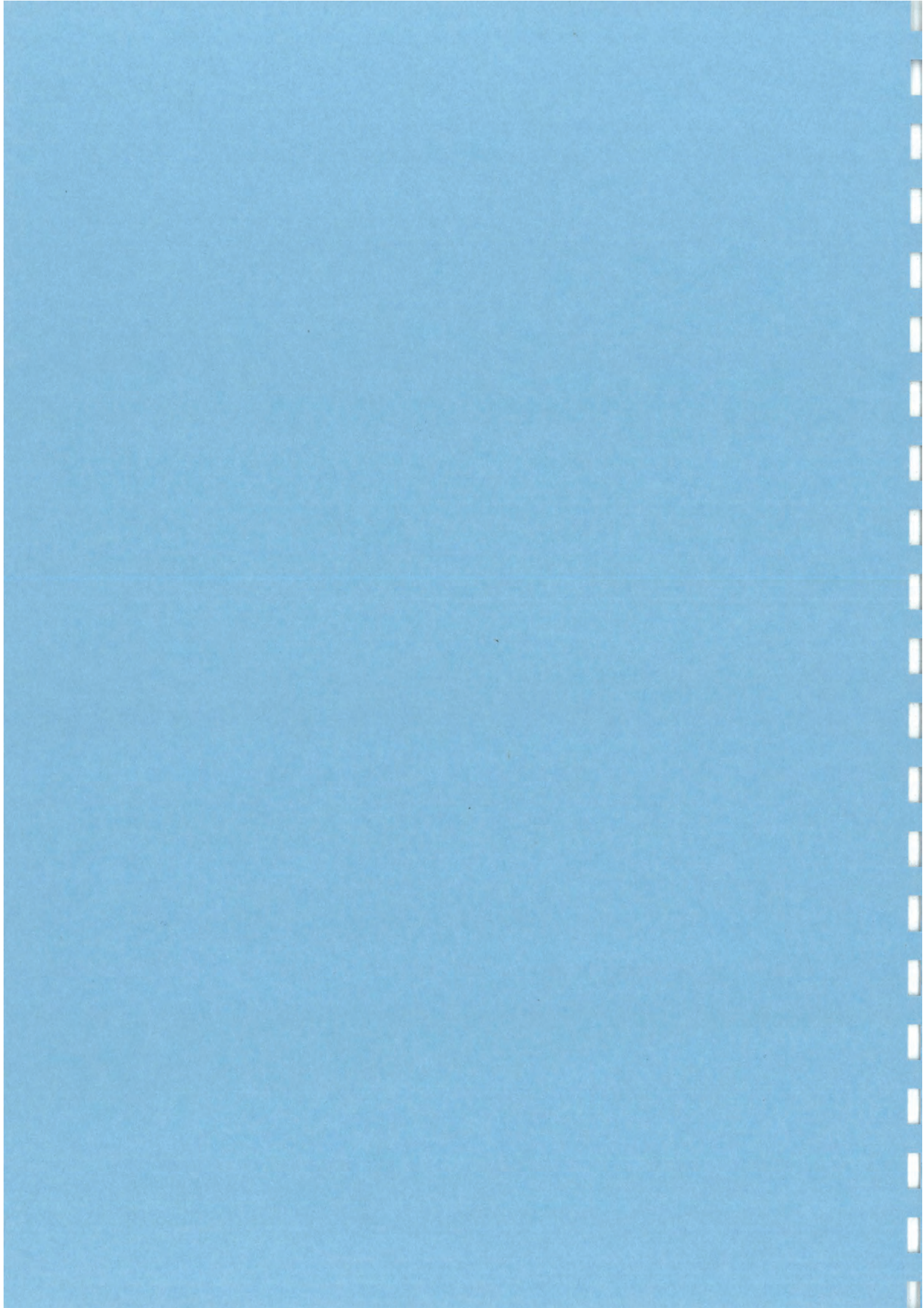


**Certificate in Scottish
Family History Studies**

**The Speirs Family
1714 - 1817**

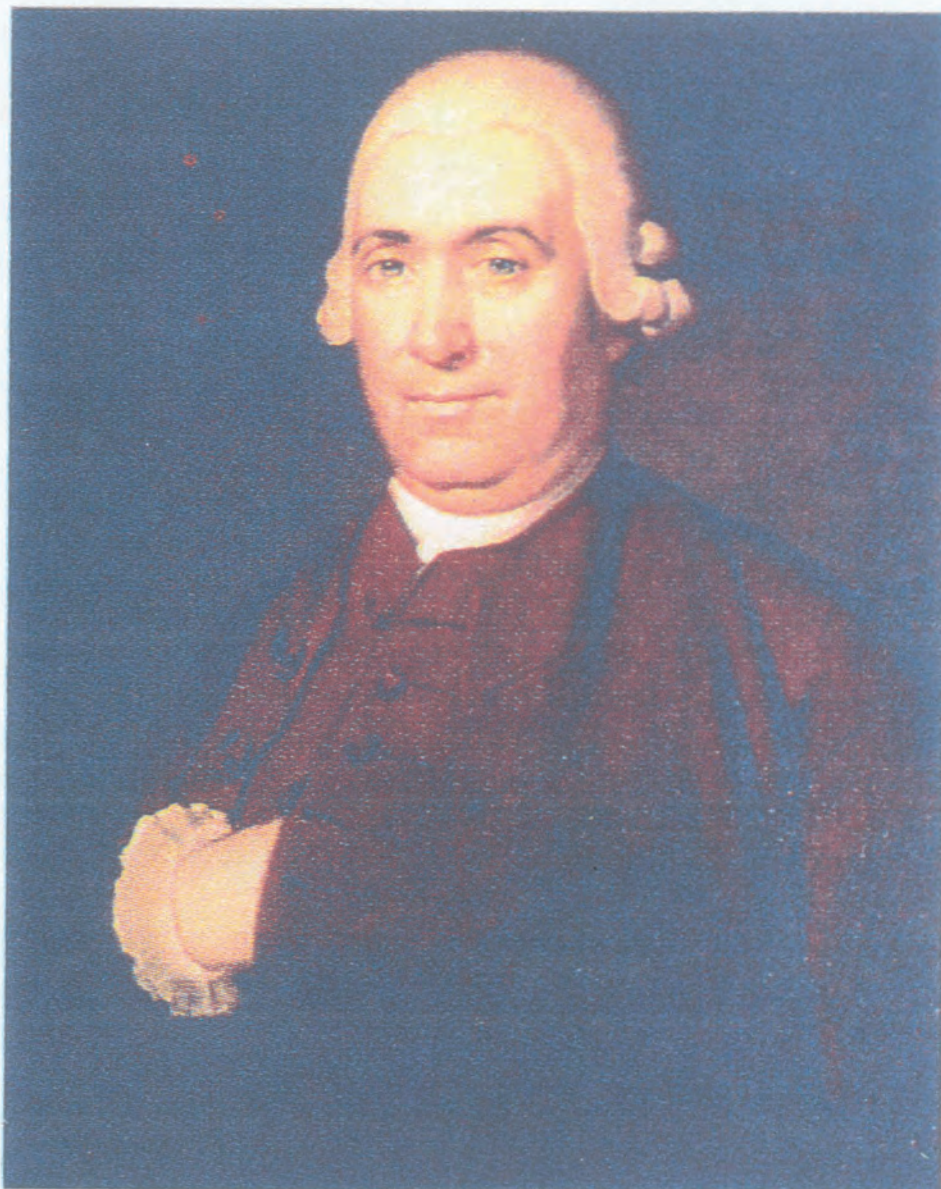
Fiona Boyd



ALEXANDER SPEIRS OF ELDERSLIE

HIS SON, PETER SPEIRS OF CULCREUCH

AND HIS GRANDSON, CAPTAIN ALEXANDER SPEIRS



ALEXANDER SPEIRS OF ELDESLIE.
1714 - 1782

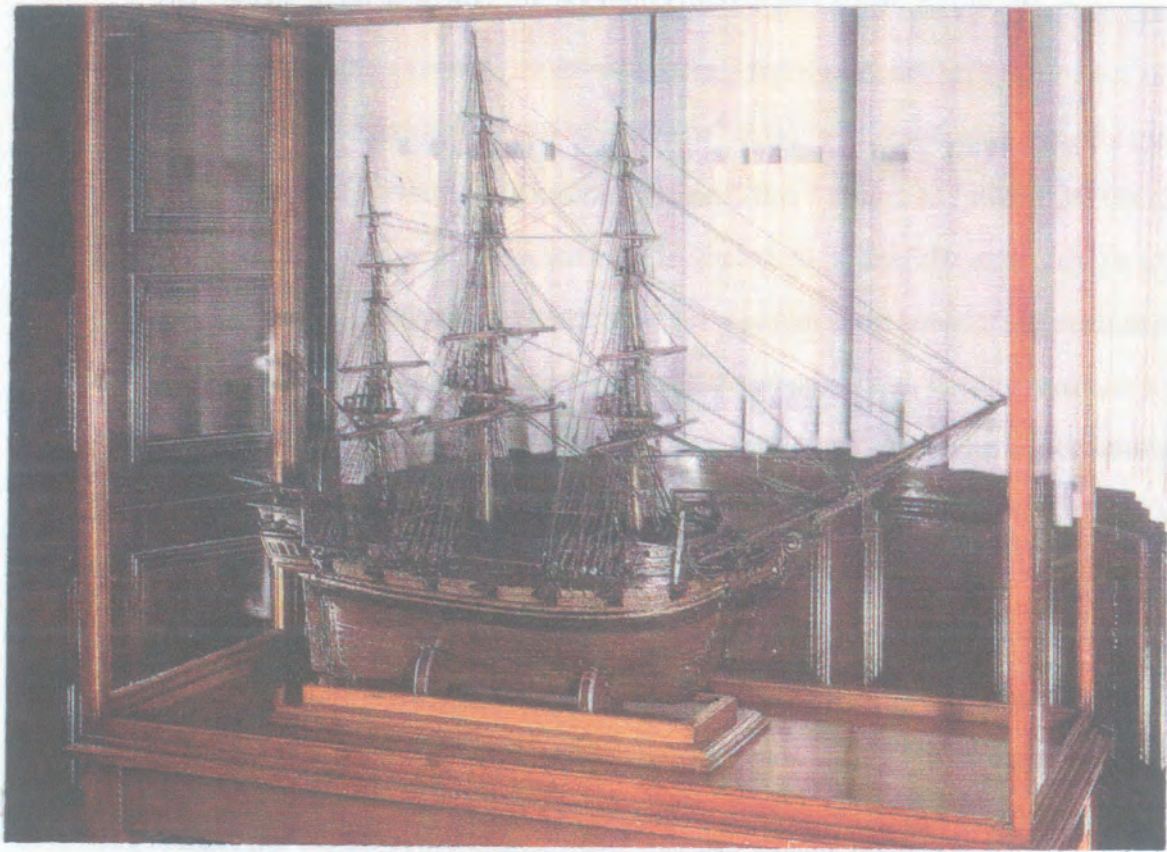
ALEXANDER SPEIRS TOBACCO LORD

EARLY YEARS:-

Alexander Speirs was born in Edinburgh on 14th September, 1714.¹ His father was John Speirs, an Edinburgh Burgess and Merchant, and his mother was Isobel Tweedie, the only daughter of John Tweedie, Provost of Peebles.² Alexander had three sisters, Judith,³ Margaret⁴ and Joanna⁵ and brothers, James and Thomas.⁶

As a young man Alexander, like many of his contemporaries, was sent to the Colonies to learn the tobacco trade and to serve his apprenticeship there. He was ambitious and rose to become a plantation owner in Virginia,⁷ laying the foundation of his fortune and future enormous success as a tobacco merchant. In 1741, while still in Virginia, Alexander married Sara Caney,⁸ but it is presumed that she died as he was free to marry again at a later date when he was back in Scotland. Alexander appointed David Bell, tobacco factor in Virginia, to manage his estates there. David Bell married Alexander's sister, Judith, and they were in America at the time of the War of Independence (1775-1785). Judith wrote home to say that she was not a rebel but was in sympathy with the American position.⁹

