

BLACKBARONY

PART I

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BLACKBARONY



BY

LT.-COL. HON. ARTHUR C. MURRAY
C.M.G., D.S.O.

By the same Author

MEMORIALS OF SIR GIDEON MURRAY OF ELIBANK
AND HIS TIMES, 1560-1621

LORD GREY OF FALLODON, K.G.
(*Quarterly Review*, January 1934)

THE FIVE SONS OF "BARE BETTY"

MASTER AND BROTHER

AT CLOSE QUARTERS

REFLECTIONS ON SOME ASPECTS OF BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY
BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

DECISIVE BATTLES IN HISTORY
IN A NUTSHELL

WHATNOTS

ST. COLUMBA AND THE HOLY ISLE OF THE GARVELLACHS:
THE WHIRLPOOL OF CORRIEVRECKAN

THE STORY OF THE BARROW PAPER MILLS

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED, EDINBURGH
1950

REPRINTED
1978

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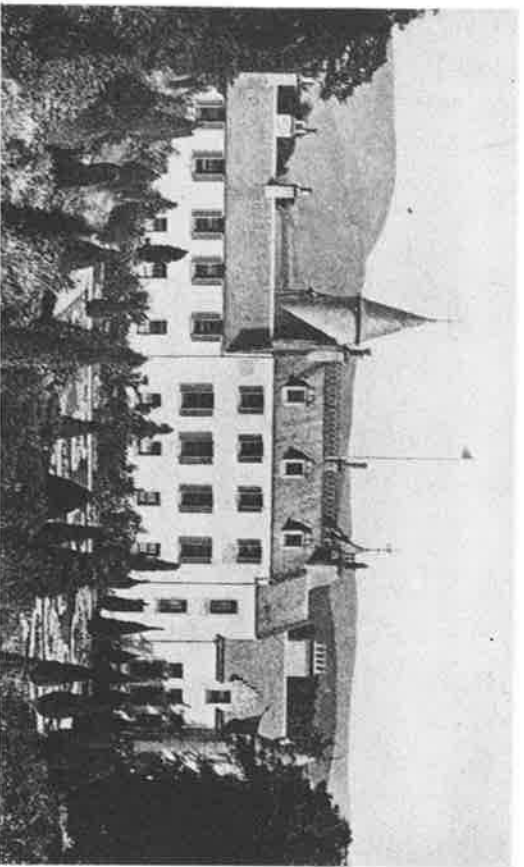
FOREWORD

In the following pages I relate the sixteenth-century story of my forebears' estate of Blackbarony in Peeblesshire, and of its mansion house. Blackbarony remained in the possession of the family up to *my* generation, and we were all brought up there. In 1930, the farms on the estate were sold separately, and the mansion house (with its gardens and 80 acres of adjoining ground and woodland), was acquired as a Hotel, in which capacity the old place continues to give pleasure—as it did to Murrays through four centuries—to those who stay there and enjoy the beauties of its surroundings. As a matter of interest, I have added a few notes on the lives of my ancestors, Andrew Murray of Blackbarony (1512-72), the builder, in 1536, of the mansion house; of his third son, Sir Gideon Murray of Elibank, Treasurer Deputy of Scotland, 1612-21; and of Elizabeth, 4th Lady Elibank and her five sons, all of whom achieved fame in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

A. C. M.



BLACKBARONY, EDDLESTON, PEEBLES SHIRE
(built 1336)
Front of house, facing East



Family Wing
(added 1855)
Central Portion
(built 1336)
Back of house, facing West
Bachelors' Wing
& Billiard Room
(added 1877)

BLACKBARONY

IN the year 1507, John Murray, laird of Blackbarony in the "vill" or manor of Eddleston, Peeblesshire, violated one of the conditions attaching to ward lands by alienating more than half of the estate to a stranger without the licence of the Crown, and the estate of Blackbarony was then recognised by decret of the Lords of Council and Session, and vested *de novo* by King James IV under a Great Seal Charter of May 4, 1507, in his "familiar cleric and daily servitor John Murray [curiously enough again a John Murray], and Isobelle Hopper, his spouse".

