

The Drysdale Family

On the Twentieth Day of May, One Thousand, Five Hundred and
Three Years :-

We, Thomas, William and James Douglas, sons of the departed Thomas Douglas of Brushwood Haugh, in the parish of Dryfesdale and shire of Dumfries, left our native place for the reason here assigned, viz. defending our just and lawful rights against our unjust neighbour Johnston of Greenston-hill, who, being determined to bring water to his mill through our property, and having obtained the leave of his friend the King, began his operations on Monday, the 16th May. We prevented him with force. The next day he brought twenty of his vassals to carry on the work. We, with two friends and three servants (eight in all) attacked Johnston with his twenty, and, in the contest, fourteen of his men were killed, along with their base leader. A report of these proceedings was carried to the King, and we were obliged to fly (the tocsin being sounded). We took shelter under the shadow of the Ochil Hills, in a lonely valley on the river Devon. After having lived there for two full years, we returned home in disguise, but found all our property in the possession of Johnston's friends, and a great reward offered for our lives.

We, having purchased a small shot, called the Haugh of Dollar, and changed our names to the name of our native parish, are clearly in mind to spend the residue of our days under the ope of the Ochils, and wish the name of Drysdale to flourish in the lonely valley.

The King passed through this with his court on the 12th June, 1506, going from Stirling to Falkland, dined on Halliday's Green, an eastern neighbour, but we were not known.

The above document has been preserved among the descendants of Thomas, William and James Douglas, now known by the name of Drysdale. Copied at several times by different individuals, first by Symon Drysdale of the Haugh of Dollar, 1620; by Robert Drysdale, Tillicoultry, 1708; by John Drysdale, Dunfermline, 1835; by James Drysdale, Dunfermline, 1838; printed by John Drysdale, Montrose, 1841; printed by William Drysdale, Alva, 1870; printed for Robert Drysdale, Tillicoultry, 1881; printed for David Drysdale, Warwick Lodge, Brixton, London, 1892; printed for Alexander Drysdale, Alloa, 1938; and copied by Neil M. Douglas Ewins in 1987 a descendant of David Drysdale, tailor in Sauchie, Clackmannanshire, and Janet McGregor (married 5th January, 1800, Clackmannan).

From information gathered it appears that there is some truth in the story, although it is well known that the Drysdale name, or at least a similar name, existed in the Clackmannanshire area before the documented incident of 1503. These instances occur in the Exchequer Rolls of Scotland in the parish of Tillicoultry, (which is adjacent to Dollar), between 1480 and 1513 when several 'Drisdale' or 'Dryisdale' families are recorded as tenants residing on the lands of 'Coschnachtain', (Coalsnaughton), 'Hervisdawak', (Harviestoun ?), 'Drummy', 'Schannach', (Shannockhill) and 'Ellokisdawak', (Elistoun Hill ?). (See map of Clackmannanshire). An earlier record of the name in the same district occurs in the Burgh records of Stirling in 1478 when a Thomas Drusdale appeared before the Abbot of Cambuskenneth regarding Alveth (Alva) church.

Perhaps it could be that the Tillicoultry 'Drisdales' or 'Dryisdales' are a different family from those descended from the Douglasses who settled in Dollar, but had a similar surname distinguishable by the spelling. However, variations in all names were

extremely common as it was not until the late 18th century that there was any attempt to standardise spelling. If there is a distinction it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible to differentiate between those descended from the Douglasses and those who are not.

As the contents of the document concern an argument over the right to bring water to Johnston's mill through Douglas land, it is necessary to briefly discuss this point. The parish of Dryfesdale is located in the valley of Annandale and the western and southern parts are generally flat. The northern parts are hilly and according to the owner of St. Michael's Walls, (or Old Walls), there was in this vicinity a water-mill, though it has long since been demolished. This area was first identified by the Rev. Robert Paul, F.S.A. Scot., who wrote "The Drysdales of Dollar" in 1909, as a possible location of the feud. It is also worth mentioning that, despite extensive research by various authors, the precise locations of 'Brushwood Haugh' and 'Greenston-hill' have never been found. However, in Sir John Sinclair's "Statistical Account of Scotland" written in the 1790s, we find north-eastern parts of Dryfesdale being described as covered with hazle and 'brushwood'.

The evidence which suggests that there is some truth in the documented account is shown by the apparent patronage towards Drysdales by Douglasses. During the 1560-70 period a James Dryisdail and John Drysdail were employed by the Douglasses of Loch Leven castle and according to the Registrum Secreti Sigillm Regum Scotorum, James Dryisdail was granted a pension from James Douglas, Commendator of Melrose Abbey, (son of the Laird of Loch Leven), for £40 yearly starting on Whit Sunday 1574 and confirmed in 1579.

A Thomas Dryvisdail was granted the ecclesiastical lands of 'Culwen' or 'Culven', in Kirkcudbrightshire, by Robert Douglas, Provost of Lincluden, in 1566. Robert was the illegitimate son of Sir James of Drumlanrig.

