sean:** No. I'm no. But tell us onyroad.
- Billy:** It was a draw.
- Sean:** Oh. Aye. There you go then.
- Billy:** Ye got a result at Prestonpans mind.
- Sean:** Who?
- Billy:** You Jacobites. Naw! Only kiddin'.
- Sean:** Aye. But yir local hero, Colonel Gardiner, the one wi' a memorial, he's a Hanoverian. A proddy. Makes things kind o' awkward.
- Billy:** How?
- Sean:** 'Cos in a way all Scots are Jacobites at heart. It's the Romantic thing.
- Billy:** Aye. Weil, the sectarian carry on, it's bin going fur hundreds o' years. Mebbe time to put the whole thing to bed eh?
- Sean:** Aye. How no? If Gerry Adams and Ian Paisley can sit doon together, then anything's possible.
- Billy:** Aye. Mebbe. What was it the Prince said? 'Let my blood be the last that is spilt in this quarrel.'

[Enter the Director.]

- Billy:** Who's side are you on, Mr Director?
- Director:** Side? I don't take sides. If enough people sit on the fence, they will break it down. What impresses me most about all this, is how much music, art and literature the battle has inspired.
- Sean:** And plays. Don't forget plays.
- Director:** No, no. Let's not forget plays. Come on lads. I'll buy you a drink. They'll be wanting to get locked up in here.

[Exuent. Sound of outer door being locked.]

PRESTOUN'S WALLS

A Battle of Prestonpans Song by John Lindsay,

Men of Appin, Perth and Ranald,
Cam ye doon by Prestoun early?
Eident for the sake o' Cherie
Did ye fell by Prestoun's walls?

*Chorus: Brave Lochiel and bold MacGregor
Charged the scarlet ranks and squarely
Saw them off wi' dirk and broadsword
Did ye ca' by Prestouns walls?*

Atholl Ranald and Glengarry
Broke the Hanoverian army
Cowed them a' and beat them squarely
Did ye fell by Prestoun's walls?

Chorus

Saw their Colonel standing bravely
Like a rock 'mang cowardly knavery
Ca'ed him doon and wounded sairly
Did ye fell by Prestoun's walls?

Chorus

Now the rammie's ower an' by wi'
Will ye tell your hielan' laddies
How ye fought for Bonnie Cherie
How ye ca'ed by Prestoun's walls?

Chorus



POET LAUREATE

THIS POET'S ANGST

I didn't get where I am today!

No, it was my old pal and colleague Jim Forster who said – “The Baron in the ‘Pans wants a Poet Laureate. Would you be interested?”

Frankly I didn't know what Jim was talking about: “Baron, ‘Pans, Poet Laureate ?” I'd always thought the “Poet Laureate” wrote sookie-uppie verse for the Royals!

But it turns out almost anyone crazy enough can have their own Poet Laureate, so here I am, by no means a poet to my own satisfaction, but quite happily writing Arts and Baronial verse for The Much Honoured Gordon, Baron of Prestoungrange and for the Arts in General around and about town. This extraordinary man, loose cannon, maverick to some, energetic, creative empathetic entrepreneur to others wasn't long in converting me to his mantra of “Economic and social regeneration through the Arts and Cultural Tourism”.

I'm very unqualified to gauge the success of such efforts this past decade, but there are certainly some fine artists and creative folk all working now pro bono publico in and around the ‘Pans. I know the contributions I make and which are printed here give me huge fun and satisfaction. May we all have many more years of such enjoyment, please, and an ever more thriving ‘Pans?

John Lindsay

Poet Laureate to The Baron & The Arts in Prestoungrange





BLACK GOLD

Into our dreams some nights
the great black waggon rolls
to rumble our easy sleeping
and spread choking dust
on our bolsters
that bathes us
in a hot perspiring

What is the measurement
of a miner's sweat?
No rainbow forms
in the waterfalls we leach
at the coalface heat
a town's length
beneath their feet

We toil like Lascars
and we work for hearth and home-
the ones we love-
and in our sleep
half-guilty memories
of friends sair hurt
in that vast deep
or happier ones
of lunchtimes shared
and jokes half-gasped
two hundred feet
beneath the Forth
And think of the folks above,
the comrades from another shift
as they yatter away
along at The Goth

Burns' Day – 25 January 2006

Death dresses us
but not in fear
each time we drop
beneath the pit-head gear

We toil because
our fathers did with honour,
without complaint
for these are the facts of life
and by our graft
our families gain.

So we picture the warm clean hearths
in the rows of houses
far above
whiles we howk black gold
below
for the ones we love.





“RAVEN WAS GOING ALONG . . .”

Raven raven sleek and clever
High atop this cedar tree -
Tell us how you got here
And how it came to be
You crossed great Canada’s heartland
And then the Atlantic sea....

