

## Introduction

The Curious Histories lecture series showcases the half-forgotten, unconventional and overlooked stories of the past. In her talk she ‘uncovers the puzzling world of 18<sup>th</sup> Century Scottish politics in the story of one reluctant peer and his family (*the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl*).’

The talk is recorded here: <https://youtu.be/-tHVOmdk83Q>. Her slides with notes follow.

## Slides

# Prestige, Progress and Power: The peculiar politics of Dumfries House.

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## Notes

Dumfries House is in the lowlands of Scotland, with part of the estate lying in the southern uplands, where the land is poorer with high rainfall and strong winds from the southwest.



On the right-hand map, inland from the coastal town of Ayr, is Cumnock and New Cumnock.

Ayr to the west, Glasgow  
to the north and  
Edinburgh to the east.

In the very southwest is the town of Stranraer,

where Patrick, the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Dumfries, also owned the lands of Freugh nearby.

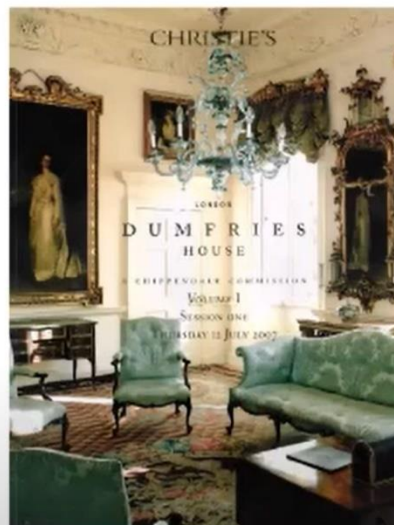
# Dumfries House

- Built between 1754 -1759
- Neo-Palladian Style
- Furnished with items from Edinburgh cabinetmakers and early Chippendale work



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Built between 1754 and 1759 in a neo-palladian style. Scaled down in a series of drawings by Robert Adam because the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl who built the house, did not have endless funds. The simplicity gives it its elegance. The 5<sup>th</sup> Earl wanted the very best and goes to London and Edinburgh to buy the best furnishings, which is what the house is famous for.



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He buys Thomas Chippendale's early furniture including this cabinet which is unique, much of it Riccoco. The righthand picture shows the catalogue when it was going to be sold in 2007. The King intervened and bought Dumfries House thus preserving a magnificent home.

## 5th Earl of Dumfries William Crichton Dalrymple

- Inherited his title and estate from his mother in 1742
- Soldier
- Painting by Thomas Hudson



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The 5<sup>th</sup> Earl built Dumfries House. In 1742 he inherits his title and estate from his mother not his father. He is a soldier fighting in the wars of the Austrian Succession only returning in 1747. He was with George II at the battle of Dettingen, the last battle where the monarch led the army. The 5<sup>th</sup> Earl was ADC to his uncle the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Stair. The painting was by Thomas Hudson, the very best portrait painter in London.

## The Dalrymples of Stair

- Family of lawyers
- Protestant/Covenanters
- Hanoverians
- But always managed to prosper



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His family are important in Scottish history. Originally small barons, they were involved in lawmaking in the 1600's, and held important government positions. They were Protestants, Presbyterians and Covenanters, who wished to practice their faith without intervention from the Stuart Kings. Consequently, they were persecuted by Cromwell and King Charles' men. However, the Dalrymples prospered.

## Patrick Crichton McDouall of Freugh

- Inherited the estate in 1768 at the age of 42
- Nephew to the 5th Earl
- Career soldier - colonel



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The 5<sup>th</sup> Earl died in 1768, with no direct heir, and the estate was left to Patrick, the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl's sister's eldest boy. The estate was left in entail, which created problems, limiting what could be done to the estate. In the painting Patrick was in his 30's, a career soldier reaching the rank of Colonel. He is stationed at the Tower and Edinburgh Castle.