By the mid 18th century Glasgow was the main centre for the importation of tobacco into Britain. When Alexander returned to Scotland in the 1740s Glasgow was the obvious place for him to set up in business. He was an exceedingly astute businessman and his success was phenomenal. He was able to associate with established successful Tobacco Merchants, eventually becoming one of the "Big Four" Virginia Traders, along with John Glassford of Dougaldston, William Cunningham of Lainshaw, and James Ritchie of Busby. They were active, clever young men, who laid the foundation of the merchantile greatness of Glasgow. They made considerable fortunes, despite starting out with no more than £10,000 among them, finally controlling over half of the Glasgow tobacco trade.¹⁰ There were 46 firms in Glasgow, the largest of which were Alexander Speirs' and John Glassford's. Alexander's companies were 'Speirs, Bowman & Co.' and 'Speirs, French & Co.'¹¹



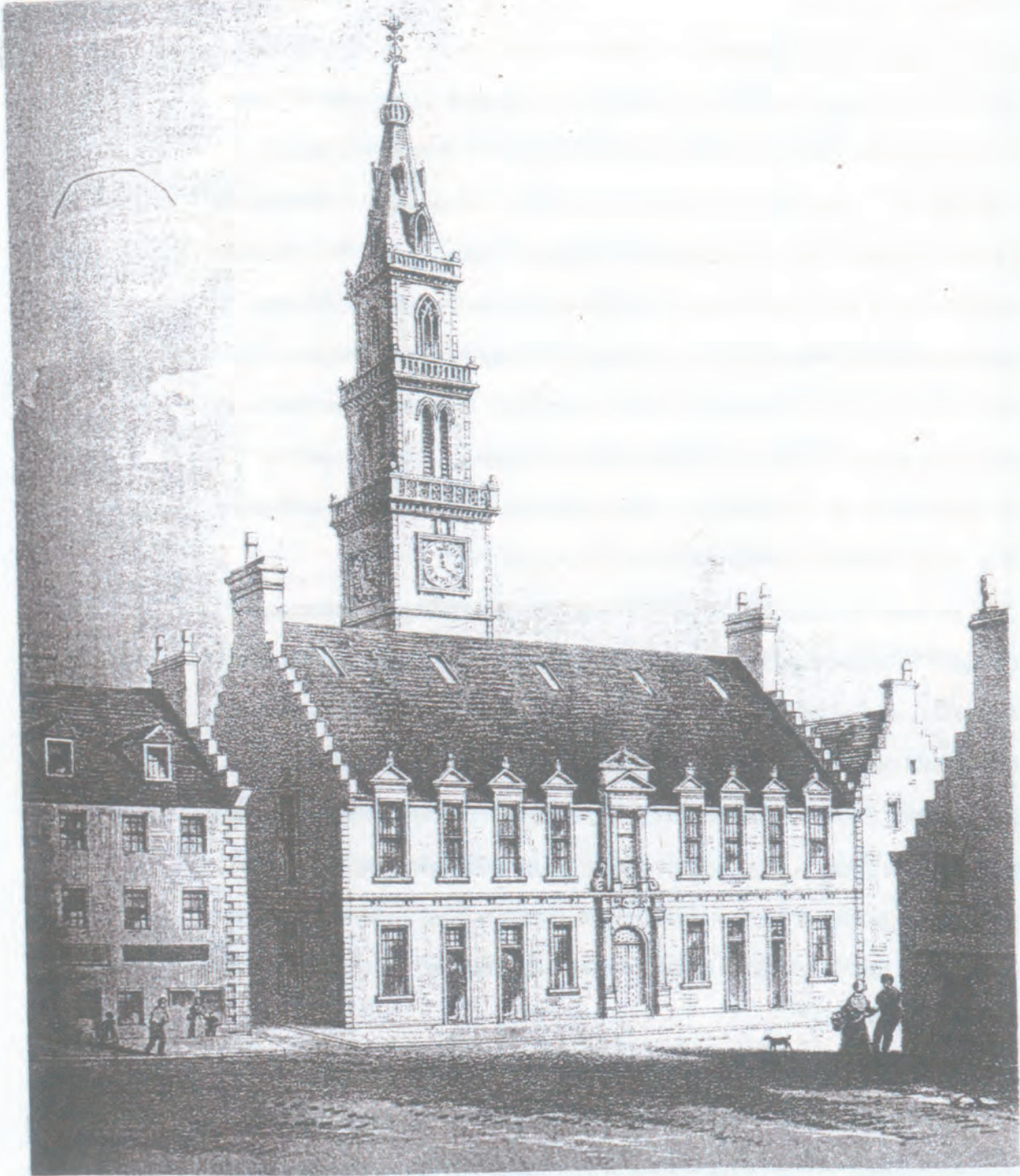
MODEL OF A TOBACCO SHIP

THE TOBACCO TRADE:-

In 1772 alone 90,000 hogsheads of tobacco came into the country, 49,000 were imported by Glasgow merchants - since each hogshead held between 500 and 600 lbs. of tobacco the Tobacco Lords were handling almost 30,000,000 lbs. of tobacco per annum.¹ The ships came up the river Clyde, offloading at Port Glasgow where vast warehouses there were used for the storage of tobacco. In 1761 Alexander had acquired a feu at Port Glasgow for a warehouse to store his tobacco, this was recorded in the minute book of the Town Council of Glasgow. *A feu contract to be granted to Robert Bogle and Alexander Speirs, merchants in Glasgow, and their respective companies, of a piece of ground at Port Glasgow, 150ft. in front, for building cellars there on 'Grassum' £2 yearly, feu 2 merks Scots. Eight warehouses were built, entry from the Clyde and entry on Scarlow Street*²

An attempt was made by Glasgow's rivals, the great ports at London and Bristol to spoil Glasgow's trade when a Government regulation was passed stating that 3/4^d per lb. must be paid on all tobacco in bond.³ It was hoped the Glasgow merchants would be unable to pay. This incident and others, trying to injure Glasgow's tobacco trade, failed because John Glassford and other tobacco merchants, including Alexander Speirs, used their own private Glasgow banks, the "Ship" and the "Arms" banks to give credit to cover the new demands.⁴ Alexander Speirs was a leading partner in Speirs, Murdoch & Co., bankers who founded "the Glasgow Arms Bank" in Bridgate in 1750.⁵

Much of the tobacco was re-exported to Europe. For example, in 1775 tobacco exports from Greenock and Port Glasgow by Speirs & Co.- to France 576 hogsheads, to Holland 363, to Ireland 498 and to Norway 137. The Customs Accounts for Port Glasgow record all imports and exports of tobacco; quantity, duty to be paid, and various subsidies. The names of ships, their masters and owners were also recorded as well as the cargo. *The Badem - Alexander Speirs and others - bound for Mryland. 6200yds. linens, commonly called 'Kentings', 1460yds. lawns, 22 pieces*



OLD MERCHANTS' HALL AND STEEPLE IN BRIDGEGATE, GLASGOW.
(Only the steeple remains today)

*containing 176yds cambricks, and all British manufacture and 800lbs woollens.*⁶

One of the main reasons for the success of the Tobacco Lords in Glasgow was that they dealt with the tobacco planters directly, their ships sailing up the rivers to the plantation landings and exchanging goods for tobacco on the spot. Later on the merchants ran their own stores where planters could obtain credit and make payment in the form of tobacco, this was encouraged as they were then forced to bring their tobacco to the stores to which they owed money. All manner of goods were exported to the Colonies to supply the stores; this much benefited Glasgow tradesmen. The city became a hive of industry with weavers, stocking makers, calico printers, saddlers, shoe-makers and glass blowers all working hard making things to sell in Virginia. Manufacturies making pottery, linen tape, copper and tinsplate and others started up. In addition, luxury goods were purchased in England and France for export to the Colonies. The tradesmen received no money for their goods till sold and until the ships returned safely from Virginia, so the Tobacco Lords ran no risks and the tradesmen had a worrying time waiting, shipping was a risky business.⁷ Alexander Speirs was known to watch for his ships returning to the Clyde from the top of the Merchants House tower in Bridgegate.⁸

CITY BUSINESS LIFE:-

Despite the merchants success in the tobacco trade there was always anxiety because of its uncertainty, so it was sensible to spread the risk by developing business interests in other sectors of trade. The kinds of ventures the Tobacco Lords invested in were examples of 'factory' organisations at a time when most production took place in the home or on the farm.¹ Alexander Speirs had wide ranging investments, becoming involved in, as well as his Virginia and Maryland concerns, the Monkland Canal, Forth and Clyde Navigation Co., Bank Stock, Wester Sugar House, Bell's Tannery, Port Glasgow Rope Works, Lawn and Cambric Manufactory, Pollockshaws Printfield Co., Smithfield Iron Co. and others.² All were profitable and

increased the prosperity of the city. The Bell Tannery is a good example, described as 'a prodigious large building' in the 1730's, emerging forty years later as the greatest single leather processing plant in Europe, apart from one in Cologne, by which time it employed 500 men.³ The merchants success in manufacturing concerns made them realise the profitable nature of these industries and encouraged many to turn their attention and capital to the new cotton industry.⁴

The wealth of the Tobacco Lords made them the most opulent business group in Scotland before the 19th century. Their wealth led to the rise in luxury trades in Glasgow to supply their needs, for there were two coach builders, four architects, two marble cutters, fourteen booksellers, fourteen saddlers, three engravers, a carpet warehouse, three jewellers, twenty-six hairdressers, eighteen barbers and twenty-three cabinetmakers in the city.⁵ Alexander Speirs was a prime example of this as *by dint of his industry and success at trade he was worth over £156,000 by the time he was fifty-nine.*⁶ He was known as "the Great Virginian."⁷ and took a significant role in the affairs of his city, becoming a Burgess and a Baillie of the craft rank in 1757. In 1762 he gave a grant of money towards improving a road from Glasgow to an old mill at Partick and made other generous gifts for the benefit of Glasgow.⁸

The wealth of the Tobacco Lords also affected the face of Glasgow because of *the beautiful mansions they built in their size and architectural magnificence.*⁹ They were a "mercantile elite" who formed a small "aristocracy" and who tended to be related to each other, creating trust in their business dealings and giving financial support to each other.

The rule of the Tobacco Lords drew to an end because of the American War of Independence when trading in Virginia was no longer possible. Many of the wealthy merchants were ruined, but two of them, Speirs and Cunningham, foresaw what was coming and made even greater fortunes by selling off much of their tobacco stock at enormous prices before the crash.¹⁰



MARY BUCHANAN OR SPEIRS.
1730 - 1818

The portraits of Alexander and his wife are in the Directors room of the Merchants House, Glasgow. These are copies of the originals painted by McNee. Mrs Speirs and her daughters are remembered at the Merchants House because of the bequest of £2,000 which they donated and which is known as the 'Speirs Bequest'.

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY:-

In the year he became Treasurer of the City of Glasgow Alexander followed the trend of keeping relationships within the mercantile circle by marrying Mary Buchanan on 2nd March, 1755.¹ Her father was Archibald Buchanan of Silverbanks and later Auchentorlie² (one of the most influential and wealthy tobacco merchants of the period) her mother was Janet Buchanan.³ In the newspapers of the day⁴ it was stated that *Mary Buchanan was a very agreeable young lady, with a handsome fortune.*⁵ Alexander and Mary had two sons and five daughters.

The first born was Martha, baptised in Glasgow in 1756.⁶ She married George Crawford, an associate of her father. Her promised dowry was £5,000.⁷

Their first son and heir was Archibald, baptised 10th February, 1758⁸ and who married Mary Dundas, daughter of Sir Thomas Dundas.⁹ They had five sons and nine daughters.¹⁰

The next son was Peter baptised 15th May, 1761.¹¹ His story will be told later. (Alexander made both his sons members of the Merchants House of Glasgow in 1790 with the designation "Foreign Trader"¹²).

Then came Mary baptised 26th January, 1765¹³ followed by Helen on 8th July, 1766,¹⁴ Grace on 18th July, 1770¹⁵ and finally by Johanna Isabella on 24th June, 1772.¹⁶

Alexander made sure his family had a good education. The sons went to grammar school and then abroad, in the first instance to Holland and then on the "Grand Tour."¹⁷ It was noted in Alexander's account books that, in 1744, £119-5/6d was spent on Peter's education in Holland and a further £1070-5/- in 1776, for Archibald £289-15/11d was spent in 1774 and £2,492-5/8d in 1776.¹⁸ Alexander made certain that immaculate accounts were kept and every detail of his private and business expenditure was recorded.¹⁹



ELDERSLIE HOUSE

MANSIONS AND PROPERTIES.