From Chemainus in Cowichan lands
I flew three thousand miles
Then I sailed across the ocean
To be carved in Prestonpans
And be painted by your children -
I’m the work of many hands

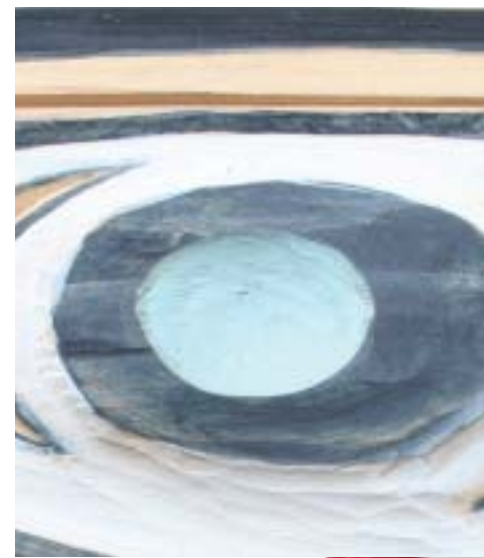
My epic tale waxed on here
When Lak Tun and Splash my axe-men
Suffered threats of deportation
And were damn near sent back home again
But thanks to carver Kenny Grieve
And the help of local young ‘uns
I’m ready now to watch you feast
The “Prestoungrange Totem Pole”
But of course a pole can’t talk -
A pole is like a poem
And it’s here to tell the story
Of Prestoungrange - it’s home



at the raising – 18 August 2006

Prestonpans men!
Prestonpans women!
Prestonpans children!
Strong in your history!
Strong in your forefathers!
Strong in your community!

Open up to the world!
This is YOUR totem pole!





QUESTO . . . IL PRESTOUNGRANGE

Questo e' il Prestoungrange
Dove le persone ancora credono
Nella luce brillante!

Io so che
L'amore fioriva tutta intorno
A questo posto
Dove si lavorava nelle miniere
O nel Firth spumeggiante.

Forse l'ho sentito presto in una calda
Mattina di primavera quando
I rumori nella strada principale
Rimanevano sospesi nell'aria, per sempre . . .

“Ascoltaci!” le vecchie dicevano,
noi vivevamo come Angeli di marmo
lungo questa costa . . .
siamo cresciute da polvere a pietra
e poi ritornate da pietra a polvere . . .

Qualche volta mi sembra di sentirli tutti
In linea parallela,
le antiche persone piene d'amore,
il carbone, i loro sforzi,
e le loro speranze.

Dolci, dolci per me questi scuri meritevoli
Uomini e donne,
compagni d'amore
in un gigantesco, risuonante
giardino metallico.



at the Twinning with Barga – September 19th 2006

Quali i loro piu' reconditi sogni?
Dicci adesso
Come d'attraverso il mondo
La Fratellanza del Genere Umamo
Cominciava di nuovo qui,
tra queste soffitte piene di scale.

Oh Si! Annuiscono
Da dietro le grige finestre
Di ricordi senza padrone:
"La Storia non ci ha
completamente cancellati,
noi siamo semplicemente distesi
sotto una crosta di fragili memorie!"

Oh si! Annuiscono
"Eravamo noi i lavatori
nelle quasi immortali vene di carbone . . ."

E la donna piu' vecchia
Che ha mai vissuto a Prestonpans,
in un miscuglio di gatti e fiori,
piu' vicina a Dio ora,
ci puo' raccontare dei profeti Marxisti
coraggiosi, spettrali e utopisti,
di giovani chiassosi
che gridano agli angoli delle strade
e dei nuotatori
nell' Aitcheson's Haven
in mezzo a una miriade di barche.

Oh, lei ha la faccia di un vecchio Angelo
Che una volta volava
Su stendardi di fuliggine
Tra il vento lungomare . . .
Sicuramente lei conosce
I tempi duri che qui si vivevano
Quando un Calvario di debiti
E fatiche insostenibili
Spinsero i nostri attoniti genitori
Verso un destino stregoto e impenetrabile.

E ora a Sud del grande Forth
Fantasmi mi parlano
Di polvere, sale, sapone,
dell'alchimia delle ostriche,
della potente flotta da guerra
che avanza a tutto vapore doppiando
Inchkeith
e in un micro cosmo
la piccola bottiglia di Fowler
tenuta da un giovane nervoso minatore
con un mazzo di carte da gioco per dita.

E della donna giovane, carina
piegata sopra una staccionata con la TBC.
ed i bambini senza scarpe
con la fisarmonica
che suonava di continuo
con questi dannati cucchiali,
percussione approssimativa,
proprio dove i tram sferragliavano
accanto a uomini senza lavoro.



“Oh volete venire con noi?”
i nostri genitori ci chiedono,
“dove i vagoni cigolavano
e i suonatori di violino il loro amore
attraverso grotte scure e rumorose
in Prestonpans
dove Angeli impazziti e gioiosi
a volte si chiudevano le orecchie
in cerca di pace! Mentre i buoni Pastori
li incitavano,
“Baldy”, il maestro e ministro
pieno di rimproveri
e il prete missionario in un ambiente che li snobbava,
predicava a queste dolce
intransigente razza
la cui pietra da affilare era il carbone
conquistato da un Dio rancoroso
che sembrava accigliarsi
mentre i mortali rubavano
le sue rocce
con le loro mani!

“Oh Signore” dicono gli onorati fantasmi:
“noi non eravamo sedotti
dalla perfetta visione
della eguaglianza degli Uomini . . .
Oh, eravamo soltanto umili persone
Presi a nolo e usati
Come merci e strumenti!”

Aaah lei si ricorda bene,
questa donna, la piu' vecchia,
la musica nella temperanza di Goth,
era essa una Taverna D' Amore
dove la sgangherata orchestra
di una vita duramente lottata
e della gioia
scherniva i non convinti nemici
del suo ceto?