This John Murray, from whom the Murrays of Blackbarony, the Wolfe Murrays of Cringletie, the Murrays of Ellibank, and the Murrays of Dunerne are descended, followed his royal master to the fatal field of Floddon, and there perished with him on September 9, 1513. By his wife, Isobelle Hopper—who married secondly, in 1518, Sir Archibald Douglas of Kilspindie (Lord High Treasurer of Scotland in 1526)—he had a son Andrew, who succeeded to the "Blak Baronie".

It has hitherto been generally assumed that when James IV bestowed Blackbarony on his "familiar cleric" (Private Secretary), Darnhall (now known as Blackbarony) was the mansion house of the estate, and that the laird and his family lived in it. A recent study of the subject, however, proves that this was not the case, and it may be of interest to outline the actual facts as now revealed.

A DOCUMENT OF 1536

Let us begin by quoting a document which throws considerable light on the situation. This document is an Instrument of Resignation by Hugh Murray, of Darnhall,

in favour of Andrew Murray, of Blackbarony, of the lands and houses of Darnhall and Franshill, the said lands to remain perpetually in the hands of Andrew Murray, superior thereof. The Instrument is dated August 12, 1536, and is in Latin. A translation of the Latin script reads as follows:—

“ In the name of God Amen : Be it clearly shown to all by this present public instrument that in the year of our Lord's Incarnation one thousand five hundred and thirty-six on the twelfth day of the month of August and ninth indiction and second year of the pontificate of the most holy father in Christ our lord Paul the Third by divine providence pope. Personally compared in presence of me notary public and of the witnesses underwritten an honourable man Hugh Murray of Darnhall and passed to the personal presence of an honourable man Andrew Murray of Blakbarony his lord superior of the lands underwritten and there the foresaid Hugh Murray not moved thereto by force or fear nor falling into error compelled or pressed but of his own entire pure and free will surrendered by staff and baton and purely and simply resigned in the hands of the foresaid Andrew Murray his lord superior all and sundry his lands of Darnhall and Franshill with manor place, mansion houses and buildings thereof and their several pertinents lying within the barony of Blakbarony and sheriffdom of Peebles with all right and claim property and possession which he has had or any manner of way might have to the same for himself and his heirs that they may remain heritably for ever with the said Andrew Murray and his heirs. And that for certain sums of money and other good deed done and paid to the said Hugh by the said Andrew ; Upon all and sundry which premises the foresaid Andrew Murray asked to be made by me notary public subscribing this present public instrument or instruments ; These things were done within the burgh of Edinburgh, upon the high street at the Nether Port of the said burgh at ten hours before noon or thereby year month day indiction and pontificate as above In presence of worthy men David Tod burgess of the said

burgh Gavin Wallace Donald Fullerton clerk James Young and John Balquhannan notaries public with sundry other witnesses to the premises called and required.

“ And I Alexander Young clerk of the diocese of St Andrews notary public by holy apostolic authority because I was personally present in all and sundry the premises while thus as aforesaid they were acted spoken and done and spake saw knew and heard the same so to be done and took a note thereof, therefore I have prepared therefrom this present public instrument faithfully written by another hand and have signed the same with my accustomed name and sign in faith and testimony of all and sundry the premises being thereto called and required.”

SYMBOLICAL DELIVERY

The form of the foregoing Instrument of Resignation shows that the document was executed not for the purpose of completing the title of Hugh Murray, but for the purpose of conveying the lands to Andrew Murray on payment of a price. At first blush it might be thought that a mid-superiority was created in the person of Hugh Murray, as the symbolical delivery by “ Staff and Baton ” was applicable to a conveyance of a superiority (although it was applicable to all resignations in favour of a superior); but a receipt (which is extant) by Hugh Murray of Darnhall to Andrew Murray of Blackbarony, in 1531, for 60 merks of rent of “ Myddil Third of Franshill ”, shows that Hugh Murray of Darnhall must have been proprietor of the lands, and that Andrew Murray of Blackbarony was the tenant as well as being the superior.