Alexander used his wealth to purchase many properties between 1760 and 1782, as homes for his family and to maintain his standing in the community. The possession of an estate was one precondition for entry into the highest political and social circles, it offered the kind of security which most merchants craved. He bought the historic estate of "Kings Inch" in 1760 for £8,000 and the neighbouring estate of Elderslie in 1769 and, along with other properties, he eventually owned 10,000 acres in Renfrewshire, nearly always paying in cash. He took out a 'Crown Charter' in which all the properties were combined under the general title of "Barony of Elderslie." When he built his splendid mansion on the "Inch" estate, which took five years to build, he named it "Elderslie House" taking Elderslie as his ordinary landed title.¹ His Renfrewshire properties were eventually worth over £48,000.

"The Virginia Mansion," considered to be one of the finest houses in Glasgow, situated in a commanding position at the top of Virginia Street, had been built by George Buchanan of Mount Vernon.² He was Alexander's brother in law and after his death in 1770 Alexander bought the Mansion as his town house.³ In 1777 he conveyed the "Virginia Mansion" to his wife, in liferent, as a 'jointure house.'⁴ He also purchased two stances in Virginia Street in 1760 with 100ft frontage for £141-4/6d.⁵

Alexander also bought properties in Stirlingshire in 1778. The estates of "Glinns" and "Culcreuch" for which he paid £15,020 and, as he had done in Renfrewshire and Lanarkshire, gradually adding other small properties to the Culcreuch Estate, namely Provanston, Craigton, Overglinns, Drumboig to create a major estate.⁶

As well as the above mansions and properties Alexander had a house in Edinburgh for which he paid insurance and running costs totalling £300 annually.⁷



INTERIOR OF ST. ANDREW'S EPISCOPALIAN CHURCH, GREENDYKE ST.

St. Andrew's is said to be the first church after the Reformation to be erected by our communion in Scotland. It was originally a "Qualified Chapel."

The (Presbyterian) Original Secession mason who built it in 1750 was ex-communicated for the "sin and scandal of biggin" an Episcopalian Chapel.

One of the last pieces of the high altar of Iona Cathedral is in the centre of the altar. There is a pair of candlesticks, made of oak from old Stockwell Bridge (built by Bishop Rae in the 13th century).

The organ is an old one (1797) and was bought from a Glasgow Choral Society in 1812. The four bells in use were originally in the ancient city steeple.



ST. ANDREW'S - BY - THE - GREEN DURING RESTORATION.

(It is now, 1998, used by the West of Scotland Housing Association)

CHURCH:-

Alexander was an Episcopalian, which was unusual then as most people belonged to the Presbyterian Church and disliked all others. A request was made to members in 1750, asking for subscribers to donate money for the erection of an Episcopalian Chappel. *Ground to be purchased whereon Chappel to be built.*

The St. Andrews Episcopalian Church (St. Andrew's-by-the Green) was then built and opened in 1751. Alexander Speirs was added to the list of directors on 26th September, 1751 and continued in office till the next election of office bearers. He and others on the committee of managers drew up a letter to the Lord Bishop of London asking for his assistance in obtaining a "proper clergyman" for the Chappel.

Mr. Speirs had five seats in the centre of the Chappel, north side, no.20, for which he paid £1-15/- rent. Mrs. Speirs continued payment for seat 20 from 1786.

Alexander bought burial lairs in the churchyard on 27th May, 1768.¹ No records exist of burials before 1808.

DEATH OF ALEXANDER: _

Sadly Alexander did not live long to enjoy his fine new mansion of Elderslie but caught a chill and died there on 10th December, 1782.¹ Strangely, he is not buried at Elderslie or in the churchyard of St. Andrew's by-the-Green where he had purchased lairs, but in the churchyard of Polmont Church in Stirlingshire.² A monument was erected by a number of his particular friends in the Chapel of St. Andrew's by-the-Green commemorating his great talents and high character.³

He left his family very well provided for and trustees to see that his wishes were carried out. His trustees were as follows :- Mary Buchanan his relict; Patrick Colquhoun Esq. Lord Provost of Glasgow; John Bowman former Lord Provost; William French also former Lord Provost and late Speirs' partner; Archibald and Peter Speirs his sons; Peter Buchanan of Auchentorlie; Peter Murdoch his wife's



Polmont Park House, home of the Speirs family,
was pulled down in 1962 and a housing scheme built on the site.

cousin; Andrew Buchanan of Ardenconnel and John Robertson, most of whom were his partners in various businesses. Vast sums of money were due to his estate at the time of Alexander's death from the Colonies of Virginia and Maryland, despite the stock he had already sold. As the war there was affecting the company's ability to collect debts there the partners therefore agreed to sell all the businesses.⁴

At a meeting of Trustees after Alexander's death in 1782 his repository was opened and two Deeds of Entail were found - one to each son - and a Trust Disposition of his whole personal estate and land property not included in Deeds in favour of his sons, his wife and George Buchanan his brother-in-law. Archibald was his heir but Alexander had made him promise that, as soon as he inherited his father's estate, he would make sure that the lands in Stirlingshire went to Peter in the same Provision and Condition of Deed of Entail as applied to his own inheritance.⁵

In a Deed of Settlement⁶ Alexander left his daughters well provided for :- Martha, Mrs Geo. Crawford - £2,500, Mary, Helen, Grace and Joan Isabella all to receive £5,000 each. None of these unmarried ladies to have control of their money, unless they married, which Grace did, she married Wm. Murray of Polmaise and they had a daughter, Grace.⁷ The daughters inheritance was invested in land on their behalf, from which they would each receive an income of £125 to be paid at Whitsunday and Martinmass.⁸

Alexander's wife, Mary, was wealthy in her own right and she was the widow of an exceedingly affluent businessman who left a vast fortune for his Trustees to administer. When Archibald, her son, inherited Elderslie, Mary Speirs went to live in Polmont Park, a mansion in the village of Polmont, east of Stirling. Her unmarried daughters went to live with her there. The Trustees authorised *payment to Mrs. Speirs of £50 yearly for both Mary and Helen for their maintenance, washing and lodging and to provide a proper woman to act as their servant. £30 was allocated for Grace and Joanna as above and £50 to provide clothes for Mary and Helen.*⁹

*Alexander Speirs of Elderslie
and Culcreuch.
W. Mary Buchanan b. Glasgow
d. Polmont Park.
Mary b. 23.1.1763
d. 12.5.1849
Helen b. 7.8.1766
d. 19.2.1853
Joan Isabella b. 24.6.1772
d. 8.7.1860
Wm. Murray of Polmaise
W. Grace Speirs
Daughter Grace Murray
18.4.1810 - 27.11.1858*



POLMONT PARISH CHURCH WHERE ALEXANDER AND HIS FAMILY ARE BURIED IN LAIR NO. 6 - THREE ENCLOSURES ALONG FROM THE GATE.

Mary Speirs died at Polmont Park in 1818, aged 88, thirty-six years after her husband.¹⁰ She is buried with her husband in Lair 6, Polmont Churchyard. Her daughters Mary, Helen and Johanna remained single and spent the rest of their lives at Polmont Park. Mary died in 1849, Helen died in 1853 and Joan Isabella died in 1860. All three are buried in Polmont Churchyard. Their sister Grace, who died in 1858, and her husband, Wm. Murray of Polmaise are also buried there.¹¹

CONCLUSION:-

The end of the rule of most of the Tobacco Lords was hastened by the American War of Independence and partly because the next generation became engineers, scientists and manufacturers who turned Glasgow into an industrial city. The Tobacco Lords had no place in an age of steam, iron and coal. Cotton manufacturing, engineering and shipbuilding replaced the tobacco trade. However, the time of the Tobacco Trade and the names of the great Tobacco Merchants is remembered to this day in Glasgow Street names: - Virginia Street, Jamaica Street, Glassford Street, Dunlop Street, Miller Street and Buchanan Street.¹



A MAP OF STIRLING SHIRE 1780 BY CHARLES ROSS
 Showing Fintry as it was when Alexander Speirs purchased Culcreuch

John Tweedie, Provost of Peebles

SPEIRS FAMILY CHART

John Speirs M. Isobel Tweedie

Geo. Buchanan Neil Buchanan

Andrew Buchanan
(Provost of Glasgow 1740-41)
of Drumpellier & Ardcornel
He had 2 sons & 5 daughters.

Archibald Buchanan, Tobacco Lord
of Silverbanks, later Auchentorlie.
M. Janet Buchanan 1720

Thomas M. Judith Alexander M. Margaret b. 1716 Joanna b. 1718 James b. 1720
David Bell Mary Buchanan

George M. James b. 1733 Mary M. Andrew Dorothy Janet Jean Margaret Archibald Gilbert
Lilias Dunlop Alexander Speirs

Archibald M. Martha M. Peter M. Mary b. 1765 Helen b. 1766 Grace M. Johanna Isabella b. 1772
Margaret Dundas d. of Sir Thomas Dundas Geo. Crawford Martha Maria Harriet Graham d. of Robt. Cunningham Graham Wm. Murray of Polmaise

Alexander M. Thomas Dundas Mary b. 1796 Archibald Alexander Graham M. Anna Maria b. 1794 Mary Buchanan b. 1796
Eliza Stewart

Robt. Cunningham Graham M. Catherine Ann Grant Helen b. 1800 Elizabeth b. 1802 Grace b. 1803 Archibald M. Henrietta b. 1810
Mary Ann Pringle d. of Wm. Alex. Pringle

Unnamed daughter M. Archibald Alexander (4th of Elderslie)
Col Alexander of Ballochmyle d. of Lord Radnor

Ann Oliphant M. Harriet Martha b. 1840 Peter Alexander b. 1842 Anna Elizabeth b. 1845
Sir George Hume Married

Archibald Alexander (5th of Elderslie)

James b. 1861

Archibald Douglas Alexander Graham + son & daughter

REFERENCES FOR ALEXANDER SPEIRS

EARLY YEARS:-

- 1) OCH 40. XL Elderslie House G.C.A. Mitchell Library.
- 2) Ibid.
- 3) Speirs Papers, TD 131/18 G.C.A.
- 4) O.P.R. 1716 685 1/16 Reg. Edinburgh.
- 5) O.P.R. 1718 685.1/16 Reg. Edinburgh.
- 6) O.P.R. 1720 685.1/16 Reg. Edinburgh and TD 1318/67 for Thomas.
- 7) "The Tobacco Lords" by T.M. Devine. p.7. Pub. John Donald.
- 8) "The Merchants House of Glasgow." Pub. Bell & Bain. 1866
- 9) Speirs Papers, TD131/18 G.C.A.
- 10) "Glasgow, Past and Present" p. 474. Pub. David Robertson & Co. 1884. Compiled mainly from articles in the Glasgow Herald by "Senex"
- 11) Speirs Papers, TD131/13. Names of Alexander Speirs Co.s - Speirs, French & Co., Speirs, Bowman & Co. G.C.A.

THE TOBACCO TRADE:-

- 1) "Glasgow, Past and Present" p.521. Pub. David Robertson & Co.
- 2) Extract from Records of Burgh of Glasgow Vol. 7 1760-1780 p. 623 G.C.A. Mitchell Library.
- 3) Govt. Regulation held in S.R.O. but not available to view.
- 4) "Tobacco Lords at the Plain Stanes" p.22 & 23. Merchants House.
- 5) "Bank of Scotland. 1695-1995. Compiled by Alan Cameron. and Speirs Papers TD 131/4 Ledger B. G.C.A. Mitchell Library.
- 6) E 504/28/24 Customs Accounts of Port Glasgow. Oct. 1774-75. G.C.A.
- 7) "Tobacco Lords at the Plain Stanes" p.25. Merchants House
- 8) Anecdotal, Merchants House Legend.

CITY BUSINESS LIFE:-

- 1) "The Tobacco Lords" by T.M. Devine. Pub. John Donald. p.38
- 2) Speirs Papers TD131/4. Shareholdings in companies. G.C.A.
- 3) "The Tobacco Lords" by T.M. Devine. Pub. John Donald. p.38.
- 4) "Industrial Revolution in Scotland" (1932). Prof. Hamilton.
- 5) Glasgow Courier, 17th November, 1798.
- 6) Signet Library, Court of Session Process 180/7 and Speirs Papers TD 131/6/3c. G.C.A. Mitchell Library.
- 7) Regality Club I p.56 and p.114. G.C.A. Mitchell Library.
- 8) Extract from Records of Burgh of Glasgow Vol. 7 1760-1780. p.623 G.C.A. Mitchell Library.
- 9) "The Tobacco Lords" by T.M. Devine. Pub. John Donald. p.11.
- 10) "Glasgow and the Tobacco Lords" by Norman Nichol. Pub. 1966.