E sicuramete le strane parole
Che ci scambiammo in quella mattina di Primavera
"Compagno getta via il tuo piccone!
porta la tue ragazza
per un viaggio sul tram
fino a Portobello
Memento Mori
Poiche' il sale della giovinezza
Si scioglie presto!"

E per l'amore dei vecchi tempi
Guardavamo un gatto bianco e nero
Mentre tendeva un'imboscata
E lui disse:
"si! Questo e' proprio il posto giusto
per riposare gli stanchi corpi,
lungo la riva del mare
qui a Prestoungrange!"





THIS ... IS PRESTOUNGRANGE

This is Prestoungrange
where people still believe
in the shining light!

I know that
love flowered all around this place
where the work was done
in the pits
or on the frothy Firth

Maybe I heard it on a warm
spring early morning
when sounds
in the High Street
hung in the air forever....

“Listen to us!” the auldyins said,
“We lived like marble angels
along these shores....
We grew from dust to rocks
and back from rock to dust!....
Whey Hey!

I can sometimes sense them all
in parallel lines,
the ancient loving folk,
the coals their struggle
and their hope.

Sweet, sweet to me
these swarthy worthy
men and wummen,
comrades of love



at the twinning with Barga – September 19th 2006

in a gigantic clanking
iron garden.

What were their loftiest dreams?
tell us now
how from across the world
the Brotherhood of Man
began again, here,
among these laddered roofs.

Oh Yes! The wraiths nod
from behind the grey windowpanes
of ownerless recollections :-
“For history hasn’t quite
finished us off -
We only lie beneath a crust
of brittle memories!”

“Oh Yes!” They nod,
“We were the workers
in the half immortal coal seams.....”

And the oldest wumman
who ever lived in Prestonpans,
amid a jumble of cats and flowers -
closer to God now -
can tell of Marxist prophets-
bold, spectral and Utopian
and the young louns
roaring at the street corner
and the swimmers
in Aitcheson’s Haven
amid a tatter of boats.

Oh, she has the face of an elder
angel
who once rode on banners of soot
astream in the shore wind....
For sure she knows
a harsher time was here,
when a Calvary of debt
and impossible toil
led our astonished forefathers
to a bewitched and fathomless fate.

And now, South side of the Great Forth,
ghosts tell me of
the dust, the salt, the soap,
the alchemistic oyster meat,
the mighty warfleet
steaming past Inchkeith
and in microcosm

the little bottle of Fowler’s
held by a nervous young miner
with a deck of cards for fingers....

And of the pretty young wumman
bent over a fence with T B
and the children with no shoes
and the squeeze-box in the Goth
playing onandon
with these damn spoons -
approximate percussion,
just where the trams rattled by
the jobless men.



“Oh, will ye come with us?”
Our Faithers ask,
where the waggons creaked
and the fiddlers etched their love
past dark and noisy caves
in Prestonpans
where maddened/gladdened angels
sometimes pressed their ears
for peace! while the Guid Shepherds roused them,
“Baldy” the teacher and the disapproving meenister
and the missionary Priest
in a Blue-nose environ,
lectured at this sweet
uncompromising breed,
whose whetstone was the coal,
won from a grudging God
who seemed to frown as mortals stole his rocks
with their hands!

Oh Lord, the honoured ghosts say:-
“Were we no seduced
by the perfect vision
o’ Man’s equality....
Oh, we were but simple folk. hired and used as goods and chattels!”

Aaah, she remembers fine,
this auldest wumman,
the music in the temprance Goth_
Was it a Tavern of Love, where the ramshackle
orchestra of hard-won life and joy
taunted the unpersuaded enemies of her class?



And of course the funny words
we shared on that Spring morning:-

“COMRADE, THROW AWAY YOUR
PICK!

Take your girl for a tramride
to Portobello-
MEMENTO MORI -
for the salt of youth
is crumbled soon!”

And for auld times sake,
we watched a black/white cat
laid in ambush at the doocot
and she said:-
“Yes! this was a proper place
to rest tired bodies
at the sea’s edge
at Prestoungrange





A RED LAMBENT FLAME – THE WITCHES OF PRESTONPANS

A' Ye whae stand here now
remembering them,
remember this!

We have numbered the 81 innocents
whaes ignorance broked no bliss,
all brent wi'a red lambent flame
or chokit for mercy first
whaes scattered ashes
are now dust of dust.

Remember the Baron Gordon's Pardon
for those marked by this night
and witness tae this balance
of a cruel wrong with right.

“PARDONED THEY ARE”
But for the hypocrites whae lied
there is no place tae hide
burnt witches
in the pages o' history

And the likes o' Jamie Saxt
“The Wisest Fool in Christendom”
Were soaked
wi' the blood o' the ancients
all killed for lies
extracted fiendishly
by Lucifer's sharp devices
and his spies.

Remembrance Day – October 31st 2004

And now the murderers' souls
fly crow-feathered
ower the bald hillocks
where innocents perished
by the score.

Do not forget the outrage
on thae puny wummen,
wretched marionettes jerking
in the stinking tar barrel
o' mens' politics and manoeuvring

And spare us still the feigned piety
o'God's self-appointed officers
whae roped tae a merciless Kirk
performed their deeds
tae the slow hand clap
o' sickened Angels.

