

ISLE OF BUTE CHARTERS.

By THE MARQUESS OF BUTE.

(Prepared for the Scottish History Society's meeting of
11th December, 1943, and printed with the
Society's permission.)

I had some difficulty in finding a subject of any sufficient sequence, and with which I might be capable of dealing, for my fourth lecture.

However, I have for some years past been collecting from different sources all the Charters that I could find relative to the Island of Bute, and I thought it might be of interest were I to give some exposé of what has been found.

The thing must, I fear, suffer from some inconsequence, as I propose to begin with the earlier period where the Charters are too few and far between to offer any real narrative.

The earliest Charter is about 1318, and is a grant by Walter, the High Steward, to Gilbert, son of Gilbert, of the threepenny lands of Kylmocolmoc, in the middle of the Island, for the service of one archer in the Army and attendance at three Courts in Bute. It says that the lands are in the Barony of Wanseria. This is, of course, a Latinised form, and it may occur in some State paper, but I can think of no lands in or about the Island that may be appropriate. It is, however, suggested by Mr Paton, Curator of Historical Records, that Wanseria has been a misreading—that the 'W' should be 'R' and the 's' should be 'f,' which makes the word, of course, Renfrew, and with this Dr Malcolm agrees. In this way, therefore, are rabbits pulled out of hats!

The next Charter, a couple of years later, is the grant to John, son of this Gilbert, of an elevenpenny

land, equally with one archer and Court attendances, but also with his own homage and service.

Then, in the year 1400, there is the Charter by Robert the Third confirming his brother, John Stewart, in the Sherifffdom of Bute and Arran with which he had been invested by Robert the Second about twenty years previously.

And on the same day there is another Charter granting to him the lands of Ardmoleish and Grenane in Bute and those of the Corregelles in Arran. The lands in Bute brought in £10 a year and those in Arran 10 merks, which was the fee he had formerly been paid by the King.

These are the first lands my ancestors acquired in the Island, and the Charter shows that the fees of the Sheriffship amounted to 25 merks or £16 13s 4d. Nor does this seem much when one considers the dispersed nature of the Sherifffdom, and it is very remarkable how, out of the hundreds of cases of transferred lands—because these are mostly deeds of that nature — almost invariably the Sheriff personally, from one generation to another, attended on the ground to see the earth and stone duly handed to the new proprietor.

If one reads through the first four or five hundred documents consecutively and in full, one can obtain a quite good general view of the Island and its inhabitants from, say, the year 1400 to 1600.

In the centre part of the Island was Rothesay, with the Royal Castle, surrounded by probably thirty or forty small houses standing in wide gardens, many probably inhabited by functionaries of the Court and Castle.

In the Notes of Scottish Parliaments there is an entry dated 1556 saying that Robert the Second, at a Parliament held in Perth in 1398, created his son Duke of Rothesay, and adding: "This Rothesay being parcell

of the Western Isles was inhabited by one Rothesay who governed the Scots in Ireland and so named it after his own name." I have looked up a long list of Irish Kings as far as Adam and Eve, and failed to find anyone of this name. Even so, it may well be called after some smaller Chieftain.

The Burgesses of the Royal Burgh do not seem to have numbered more than about a dozen, and to the landward of the central portion there were a great many McWerarties, with some Stewarts, and two or three land owners of the name of Glass, several of whose successors in future years became Provosts of Rothesay; and the owner of the lands of Scoulag, just above the village of Kerrycro, was a man called Conningsburgh. There never seems to have been more than the one family of this name in the Island. The first whom we hear of died just before the year 1500, leaving a widow, Janet, who was a daughter of the House of Boyd of Pitcon. Many people have tried to twist this name into or out of Cunningham. Here it starts with Conningsburgh and first appears as Cunningham about 1580 and then reverts to Conningsburgh, but after 1600 it becomes Cunningham and remains so. There is a village called Conningsburgh in North Wales, and two more — I believe one in North Yorkshire and one in Shetland. The word is said to be derived from the German or Dutch 'Koningsburg'—that is, Kingsburgh or Kingstoun.