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY:-

- 1) O.P.R. 1755 644.1/25 Reg. Glasgow.
- 2) OCH 40 XL Elderslie House. G.C.A. Mitchell Library.
- 3) O.P.R. 1731 494/1 Rec. Cardross, birth of Mary. She had four sisters and either four or five brothers.
- 4) Glasgow Journal and Glasgow Courier were pub. in 1755.
- 5) "Glasgow Past and Present" Pub. by David Robertson & Co. 1884. Compiled mainly from articles in the Glasgow Herald by "Senex".

- 6) O.P.R. 1756 644.1/12A Reg. Glasgow.
- 7) Speirs Papers TD131/13 and B10/15/8435 G.C.A.
- 8) O.P.R. 1758 644.1/13 Reg. Glasgow.
- 9) OCH 40 XL Elderslie House. G.C.A. Mitchell Library.
- 10) Ibid.
- 11) O.P.R. 1761 644.1/13 Reg. Glasgow.
- 12) Alphabetical List of Merchant House members.
- 13) O.P.R. 1765 644.1/13 Reg. Glasgow.
- 14) O.P.R. 1766 644.1/13. Reg. Glasgow.
- 15) O.P.R. 1770 644.1/13 Reg. Glasgow.
- 16) O.P.R. 1772 644.1/13 Reg. Glasgow.
- 17) "The Tobacco Lords" T. M. Devine p.8.
- 18) Speirs Papers TD131/4 G.C.A. Mitchell Library.
- 19) Ref. to Speirs Papers.

MANSIONS AND PROPERTIES:-

- 1) OCH 40 XL Elderslie House. Crown Charter C2 in Latin. S.R.O.
- 2) OCH 40 XL Elderslie House. Map of City of Glasgow from a Survey by John McArthur. Shows Alexander's 'Virginia' property. G.C.A.
- 3) "Glasgow, Past and Present." Pub. by David Robertson & Co. p.474.
- 4) Ibid. p.521
- 5) Regality Club I p.56 and p.114 G.C.A.
- 6) Speirs Papers TD 131/5. G.C.A.
- 7) Speirs Papers TD 131/4. G.C.A.

CHURCH:-

- 1) TD 423/1/1 Minute Book of St. Andrew's Episcopal Ch.1750-1805 Held in G.C.A. Mitchell Library.

DEATH OF ALEXANDER:-

- 1) OCH 40 XL Elderslie House. G.C.A.
- 2) "Monumental Inscriptions pre 1855 in East Stirlingshire" by John and Sheila Mitchell.
- 3) "Glasgow Past and Present" Pub. by David Robertson & Co. p.475.
- 4) GR (RS3) 680 Folio 238. 13th August,1803. S.R.O.
- 5) Speirs Papers TD131/13. Reg. Deeds B10/15/8435 1782 . G.C.A. Mitchell Library.
- 6) Deed of Settlement 23rd May, 1782. Recorded in Town Court Books of Glasgow in a Heritable Bond and Precept of Sasine. G.C.A.
- 7) Monumental Inscriptions pre.1855 in East Stirlingshire by John Mitchell & Sheila Mitchell.
- 8) Sasine. Deed of Settlement carried out according to Act of Parliament 1617. GR 680 253 20th Aug. 1803. S.R.O.
- 9) Speirs Papers TD131/7 G.C.A.
- 10) Monumental Inscriptions pre 1855 in East Stirlingshire by John Mitchell and Sheila Mitchell and "Merchants House of Glasgow" Pub. in 1866 by Bell and Bain.
- 11) Monumental Inscriptions pre. 1855 in East Stirlingshire by John Mitchell and sheila Mitchell.

CONCLUSION:-

- 1) Glasgow and the Tobacco Lords by Norman Nichol. Pub. 1966.

SOME OF THE SPEIRS PAPERS CONSULTED

- TD 131/1 Speirs Cash Book 1760-78.
Business and private accounts in Alexander Speirs' hand
- TD 131/2 Day Book, business and estate.
- TD 131/3 Day Book, business and estate. Speirs, Murdoch & Co., bankers. Journal entries. Invoices of sugar, coffee exported to Europe by A. Speirs and John Robertson.
- TD 131/4 Ledger B 1773-1780 Folio of business, estates and private accounts. Shareholdings in Companies. Estates, rentals, profit and loss, cash and household accs.
- TD 131/5 Journal 1780-1783 of private affairs of Alexander Speirs giving details of business interests. Account book.
- TD 131/6 Account Book 17770-1785 detailing :- Virginia and Maryland concerns, Lawn and Cambric Manufactory, Printfield, Tanworks, Smithfield, Sugar Refinery, Silk Shop, Bank Stock, Ropeworks, Forth and Clyde Navigation Company, Monkland Canal and others.
- TD 131/7 Ledger C 1st June 1780-1785.
Account Book continued by Trustees after Alexander's death.
- TD 131/8 Rentals of Estates.
- TD 131/9 Letter Book, 11th October, 1781 to 12th May, 1789.
Business concerning sugar and tobacco. Unsigned drafts or copies, presumably from Messrs. Speirs, French & Co. Last letter signed by Alexander.
- TD 131/10 Pocket Account Book with estate notes.
- TD 131/13 1782-1785. French was manager of Speirs, French & Co., Virginia Merchants. Debts to Firm after Revolution £46,510.
Bowman leading partner. Mention of ship "Mally" owned by firm.
Orders sent to U.S. factors to sell all goods remaining. (Vol. No.1)
- TD 131/6/14 Alex. Speirs 1770 Stocks in concerns:- 'Virginia Concerns' - £55,057; 'Maryland Concerns' - £7,410; Value of landed property - £49,050; Domestic Industry and Banks - £18,141; Occasional Transactions including Canal Shares - £1,778. State of private affairs of A. Speirs.
- TD 131/18 Letter to Alexander from sister Judith who married David Bell, Tobacco Factor in Virginia, he managed Alexander's plantations there.
- TD 131/19 Decision to wind up Colquhoun & Co. in compliance with Alexander's settlement, realise assets and pay off debts.
- TD131/19 Decision to wind up Colquhoun & Co. in compliance with Alexander's settlement, realise assets and pay off debts.
- TD131/21 Sketch plan of lands of Kings Inch.

NOTE. There are an enormous number of documents:- day books, estate ledgers, letters, journals of private affairs, cash books, account books, pocket diaries, wine storage, rent books, pocket account books of daily expenses, wages records, tally of crops, in fact every detail relating to the life of the Speirs family was recorded. Only a small number of the total were able to be seen. Many are in the Houston Family Archives (private) and in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

PETER SPEIRS OF CULCREUCH

HIS YOUTH:-

As has been stated, Peter Speirs was the second son of Alexander Speirs, 1st of Elderslie, and Mary Buchanan, born 15th May, 1761.¹ He was brought up as the son of a wealthy man and his youth was spent in luxurious surroundings, but he was expected to study and prepare himself for a future in trade or commerce.

His father wanted him to be well educated and gave him every opportunity to learn, both at school and thereafter. Most merchant's sons went to the Grammar School where the curriculum was academic; Latin, Greek, Classical Antiquities and Geography the main subjects.² Peter did not do well at school and was often at the bottom of the class but he was quick witted as instance the time he persuaded his uncle to give him a pony as reward for being Dux of the class – when it was found that he certainly was not, he said he was *a Dux of the bottom of the class!* He still got his pony.³

After leaving school, many of the pupils went to classes at Glasgow University where teachers of international renown lectured (such as Adam Smith, 1723 - 1790). They did not go on to graduate but went to University for a couple of years before entering trade or commerce.⁴ Some went to the continent to do the “Grand Tour” as Peter did. *The continental education of Peter Speirs, son of Alexander Speirs, lasted for 7 years (at an annual cost of over £1,000) and involved training in languages, commercial skills, dancing, riding and fencing.*⁵

Alexander Speirs provided his son Peter with an expensive education but his earnest wish was that *‘he apply himself to the Counting- house’*. When he had reached maturity Alexander intended to purchase for him *‘land and an estate and a small firm in trade’*.⁶ Alexander knew that, as his heir, Archibald would inherit a goodly portion and he wanted to ensure that Peter was well provided for too. He made sure of this by leaving estates and properties to him also.⁷



CULCREUCH HOUSE

The keep dates to the end of the 15th century and was extended by a wing towards the end of the 18th century.

There was a Laird of Fintry, Andrew Galbraith, mentioned in 1472 and the castle remained in Galbraith ownership till 1630. Robert Napier (son of Napier, inventor of logarithms) bought Culcreuch in 1632 and his descendants sold to Alexander Speirs of Elderslie in 1778.

In 1779 Alexander disposed the Virginia Mansion, under the burden of Mrs Speirs' liferent, to his son Peter. He, with his mother's consent, sold the mansion in 1787 to Mr. James Dunlop of Garnkirk, agent for the Greenock Bank.⁸

Peter was made a Burgess and Guild Brethren of Glasgow in 1785 by his father, Alexander, who was a Burgess and Guild Brethren himself.

At one time Peter was a member of Parliament for Paisley and was sometimes called upon as an after dinner speaker.⁹ The liberal education received by some merchants produced a vigorous urban culture in Glasgow in the second half of the 18th century and there was considerable scope for leisure activities, such as membership of Clubs, Music Institutions, Academy of Fine Arts and so on.

PETER IN FINTRY:-

Peter inherited, under a Deed of Entail, the estates purchased by his father in Stirlingshire and came to Fintry and to live in Culcreuch House in the Strathendrick Valley.¹ Along with the Culcreuch Estate he got the title of 'Baron.'² *Culcreuch House is situated on the westerly extremity of the Fintry hill and is embosomed in wood, a great part of which is fine old timber, notwithstanding its bartizans and thick walls, it is commodious, and yields to no other residence in the county, for the venerableness of its appearance, and the beauty of its situation. Peter Speirs has added much to the value of the property and beauty of the place by further extensive plantations of fine trees.*³ His coming vastly altered and affected the way of life of the people of the area. *Great praise is due to Mr. Speirs for his indefatigable exertions in promoting every measure that can contribute to the prosperity of the parish.*⁴

1) In Agriculture: Up to the end of the eighteenth century agriculture had followed ancient methods of pasturing and of sowing oats on the outfield and sowing as much land with 'bear' as the winter dung would allow and then two years of oats, but some farmers were beginning to change methods of cropping. They have been



PART OF THE OLD COTTON MILL

The Cotton Mill, built by Peter Speirs, originally had a fourth story which was gutted by fire and not replaced when the building was reroofed. The building was used for various other purposes after the Mill closed down and today has been converted into an attractive home.

influenced, instructed and prompted by Mr. Speirs of 'Culcruich' who, since his residence on his estate, has set the example of clearing the ground with potatoes and turnips, and has introduced the sowing of grass and clover seeds for hay. The beneficial effect of this encouraged some of his own tenants to follow his example and this became general in all farms where enclosures were fenced against sheep. The sequence followed was - 1st year potatoes and turnips, 2nd year bear with grass seeds, years 3 and 4 hay, years 5 and 6 pasturing, years 6 and 7 oats, then back to potatoes and turnips again.⁵ Black cattle and sheep were grazed and rent was paid from the production of milk, butter and cheese. Cattle were brought into the area for fattening over the summer and sold on in October. The wool produced was of good quality and lambs grew well.⁶ It was mainly a grazing community consisting of small farms but gradually these were joined together to form larger ones and unemployment would have occurred if industry had not come to the valley.⁷

2) In Industry: After the 'Tobacco Boom' came the 'Cotton Boom'. In 1768 Richard Arkwright had invented waterframe spinning, by which hard cotton warps of considerable strength were made on large machines driven by water power, whereby above 4,000 threads of cotton yarn were spun at once.⁸ As the tobacco trade began to decline there was an enormously increasing importation of raw cotton into the Clyde and many cotton spinning mills were built round and nearby Glasgow where the damp atmosphere suited the production of cotton yarn.⁹ The crucial decades were the 1780's and 1790's, it was then that the cotton trade grew with unparalleled speed, from virtually nothing, to become by far the greatest industry. The Tobacco Lords wealth helped, as much of it was used by the next generation for the cotton trade.¹⁰ On the twentieth day of August, 1792, a 'Contract of Copartnership' was entered into by Peter Speirs of Culcreuch and others to set up a cotton spinning mill at Culcreuch, the business was named "the Culcreuch Cotton and Spinning Co."¹¹ The cotton mill was built on the north bank of the river Endrick, near Culcreuch House, and was 156 feet in length and 40 feet wide, it was a



NEWTOWN (or NEWTON) OF FINTRY LOOKING WEST.
A wedding day, around the end of the 18th century.



