

Niel Ballingall (1750-1843): The First Ballingall Factor of Balbirnie, Markinch Parish, Fife
By His Distant First Cousin, Michael T. Tracy

"Yet every local history has a value of its own as a portion of the larger history of the country. Besides, in old days, much more than at present, when the life of the nation centres in the large towns, each spot of Scottish ground felt the touch of great events and was affected by them. As, on mountains and rocks we see the marks of old upheavals and weathering, so, in old parish records, we find the imprint of the storms that traversed Scotland in Church and State, and we see how the inhabitants of even the most secluded places were often to their sorrow passionately involved in these tempests. A local history must of necessity be fragmentary and interrupted, but the glimpses we are able to get of the men and women of past generations as they lived on this one spot are vivid enough to give pleasure and awaken sympathy. Humble and forgotten as they are, it is on their lives that ours have been built up, and we owe more than we think to those men of the past who tilled the soil and built and planted, and struggled for freedom and served God long years ago..."

Reverend James Ballingall, 1905
Grandson of Niel Ballingall

He was named after the minister of Kennoway, Dr. Niel Bethune who was ordained only a few months before the child's birth.¹ Niel Balligall was born of humble parents and after growing up in Kennoway Parish, Fife, the history of the family suggests that he may have been a clerk for a time in a lawyer's office in Cupar, and may have assisted Mr. A. Small, Factor at Balbirnie, before succeeding him as Factor in 1770, at the age of 20.² Another account of his early years suggests that he was apprenticed to Mr. Jamieson, writer at Brymers Newton west of Kennoway where he had the benefit of his library, of which he made the most diligent use.³ He would continuously serve the Balfour family whose residence was Balbirnie House until 1969. Today the Balbirnie House is a hotel.



Fig.1. Old View of Balbirnie House, Markinch Parish, Fife, Photograph Courtesy of the Fife Family History Society

¹ Ballingall, Rev. James. *The Ballingalls of Sweetbank, Markinch*. Typescript, undated

² Ballingall, Rev. James. *The Ballingalls of Sweetbank, Markinch*. Typescript, undated

³ *Caledonian Mercury Newspaper*, 29 April 1843, p. 3

Niel and his first wife, Betty McKenzie, are said to have given the name of the newly built Factor's House "Sweetbank," on the Balbirnie estate. Unfortunately, she would die within a year of their marriage, leaving no children. Ballingall, within two years of her death, would marry Isabella Russell, another old Fife farming family and have 13 children while at Sweetbank. In his early days of his Factorship at Balbirnie, he took a lease of the farm of Auchmuty on the Rothes estate. It was thought that Ballingall needed more money to support his growing family.⁴ On a large estate like Balbirnie, Ballingall had numerous responsibilities which included the management of the farm steadings; securing new tenants; roads and bridges on the estate to repair or build; improvements on the estate which included extensive tree planting and drainage of any bog land's and other miscellaneous duties as required. One such stone bridge that may have been constructed by the Factor is still presently standing which would have been wide enough for a cart is located on the southwest boundary of Star Moss.



Fig.2. A Possible Ballingall Stone Bridge near Lochmuir Woods, Markinch Parish, Photograph Courtesy of Mr. Neil Sutherland, Chairman, Markinch Heritage Group

⁴ Ballingall, Rev. James. *The Ballingalls of Sweetbank, Markinch*. Typescript, undated



Fig.3. Ordnance Survey Map, 1843-1882 showing location of a stone bridge possibly constructed by Niel Ballingall, Factor of Balbirnie on the southwest boundary of Star Moss, Photograph Courtesy of the National Library of Scotland

As Ballingall grew older he was happy to have his son, William (1800-1888), as his assistant and successor as Factor on the Balbirnie estate. Niel and his son were successively Factors at Balbirnie for considerably more than a century. This then is the narrative of the life and times of Niel Ballingall, the Factor of Balbirnie.