Then, in the South of the Island, at least on the lower and agricultural parts, the Stewarts of Kilchattan held sway, but the rocky hills of the very south end, where is the old Chapel built by Saint Blaen nearly 900 years earlier, were mostly possessed by McKawes.

The mountains of the north end, sloping to the Kyles, were the domain of the Bannatynes, and, a little later, of the Spences also.

Of the Stewarts and McWerarties, and especially of the Conningsburghs in the Central part, one may say they were douce, law-abiding, and loyal. While of the Bannatynes of the North and the Stewarts of Kilchattan of the South, one can only describe them as both exceedingly truculent. It is true they both had some leavening — one in the McKawes and the other in the Spences. The McKawes might perhaps be best described as "alright if you leave them alone": The Spences we first find in Rothesay. There is a John and then a Donald, who both seem to have been lawyers. Very soon, however, they acquired land at Cames in the North end, and coming into this close contact with the Bannatynes seems to have sometimes led them off the straight path!

There are here two documents in which the Bannatynes are concerned like which I have not before come across.

The first is dated 4th October, 1473, and says that Ninian Bannatyne, Lord of Cames, compeared at Rothesay in presence of the Burgesses, who all accepted him to be their master and captain in time coming and promised to give him due honour and their service, as their predecessors did to his ancestors, saving their duty to the King, he being their true and native Captain, providing that the said Ninian always supports and befriends them as law and justice requires.

The second document is dated 15th October, 1521, when Robert Bannatyne of Kamys claimed the same right. It would therefore seem that this position was analogous to that of champion of the town, and was hereditary in the Bannatynes.

It is significant that both these documents are dated in October. There are very few Town Council Records extant as early as this, but later ones show that the Burgh Head Court was always held in that month, and

the day before this meeting the Officers for the succeeding year were always chosen. The appointment cannot have been that of Captain of the Town Guard—the period is too early and the town too small. In these days, however, a Burgess was supposed to come out and defend the town as best he could.

It may, however, be that the Bannatynes were rulers or governors of the town before there was a Town Council, or before it was a Royal Burgh. Or it may be that the Bannatynes were supposed to command the Burgesses when they were called out. If so, they certainly could not have found a better man, either personally or as being able to raise support beyond the Burgh.

But Bannatyne was not, in fact, chosen. He came to the Head Court, but claimed the thing by heritable right.

The second document shows that he appeared in presence of the Bailie and Burgesses and produced an Instrument showing that his predecessors were the Superiors, under the King, of the said Bailies and Burgesses, and he required them accordingly to hold him as their Superior. "Which request the said Bailies and Burgesses considering reasonable, they received the said Robert as their Superior under the King and Steward of Scotland and promised to recognise him only, and no other, he defending them as often as necessary in their actions as such." This is all we are told of the affair, but it is enough to save us the trouble of trying to read between the lines. Bannatyne did not sidle into the Court House and place before the Clerk some greasy papers purporting to show that he was sober and industrious and then stand quietly behind the door hoping against hope that he might be sufficiently fortunate to receive the appointment. On the contrary, he busked around with all the accoutrements of war that he could find, he stamped into the room with great

clatter, and, standing behind the Provost's chair, loudly proclaimed his hereditary right. Of course, no one felt inclined to move an amendment. That he was industrious in the matter in which he presented himself they well knew. That he was sober they probably had some reason to doubt! And after the Provost had duly assured Bannatyne of their delight at seeing him, Bannatyne then in louder and more boastful terms would remind the Council of the manner in which his ancestors had always defended the town, through thick and through thin, and would warn them to beware of their position if they had not men like himself to rely upon!