Aye, where lay the latitude o'mercy then?
the man o' conscience cries!
The witch-kinds' doom
was sealed and linked
In a chain o' filthy lies.

And the restless hunger o'
the witch seekers
still rustles the leaves
on the laurel tree

And the hauf-mad clergy
showed no Savior's refuge
tae the victims o'
the Tartar eyes
o' watchful human demons
whae wi' herts o' Lammermuir-lions
and dempsters' venal minds
ill-persecuted Faedom
and doomed their harmless kind.

So the clouds were shut to mercy
when their final sparks
flickered and died like fireflies
under acrid skies
in a land o' nae gramultion
that heeded not their cries.





AN AWFY TAUTOLOGY FOR BARONS

Gif ye're a fresh beginner
at this noble Baron lark
please find attached hereto a guide
for those still in the dark.

A Baron's lot's a quantity
o' Queen's men
in the main
and your gaithering here thegither
Revives the noble rank again....

For there's divers Barons' duties tae be done
and their lot need not be an unhappy one!

Remember back past history
when a Baron could be called
by Royal Liege tae violent wars
tae serve his Sovereign Lord!

Well, your towers are built of ivory now
and no o' stanes and mortar
but the good news is your duties
don't include the pain and slaughter!

Aye! Yestermen ye may be
and nearly gone the day
so rise up and stand! Review again-
the role ye still may play!
Mair preferable - be philanthropists
encouraging the Airts;
as wi' Prestoungrange
and Dolphinstoun
and roud about thae pairts!



for 1st Scottish Barons' Day – November 28th 2005

That Barons can be leaders still's
mair desirable in this age
o' battered cyber-cliches–
be a healthy Baronage!

Upget then on this Feast Day
first o' a thousand mair
each 28 November
We'll repeat the same again!

So welcome tae this Barons' place
that some find unco strange–
Your presence on the scene is grand
By behest at Prestoungrange

Nae Jack-in-office Barons they
hae wished ye this advice–
free gratis and for naething
so please read it ower twice!





CHARLES BELFIELD IV

For every sun that sets
Behind this stane
Joined by the Forth
To the land of Prestoungrange
We think of the Belfield Potters
In their day
For they like we watched
Sunsets here the same

And could they speak
Their ghosts would surely say:
"Consider this!
We too were made of clay!"

In memory of their lives
We name this stane
"CHALES BELFIELD IV"
To celebrate their fame!



**Launch of Centenary Celebrations of the Prestoungrange
Gothenburg 1908–2008 – July 23rd 2007**





HOKKAI THE NOO!

Haiku from Prestoungrange

The Gothenburg flowers
Well chosen by Jim Forster:
Gloriously tuned!

Storms lash the sea wall;
The totem pole crumbles but
What sprouts from its seed?

A fine thing to see,
The mighty Forth calm as glass!
Good for the children!

A cow out the back
Grazes on the witch gestalt:
Sure keeps the weeds down!

Pandores oyster beds?
Take 'em with a pinch of salt-
Tabasco's better!

Charles Belfield the Fourth
With a heron on his head
That the tide swept off

Gulls over the Goth
But pigeons nest in the eaves;
We can't have that!

Launch of Centenary Celebrations of the Prestoungrange Gothenburg 1908–2008 – July 23rd 2007

Murals are magnets:
They warm the town walls
But frieze in winter!

Muralist at dawn,
His head like a periscope:
He prays for blank walls!

Sam Burns' fine junkyard-
It aye looks the same to me,
Winter or summer.

I think we should plant
Big sunflowers at the Haven
On old Topaz grave

A fild of stubble;
Hundreds of dead redcoats there
And they call war art

Battles in the Kirk,
Doves nesting in the belfry:
What more can you ask?

He ran from the Manse:
Some Hielan' teuchter shouted:
Gie me your watch, son.

Bankton House looks grand
And he almost made it home-
Poor Colonel Gardiner

Red flag on the Bing!
Flying high in late July
The workers have won

PS
Auldhammer House folk
Can still hear the tramcars run
At the hush of dawn!





HOKUM LEERIES

On the seaside bench
Provided by the council –
Three local heroes
Cradle their morning cans
And contemplate the Paps o’ Fife,
Alas! No poetry in their life!
But joy! Whit joy, tae sit awhiles,
Suppin thegither wi’ sardonic smiles!
Yin day the meenister up yonder brae
Came doon tae save oor heroes frae oblivion –
All part – he thocht – o’ life’s guid work,
Enhancing God’s dominion.
The crab traps creaked
And the promenade puddled
As the man o’ cloth descendit
Tae interview the fuddled.
“Fine morning, my good men!”
Fired frae point-blank range
This took oor Hokum Leeries by surprise...
“And how are we today?”
The first looked up wi’ de’ilment in his eye
And said:-
“My dearest hope for now is when I die
I’ll jine the Big Man’s brewery in the sky!”
“Alky? No me!” the second cried...
“I jist sit here wi’ them
an while awa the time –
as far as I’m concerned,
This life’s jist fine!”
The third man didnae speak.
“Have ye seen the mural in the Burns’ shelter?”
The meenister changed his tack,
“It’s the tale o’ Tam o’ Shanter!”