Early years

Niel Ballingall was born in October of 1750 in Kennoway Parish, Fife. He was the first child of David Ballingall (1721-1805), a weaver, and Rachel Durie. He was named after the minister of Kennoway, Dr. Niel Bethune who was ordained on Thursday, 30 August 1750.⁵ He was baptized on Sunday, 14 October 1750 at Kennoway Parish.⁶

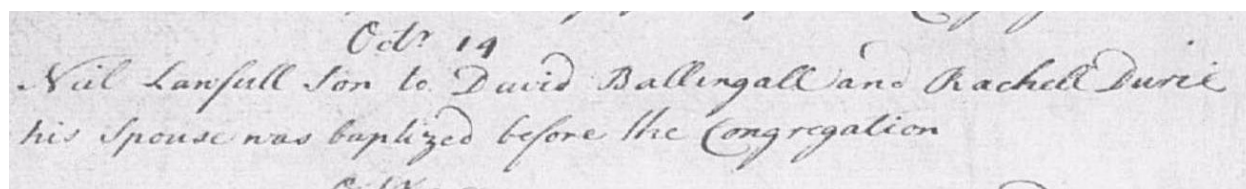


Fig.4. Baptismal Record of Niel Ballingall, 14 October 1750, Kennoway Parish Records, Crown Copyright

⁵ Ballingall, Rev. James. *The Ballingalls of Sweetbank, Markinch*. Typescript, undated

⁶ Baptismal Record of Niel Ballingall, 14 October 1750, Kennoway Parish Records, Old Parish Records 434/0020 0309

“His father, David, was a self-employed weaver working from home. The family lived the life of simple peasants having a cottage with garden and a little area of grass to keep a cow or two and some poultry. The spinning wheel was kept at the fireside. [The] children were brought up attending church and school and receiving both secular and religious lessons in the home... Niel attended Kennoway School but it is not known how he acquired his knowledge of [the] law to allow him to acquire the factorship of Balbirnie.”⁷ However Niel Ballingall may have been a clerk in for a time in a lawyer’s office in Cupar, and possibly may have assisted the Factor at Balbirnie, Mr. A. Small, before succeeding him as Factor at Balbirnie at the age of 20.⁸ There is another account of his early years which suggests that he was an apprentice to Mr. Jamieson, writer at Brymers Newton west of Kennoway where he made use of his library by understanding and reading his books.⁹ In either case what is apparent is that he had the means of gratifying his quest for knowledge and continued to build upon his education throughout his lifetime. Further evidence of his education was that he completed two early surveys which took some knowledge to complete. The first survey was a sectional plan of Pit Number 5 in the Balbirnie Coalfield dated 1775.¹⁰ The second early survey completed by Ballingall was a plan of encroachments alleged to be made by Balbirnie on the Cadham Coalfield dated in 1776.¹¹

The Balfours of Balbirnie

The Balfour family has had a long and distinguished history in the Kingdom of Fife for generations. The family acquired the Balbirnie estate from the heritable sheriffs of Fife in 1640.¹² John Balfour (1738-1813) rebuilt the 17th-century house between 1777 and 1782, employed the renowned Scottish landscape gardener and draftsman, Robert Robinson to draw up proposals for improvements to the estate. It was John Balfour who first hired Niel Ballingall as his Factor in 1770.¹³ He was considered the first Factor of Balbirnie. The post would be handed down to each successive generation of the family until 1916, lasting more than 146 years. Niel Ballingall would also serve under General Robert Balfour (1772-1837) who was heavily involved in extending the landscaped garden and moving the roads on the estate. The family had great influence in helping Markinch become industrialized in the 19th-century.

⁷ Gourlay, Ian, Wilkie, Ken, Manson, Bruce. *Markinch: Its Church and Parish*. Markinch: Inkcharm, 2010, p. 143

⁸ Ballingall, Rev. James. *The Ballingalls of Sweetbank, Markinch*. Typescript, undated

⁹ *Caledonian Mercury Newspaper*, 29 April 1843, p. 3

¹⁰ Sectional Plan of Pit Number 5 in Balbirnie Coalfield, National Records of Scotland, Ref RHP 23735

¹¹ Plan of encroachments alleged to be made by Balbirnie on the Cadham Coalfield about the year of 1776, National Records of Scotland, Ref RHP 23753

¹² portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/GDL/00034

¹³ Ballingall, Rev. James. *The Ballingalls of Sweetbank, Markinch*. Typescript, undated

Marriage and the Factor's House of Sweetbank

Niel met Betty McKenzie most likely at Balbirnie House as she was the governess to the Balfour children.¹⁴ They began dating and on Saturday, 17 December 1785 they were married at Markinch Parish by the Reverend John Thomson.¹⁵ Their marriage record states that on the day they were married the newly married couple gave twenty pence to the poor.¹⁶