A curious point is that symbolical delivery appears to have been given in Edinburgh instead of, as ought by custom to have been the case, on the lands themselves. An Act was passed in 1555 compelling symbolical delivery on

the lands, and the explanation may have been that before that date the practice had become loose.

But what chiefly concerns us is this—that the Instrument shows that Darnhall and Franshill were originally part of the Blackbarony; that they were feued off at some time, and were re-acquired in 1536 by Andrew Murray of Blackbarony.

Now, it is not possible, owing to lack of documentary evidence, to say at what time Darnhall was feued off from the Blackbarony, but it is quite plain that it took place prior to 1507, seeing that Hugh Murray was a member of the family of Murray that possessed Blackbarony before that date. Another fact, too, shedding light on the inaccuracy of the assumption to which reference has been made at the commencement of this paper, emerges from obscurity, namely, that the proprietor of the Blackbarony, who granted a feu of Darnhall and its lands, did not, in so doing, part with the principal dwelling-place on the Blackbarony estate.

In other words, Darnhall, it is now shown, was not the principal dwelling-house of the "Blak Baronie". Further evidence in support of this view is contained in documents which make it clear that members of the same family were living, each in his own dwelling house—on the lands of Blackbarony, Darnhall, and Milkleston, circa 1507, in which year John Murray was dispossessed of his home, whilst his older brother, Hugh, remained at Darnhall. Additional confirmation is found in two charters, the one dated February 10, 1565, which refers to "the lands and barony of Haltoun (denoting the site of the family's hall), or Blackbaronie, with tower, fortalice, manor, mills, &c."; and the other of August 13, 1607, ordaining "Darnhall to be the principal message".

A CONNECTED STORY

It is not difficult, having arrived at this stage, to piece together the evidence, and to make out of it a connected

story. What actually happened appears to have been this:—At some date prior to 1507 the then Murray family split up the Blackbarony property among themselves. At the time that the King's "familiar cleric" appeared upon the scene, John Murray, of the original family, occupied the principal dwelling-place—the "tower, fortalice, and manor"—on the site of what is now the Hatton (Haltoun) Knowe farm; and his brother, Hugh, inhabited the lesser dwelling-place of Darnhall.

The "familiar cleric" was a wealthy man, who, between 1507 and 1513, acquired considerable property in Peeblesshire, Haddington, and Linlithgow, and left his son, Andrew, well endowed with this world's goods. No doubt Andrew—a man of substance and of forceful character—considered the "tower, fortalice, and manor" on the Hatton Knowe site too out of date to serve as an adequate and befitting mansion house, and decided, therefore, to build an entirely new one.

Those of us who know the ground will not be surprised that, after forming such a resolution, Andrew should allow his eyes to rest longingly upon the site at Darnhall. Had we been in his shoes, we feel sure that, like him, we would not have rested until we had acquired it. Perseverance brought its due reward, and in 1536 Hugh—his brother gone, and seeing a new order of things established all around him in his old age—finally agreed to sell and quit the scene, thus permitting Andrew to achieve his ambition.

Now, what were the buildings at Darnhall like in 1536? So far as the edifices on the Blackbarony lands are concerned, we are told that they were "braw" buildings, such as "towers, fortalices, and messuages", but the buildings at Darnhall were, by their description, not nearly so commodious and of a much less imposing appearance. But Andrew Murray was not worried about that—it was the site and not the houses that he was after; and having obtained possession of the site, he proceeded to pull down the existing buildings and to erect in their place an entirely new mansion house, which, in the charter of 1552, is referred to as the "manor place at Darnhall", and was later, in 1607, as we have

already seen, to be designated under charter the " principal message " of the estate.

AN AGREEABLE OCCUPATION

It was Andrew Murray then, who—after he had purchased the site from Hugh Murray in 1536—built Darn Hall (Blackbarony as we now know it)—or, rather, the central thick-walled portion of the house without the " family wing " on the north side and the three-roomed " bachelors' wing " (in which my brothers and I used to sleep) on the south side which were added between 1850 and 1880 by my grandfather the 9th, and my father the 10th, Lord Elbank respectively. We can imagine that Andrew found the planning and building of the house and the laying-out of the grounds a pleasant and agreeable occupation, but it is to his credit that he did not allow himself to be classed merely as one of the " idle rich ".