But the Town Council may probably have been quite pleased to see Bannatyne and to accept any offers of help, because the marks of a late raid by the Campbells must still have been visible over the countryside. There are, of course, no details of the damage done in this raid, but there is an account of how the affair was afterwards amicably settled—or perhaps more correctly—how it was patched up.

Argyle knew that his clansmen had gone too far. It was during the Regency of James V., and Argyle was sitting for the moment quite comfortably and nothing could be more upsetting to him and his people than that the Sheriff of Bute should write to the Exchequer that the Crown must not expect any taxes or rent from the Crown lands and the mills for some years owing to the land having been devastated, or that Kilchattan, who owned the teinds of the South End, should send one of the priests from St Blane's to the College of Glasgow to ask the Bishop for a cheque to buy bread with during the current year because the crops had been destroyed.

So Argyle sent his chaplain, the Reverend Donald Brown, to Rothesay, with instructions to get the matter arranged at all costs. Under the circumstances Mr Brown would scarcely have sailed down the Kyles. He probably set out from Toward and would have landed

at Rothesay on some shelving rocks where the Bute Arms Hotel now stands. From there he would have been hurried up to the Castle to stay under the protection of the Sheriff, and we are told that he there held conferences with several of the more important persons, including Stewart of Kilchattan and two members of the well-known family of Glass who were Burgesses of Rothesay, but both of whom held farms in the country. Cuningsburgh was there and also George Abernethy the lawyer.

Mr Brown was, of course, in an impossible position. He had to meet enormously exaggerated claims, but had no means whatever of checking them. However, he did obtain some estimate of the compensation that would be necessary, and a general meeting was arranged for the next day. Early next morning Mr Brown, escorted by the Sheriff and his son, and no doubt a considerable escort, rode out about four miles to the house of John Stewart of Kerecroy, overlooking the little Bay of that name. They arrived there at ten o'clock, and were met by a considerable number of smaller farmers and by Mr Finlay M'Gillenoch, vicar of Kingarth, whose parish and church was St Blane's, and by Sir William Bannatyne, Sir Patrick McWerartie, and Sir Patrick McConochy, who were the chaplains. The last one, for some reason unknown, committed suicide there about ten years afterwards.

Kerecroy had no doubt killed a sheep for the occasion, and Cuningsburgh would have taken care that there should be enough ale and other good things, not only to do the honours but also to help on the business.

We are told that they sat down in the garden of Kerecroy House and that an arrangement was, in fact, reached. Agreement had, of course, really been reached the night before, but the trouble now was to keep the smaller tenants quiet. However, Mr Brown started the

meeting by asking what satisfaction and compensation they were to ask from Argyle for the damage done. To this the Sheriff and Kerecroy immediately answered on behalf of all the neighbours that although Argyle had burnt and destroyed their lands and driven their cattle, yet because he had settled with them and had promised to be friends in the future, and because he had arranged with the Earl of Lennox to remit the teind meal belonging to Stewart of Kilchattan, therefore they forgave and discharged him and his accomplices for the injuries and damage done. All of which Mr McGillenoch and the chaplains would have taken care to have properly inscribed.

This simply means that Argyle had paid an inordinate amount of compensation, had promised never to do it again, and that Kilchattan, who was the owner of the teinds, was to be compensated in the teind meal by the Earl of Lennox.

Soon after this Stewart of Kilchattan got expelled from the Church. We are not told why, or if he was ever accepted back, but he went up to St Blane's Church and complained about it to Mr Finlay Lennox, the Dean, and the Dean convoked a sort of synod of laymen to try the case, amongst whom were Bannatyne of Scarrel in the North End, Cuningsburgh, and Abernethy the notar.

This was only a short time before his relation and next-door neighbour, Stewart of Largizean, was escheated of his lands for what the deed euphemistically describes as "having gone to England without leave." What he had really done was to get together two or three ships and joined with the Earl of Lennox in what they said was to be an attack on the French Fleet. He had probably met the Earl over the subject of compensation for the teinds, and we may imagine that it was then that they had laid the plans for the expedition.