Later, in 1638 according to the Register of Privy Council, a James Dryisdail, servitor to Sir William Douglas of Cashogle, was a witness to a summons. The Douglasses of Cashogle are also descended from the Lairds of Drumlanrig. So, it is clear that the Drysdales had close links with both the Douglasses of Loch Leven and Drumlanrig which may not have been purely a coincidence; kinsmanship was much more important in those violent times!

There are several possible reasons for doubting the authenticity of the 1503 document. To my knowledge there are no records of any Drysdales purchasing the 'Haugh of Dollar' or of a 'Symon Drysdale of the Haugh of Dollar' (who apparently copied the document in 1620), actually owning that property. The word 'of' implies ownership rather than tenancy. There are many Drysdales recorded as living in the parish of Dollar but all these were tenants. For example, according to the Visitation of the Diocese of Dunblane, a Thomas Drysdell was recorded in 1586 as being 'in Nether Mains': in the Commissariat of Stirling, under Wills, we find John Drysdale, 'in Wester Scherdail' in 1615 and William Drysdale 'in New-raw' in 1677; according to the Register of the Privy Council, John, Thomas and Symon Drysdell or Drysdail were recorded as being 'in Manes of Duller' in 1643. This appears to be the case for all Drysdales in Dollar until the 1760s when we find in the Sasines a mention of William Drysdale 'of Sheardale'. If we could find 'Symon Drysdale of the Haugh of Dollar' this would indicate that he was the direct descendant of the three brothers, and therefore, provide some evidence to support the 1503 document.

It is also interesting to point out that of all the documents recording the 1503 incident which have been made available by various descendants, the names of the first three who copied it are always the same. They are :- Symon Drysdale, of the Haugh of Dollar, in 1620,

Robert Drysdale, of Tillicoultry, 1708, and John Drysdale, Dunfermline, 1835; (different names begin after this date). This suggests that only one, or very few, copies of the document existed until the 19th century, despite the fact that many Drysdale families emigrated, or moved away from Clackmannanshire before that time. Surely different families would have taken copies, and variations in the above list would have resulted. Perhaps this indicates that the story was passed down among the descendants orally and then committed to paper at a later date and would explain why the document fails to preserve 16th or 17th century spelling.

Bearing in mind the evidence of patronage by the Douglasses towards Drysdales and the lack of definite proof to support the 1503 document there might be a possibility that the changing of the name from Douglas to Drysdale occurred earlier- in the 1460s or 1470s, perhaps. The reason for this suggestion is revealed by looking at the history of the Douglasses from the mid-15th century. As you know, James II, (1437-1460), was particularly worried about how powerful the Earls of Douglas had become; in 1444, William, 8th Earl of Douglas married his cousin Margaret, daughter of the 5th Earl, and acquired the lands of Galloway, Bothwell etc. William already owned Douglasdale, Annandale etc, and so he was master of a great portion of South Scotland. Later, in 1452, William was murdered at Stirling Castle by James II because he would not break an alliance with the Earls of Crawford and Ross. William's brother James succeeded to the Earldom but fled to England in 1455 and his lands were forfeited. As for James's younger brothers, Archibald, Earl of Moray, Hugh, Earl of Ormond and John, Lord of Balveny, they were defeated at the battle of Arkinholm, also in 1455. Archibald was killed at the battle and Hugh and John were captured and beheaded.