He appears to have passed much time in Edinburgh, and to have taken a considerable share in the direction of the city's affairs. He was a member of the Edinburgh City Council in 1555-56. He owned various lands in Edinburgh, amongst them—on the south side of the High Street about 100 yards below St Giles Church—a " lodging and land " in Snowdown's Close, and a tenement in Bell's Wynd (to the west of Snowdown's Close). Both these properties were really one and the same, comprising a mansion—originally belonging to a Bishop of Dunkeld—which lay on the fore-street between the two passages.

There is in existence a Notarial Instrument of Submission and Decree Arbitral by Alexander, Abbot of Cambuskenneth, in disputes between Adam Orterburn of Redhall and Andrew Murray of Blackbarony, deciding that the latter should pay the former 200 marks (£10 sterling) for food and drink to him and his servant for five years; dated the Capital of the Place of the Blackfriars at Edinburgh, July 20, 1533.

In 1562, six years after Andrew had retired from the Town Council, he presented a petition to it complaining that he was taxed among the common merchants " though ane gintillman having his living outeside and using na maner of trafique within the burgh ", and desiring the Council to discharge him of all taxes in future as other free barons, otherwise he would take no thought of their affairs as he had done in bygone times. Although the Council—having considered the matter—did not exclude him from all future taxation, it is clear that Andrew did not implement his portentous threat to withdraw from all Town affairs (!) for we find that on June 18, 1563, he was chosen to go with John Knox to Perth to discuss Church business.

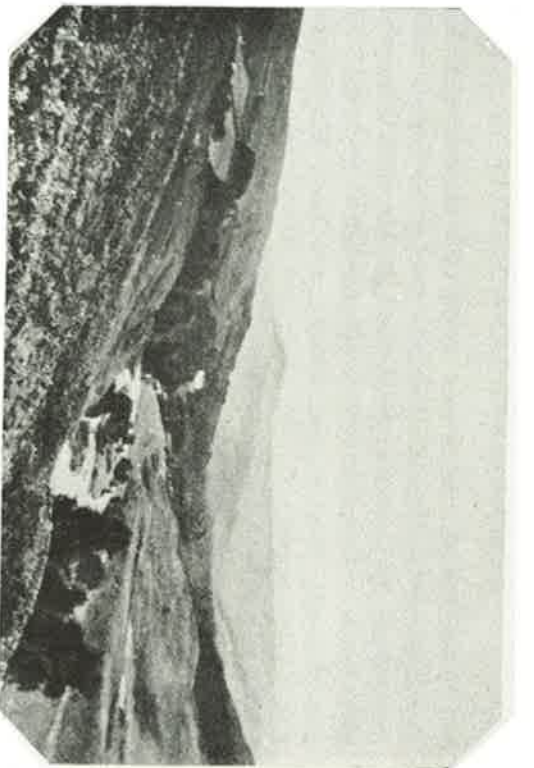
Andrew was a zealous Protestant, and his views on Church matters are revealed by the complaint made by him (on behalf of the parishioners of Eddleston) at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in Edinburgh in July 1568, that Mr. George Hay, the Minister of Eddleston, " neither preached the word nor ministered the sacraments to them ". The complaint—which was couched in Andrew's usual vigorous and forceful language—produced a verbal chastisement of Hay by the Assembly.