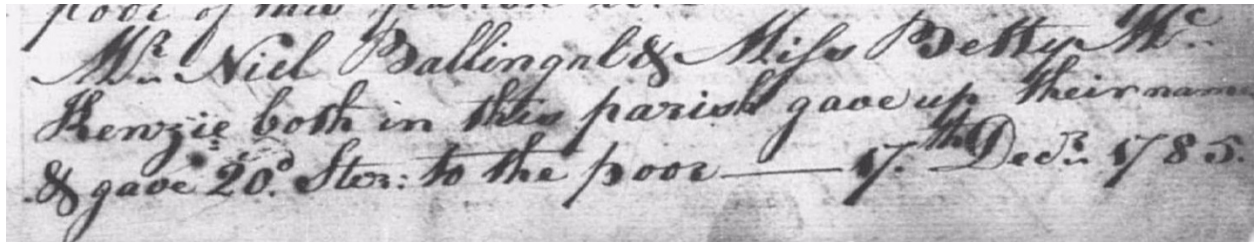


Fig.5. Marriage Record of Niel Ballingall, 17 December 1785, Markinch Parish Records, Crown Copyright



Fig.6. Markinch Parish Church, Photograph Courtesy of Michael T. Tracy © 2010 Michael T. Tracy

¹⁴ Ballingall, Rev. James. *The Ballingalls of Sweetbank, Markinch*. Typescript, undated

¹⁵ Marriage Record of Niel Ballingall, 17 December 1785, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0020 0251

¹⁶ Marriage Record of Niel Ballingall, 17 December 1785, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0020 0251

At about the same time of their marriage, a Factor's house was being constructed on the Balbirnie estate. It was said that Niel and Betty gave the name of "Sweetbank" to the new house.¹⁷ The name could refer to a bank or slope of good land.



Fig.7. Ordnance Survey Map, showing Sweetbank, Markinch Parish, Fife, Photograph Courtesy of the National Library of Scotland

Sweetbank was located 3/8 of a mile west by south of the village of Markinch.¹⁸ The property is described in the Ordnance Survey Name Books of 1853-55 as "a dwelling house with garden attached, occupied by Mr. Ballingal, Factor for the Estates of Balbirnie and Balgonie, the property of Mr. Balfour, Balbirnie House."¹⁹

¹⁷ Ballingall, Rev. James. *The Ballingalls of Sweetbank, Markinch*. Typescript, undated

¹⁸ Ordnance Survey Name Books, *Fife and Kinross-shire Ordnance Survey Name Books, 1853-1855, Volume 92, OS1/13/92/31*

¹⁹ Ordnance Survey Name Books, *Fife and Kinross-shire Ordnance Survey Name Books, 1853-1855, Volume 92, OS1/13/92/31*

20,000. 11-53. *Plan 24 A Markinch Parish* No. 21. 317

List of Names to be corrected if necessary	Orthography, as recommended to be used in the new Plans	Other modes of Spelling the same Name	Authority for these other modes of Spelling when known	Situation	Descriptive Remarks, or other General Observations which may be considered of Interest
<i>Prestonhall</i>	<i>Prestonhall</i>	<i>Prestonhall</i> Do Do Do	<i>Property Plan</i> <i>Mr Ballingall</i> <i>Mr Nichols</i> <i>Mr. Nichols</i> <i>Revd. Mr. Nichols</i>	<i>1/2 mile N. of Markinch</i>	<i>A row of Cottages and garden, occupied by Laborers and Cottiers.</i>
<i>Sweetbank</i>	<i>Sweet Bank</i>	<i>Sweet Bank</i> <i>Sweetbank</i> Do Do Do	<i>Property Plan</i> <i>Mr. Ballingall</i> <i>Mr Nichols</i> <i>Mr. Nichols</i> <i>Revd. Mr. Nichols</i> <i>Property Plan</i>	<i>1/2 mile N. of Markinch</i>	<i>A dwelling house with garden attached, occupied by Mr. Ballingall, factor for the Estates of Balbirnie and Balgonie, the property of Mr. Balfour Balbirnie House.</i>
<i>Balbirnie Bridge</i>	<i>Balbirnie Bridge</i>	<i>Balbirnie Bridge</i> Do Do Do	<i>Mr. Ballingall</i> <i>Mr. Nichols</i> <i>Mr. Nichols</i> <i>Revd. Mr. Nichols</i>	<i>1/2 mile N. of Markinch</i>	<i>An old stone bridge of two arches over the River Leven on the old Watergate road. It was built by the County.</i>

Fig.8. Ordnance Survey Name Book for Sweetbank, Markinch Parish, Fife, Photograph Courtesy of ScotlandsPlaces.gov.uk

Betty Ballingall would not reside long in the home and she, unfortunately, died within a year of the marriage in 1786, leaving no children.²⁰