NEWTOWN OF FINTRY LOOKING EAST,
Around the end of the 19th century.

handsome building.¹² Water was required to power the Mill so a dam was built at Loch Walton to create a reservoir which covered thirty acres of land on high ground further up the valley. It was supplied by water from the rivers Endrick and Gonachan and was calculated to contain enough water to run the Mill for six weeks.¹³ A Mill-lade was also constructed to carry the water from the reservoir to the Mill. This was all completed by 1800 when the Mill *employed 260 workers operating 20,000 spindles. The mill people of Fintry were quiet, sober and industrious*¹⁴ The key workers were brought from Dewsbury in Yorkshire¹⁵ but many people who had lost their employment on the farms were taken on at the mill. They earned more than in farming and lived better, but cotton mill life for the children - child labour was within the law at that time and children between the ages of 6 and 16 were employed - tended to lead to *a pallid and sickly race, brought up in the confined air of cotton mills and with little education.* More women and children were employed than men.¹⁶ In the factory the noise of the spindles must have been dreadful and the atmosphere had to be kept damp to preserve the quality of the cotton. The workers were paid in 'tokens' which were exchangeable in the mill shop or in the village shops, some of which were owned by Mr. Speirs.¹⁷

At the same time as Peter and his partners were building their mill at Culcreuch, Robert Dunsmore was building the Ballindalloch Cotton Mill at Balfroun. Robert's father was also a Tobacco Lord and left his son a good inheritance in land. Robert and Peter co-operated closely, both men sharing the waters of the river Endrick for power, building new homes for their workers and improving the roads.¹⁸ The Balfroun workforce tended to be militant but the later riots there seem to have escaped Fintry.

3) The Newtown (or Newton) of Fintry: As Peter Speirs had to supply homes for his workers he built *a handsome village upon rising ground on the south side of the river Endrick. The houses followed a regular plan, standing in one row and consisting of two stories and garrets, with gardens in front running down to the*



FINTRY BRIDGE

This three arch bridge over the River Endrick was constructed in 1804 to replace the previous four arch bridge built around 1792. This was primarily to facilitate the transport of goods to and from the cotton mill



THE OLD WOOL MILL.

A Wauk / Lint / Woollen Mill dated from around 1585

river.¹⁹ For the most part the houses were in sets of four - 21ft. 3ins. frontage and 28ft. 3ins. deep. The front door led into a small lobby and from here into a single room on each side, each single room leading to two smaller rooms at the back. The upper floor was reached by an outside stair at the back and was similar in layout to the one below except that it had a garret reached by a ladder. The "flats" were let out according to the size of the family - up to four children for the lower "flats" and more than four children to the top "flats."²⁰ They were low rented and generally superior to the traditional cottages of the peasantry.²¹ The houses fronted onto the road which ran between the houses and their gardens.

In the village there were five weavers, three tailors, two smiths, one shoemaker and five public houses. There was also a distillery, owned by Messrs. Cowan & Co. which opened in 1816, producing 10,000 gallons of malt whisky a year, supplanting numerous illicit stills. This whisky was said to be of excellent quality.²² A fine new bridge with four beautiful arches was built over the Endrick primarily to facilitate transport of goods to and from the cotton mill.²³ Previously the only bridge over the river Endrick was at the Clachan of Fintry, built in 1750 by General Wade's army engineers, from which there was a road to Denny and through Culcreuch Estate to Kippen and Balfroon.²⁴ Below this old bridge there was a small wauk/lint woollen mill, dating from 1585, on the north bank of the Endrick. However, as wool had risen so exorbitantly in price by the time of the cotton mill it was not much in operation.²⁵

4) New Roads: Up until the advent of Peter Speirs and Robert Dunsmore, access to Fintry had been exceedingly difficult.²⁶ These two men, at much expense and by an Act of Parliament, built new district roads in the west part of Stirlingshire; they provided as good roads as in any part of Scotland at that time. The "Craw" road reaching from Glasgow through Fintry to the military road between Stirling and Dumbarton had a gradient of 1ft. in 7ft. and they had it realigned to 1ft. in 20ft. As, prior to this change, a horse could only deal with half a load in a cart, and that with difficulty, the better gradient vastly eased transport to and from Glasgow and to the



Extract from J. Grasson's Map of County of Stirling S.E. 1817.
 After Peter built his mill and showing the newly aligned Crow Road. —

canal at Kirkintilloch. Numerous bridges were built over streams and deep ravines which were formerly difficult to pass.²⁷ The better roads not only benefited the mill owners enabling them to have their cotton and yarn carried in and out more easily but also the farmers who found it easier to get their produce and animals to market.²⁸ The road through Fintry was a "Turnpike" road with the tolls collected at the Toll House in the village street. The rates in 1841 were, for example, 1d for a cow and for a horse and cart 6d. There was also a Toll House on the Crow Road. At a later date, when coal was used to power the mills it also had to be carted over the hill from Kirkintilloch, a distance of twelve miles,²⁹ this proved too expensive and was the beginning of the end of the mills.

5) Church: The church (still standing) was built in 1823 and is typical of the period. It was novel in its construction in that it was built around the still standing kirk of 1642, the congregation continuing to worship in the old sanctuary as construction of the new one went on around them.³⁰ As Peter Speirs was an Elder of the kirk he must have been involved in the new building. The proprietors in the Parish were the Duke of Montrose, who was Patron, and Peter Speirs. As Heritors, they made the decision as to who should be appointed as the minister in the kirk. The Rev. John Mitchell was called to the Parish in 1792 and proved an unfortunate choice. A report had to be sent to Presbytery stating that the minister was neglecting his duties and there were complaints of drunkenness, immorality and an irregular marriage.³¹ In 1805 the Rev. John Graham was called to Fintry Kirk and he continued in the charge till 1822. He was a good pastor and it was through his efforts that an improved system of management of the poor was adopted and the session and baptismal records put in good order. The minutes note the sessions *sorrow at parting with such an affectionate and useful pastor* and that they were *extremely satisfied with his care and peculiar management of the poor.*³²

S^{pirit}

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Age	Year	Month	Day	Child's Name	Father's Name	Mother's Name
17	1755	July	1	Hellen Smith	Richard Smith	Elizabeth
21	1756	June	22	Maria	Richard Smith	Elizabeth
10	1757	May	31	John	Richard Smith	Elizabeth
12	1761	Mar	21	Francis Allan	Richard Smith	Elizabeth
12	1764	Jan	14	Mary	Richard Smith	Elizabeth
13	1765	Jan	19	Marianne	Richard Smith	Elizabeth
	1769	Mar	5	Maria	Richard Smith	Elizabeth
	1773	July	25	John	Richard Smith	Elizabeth
	1788	Jan	25	Mary	Richard Smith	Elizabeth
	1789	Sept	15	John	Richard Smith	Elizabeth
	1794	June	19	Maria Maria Speirs	Peter Speirs Esq	Mrs Martha Speirs
	1795	Mar	29	John	Richard Smith	Mary Guffen
	1795	Oct	20	John Smith	Richard Smith	Mary Guffen
	1796	Jan	1	Mary Buchanan Speirs	Peter Speirs Esq	Mrs Martha Speirs
	1797	June	4	Martha Ann Smith	Richard Smith	Mary Guffen
		July	14	John Speirs	John Speirs	Mary Guffen
	1799	May	5	Maria Smith	Richard Smith	Mary Guffen
	1800	Oct	19	John	Daniel Steel	Mary Guffen
	1797	June	15	John Cunningham Graham Speirs	Peter Speirs Esq	Mrs Martha Speirs
	1800	Jan	15	Hellen Speirs	Peter Speirs Esq	Mrs Martha Speirs
	1804	Feb	12	John	Richard Smith	Mary Guffen
	1805	Mar	14	John	Richard Smith	Mary Guffen
	1807	Sept	6	John	Richard Smith	Mary Guffen
	1793	Mar	15	Maria	Peter Speirs Esq	Mrs Martha Speirs
	1801	Dec	6	Elizabeth Speirs	Peter Speirs Esq	Mrs Martha Speirs
	1803	Oct	14	Grace Speirs	Peter Speirs Esq	Mrs Martha Speirs
	1806	July	4	Archibald Speirs	Peter Speirs Esq	Mrs Martha Speirs
	1808	Dec	18	John Scott	Richard Smith	Mary Guffen

EXTRACT FROM INDEX TO PARISH OF FINTRY.
O.P.R. BIRTHS 1748 - 1854.

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY:-

Peter Speirs married Martha Maria Harriet Graham on 7th April, 1792, the marriage was recorded at both Port of Menteith and Fintry.¹ Martha was the second daughter of Robert Cunningham Graham Esq. of Gartmore and Ann Taylor, she was born on 9th April, 1772.² Martha's father had been a merchant in Norfolk, Virginia and, at the time of her marriage, was living in Aberfoyle.³ Robert Graham was involved with Peter in business pursuits. In a 'Contract of Marriage and Precept of Sasine' drawn up on 17th April, 1792, Peter Speirs *obliged himself to give Martha and her heirs, for all of her life, lands in Estate of Culcreuch and Provanston in the Parishes of Fintry and Balfron, Shire of Stirling.* Peter held the Estate under a Deed of Entail but Martha was given the right to rents and levies from the farms of Easterton of Culcreuch, Easter and Wester Killewnan, part of Gonnachan, Rashyhill and Greenhill of Provanston.⁴

Peter and Martha Speirs had a large family of nine children:-

- 1) Alexander Graham Speirs, baptised 11th February, 1793,⁵ more of whom later.
- 2) Anna Maria Speirs, baptised 19th June, 1794.⁶ The 'Maria' in her name was after her mother. Anna did not marry and died on 25th December, 1858 aged 64. She is buried in St. Ninian's Burial Place, Stirling.⁷
- 3) Mary Buchanan Speirs, baptised 1st February, 1796.⁸ She was named after her paternal grandmother. Mary did not marry either and died on 25th August, 1866.
- 4) Robert Cunningham Graham Speirs, baptised 15th June, 1797.¹⁰ He married Catherine Ann Grant and they had one daughter, Ann Oliphant, born 28th February, 1833.¹¹ Robert (he preferred to be called Graham, as seen in various documents) was an Advocate by profession.
- 5) Helen Speirs, baptised 15th January, 1800.¹² She was called after her father's sister. Helen also remained a spinster and died on 15th November, 1878 aged 78.¹³

6) Elizabeth Speirs, baptised 6th December, 1801.¹⁴ She died on 4th January, 1890 aged 88 from senile decay and also remained unmarried. Town Hall Officer, Stirling was the signatory.¹⁵

7) Grace Speirs, baptised 14th October, 1803.¹⁶ She, like her sisters, did not marry and died on 21st August, 1885 from disease of the heart.¹⁷ Grace was also called after one of her father's sisters.

8) Archibald Speirs, baptised 9th July, 1806.¹⁸ He married Mary Ann Pringle, daughter of William Alexander Pringle of the Bengal Service.¹⁹ Archibald was in the service of the Honorable East India Company, civil servant Bengal Presidency.²⁰ Archibald and Mary had three children; Harriet Martha born 16th November, 1840²¹ and who did not marry, Peter Alexander born 10th November, 1842²² (he had three sons and one daughter) and Anna Elizabeth who was born on 30th March, 1845²³ and died on 9th January, 1921 unmarried.²⁴ Archibald died on 8th March, 1859 in Edinburgh, aged 59, of disease of the heart. He is buried in Southern Cemetery, Grange. The certificate was signed by his brother Alexander.²⁵

9) Henrietta Margaret Matilda Speirs, baptised 18th May, 1810.²⁶ She died, unmarried, on 17th November, 1882 aged 72. Her death was registered in Stirling and the cause given was 'general debility.'²⁷

BUSINESS DEALINGS:-

Peter's father had bought Culcreuch Estate in 1778¹ and other small properties in the area as well. Peter followed his example by purchasing extra land and properties to add to the Culcreuch Estate, some of which would become necessary later for the operation of the planned mill, for his village and for the new roads.² These purchases were not included in his entailed inheritance.