Andrew Murray died on September 1, 1572, having married, first, Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of William Lockhart, Burgess of Edinburgh; and, secondly, on February 8, 1551, Grizel Bethune (" Dame Grissale Betoun "), daughter of John Beaton—spelling was at a discount in those days!—of Criech in Fifeshire—a niece of the notorious Cardinal (a bitter opponent of the Reformation), and widow of Sir William Scott of Kirkurd. The third son of this marriage, Gideon (born in 1560), studied theology, and, shortly after taking a degree at Glasgow University in 1581, became Minister of the Parish Church of Auchterless in Aberdeenshire, and " Chantour " in the Cathedral of Aberdeen. In the year 1585 Gideon's spiritual career was cut short by what was described as an " accident " (!), the records showing that " Mr. Gedion Murray, Chantor, cannot be comptit ane of the Chapter, becaus for slauchtir he

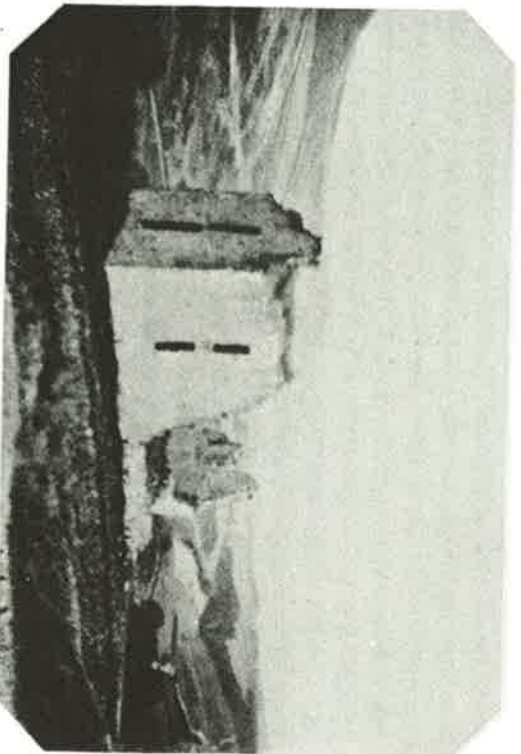
was fugitive out of the North and never returned ther again". The "slauchtir" was the killing, in a quarrel, of a man named Aicheson, and for this indiscretion—particularly indiscreet in the case of a Parish Minister!—Gideon was apprehended and imprisoned in Edinburgh Castle. Powerful influences were exerted in favour of his release and, after a year's incarceration, a licence over the signatures of King James VI and Lords Arrane, Montrose, Thyrlistane, Pet-tynewm and Blantyre, Members of the Privy Council, was granted to Gideon giving him "frie libertie to depart furth of our burgh of Edinburgh within the quhilk he hes bene and yitt remanis in wairde".

In the last great Border Clan battle between the Johnstones and the Scotts of Buccleuch on the one side and the Maxwells on the other, which was fought on the Dryfe Sands near the Solway on December 7, 1593, Gideon—who in 1591 had become chamberlain and guardian to his kinsman, Sir Walter Scott, Lord of Buccleuch—commanded the Scotts. Lord Maxwell had under his command some 2000 men, whilst the following of the Laird of Johnstone numbered only 800, of whom 500 were Scotts under Gideon. In the battle, the Maxwells and their adherents were disastrously routed, and 700 of them, including Lord Maxwell, were slain. Scores of them were cut down in the streets of Lockerbie—hence the phrase used in Annandale to denote a severe wound, namely, "a Lockerbie hick".

In the year 1594 Gideon became possessed by Royal Charter of the property of Elibank in Selkirkshire (which was acquired in 1649 by Sir John Hepburn Milne Home) and in 1605 he was knighted and was appointed to be a Commissioner for the Borders. His daughter Agnes, "Muckle mou'd Meg", married in 1611, in romantic circumstances, William Scott, eldest son of "Auld War" Scott o' Harden, the famous Border reiver. Sir Walter Scott, the Scottish novelist, was a descendant of this marriage. From 1612 to 1621 (the year of his death), Sir Gideon was Treasurer-Depute of Scotland, having been admitted an Ordinary Lord of the Court of Session in 1613 (the Lords dispensing with any



ELIBANK HOUSE
on
River Tweed



RUINS OF ELIBANK CASTLE
(built c. 1450)
[Snapshots by Author]

trial "because of the certain knowledge they had of his qualifications"). I have related the story of Sir Gideon's life in my book, *Memorials of Sir Gideon Murray of Elibank and His Times, 1560-1621*, which was published in 1932. Sir Gideon's son, Patrick, was created 1st Lord Elibank by Charles I in 1643.