They sailed out of the Clyde, but put in at Ballantrae, where they burnt some houses and carried off all they could lay their hands on. If he got to the English Channel he had to come back without sighting the enemy. The affair of Ballantrae was, of course, only a more economical way of victualling their ships than by doing so from their own stores.

But in 1544 Stewart of Kilchattan must have found things getting too hot for him. One can scarcely think that he found life at the Bay lacking in entertainment. In any case, he sold his lands and emigrated to Ireland, and his line can now be traced to the Earls of Londonderry.

At this time Bannatyne of Cames was having trouble with his tenants across the Kyles on the Cowal side of Argyle. I do not think the Bannatynes held much land in Argyle. The larger part of the family I suppose to have lived about Renfrew and Ayrshire. At least it was they and the Cunninghams who nearly defeated the Crown Forces under the Governor on the Wapenshaw ground in Glasgow a few years after the time we are now discussing. In this fight the Royal Army had three or four pieces of cannon, and they lost these at the first onslaught, and would have lost the day had not Lord Boyd of Kilmarnock with a body of men charged into the fray just in time to save the Governor's defeat.

Some of the Bute Bannatynes were in this affair. But as to the lands in Argyle, the lands concerned were those called the Auchincrossans on the Cowal side, and Bannatyne must have found it impossible to get any rent from the tenants. So in April, 1538, he went to Inverary with the trusted Abernethy, the notar, and there came to Bonds of Manrent with Argyle that they would support and defend each other.

Two days later he arrived at the Auchincrossans, and with one of the Spences and a couple of Bannatynes as

witnesses he ordered the five or six tenants to leave, while Abernethy took a formal note of the proceedings. Of course, this had no effect, and six weeks later he came back and did what I have never before seen mentioned. He threw three pieces of furniture out of each house to show his right to possession, but the tenants stood fast. He then returned and drove off their cattle and drove on his own.

The tenants, however, headed by young Lamont of Inneryn, drove off the laird's beasts and drove their own back again. Bannatyne, now seeing that he had to do with Inneryn, must have complained to Argyle that he was not honouring the agreement they had come to of mutual support.

Argyle then summoned Inneryn to a Court to be held at Dunoon. The Court was held on the Hill there, and the case had not gone very far before Inneryn boldly accused Argyle of bias against him.

Under these shocking circumstances, Argyle did the right thing. He protested that he held no feelings of hostility towards Lamont of Inneryn, which may well have been true, but asked that a formal note of Lamont's accusation be taken.

I have not followed the thing further, but Inneryn must have complained to the Lords as they ordered the case to be passed to the Sheriffs of Kyle and Ayr. This is as far as these papers take us.

But the Bannatynes remained in possession of the Auchincrossans for another hundred years, and from the Inventory of Lamont Papers published by the Scottish Text Society the Bannatynes are shown to have been in possession of the Auchincrossans before 1475 and to have held the lands until 1623.

While this was going on the beginnings of a much longer intrigue were unfolding themselves.

Somewhere about 1544 Macdonald of the Isles met the Earl of Arran in Rothsay. Two people of such distinction must have stayed at the Castle and been guests of the Sheriff, if indeed Arran did not lodge there by right of his Governorship. Nevertheless, they there, under the Sheriff's very nose, signed a Bond of Manrent, the object of which was to do the Sheriff out of his lands in the Isle of Arran and get them into Macdonald's possession.

Three years later there are the details of a meeting between Macdonald and Argyle in which Argyle undertakes to help Macdonald in the matter. This may well leave a doubt as to whether Arran was not playing Macdonald false. On the other hand, Macdonald's family were the foster-parents of Arran's second son, a bond of relationship that would seem to preclude any such double dealing.

This subject of fostering was a peculiar one. It was not so much the domestic affair that it sounds as that of a social custom with very far-reaching effects.