An interview with the Three Wise Men – at the unveiling of the Tam O'Shanter Mural in the town's Burns Shelter – January 25th 2005

And now warming to his creak, he mused:-

"I wonder if Burns ate Queenie oysters
quaffed wi' Fowler's Heavy?"

The first man:- "Aye! Tae hone his blade!"

The second:- "Aye! Burns liked his bevvy!"

At last the third man spoke:-

"Whae's MURIEL? BURNS? BURNS SHELTER?"

So that's whit it is, Chrissakes!

It hasnae sheltered US –

We cannae force the gates!"



THE AULD THORN TREE

at the premiere of *Battle of Pots and Pans* – June 8th 2007

They've been strippin' doon the bodies
'roon the Hawthorn Tree
and oor wummenfolk are a' bedecked
in King's livery

In the field of new-cut stubble
Where the redcoats ran from trouble
There the only bush for miles around's
The Auld Thorn-Tree

Gallant Gardiner
He was felled abune the Hawthorn Tree
By a claymore or a sickle-
It was hard tae see

Why he stood there at the last-
Tae meet his future and his past!
At the only bush for miles around-
The Auld Thorn Tree

And his faithful servant took him
From The Hawthorn Tree
Tae the Manse above the Brae
And he wis left tae dee

And the brave auld Gardiner's wife
Wasn't there tae see his life
Ebb sae slowly from his body
After the Hawthorn Tree

In the future all ye'll have's
The stump o' the Auld Thorn Tree
Where the Colonel stood
And carved his name in history

He was felled by Hielan' blades-
His Dragoons had run like Knaves
Whiles the Colonel knew that he had deed
For King and Loyalty.



THE LADY FRANCES GARDINER'S LAMENT

Oh cam ye doon by Bankton Hoose
Whaur my fine James was slain?
And did ye see his Erse Dragoons
Flee cowardly frae the plain?

But I was safe in Stirling Keep
And lo'ed my mannie dear
Oh cam ye doon by Bankton Hoose
Whaur my man James was slain?

He never thocht his men wad fecht
And made that unco clear
Tho' his pallor on the battle's eve
Wis painted no by fear

My Colonel said:- "I'll face them a'
Could I inspire my men!"
Yet on the morn they fled like hares
And wadnae stand again!

Yet I wis no at Bankton Hoose
On that dread day I fear
Tae see my fine auld Jamesie slain-
Oh how I lo'ed my Dear!

PRESTOUN'S WALLS

Men of Appin, Perth and Ranald,
Cam ye doon by Prestoun early?
Eident for the sake o' Cherie
Did ye fell by Prestoun's walls?

Chorus: Brave Lochiel and bold MacGregor
Charged the scarlet ranks and squarely
Saw them off wi' dirk and broadsword
Did ye ca' by Prestouns walls?

Atholl Ranald and Glengarry
Broke the Hanoverian army
Cowed them a' and beat them squarely
Did ye fell by Prestoun's walls?

Chorus

Saw their Colonel standing bravely
Like a rock 'mang cowardly knavery
Ca'ed him doon and wounded sairly
Did ye fell by Prestoun's walls?

Chorus

Now the rammie's ower an' by wi'
Will ye tell your hielan' laddies
How ye fought for Bonnie Cherie
How ye ca'ed by Prestoun's walls?

Chorus



WITCHES ATONEMENT . . .

on October 31st 2007

Death invites us all
but surely not THAT way –
damned to a fate
of terror, torture and dismay –
The ignorant destroyed
by those more stupid still
and led like flocks of hobbled sheep
to die on Castle Hill, where
hurt, damned, shamed as heretics
they were torched
by star-crossed laws of yesteryear.
Events from such an archane past
we scarcely can conceive ..
while from a time more distant still
we hear the echo from another public hill
where Jesus cried:
"Forgive them Lord - they know not what they do!"
Make no mistake!
Atonement here is made by me and you
Who wish a peace in Heaven
For those harmless martyred few.

DIGNIFIED BARONS A-PLenty

on November 28th 2007

From Inneryne to Plenderleith
There's Barons Scots a-plenty
From Gigha west to Cluny east
Here number Barons twenty

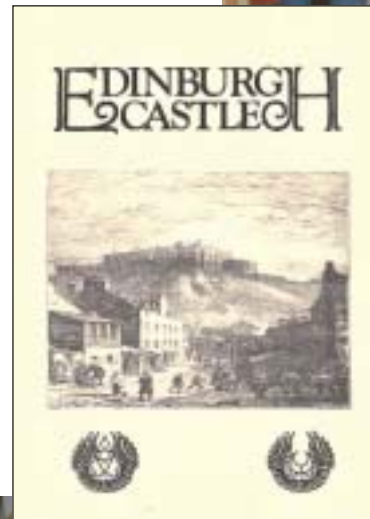
Come all ye honoured Barons now
Of Scotia's rain-swept land
We'll take a trip down History Lane
Then view the state-in-hand!

The Declaration of Arbroath
Was signed by thirty-eight
When Barons were a source of strength
Which moved this nation's fate

Our Barons stinted not their lives
To fight usurpers ill
For dozens died at Halidon
And more on Flodden Hill

You may have lost your feudal rights
But titles you've retained.
Above all, use those dignities

For which you once were famed.