Patrick (who had the courage to enter five times into the bonds of matrimony!) died in 1649, and was succeeded in the title by Patrick, his son by his second marriage in 1617 to Elizabeth, daughter of Sir James Dundas of Arniston, Midlothian. The second Lord, like his father, was an enthusiastic Royalist, and in 1646 was fined the *huge* sum (for those days) of "twentyethousandmerks" (£13,333:6:8) by the Scottish Parliament War Committee of the "Solemn League and Covenant in Scotland".

Patrick's grandson, Alexander, 4th Lord Elibank—a founder in 1723 of the Society for improving the knowledge of agriculture, but who lost the bulk of the family fortune in the "South Sea Bubble"—¹—married Elizabeth, daughter of George Stirling, an eminent surgeon of Edinburgh, and Member of Parliament for that city. Elizabeth displayed from her early teens an independence of character which not infrequently led her into eccentricities, and she handed on to her five sons the traits she herself possessed of vivacity and original wit in thought, speech and action. In his *Scotland and Scotsmen* Ramsay tells us an interesting and amusing anecdote. A somewhat rash Edinburgh minister of religion, when conducting "public examinations", referred to Miss Elizabeth as "Betty Stirling". This caused deep offence to the dignity of the young lady: "Miss Betty" or "Miss Betty", she said in tones of scathing rebuke, was the style of address to which she was accustomed, but certainly not "bare Betty"! Needless to say, after this incident, she was always known in Edinburgh and surroundings as "bare Betty"! When a man, who was deeply in love with her told her that he was ready to lay down his life for her sake, "Oh," she said, "I do not believe you would part with a little joint of your little finger for my whole body". Next day the

gentleman returned, and presented her triumphantly with the joint of one of his little fingers. But he was dumfounded when she gave him a peremptory refusal, "for", said she, "the man who has no mercy on his own flesh, will certainly not spare mine".

But, despite this mercurial turn, "bare Betty" had a very tender side to her character, and was much beloved by all her family. In 1739 she wrote to her eldest son Patrick (then become 5th Lord Elibank), who was about to start with Lord Cathcart's disastrous expedition to the West Indies, "If ye have any comfort to give me for God's sake writ soon, for I am in the utmost distress: oh, these wars will brack my heart". And her son George (afterwards 6th Lord Elibank) shows us the love of the sons for their mother in a letter to his brother General James Murray shortly after the capture of Quebec in 1759, "I wish our dear mother", he wrote, "had lived to have been a witness of the praises so deservedly bestowed upon you".

Of a numerous family of fifteen sons and daughters born to Alexander the 4th Lord and "bare Betty", five sons and six daughters survived them. The stories of the sons—who entered the world at irregular intervals between the years 1703 and 1721—I have related in my book, *The Five Sons of Bare Betty*, published in 1936: Patrick—wit, raconteur, friend of, and admired by, Dr. Johnson—who succeeded to the title as 5th Lord Elibank; George, who sailed with Anson, became an Admiral in the Royal Navy, and followed his brother as 6th Lord; Gideon, appointed Chaplain-General to the Army and Prebendary of the third stall in Durham Cathedral; Alexander, who developed into a well-known and vehement Jacobite, and, by high-spirited action, broke the arbitrary and degrading power of the House of Commons to compel persons brought before it to kneel at the bar; and James who, at the age of thirty-eight, commanded the left wing of Wolfe's army at the capture of Quebec, became first British Governor of Canada, and commanded (as Governor) the British garrison in the celebrated defence of Minorca, 1781-82, against overwhelming

French and Spanish forces. Good reason, indeed, had "bare Betty" and her spouse, looking down from the Great Beyond, to be very proud of their sons, through whose stories—as *The Observer* said when reviewing my book *The Five Sons of Bare Betty*—"it is possible to watch a considerable stretch of history in the making", and—as was said by *The Sunday Times*—"to watch the fortunes of a family until one begins to understand the fortunes of a nation". And having pursued the "fortunes of the family" in *Master and Brother* and in other writings, I will now say good-bye to them in this!

Arthur C. Murray

10 August, 1950