²⁰ Ballingall, Rev. James. *The Ballingalls of Sweetbank, Markinch*. Typescript, undated

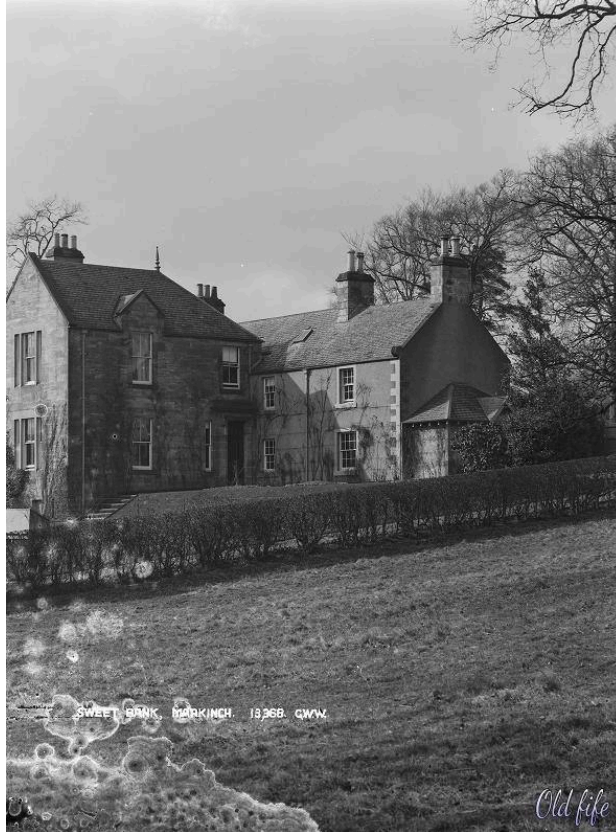


Fig.9. Sweetbank House, Markinch Parish, Residence of the Ballingall Family for three generations, Photograph Courtesy of the Markinch Heritage Group

Sweetbank would continue to be the residence of the Ballingall family for three generations. The home was, unfortunately, demolished in 2009.

Isabella Russell

Like the Ballingall family, the Russell family was an old and extensive Fife farming family. Isabella Russell was 17 years younger than Niel when they first met. Soon they began dating and on Tuesday, 15 January 1788 they were married in Kinglassie Parish.²¹

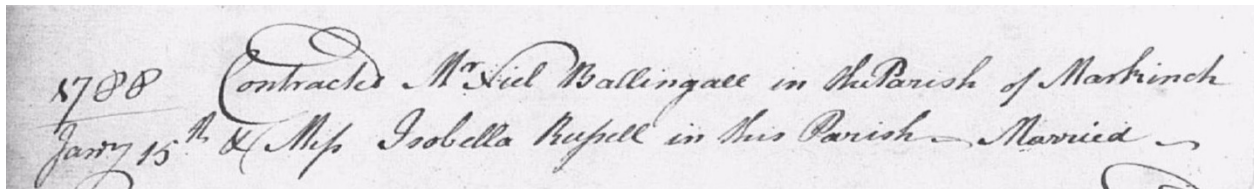


Fig.10. Marriage Record of Niel Ballingall, 15 January 1788, Kinglassie Parish Records, Crown Copyright

²¹ Marriage Record of Niel Ballingall, 15 January 1788, Kinglassie Parish Records, Old Parish Records 440/0020 0312



Fig.11. Kinglassie Parish Church, Photograph Courtesy of Scottishchurches.org.uk

The couple had 13 children who were all born at Sweetbank, Markinch Parish. They were:

David born on Monday, 16 March 1789;²²

Isobella born on Tuesday, 27 July 1790²³ and died on Monday, 23 May 1836;²⁴

Robert born on Monday, 12 December 1791²⁵ and died on Thursday, 7 June 1860;²⁶

Elisabeth born on Tuesday, 7 May 1793;²⁷

Elisabeth born on Friday, 2 January 1795²⁸ and died on Sunday, 28 June 1863;²⁹

David born on Friday, 8 July 1796³⁰ and died on Sunday, 1 August 1841;³¹

James born on Sunday, 28 January 1798³² and died on Tuesday, 24 June 1856;³³

Rachel born on Sunday, 4 August 1799³⁴ and died on Monday, 28 October 1839;³⁵

²² Baptismal Record of David Ballingall, 22 March 1789, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0020 0030

²³ Baptismal Record of Isobella Ballingall, 5 August 1790, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0020 0036