In the ordinary way, when the child was sent to the foster-parents a considerable head of cattle was sent with it to the house of the foster-parents. After seven or eight years, or when the child was returned home, it brought with it the increase of stock. When the child came of age the foster-parents made it a present equal to a portion of the cattle it had at first brought with it.

The custom must have been an exceedingly old one, as the early Irish writings gave in detail the number of cattle that each person, according to his degree, should send with the child—not that I think for an instant that these rules were adhered to.

Innes and Cameron and Macdonald give examples of fostering arrangements, and there is another case showing how seriously the matter was regarded. It is a

case where the fostering had been arranged, but where, owing to something unforeseen, it had not been found possible to send the child, and some years later the intended foster-father had died. But so deeply inherent and punctilious was the custom that the executors of the intended foster-father thought it incumbent to send the child a sum of money when he came to the age of 14.

An Englishman, writing as late as 1725, says that the child was fostered with people of much less degree, and when it returned to its own home the foster-parents came with it and the foster-father became the Laird's henchman.

These Bute papers afford a case somewhat the same but not quite analogous. It is about 1560, and here Walter Stewart, a small landowner, was left a widower with four young children whom he found himself unable to tend. He therefore sent them to a neighbour. With the eldest boy was sent thirty full-grown cattle and five young beasts. One calf was to be reared between every two of these cows, and this increase of stock was to go back with the boy as his own property when he was fourteen years old.

Another thirty head of cattle went with the other three children, but the deed does not say definitely what was ultimately done with the stock originally sent with the children.

The more one reads of these documents relating to fostering, or rather the more often one reads over the few we have extant, the more they appear to be less a matter of fostering than really a manner of forming a trust for the child so that it should have something to succeed to when it came of age.

But to return to the lands in Arran. The case went on spasmodically for so long that we cannot follow it in detail here.

The Sheriff was summoned to Edinburgh on the accusation of having harried some lands in Arran. It was not he but the Argyll men who had again done the lifting, but with the Earl of Arran as Governor of the Kingdom the Sheriff was in an impossible position.

He knew by now that he would be cajoled or forced to part with his Arran properties, and so when he landed at Largs on his way to Edinburgh, and again in the Church in Glasgow, he signed an affidavit before witnesses that he had been falsely accused, that he went to Edinburgh against his will, and that if he were deprived of his lands in Arran it would not be by fair means.

When he did get to Edinburgh the best he could do was to agree to accept the Chamberlaincy of Bute and Arran, be secured in his lands in Cumbrae, and sell the Arran lands for four thousand merks, which was greatly below their value.

He got the Chamberlaincy and all that, but not the four thousand merks, and when his successor pursued for the money it was answered that there existed a receipt for the amount by his father.

This document is a discharge for the four thousand merks drawn up by one Sir Thomas, who is introduced as Procurator for the late Sheriff. It bears to have been presented before the Lords of Council and contains a further agreement that the money having been paid the contract should now be deleted from the Court books. The Sheriff saw, of course, that the document was a forgery. No such person as Sir Thomas was known of, and it was not legal to subtract deeds from the State Registers.

He accused Mr James McWerartie, Chaplain of Kingarth, of being the forger, but the Chaplain denied it on what he called his salvation or damnation.

There is not much more given here on this particular point. But now that Arran had the lands he offered to lease them to Macdonald. But Macdonald was not the sort of man who usually leased lands, nor from what he knew of Arran would he wish to have him as his superior.

So Macdonald went to Argyle again and Argyle promised to do what he could to get Arran to sell the lands. But Arran soon after lost the Governorship and the lands were forfeited to the Crown,

In 1579, that is just after the accession of James VI. and when times must have appeared more settled, at least in the West, the Sheriff laid a complaint that for some twenty-five years past neither he nor his father had received the customs due from certain farms to the Captain of the Castle. These dues are described as having been paid since before memory of man, and which, from the seven farms concerned, amounted to 9 sheep, 16½ creels of peat, and 16½ sledges of straw.