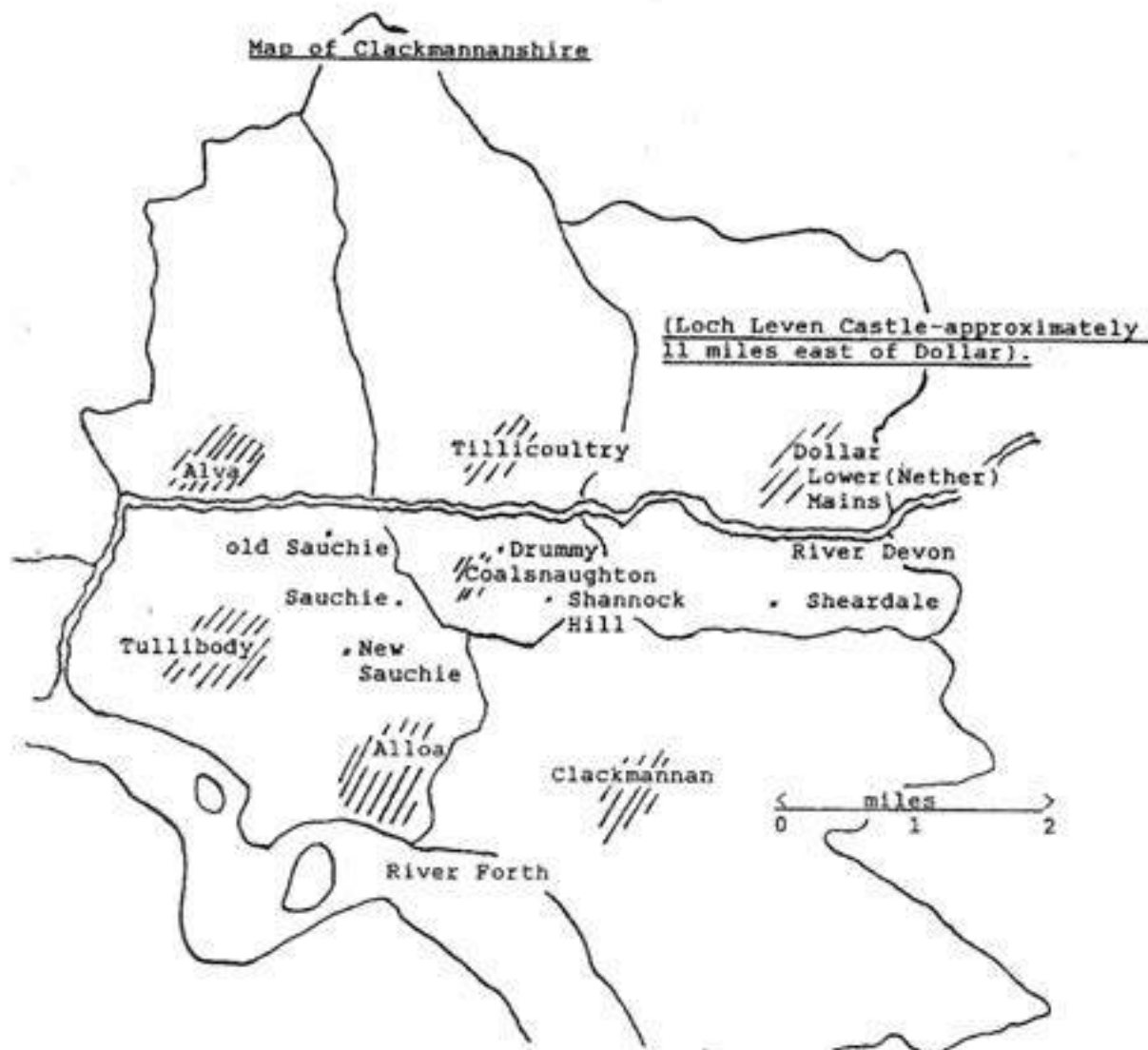
According to the 'Heraldry of the Douglasses' by Harvey Johnston, James II divided up the forfeited Douglas lands between his own supporters, and Annandale was shared between the Carlyles, Maxwells and most of important of all the Johnstons. It is clear from the information above that any Douglasses living in Annandale may have been in great danger after 1455 and one could speculate, therefore, that the Douglasses who fled and changed their name to Drysdale to prevent detection may well have done this earlier than 1503. This would provide an explanation as to why the name of 'Drusdale', 'Drisdale' or 'Dryisdale' existed in the Clackmannanshire area, (especially Tillicoultry), from the 1480s. It seems to me too much of a coincidence that so similar name should exist in the Tillicoultry area yet have a different origin.

It is my theory that the main facts of the story are true and that some Douglasses did settle under the 'ope of the Ochils' though not in 1503, but at an earlier date. (The date of 1503 could be accounted for by mistakes made when the story was finally committed to paper and recopied). There seems to me little point in writing a fictitious document about a small family of Douglasses who changed their name to Drysdale. A few Drysdales did gain employment from Douglasses, but if they had invented the story merely to obtain wealth and power, surely, it would have been better simply to call themselves 'Douglas' and guarantee nepotism.

Neil M.D.Ewins

* Norman Douglas of Dundarrach, F.S.A. (Scot.), Arrochar, Dunbartonshire, Scot., informs us that Culwen or Culven in Kirkcudbrightshire is the same place as Colvend, and that on Timothy Pont's map of 1654 this place is marked as Couenn. (A number of Norman's ancestors, who were descended from the Douglasses of Cashogle, were buried in Colvend).

Map of Clackmannanshire



WORK IN THE WOOL INDUSTRY

ANNE DRYSDALE

Anne Drysdale was born in Scotland in 1792 and at the age of 47 years left for Australia and settled in Melbourne. Having had experience in rural life she was determined to make a success of farming in her new home.

A chance meeting with Dr. Alexander Thomson led her to the Geelong district where she took up his offer of one of his runs, Borongoop, on the Barwon River a few miles south of the town of Geelong. While some living quarters were being built on the run, Anne Drysdale, lived with the Thomsons and became great friends with their governess, Caroline Newcomb.

In 1841 Anne and Caroline moved to the 10,000 acre run, Borongoop, and began their most successful partnership. They later acquired other stations and these were mainly used for agriculture, while their sheep, horses and cattle were kept at Borongoop.

From an initial 800 sheep they were able to increase their flock to 8,000 by 1847 and their annual wool production was 20,000 lbs. Anne and Caroline also built up a substantial horse stud and in their "spare time" they looked after a herd of pigs, all kinds of fowls, crops such as wheat, oats and barley, an extensive vegetable garden and a vineyard.

The names of Drysdale and Newcomb must certainly go down in history as pioneering pastoralists.

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