A Baron-free millennium
Was what the Parliament planned
Yet here you are as Barons still -
On dignities you stand.

Our world has need of folk like you,
Barons bold and Barons true!
Look then to the future
For there's much that you could do!

Your feudal days have long-since gone -
Kinship and loyalty grow less strong
But Baron's still can show the way
In this materialistic day

By taking interest in the place
From whence their ancient titles came
Like Dolphinstoun and Prestoungrange
Who've worked great wonders bright and
strange!

So now we leave you with this thought -
There are some things that can't be bought
This present time -
Blaze Barons, blaze in worthy cause
And make your titles shine!
Prove to the world there's life there yet
To justify your line!

From Ardgowan east to Ormiston,
North to Braemar then Pitcruvie,
Finlanrig, Blackhall, Holydean
On to Cromar thence to Comrie...
Think on Bathgate, Lag, Kilmarnock too,
Rochane Delvine and Biggar,
Kilpunt Dunira Duddingston,
Cushnie-Lumsden and Corstorphine-
Not forgetting Prestoungrange and
Dolphinstoun!

Let Our Dear Lord in His Wisdom
Make them glitter in their fiefdom -
Make a difference in this Godless age -
The new proactive Baronage!

***Edinburgh Castle November 28th 2007
being the 'Appointed Day Banquet' of
the Baronage of Scotland***



P.S. The Latest On the Wall Art in Prestonpans

Those who work in the arts off the walls readily acknowledge the nationally significant impact that our artists On The Wall in Prestonpans have made, and indeed continue to make. In 2006 when the Global Mural Arts and Cultural Tourism Association's Biennial Conference was held in The Pans a beautiful volume *The Murals Trail & Arts Treasures of Prestonpans* was published that included all the murals then completed along with the town's most significant architecture. Since then, however, of course further murals have been created and we are pleased to provide the printed canvas here for them to be recorded and more widely shared. Photography is once again by Linda Sneddon.

The themes continue to address the history of our town and range from our own unique Prestoungrange Totem Pole and wall map of the Murals Trail to Sam Burns' Yard, Summerlee, Prestonpans Railway Station and the Mural in a Day Battle of Prestonpans as well as two minor totems and The Annual Murals Fest from Cuthill Park.





Summerlee

This mural by Tom Ewing shows the houses that the Summerlee Company built for its workers in the area known as Cuthill which created their own street community but lacked many of the modern facilities we now expect. The mural also depicts the old Cuthill School which was situated at the bottom of Prestongrange Road. Davey Steele, the nationally famous local whose folk music grew from life in Summerlee is remembered in a portrait. The mural also reminds the Cuthill community of its park [now being restored] where gala days and children's play were enjoyed.





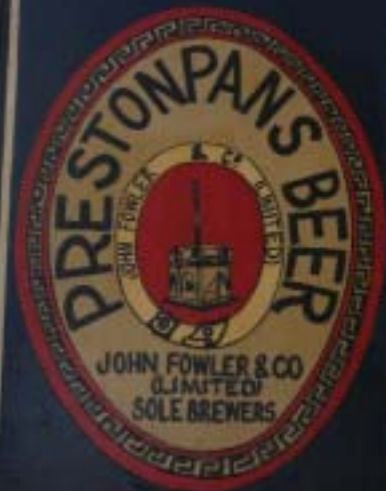
GENERAL

PRESTONPANS

WAITING ROOM



ENLARGED FACSIMILE
OF LABEL ISSUED ONLY BY
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TRADE MARK
PRESTON CROSS

Prestonpans Railway Station

The railway station was opened in 1846 by the North British Railway as part of the line from Edinburgh to North Berwick and it has played a significant part in the community's life ever since. Adele Conn's mural at and around the old booking office captures scenes from earlier days and locally manufactured products including Prestongrange bricks, Belfield Pottery, Prestonpans Soap and Salt and Fowler's Ales.

BOOKING OFFICE

TICKETS



Prestonpans Railway Station
First opened in 1846 as part of the line
from Edinburgh to Berwick upon Tweed
by the North British Railway (NBR)
Over the next 161 years the service
has been provided by 5 operators
1846-1923 North British Railway
1923-1948 London North Eastern Railway
1948-1997 British Railway
1997-2004 ScotRail (National Express)
2004 to date First ScotRail
Nowadays Prestonpans is one of 5
intermediate stops on the First ScotRail
Edinburgh to North Berwick route
IN MEMORY OF OUR PRESTONPANS ANCESTORS
With thanks to: First ScotRail
North British Railway Study Group
Scottish Railway Preservation Society
Prestonpans Arts Festival
MURAL PAINTED BY ARTIST ADELE COHN



From 1912-1934 Prestonpans was one stop on a daily service from Glasgow to Dunbar known as the Lothian Coast Express. It had the most modern rolling stock at the time and included restaurant facilities. Also calling at Gullane and North Berwick it allowed golfers a full summer's evening round on one of the county's many courses.

The North British became the London North Eastern Railway in 1923 until nationalisation in 1948, and since services were privatised in 1997 ScotRail and more recently First ScotRail have provided the service. The station staff reality portraits depict John Seth and Peter Howell.