Upon this the Lords of Council sent two separate Commissioners to Rothesay to try the case. Bannatyne was now heritor of most of these lands, but he did not appear and judgment was given in favour of the Sheriff.

Heartened by this, the Burgh of Rothesay then entered a complaint on its behalf because it too had ancient rights to the same form of customs from other lands in the island. These had probably been given to the burgh to help it meet the expense of entertaining important or official visitors.

Bannatyne was not so deeply affected by the burgh claims, but he did not want to pay dues at all and so made a counter complaint which contained some history we do not hear of otherwise.

The gravamen of his complaint is that the Sheriff is always pursuing him, his family, and tenants through

the Courts, and therefore he wishes to be exempt from the Sheriff's jurisdiction. To prove his case, he points out that it is well known that Ninian Stewart, the present Sheriff's grandfather, in 1533 killed one of the Bannatynes who was nicknamed "the parson's son," and that later, in 1569, Peter McCome, the Sheriff's nephew, went out and slew one Donald Bannatyne, and that therefore there is a state of feud between them unreconciled.

The Lords, however, do not seem to have shown much sympathy. They advocated some small payment to satisfy some of the smaller grumbles, and as to the rest suggested that bygone might be bygones.

This is the only notice we have of these two slaughters, but with the names and dates given I think we must accept them as authentic.

But perhaps the matter the most elaborate and troublesome displayed in these papers is that of the teinds of the Parish of Rothesay.

The cause is the usual one, but the effect seems to be inordinate in comparison to other parishes.

Broadly speaking, the reformed Church, not, of course, having ministers enough at the start to fill vacant parishes, a large number of parishes possessed no one to receive the teinds. The Church authorities therefore sold the rights to the teinds for so many years to someone else in the parish, and this new owner very often re-sold them to a higher bidder, or sold them in part or mortgaged them. In Rothesay the matter came to such a pass that there are intervals of sometimes four or five years when no teinds were paid—not because the farmers refused to pay but because they refused to pay until they knew with certainty to whom the teinds were really due, and this had often to be proved in Court.

But there was no such trouble in the Kingarth Parish of the south end. There Stewart of Kilchattan

had held the teinds from time immemorial. It is true that Kilchattan had emigrated to Ireland in 1544, but another Stewart had come in to Kilchattan in his place and no doubt the elder branch had transferred all rights they possessed to the younger one, and the younger one was equally determined that no Reformation should be allowed to interfere with the due course of business.

So a year before the Reformation was established Kilchattan took the precaution of having his rights to the teinds confirmed for his lifetime. They included the teinds, the fruits, the glebe, and the kirklands of Kingarth, for which he paid £40 a year. He had made the thing what in business parlance is called "an attractive proposition" by adding a gallon of aqua vitae to the £40. These provisions must have ensured the smooth running of the agreement, because after lasting more than forty years the General Assembly and Dean of the Isles continued it not only to Ninian Stewart for his lifetime but extended it to his heir for his life and the next generation for nineteen years.

That, I think, is a fair, general résumé of the more lively details to be found in these documents up to about the date 1600, and although it may not leave in one's mind a sense of peace, or that of quiet country life, nor lead one to regard Rothesay Castle in the 16th and 17th centuries as a sort of Balmoral—as it probably had been in earlier days. Nevertheless, it must be recognised that a large part of the population—the McKawes in the south, the McWerarties in the central part, with many Stewarts and with successive Cunningburghs—were willing to live on their lands as peaceably as might be allowed.

Even in the case of the Bannatynes we have already noticed a Sir William Bannatyne as one of the chaplains present at the meeting with Argyle's envoy at Kerrecroy. And in 1546 there is a letter from Gavin, Bishop of Glasgow, saying he had found Robert Banna-

tyne, student of the Diocese of the Isles and son of Ninian Bannatyne of Camas, able and fit to receive the first ordination.