As has been stated above a 'Contract of Copartnership' was entered into in 1792. The partnership was between Peter Speirs of Culcreuch, Robert Graham Esq. of Gartmore, James Murdoch Jnr., George and James Provand and George and John

Crawford, merchants in Glasgow. They all agreed to be concerned with each other in carrying on a cotton spinning mill at Culcreuch, in manufacturing calico for printing and in a muslin manufactory in Glasgow. The company was 'Crawford, Provand & Co.' and the Fintry section of the company was the 'Culcreuch Cotton and Spinning Co.' The contract was signed by all the partners and witnessed. The Speirs and Murdoch families held 50% of the £6,000 share capital of the Co.³

In 1794 Robert Graham of Gartmore, one of the partners in the Culcreuch Cotton and Spinning Mill, in a Contract of Excambion took parts of the lands of Culcreuch, mainly on the south side of the river Endrick.⁴ This was two years after his daughter's marriage to Peter.

George Provand had been appointed principle manager and director of the company. However, he became managing partner of another company, in which he and his brother had an interest, without the consent of the partners in the firm of Crawford, Provand & Co. He had taken it upon himself to abuse the firm of Crawford, Provand & Co. by adhibiting it to Bills and Notes to support the credit of the other company. This was discovered by the partners and they then, on 6th March, 1795, signed advertisements notifying 'Dissolution of the Co.' It was considered *an absolute forgery* that George Provand had carried out and therefore the company could not be held responsible for paying the Bills unwarrantly adhibited. All outstanding debts were repaid and a 'Contract of Dissolution of the Co.' was drawn up.⁵

By a separate Deed between Peter, Robert Graham and James Murdoch Jnr. when George Crawford, one of the original partners, died, all his interests in the cotton mill were taken over, his stock repaid to his representatives and his shares divided between the partners.⁶

In 1800 Peter's father-in-law, Robert Graham, died and his son William Cunningham Cunningham Graham inherited. William wanted to be relieved of all responsibility to the Culcreuch Cotton and Spinning Co. and *agreed to assign and*

convey to Peter Speirs and James Murdoch his share in stock and profits on condition that they discharge him from any Bonds, debts or obligations, or his father, to which they are liable. In the same Assignment, Archibald Speirs discharged his 'Right of Relief' against William Graham and confirmed his 'Right of Relief' to Peter and James Murdoch. These two were now sole partners in the mill.⁷ Archibald had, at an earlier date, lent money and made Bonds binding himself as co-obligant with all the partners for some of the Bonds at the time of the setting up of the mill.⁸

By the start of the 19th century it was becoming harder to make a profit in the cotton trade. In 1803 James Murdoch Jnr. wrote - *trade was never worse I sincerely hope it will blow over, if it does not I am afraid we cotton spinners must be great sufferers and the Golden prospects we had flattered ourselves with prove fallacious.* He also wrote of the possibility of war.⁹ From this time on there were financial problems in the running of the mill.

The mill involved the partners in considerable expense so, in 1821, Peter used some of the land he had purchased as security when he had to borrow money. This land was outwith the entail.¹⁰

In 1826 Peter and his two sons, Alexander and Graham, sold Overglinns, Rashiehill and the mill of Glenboig to John Blackburn of Killearn on Assignment and Disposition.¹¹

Mr. Murdoch was chief managing partner in the Culcreuch Cotton Co. and when he retired early in 1827 that was the end of the Company as it had previously existed. Any future company established by Peter, or his son, under the same name was said to be a totally different concern. At this period there was much legal argument over debts, Bonds and so on. Archibald, who had granted a guarantee in 1818 to Murdoch, ended this on his death. He gave no credit to the firm in its new form.¹² Archibald took the land in Fintry which had belonged to Robert Graham in payment of his Bond and the £6,000 borrowed in Bond and Disposition was repaid. Further legal wrangling over debts and land ownership continued after Peter's death.

*In Memory of
Peter Speirs Esq. of Culcreuch
b. 1761 d. 1829
W. Martha Maria Harriet Graham
b. 1772 d. 1817.
2da of late Robt. Cunningham Graham
of Gartmore
also their son
Alexander Graham Speirs
of Culcreuch
and his wife
Mary Buchanan Murray*

(above inscription now blurred)



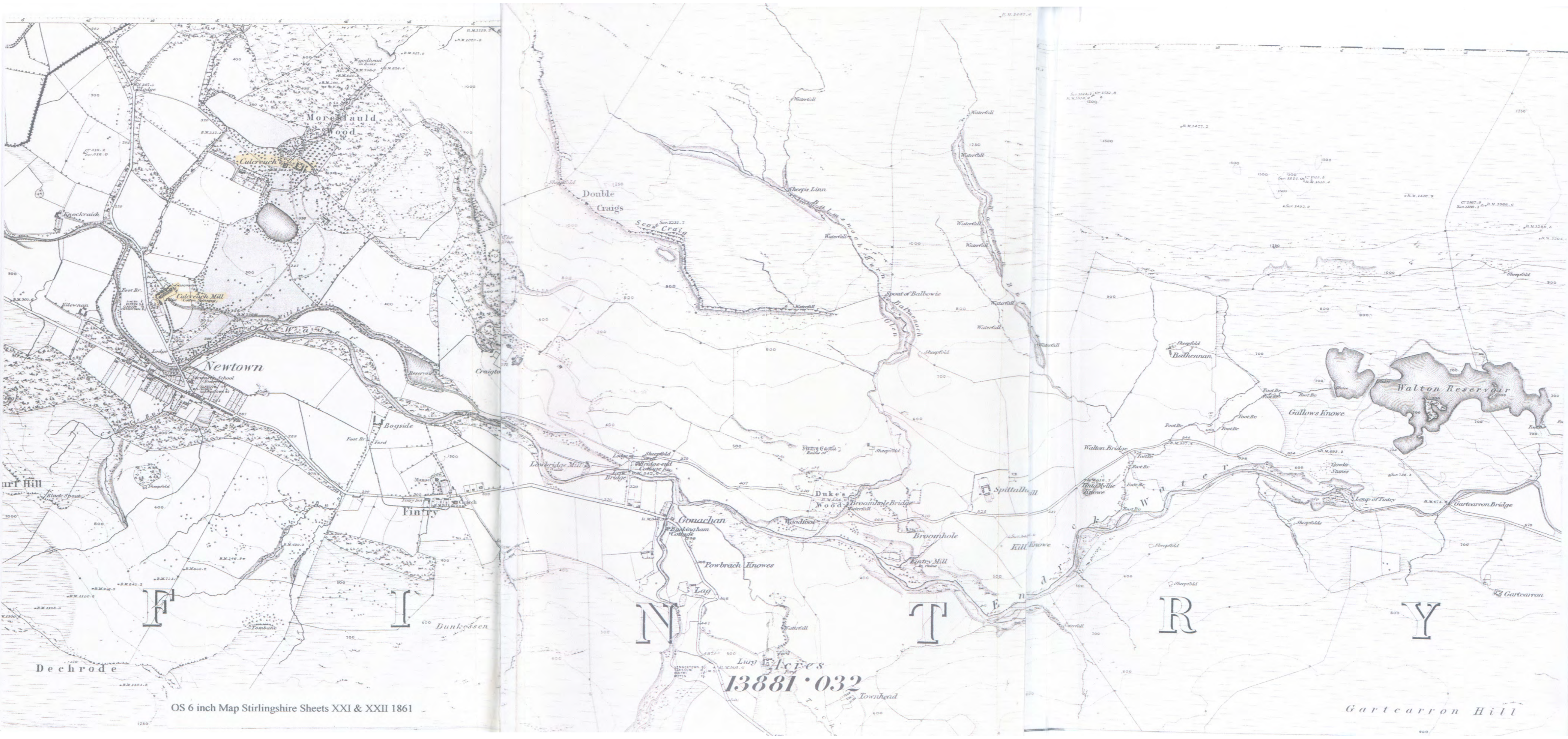
FINTRY KIRK

Showing plaque in memory of Peter Speirs on south wall of church, east end.

DEATH:-

Peter's wife Martha died before him on 10th September, 1817 when she was only 45. He died twelve years later in 1829. Both Peter and Martha are buried in Fintry Kirkyard and there is a memorial plaque to them on the outside south wall of the church.¹ Unfortunately, the writing is somewhat blurred and a new plaque has been placed inside the church.

Fortunately, Peter Speirs was rich but he also had vision, his enthusiasm and his money were directed, partly at least, to the welfare of Fintry. His influence on Fintry is best summed up by these words - "*The late Peter Speirs, a gentleman whose memory will long be cherished with much affection not only by the parish of Fintry, but by all who had the happiness to live under him or near him.*"² A very fitting epitaph for a man who cared for his people and for their betterment.



Morefauld Wood

Culcreuch

Culcreuch Mill

Newtown

Bogside

Fintona

Double Craigs

Scot Craig

Lawbridge Mill

Gonachan

Duke's Wood

Broomhole

Spittalholm

Sheepfold Bathennan

Gallows Knowe

Walton Reservoir

Loup of Fintona

Gartcarron Bridge

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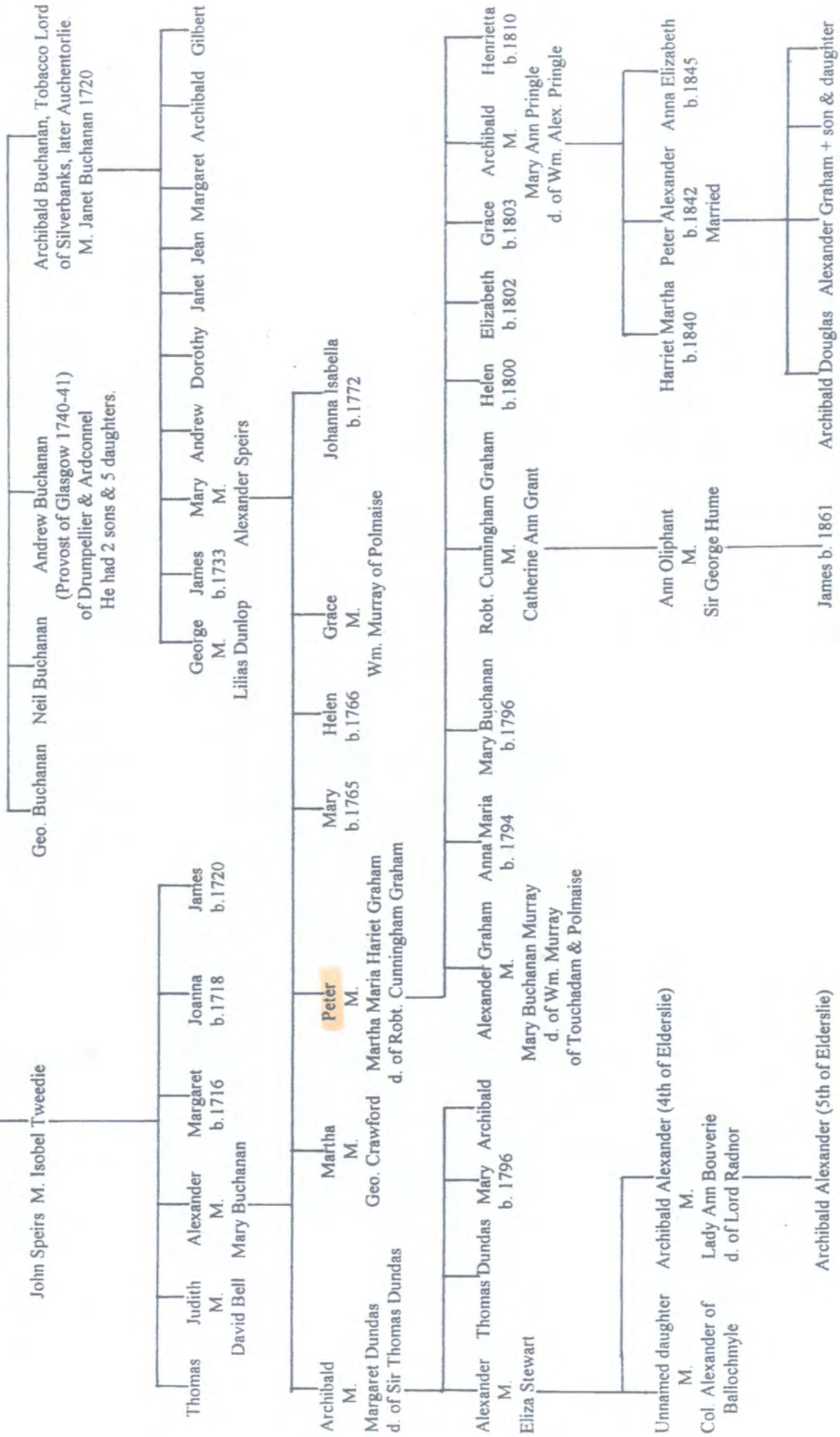
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SPEIRS FAMILY CHART

John Tweedie, Provost of Peebles



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BUSINESS:-

- 1) G.C.A. Speirs Papers TD 131/5.
- 2) Sasines - PR 30 234 and PR 31 495 also GR 562 149. S.R.O.
- 3) Contract of Co-Partnery GD 22/1/219. S.R.O.
- 4) Sasines - PR 33 230 and GR 560 217. S.R.O.