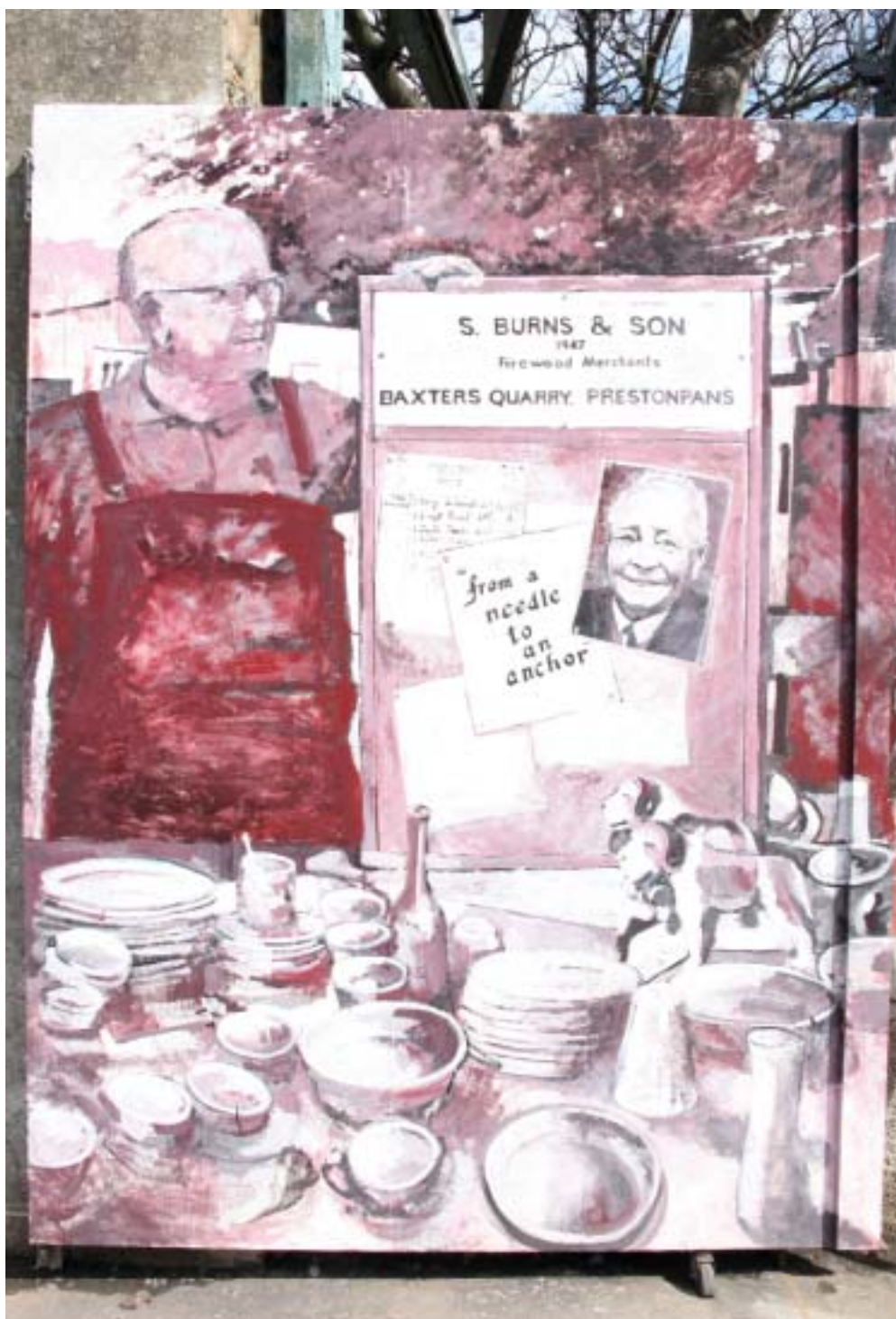




An inset image showing a collage of papers and a portrait of a smiling man. The papers include a checklist with items like "16 out Road 40", "1 Dubl. Street 40", and "1 Kilmac. Road". A prominent white card features the text "From a needle to an anchor" in a stylized font. To the right of the text is a black and white portrait of a smiling man in a suit and tie.

Sam Burns' Yard

Sam Burns' Yard and his family are a 20th century legend in Prestonpans and Andrew Crummy's mural on the Yard's gates captures the three generations that have served the town and much of Edinburgh too. The enterprise may have begun as Baxter's Quarry, Firewood Merchants and Needles to Anchors, but today it holds every manner of second hand items you could ever wish to see – and if not, it will only be a short wait till it arrives!