## Patrick's Family

- His Grandfather, Patrick McDouall of Freugh (d.1689)
- Also Covenanters
- Not quite so good at prospering as the the Dalrymple family!
- Painting by William Aikman



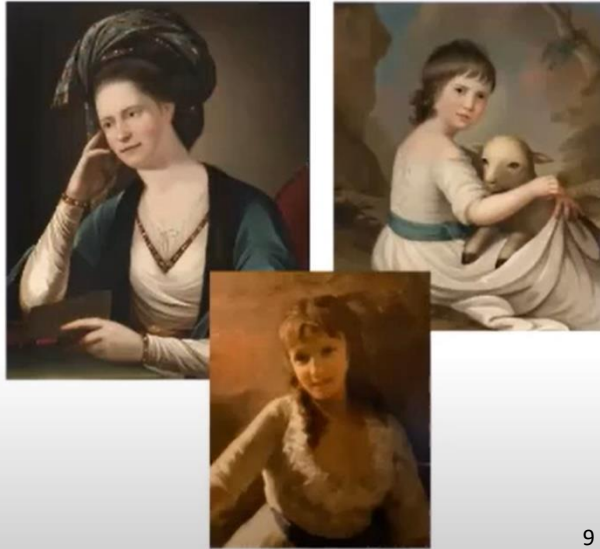
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The Freugh estate was in poor condition and came burdened with debt. The painting is of his grandfather, his wife and two of his daughters. They were also Covenanters, and suffered from persecution.



## Lady Margaret Countess of Dumfries

- Daughter of an Edinburgh advocate - Writer to the Signet, marries Patrick in 1771
- One child, Elizabeth Penelope
- Flora, Countess of Loudon
- Painting by Anne Forbes



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Patrick marries Margaret Crauford, a hugely successful marriage. He is in his 40's, and she is in his 20's. They showed huge regard for each other, apparent from their letters. She gets involved in the linen industry because flax is grown on the estate. She is from a more modest background whose family were lawyers in Edinburgh. Patrick and Margaret have one child, a daughter Penelope.

They adopt Flora Campbell born in 1780, who became Countess of Loudon at the age of 6. She is orphaned and Patrick is asked to be her tutor (legal guardian). She is welcomed into the house, and she remains with Patrick for the rest of his life.

The two top paintings are by Anne Forbes, the granddaughter of William Aikman, and she spends considerable time at Dumfries House, but does not live a long life.

The painting of Flora is taken from a Raeburn painting. She remains with Patrick until his death. Two years later she marries a great friend of Patrick's, the Earl of Moira and Marquess of Hastings. He is decades older than Flora, but the marriage is happy and productive. Her husband spends a lot of time at sea. In his Will he requests that should he die at sea, his hand be severed from his body and returned to Flora, so that in death their hands could be united together. It is a strange request, but he did indeed die at sea, and his hand was returned. And they both lie, Flora and her husband's hand, in the Loudon mausoleum.

## Scottish Politics Post Union 1707

- 45 Scottish MPs returned to Westminster
- No Shortage of candidates
- 'A seat in Parliament may get me a rich wife and military preferment but will require much economy or ruin may ensue.'



The union of 1707 had meant that the English had a secure border. The Scots expected economic growth and prosperity which did not happen. Before Union 125 MP's sat in the Scottish parliament. The note below from Patrick shows that his motivation for getting into politics is for personal reasons.

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## Ayrshire Politics

- Ayrshire had a large number of voters, 128 in the 1774 election.
- Many were small landowners whose vote was courted by the great landowners of the county in order to support their interest.
- 'Pray, neglect not Hamilton of Grange'



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Ayrshire politics were unusual with a large number of voters. Scotland overall had about 2,500 voters some 0.2% of the population, so Ayrshire's share was high. Landowners had the right to vote, and expected favours and rewards for their vote. Patrick, and his brother John, were good at courting the voters, especially the small landowners.

**'Great Struggles is through all poor Scotland and nothing prevails but corruption'**

Dowager Countess of Eglinton, 9 Feb 1774

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The Dowager, Countess of Eglinton, recognised the corruption. Although her son was also guilty of such work. The problems were exacerbated by the fact that no one was in control of Scottish elections, particularly after Union.