- 5) GD 22/1/219. S.R.O.
- 6) GD 22/1/219. S.R.O.
- 7) GD 22/1/219. S.R.O.
- 8) G.C.A. Speirs Papers TD 1318/67.
- 9) G.C.A. Speirs Papers TD 1318/67, Bundle 88.
- 10) Sasine GR 1431 51. S.R.O.
- 11) Sasine GR 1441 165. S.R.O.
- 12) G.C.A. Speirs Papers TD 1318/67, Bundle 22 1817-1835.
- 13) Sasines - GR 1458 114 and GR 1462 118. S.R.O.

DEATH:-

- 1) Monumental Inscriptions in West Stirlingshire pre 1855 by John Mitchell and Sheila Mitchell and Plaque in Fintry Kirk.
- 2) New Stastical Account Vol. VII p.38 Rev. Wm. Grierson Smith.

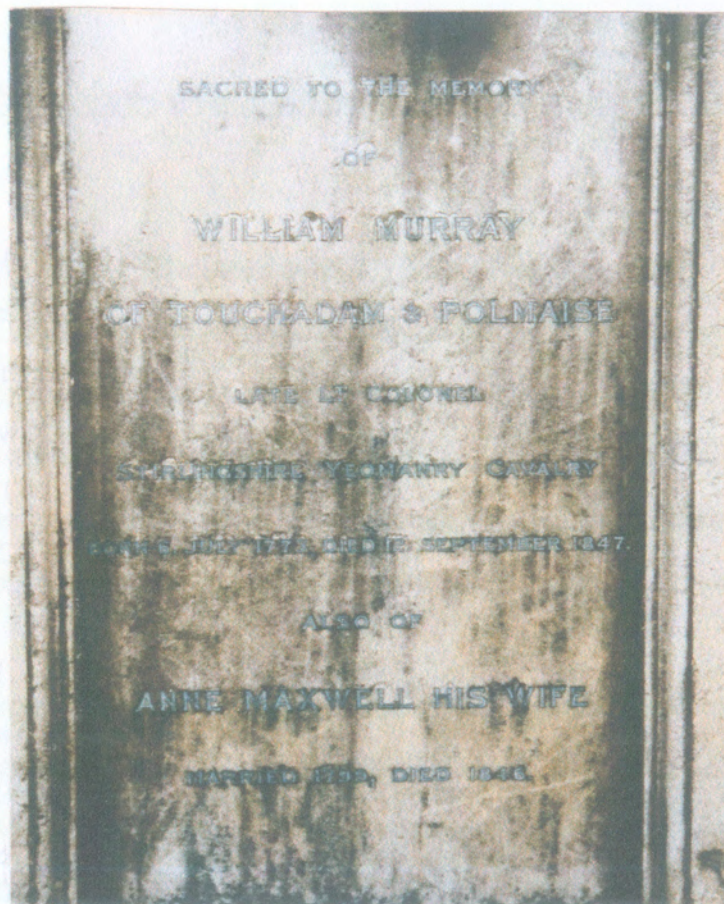
CAPTAIN ALEXANDER GRAHAM SPEIRS, YOUNGER OF CULCREUCH.

Alexander Graham Speirs, Peter's eldest son, was born in 1793 in the family home of Culcreuch House, Fintry.¹ He was baptised in Fintry Kirk by the Rev. John Mitchell.² Along with his brothers and sisters he grew up in a lovely part of the country and probably had a happy childhood. It is not known where he was first educated; at the local parish school, the Gonachan School, or privately. Later on he wrote a letter describing his first days as a student at the Royal Military College, Marlow in 1803.³

A military career followed when he became an officer in the 39th Regiment of Foot, seeing action in the Peninsular Wars.⁴ His brothers both had careers, Robert Cunningham Graham became an Advocate and Archibald went into the Honorable East India Co's service.⁵ Alexander's five unmarried sisters bought 'a beautiful little estate' in Stirling and named it "Laurelhill," they all lived there till the last of them, Elizabeth, died in 1887.⁶

MARRIAGE:-

On 6th March, 1828, the year before his father died, Alexander married Mary Buchanan Murray,¹ second daughter of William Murray of Touchadam and Polmaise and his wife Ann Maxwell.² Mary was considerably younger than her husband, twenty-one to his thirty-five.³ A Marriage Contract and Precept of Sasine was drawn up on 14th March, 1828 whereby *the Trustees of Mary Buchanan Murray, spouse of Alexander Graham Speirs, Younger of Culcreuch, seised parts of the estate of Culcreuch in security of an annuity of £150 during the life of Peter Speirs of Culcreuch. In addition, the Trustees took out an insurance policy for Alexander Graham Speirs for £5,000 for the purpose of paying an annuity to Mary Buchanan Murray if he should die before he inherits Culcreuch Estate from Peter Speirs.* Mary's Trustees were; her brothers William, John and Alexander Murray, her



MARBLE TABLET ON EAST WALL OF ST. NINIAN'S CHURCHYARD

Memorial to Mary Buchanan Murray/Speirs' parents.

Sacred to the memory of

Wm. Murray

of Touchadam and Polmaise

Late Lt. Col. Stirlingshire Yeomanry Cavalry

born 6 July 1772 died 12 September 1847

also Ann Maxwell his wife m. 1799 d. 1846

brother-in-law R.C.Graham Speirs, her uncle-in-law Archibald Speirs of Elderslie and Robert Bruce.⁴ Mary Buchanan Murray had her own fortune.

Sadly, Alexander and Mary had no children.

INHERITANCE:-

Alexander inherited the Culcreuch Estate on the death of his father, Peter, in 1829 as heir of "Tailzie and Provision" when he was thirty-six.¹ The lands he inherited were burdened with an heritable debt,² his uncle Archibald, and then Archibald's son Alexander, still had high financial involvement in the estate and he had other problems to solve too. There was some disagreement with his sisters concerning their father's will³ and his "aunts of Polmont" made claims also as "heritable creditors" of lands of Glinns and Easter Glenboig and there were other complications left over from his father's day to deal with. Alexander appointed a factor to manage the estate and a manager to run the mill.⁴

The estate was going through a difficult time as the cotton mill was not prospering, partly due to the high cost of transport to and from Kirkintilloch (12 miles) and Glasgow. With water producing power for the mill, production varied with availability of water, so the power source was moving from water to steam produced by coal. Despite improved roads, the great distance that coal had to be carted in, plus the raw cotton, and the finished cotton yarn carted out was proving very expensive.⁵

There was considerable discussion concerning the possible liquidation of the Culcreuch Cotton Co. and, in 1832, an inventory of the machinery in the mill and valuation of the mill and its contents was carried out, this totalled £19,041.⁶ Lands (not under entail) were *held in security of debts due by Captain Speirs* and even some of the mill machinery belonged to creditors.⁷ *Bond payable to Trustees of late Archibald Speirs of Elderslie £18,669 and, with guarantee to banks by Archibald of Elderslie, the total was £30,736. Lands of Glinns and Easter Glenboig made over to him in security by an absolute Disposition. These lands burdened by previous debt of*

£10,000 to Mary, Helen and Isabella. Also, as security, the Cotton Mill and lands and the mill lands of Glenboig conveyed to his cousin, Alexander.⁸ By 1833 Alexander Speirs of Culcreuch was bankrupt and the estate was sequestrated (fortunately he had a wealthy wife so he survived).

In 1837 a William Craig was tenant / manager in the mill and it was hoped that he might purchase the mill and manager's house.⁹ In the Kirk Session minutes of 1844 reference was made *to the closing down of the factory and to "those poor persons whose destitution is mainly due to the want of employment or income to which they have become accustomed" in connection with said mill.*¹⁰ However, it seems that cotton continued to be spun as it was recorded in 1865/66 that proprietors of the mill were Robert Smith & Sons and Robert Service, Cotton Spinner and Manager.¹¹

People were very dependent on the mill as the distillery and the small woollen mill closed down. The population of Fintry rose to a peak of 1,051 in 1831 as is shown in the census of that year but steadily declined thereafter.¹² The mill finally closed down in 1880 and agriculture became the main source of employment.

PUBLIC LIFE:-

Alexander took an active part in the life of his village. Management of local affairs in the parish was mainly in the hands of the Heritors and the Kirk Session. There were regular meetings attended by Mr. Smith who was the minister, Alexander Speirs, Mr. Dunn of Craigton and Mr. Jolly, representing the Duke of Montrose. Alexander was chairman and his signature is on all the minutes of these meetings. Upkeep and repair of the church, the manse and the schoolhouse were discussed, insurance of these properties, allocation of pews, the appointment of the parochial schoolmaster and his salary and any other business to do with parish affairs.¹

As Heritor, Alexander made sure that the houses in the village were let to good tenants and were kept in good repair² but the sanitation (common at that time) was earth closets and the water had to be drawn from wells.³ Annual rent was £94.



“LAURELHILL”

Home of Alexander Speirs sisters.

The house, typical of the late Georgian period, was built by James Duthie in 1806.

It was situated at the junction of Torbrex Road and Cambusbarron in Stirling.

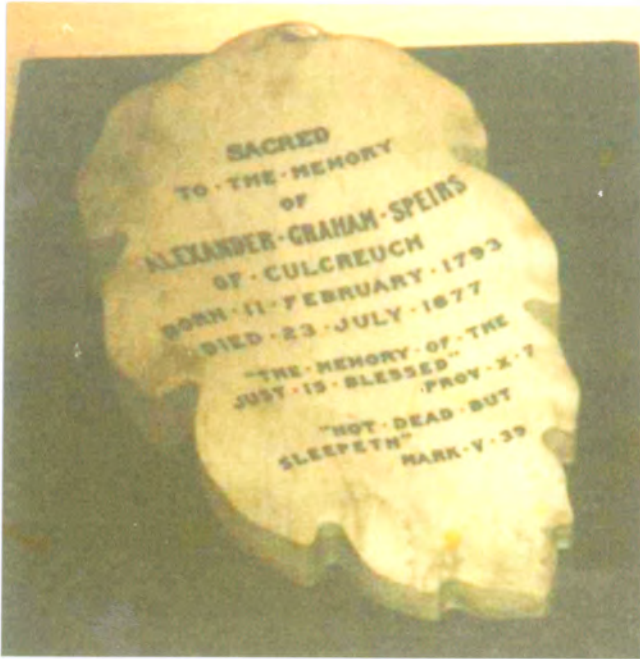
Today the offices of the Forth Valley Enterprises are on the site.