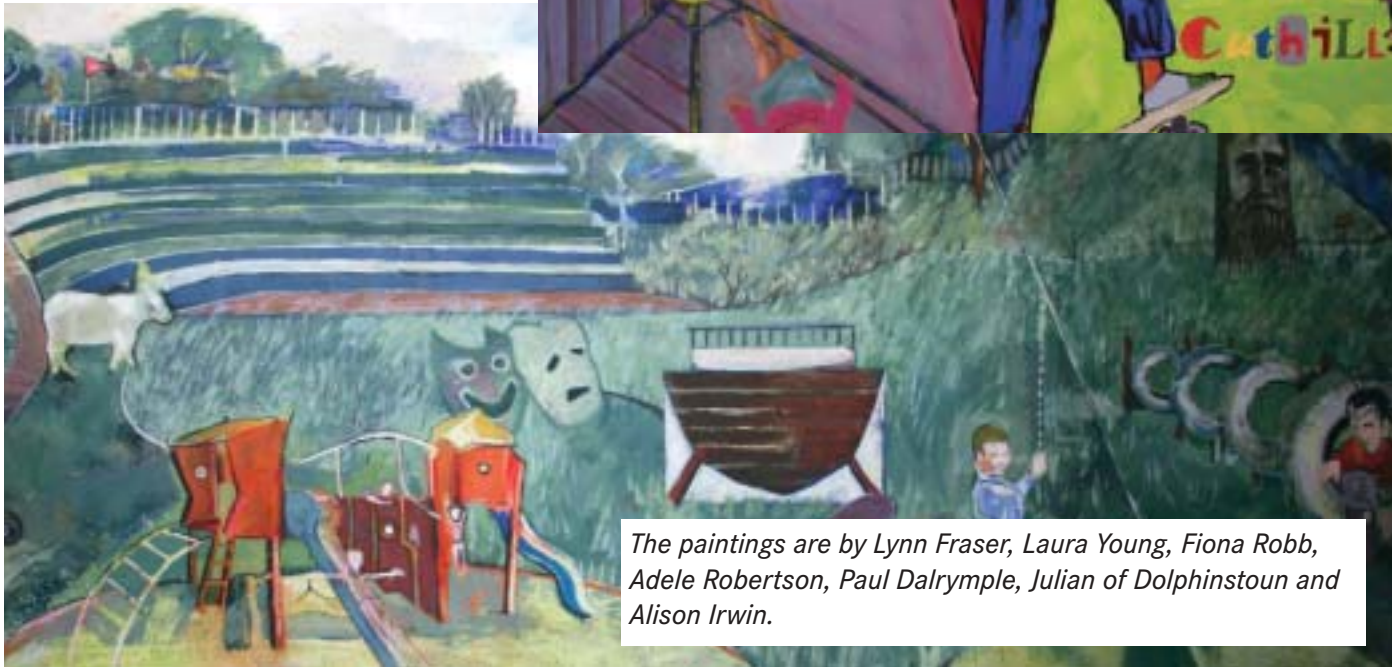
Cuthill Park Murals Fest 2007 & 2008

The Arts Festival has used a Murals Fest-cum-Competition in Cuthill Park since 2007 as part of its campaign with the local Friends of the Park to ensure its comprehensive restoration. The Murals Fest boards painted in 2007 and 2008 are created to selected themes which have thus far focussed on children's future enjoyment of the park. Art has played a key role in the campaign and that future grows nearer each year.









The paintings are by Lynn Fraser, Laura Young, Fiona Robb, Adele Robertson, Paul Dalrymple, Julian of Dolphinstoun and Alison Irwin.



Car donated by Tim Sleigh and decorated by Daniel, two Megans, Amy, Robbie & Safron with guidance from John & Tom ... in memory of Summerhill's Davey Steel for the Murals Fest 2008







Battle of Prestonpans

The Battle at Prestonpans on September 21st 1745 was Bonnie Prince Charlie's most famous victory in his youthful endeavour to regain the thrones of Great Britain and Ireland for his father. The Victory filled his Jacobite followers with Hope and Ambition. This mural was painted in a single day by a team of 15 artists, led by Andrew Crummy, during the Global Murals Conference held in Prestonpans in August 2006, and depicts the iconic Thorntree beneath which Colonel Gardiner was mortally wounded and the flight of General Sir John Cope's redcoat dragoons up Johnnie Cope Way.





Prestoungrange Totem Pole and Gothenburg Car Park

The Prestoungrange Totem Pole was unveiled on August 18th 2006 as the climax to the Global Murals Conference in Prestonpans and as a gesture of thanks to Chemainus BC, Canada, which inspired the use of historical murals in Prestonpans. The 32' red cedar was donated by Chemainus and shipped across the Atlantic. It was carved to designs created locally by Xwa Lack Tun and Tawx'sin Yexwullo and Kenny Grieve and painted by Tom Ewing, with Adele Robertson, Jan Holden, Pat Fox and children from Prestonpans primary schools. Totems are the traditional art form of Chemainus and the images commemorate the baronies and the industries of Prestonpans across the past 1000 years.

The car park wall facing the Firth of Forth carries a stylised map by Andrew Crummy of The Murals Trail across Prestonpans which has made the town Scotland's Murals Capital. The car park stands on land formerly part of the home of the town's famous Belfield Potteries. The Wiles bus standing by the pole reminds us of the last private bus company to operate from Prestonpans, and is painted in its old livery.





St Joseph's Totems

Carved by Kenny Grieve, to designs from associates of St Joseph's in Prestonpans, these totems have used the second red cedar donated by Chemainus in 2006. Tom Ewing led the painting.





PrestonHands

The second mural at the entrance of Prestongrange Bowling Club by Tom Ewing honours the community's hands at play and at work - bowls within of course but they have shaped fine pottery, mined for coal, panned for salt and fished.





BathHouse Windows

When the old Miners' BathHouse was boarded up in 2005 it looked so very neglected that the Arts Festival took a leaf from its global colleagues and a team of local artists, led by Tom Ewing, created seventeen images of tools used and life lived at Prestongrange Mine and Brickworks over the centuries.