And these papers are very complete in the information they give of the rents and taxes on the different lands. These were generally paid in kind in corn meal and in beef, under the name of "the lardner mart"—or a fattened animal due at Martinmas.

This matter of the lardner mart is often a complicated one—such as one mart, two-fifths and two-tenths of a mart, or, in another instance, one-fourth and one-twentieth parts. This leaves some difficulty in one's mind as to how the thing really was paid. One cannot imagine all the farmers on the 11th November driving their cattle into Rothesay and all shouting for the crowner to take the beasts off their hands and give them a receipt for their taxes paid. Moreover, this still leaves us with the difficulty of the two-tenths. But last winter I spent some time transcribing a kitchen book, and from it I gather that the lardner mart was really paid at any time of the year and was often paid not in the live animal but in pieces of beef. And I judge, therefore, that there was some accepted number of pieces or weight to represent an animal, and that the two-tenths would be paid in a certain number of pieces, and probably these would be taken to the King's Mill in Rothesay where they would be salted down and packed into barrels.

I had not intended going beyond the year 1600, but there is one incident just after that date which is worthy of recounting.

It refers to what is known as "ward in marriage," and for those who may not have examined this particular custom I may explain that these rights were the rights of tutors or guardians to chose the husband or wife that their ward should marry.

When the parents were alive they, of course, took care that the child should not enter into any foolish marriage, but where the child was an orphan this responsibility had come into other hands and the thing—even, I think, at the beginning of history, had already become degraded, as the rights of marriage had acquired a money interest and were sold and often re-sold.

Thus, for instance, if Barganny thought that young McCulloch was an eligible young man for his daughter he would buy McCulloch's ward of marriage from whoever owned it and then marry him to the girl. In the case of a young lady with a prospective tocher, her rights of marriage might be bandied about at an ever-increasing value.

In the example from Bute we have the very unusual case where the young man was so ungallant as to refuse point-blank to take the girl! The Sheriff had the donation in marriage of young James Stewart of Ardmoleis, and on 26th February sent to him a messenger called John Glass equipped with what in the document is described as his "very full free plain power express bidding special mandament and charge" in his name and behalf to say he had arranged with Mr and Mrs Hector Bannatyne of Camies that he, James Stewart, should marry their daughter Elizabeth, and hoped he would do so before the 12th March. The young man, however, began to make excuses and said he would consult his mother—a thing which, of course, the messenger had never before heard of! The messenger lost his temper, said he could only regard such nonsense as a refusal, threatened young Stewart that he would have to pay a fine of double the value of his ward in marriage, and set off as quickly as possible for Rothesay, where he immediately took ship to Irvine, and there, in the house of Lady Montgrenane, and supported by a notar and witnesses, drew up a signed affidavit of what had happened.

I do not suppose for a moment that Stewart paid any fine for his temerity, and he did not, in any case, marry the girl, as she was married to one of her cousins a short time later.

Before I conclude, there is one of the agricultural charters that I should refer to as of exceptional interest. It is dated 1528 and is simply a gift by the King to one John Kelso of the rents and profits of three horse-gang of land extending to twenty-five shillings worth of the lands of Brigadill. That is all, but anyone who may have tried to fathom the difficulties of the "old extent" will at once appreciate the importance of this document.

Here we are given for the first time the true meaning of "horse-gang." The Scottish Dictionary takes a shot at the word but misses the mark. Writers on the subject, such as Skene and Innes, notice the extent but are forced to leave it unexplained. But here the horse-gang is shown to be an 8s 4d land, and if I may now be allowed to take a shot at a venture I would say twenty-one acres.

I make no doubt that these Charters of Bute lands would well repay a systematic investigation, but so great was the intercourse between the Islands of Bute and Arran that the history of the inhabitants can never be regarded as fully known until there may have been transcribed the Charters of the Earl of Antrim, the present representative of the Macdonells of the Isles, and the Arran documents of the Hamiltons.