Alexander was also interested in politics and was M.P. for Stirling Burghs in 1838.⁴ He was involved in county affairs too as he was a J.P. and a Convenor of Stirling County between 1862 and 1877. After his death he was *still remembered by the older generation as a representative Whig country gentleman of the old school.*⁵

FAMILY AFFAIRS:-

The Speirs family seem to have been fond of each other on the whole and concerned for each members welfare, as is evident from the wording of their wills. The sisters of "Laurelhill" in Stirling made a "Mutual Bond" in 1841, whereby the division of their individual estates was agreed between them all.¹ Most money and their home left to surviving sisters according to the Bond and thereafter allocations to their various relatives, but the residual legatee was their nephew Peter, apart from "Laurelhill" which went to Alexander as 'heir of conquest' and after his death to Archibald's two daughters.² Much affection is expressed in the sisters wills. These ladies were quite wealthy as they had inherited money through their mother, Martha Graham, from their grand-uncle, Simon Taylor Esq.³ For example, Helen left £7,104 when she died, Henrietta £6,098 and Grace £6,902. Mary Buchanan Murray/Speirs was wealthy too as she left £19,178-12/8d!⁴

As Alexander and Mary had no children of their own they took a great interest in their nieces and nephew. Alexander was particularly fond of his nephew Peter, who was Advocate and Sheriff Substitute of Invernessshire residing at Portree, and the only son of his brother Archibald. Alexander tried to make Peter heir to Culcreuch and his other properties so, in a Trust Disposition and Settlement, Alexander stated that - *his wife should have liferent and thereafter his nephew, Peter, and Peter's heirs. Peter, nearest male heir, was to act as chief mourner and he only.*⁵ Alexander's wife Mary also thought highly of Peter, he was her heir and when she died on 2nd December, 1883 he inherited 'Nether Polmont,' Stirlingshire.⁶



Memorial plaques in Fintry Kirk to Alexander Graham Speirs and his wife Mary Buchanan Speirs



**Very large celtic cross
In Fintry Kirk churchyard**

DEATH:-

Alexander died on 23rd July, 1877, aged 84, and there is a memorial plaque to him in Fintry Kirk. His executors were Charles Couper Esq., Advocate, his wife Mary, his nephew Peter and James Crichton, a relative. *The personal estate of the late Alexander Graham Speirs was valued at £2,373 16/1d, this from rents due at time of death.*¹ Both his brothers died before him.²

Peter hoped to inherit Culcreuch from his uncle but, according to the 'Deed of Entail' made by his great-grandfather, Alexander Speirs, 1st of Elderslie, to '*Peter Speirs my second son and the heirs of his body*' no female was excluded.³ As R.C. Graham was next in line it followed that his daughter, Anne, should inherit. Alexander's executors tried to get this overturned and the matter went to court but they lost the action. *Extract Decree of Reduction obtained before Lords of Council and Session at instance of Dame Anne Oliphant Hume Speirs, residing at Inverary. Pursuers against - Trustees under disposition of deceased Alexander Graham Speirs. Defenders - whereby Alexander Graham Speirs disposed to the defenders the lands and estates of Culcreuch and others and of Cumings Glinns and Colquhoun Glinns and others being lands described in the disposition Minute No. 1776 26th July, 1877 and declaring same to be null and void and the pursuers resposed and restored thereagainst in interegrum, 4th December, 1877. With Warrant of Registration thereon on behalf of Dame Anne Oliphant Hume Speirs.*⁴ Anne was therefore the next owner of Culcreuch. Her husband, Sir George Hume, on their marriage, had taken the surname of Speirs.⁵



GRAVESTONE OF ANNA MARIA SPEIRS AND MARY BUCHANAN SPEIRS
IN ST. NINIAN'S CHURCHYARD.
(2 of Peter Speirs daughters)

NOTES

Property of Alexander Graham Speirs at time of his death. 30th Nov., 1877.

- Culcreuch Estate -
- 1) Bogside
 - 2) Jaw Farm and Clachan Park.
 - 3) Killunan Muir and Glenboig Park
 - 4) Provanston Farm.
 - 5) Rashiehill Farm.
 - 6) Glinns and Airthey Farm.
 - 7) Law Bridge Farm.
 - 8) Proportion of long lease due of Clachan of Fintry.
 - 9) Grass Park rent.
- Colquhoun Glinns Estate -
- 1) Farm of Craigend and Dalhillock.
 - 2) Mains and Glinns Farms.
 - 3) Easter Glenboig Farms.
 - 4) New Mill Farm.

Tailzie is an old name for an entail; a destination of heritage to a prescribed line of heirs, guarded by prohibitions and forfeiture, and only "breakable" on fulfilment of statutory conditions.

Heir of Provision is one who succeeds in virtue of express provisions in a settlement.

Conquest is a comprehensive name for the heritage which a man acquired by purchase or gift as opposed to inheritance.

Some of Alexander's sisters wills:-

Anna Maria Speirs. Leave all money and property to unmarried sisters according to terms of Mutual Bond of 1841. After death of last sister money divided into three equal portions. One portion to my eldest brother, Alexander Graham Speirs, and after his death, divided between my two brothers, Robert Cunningham Graham Speirs and Archibald Speirs and to their children thereafter. One portion to my brother, Robert Cunningham Graham Speirs, and lastly, one portion to my younger brother, Archibald Speirs. Mary Buchanan Speirs my sole Executrix.

Also, £1,000 from my mother's fortune to Ann, only child of beloved brother, Graham Speirs, £1,000 to niece and godchild, Harriet Martha, £200 to my nephew, Peter Speirs and £100 to my niece, Anna Elizabeth. Mary dearest of all my sisters. Share in "Laurelhill" to Archibald's unmarried daughters after death of Alexander. (Recorded in Commissary Court Book of Stirlingshire. SC67/49/85. 18th Feb. 1859.)

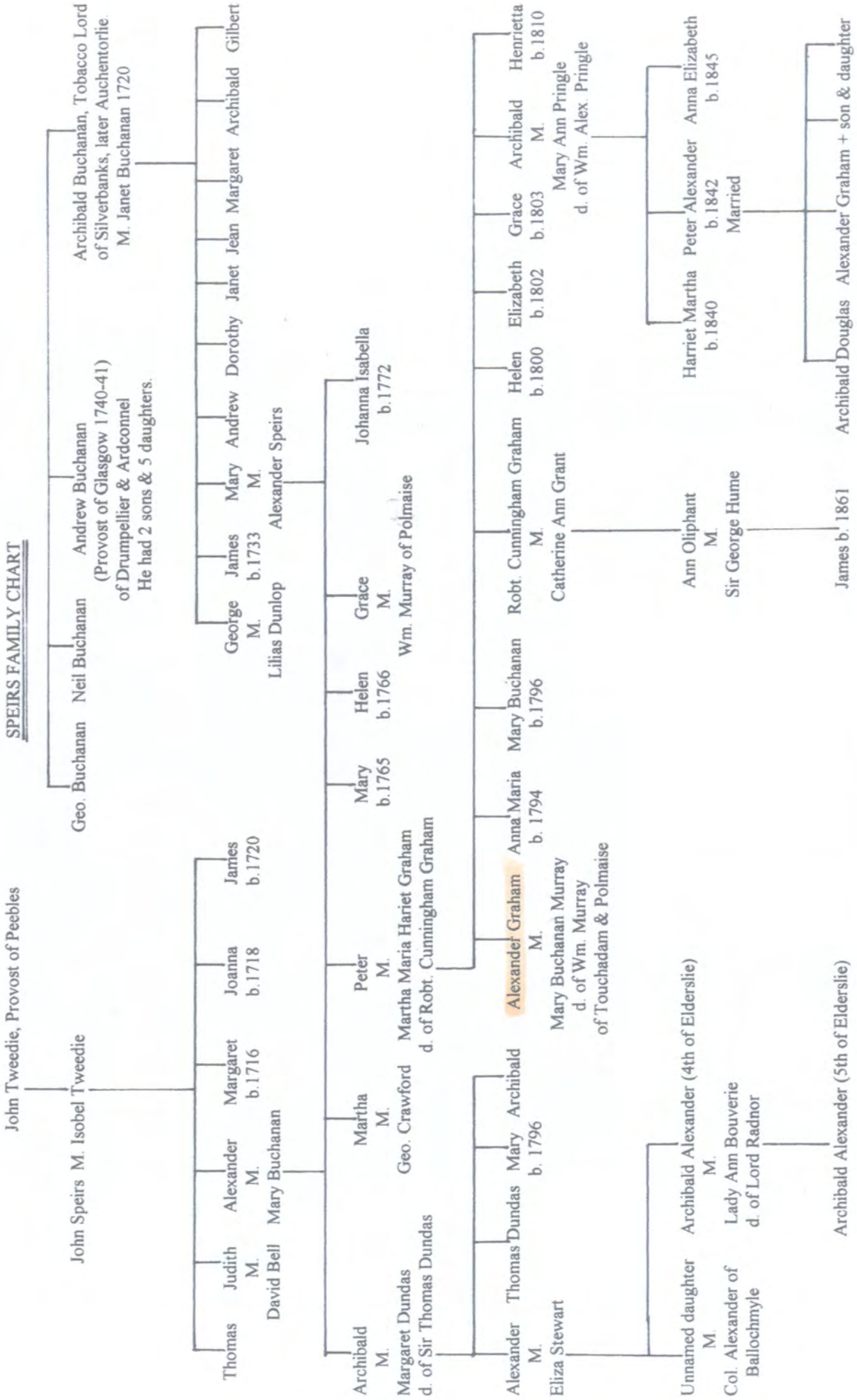
Mary Buchanan Speirs. Do constitute my dear sister Grace my Executrix. Leave all money and property to unmarried sisters according to our Mutual Missive of 1841. After debts paid, £1,000 to dear niece Ann Oliphant, wife of Sir George Home. After death of last unmarried sister; £1,000 to dear niece Harriet Martha, £500 to dear nephew Peter and £500 to dear niece Anna Elizabeth. Dear sisters to divide personal effects. Peter Speirs residual legatee. To the poor of the parishes of Fintry and St. Ninian's - £5 and to the poor of the Episcopal Church - £5. (Rec. in Commissary Court Book, Stirlingshire. SC 67/49/93 Folio86. 22nd Jan. 1861)

Henrietta Spiers All money to be liferented by my surviving sisters except:- £5 to poor of Fintry, £5 to poor of St. Ninian's, £5 to poor of Episcopal Church, £10 to Stirling Infirmary and £10 to London Irish Soc. After death of all sisters; £1,000 to Ann Oliphant, £1,000 to Harriet Martha, £1,500 to Anna Elizabeth and to very dear nephew, Peter, £800. Peter my residual legatee. SC/67/49/93. 2nd Dec. 1880



J. GRASSOM MAP OF COUNTY OF STIRLING N.E. 1817
 Showing location of St. Ninian's church where Speirs sisters are buried
 and site of "Laurelhill" their home.

SPEIRS FAMILY CHART



REFERENCES FOR CAPTAIN ALEXANDER GRAHAM SPEIRS:-

- 1) O.P.R. 1793 480/2 Rec. Fintry and Plaque in Fintry Kirk.
- 2) List of ministers in Fintry Kirk records. Stirling Archives.
- 3) Speirs Papers TD 1318/32 bundle 24. G.C.A.
- 4) Stirling Observer 11th January, 1921. Stirling Archives.
Also Military Records of his army career held at Kew. (not seen)
- 5) Stirling Observer 11th January, 1921. Stirling Archives.
- 6) Ibid. ("Laurelhill" lay at the junction of Torbrex and Cambusbarron Roads, Stirling. The offices of Forth Valley Enterprises are built on the site but it is still called "Laurelhill").

MARRIAGE:-

- 1) O.P.R. 1828 480/3 Rec. Fintry and 487/3 Rec. Polmont.
- 2) Monumental Inscriptions East Stirlingshire by John & Sheila Mitchell.
- 3) Plaque in Fintry Kirk.
- 4) GR (RS3) 1503 93. S.R.O.

INHERITANCE:-

- 1) RT 717 Vol. 21 Folio 469. S.R.O.
- 2) Speirs Papers TD 1318/32. G.C.A.
- 3) Speirs Papers TD 1318/51 bundle 39. Letters 1797-1828. G.C.A.
- 4) Speirs Papers TD 1318/32 bundle 22 1817-38 concerning C.C.Co.
- 5) New Statistical Account for Scotland. Rev Grierson Smith.
- 6) Speirs Papers TD 1318/32 bundle 22. G.C.A.
- 7) Ibid.
- 8) Ibid.
- 9) Ibid.
- 10) From Fintry Kirk Session Minutes as quoted in third Statistical Account for Scotland by Rev.
- 11) Valuation Roll of County of Stirling. SC4/3/3. S.R.O. This also listed all Alexander's properties.
- 12) Ordnance Gazetteer Scotland. Vol. III. The mill finally closed in 1880.

PUBLIC LIFE:-

- 1) Heritors Minute Book 1851-1929. HR 203/1. S.R.O.
- 2) Speirs Papers TD 1318/ 22. G.C.A.
- 3) 3rd Statistical Account, Parish of Fintry. Rev. D. H. Gerrard.
- 4) Speirs Papers TD 1318/22. G.C.A.
- 5) Stirling Observer, 11th January, 1921. Stirling Archives.

FAMILY AFFAIRS:-

- 1) SC 67/49/85. S.R.O.
- 2) Service of Heirs. 1880-89. Mitchell Library.
- 3) SC 67/49/85. G.C.A.
- 4) SC 67/36/72 Folio 403, SC 67/36/77 Folio 366,
SC 67/36/83 Folio 86 and SC 67/36/79 Folio 622. S.R.O.
- 5) SC 67/36/69 S.R.O.
- 6) Service of Heirs. 1880-89. Mitchell Library.

DEATH:-

- 1) SC 67/36/69 S.R.O.
- 2) Death Archibald. 685/1 173 1859.
- 3) RT 717 Vol. 21 Folio 469
- 4) Sasine RS 59 125.76.S.R.O.
- 5) See tombstone Fintry Kirk.

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