## 1774 Elections

- The Earls of Loudon, Cassilis, and Eglinton planned to control politics for the next 21 years
- Smaller independent landowners with the right to vote were unhappy
- Patrick sided with the smaller landowners



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The three Earls got together with their own plan including taking control for the next 21 years. They neglected to get the smaller landowners on side. Patrick and his partners put up Sir Adam Fergusson of Kilkerran, a really well-respected lawyer, to sit as candidate for the county of Ayr. The painting is of the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Loudon completed in 1747.

# The right to vote

- Freeholders
- Those who possessed land valued at 40 shillings dating from Old Extent
- Land that was valued at £400 Scots
- It was not the possession of land that conferred the right to vote but the fact that it was held in vassalage or superiority



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You had to be a freeholder to vote, i.e. people who invested in land. Old Extent was an old feudal method of valuating land.

Land held in rental valued at 400 Scots sterling also gave the landowner the right to vote. However the land had to come from the Crown.

So by separating the superiority from the land, then the vote could also be separated.

There are many lawyers in Scotland post-union who could work on creating new votes. Previously called nominal voting, now became fictitious votes. Landowners split up their lands into say 40 shilling lots and deeded them (temporarily) to others in order to gain their vote.

Dumfries estate developed 43 new votes using this method.

## Nominal and Fictitious Votes

Ingenious methods were used to create new votes

- Technically land and superiority could be separated
- New votes could be created.
- 'Self defence allows we use the same arms our adversary does and I think it for the honour and interest of this family we do so.'

*So that of none of the Lands mentioned in the 5<sup>th</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> Pages hereof belong in Superiority to any other person. It seems pretty clear that the Earl of Dumfries can make in whole*

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## Election day 1774

- 13th October
- David Kennedy has more voters than Adam Fergusson
- George Fergusson intervenes
- Trust oath

*Oath appointed to be taken by Freeholders, by Act of Geo. 2. c. 16.*  
*I, A. B. do in the presence of God declare and swear that the Lands & Estate of ... for which I claim a right to vote in the Election of a Member to serve in Parliament for this County (containing) is actually in my possession and I really & truly belong to me, and is my own proper Estate, and is not conveyed to me on Trust, or for or in behalf of any other person whatsoever, and that neither I, nor any person to my knowledge, in my name or on any account or by my allowance hath given or intends to give any promise, obligation, bond, or other security whatsoever*

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Elections are done in public by a show of hands, pretty riotous affairs.

George Fergusson suggests that the trust oath be taken, a measure introduced to limit the number of fictitious votes. The oath stated that they were voting for themselves and not others.

Five of the Kennedy voters refused to take it, however all of



Patrick's voters took the oath (a copy in the picture). George then carried the day, and was elected to the House of Commons. The results caused a huge furore, but not a great deal was done. The House of Lords were mostly English and did not understand the Scottish system and were loath to interfere.

## House of Lords

Elected as a representative peer in 1790

- 16 Scottish members in the House of Lords, elected by their fellow peers
- 'There are wheels within wheels which you must learn to know. I am a candidate for the peerage and have not been idle.' 1783
- 'How contemptible must be the condition of a set of men who by the resolution of the English can only get admission by election.'



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Patrick is eventually elected, which takes him a long time because he is on the 'wrong' side of politics. He supports the very liberal Charles Fox.

## Patrick's life

1726 - 1803

- Improvement and progress
- Cultured
- Tolerant
- Liberal
- Above all a family man

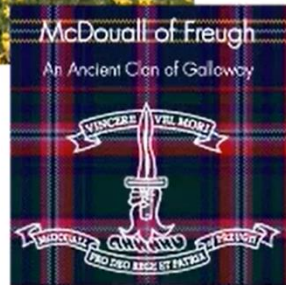


Patrick dies in 1803. He writes a list of everything he has done in his life, including improvements to the estate. Only his nephew Rev William survives him, and goes on to have a large family of his own.

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## Research

- Bute Archives at Mount Stuart
- Clan McDouall Archive



Mount Stuart well worth a visit. Finding the Clan McDouall archive was a wonderful surprise with many personal letters.

Lindy thanked Philip McDouall and Heather Swanson for their kind assistance with her research.