²⁴ Burial Record of Isobella Russell, 25 May 1836, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0070 0171

²⁵ Baptismal Record of Robert Ballingall, 15 December 1791, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0020 0042

²⁶ Death Record of Robert Ballingall, 7 June 1860, Newburn Parish Records, Statutory Deaths 451/0000 0003

²⁷ Baptismal Record of Elisabeth Ballingall, 20 May 1793, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0020 0047

²⁸ Baptismal Record of Elisabeth Ballingall, 11 January 1795, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0020 0055

²⁹ Death Record of Elisabeth Peat, 28 June 1863, Edinburgh Newington Parish Records, Statutory Deaths 685/0005 0372

³⁰ Baptismal Record of David Ballingall, 20 July 1796, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0020 0067

³¹ Burial Record of David Ballingall, 3 August 1841, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0060 0187

³² Baptismal Record of James Ballingall, 4 February 1798, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0020 0076

³³ Death Record of James Ballingall, 24 June 1856, Newburn Parish Records, Statutory Deaths 451/00 0004

³⁴ Baptismal Record of Rachel Ballingall, 11 August 1799, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0020 0084

³⁵ Burial Record of Rachel Ballingall, 30 October 1839, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0070 0226

William born on Tuesday, 16 December 1800³⁶ and died on Monday, 1 October 1888;³⁷
Ann born on Tuesday, 20 April 1802³⁸ and died on Saturday, 18 April 1857;³⁹
Jean (Jane) born on Wednesday, 19 October 1803⁴⁰ and died on Monday, 19 June 1876;⁴¹
Niel born on Tuesday, 25 December 1804⁴² and died on Thursday, 16 August 1888;⁴³
Amelia born on Wednesday, 8 October 1806⁴⁴ and died on Wednesday, 5 September 1888.⁴⁵

Markinch Parish

According to the Statistical Accounts of Scotland, Markinch Parish is described in 1794 as being “the greatest extent of the parish from N. to S., is five miles and a half; and from E. to W., about five miles... Markinch is, perhaps, one of the most populous country parishes in Fife, the number of souls amounting to nearly 2,800... The principal heritors are the Earl of Leven, Mr. Balfour of Balbirnie, Colonel Wemyss of Wemyss, Mr. Bethune of Balfour, and the Countess of Rothes...”⁴⁶ “The village of Markinch is pleasantly situated about half-a-mile to the north of the Leven and about 2 miles from the northern extremity of the parish. It is populous and thriving, and enjoys a considerable share of the linen manufacture... A short way north-west of the village of Markinch is Balbirnie house, the residence of John Balfour, Esq., of Balbirnie. It is an elegant mansion, as will be seen from the view of it given in this work, sweetly situated in a sheltered valley amid extensive grounds richly wooded.”⁴⁷

³⁶ Baptismal Record of William Ballingall, 29 December 1800, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0020 0092

³⁷ Death Record of William Ballingall, 1 October 1888, Markinch Parish Records, Statutory Deaths 447/0000 0118

³⁸ Baptismal Record of Ann Ballingall, 2 April 1802, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0020 0099

³⁹ Death Record of Ann Leburn, 18 April 1857, Edinburgh Castle and Portsburgh Parish Records, Statutory Deaths 685/0003 0225

⁴⁰ Baptismal Record of Jean Ballingall, 30 October 1803, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0020 0110

⁴¹ Death Record of Jane Railton, 19 June 1876, Markinch Parish Records, Statutory Deaths 447/0000 0045

⁴² Baptismal Record of Niel Ballingall, 30 December 1804, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0020 0121

⁴³ Death Record of Niel Ballingall, 16 August 1888, Markinch Parish Records, Statutory Deaths 447/0000 0100

⁴⁴ Baptismal Record of Amelia Ballingall, 8 October 1806, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0020 0130

⁴⁵ Death Record of Amelia Catterns, 5 September 1888, Markinch Parish Records, Statutory Deaths 447/0000 0105

⁴⁶ Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1791-1845, *Markinch, County of Fife, OSA, Volume XII*, 1794, p. p. 525-529

⁴⁷ Leighton, John M. *History of the County of Fife, Volume III*. Glasgow Joseph Swan, 1840, p. 181



Fig.12. Markinch Parish Church as seen from street level, Photograph Courtesy of Michael T. Tracy © 2010 Michael T. Tracy

The appearance of Markinch and the countryside was vastly different from its modern scene when Ballingall took over his duties as Factor of Balbirnie. A painting of Markinch and its countryside as depicted in circa 1820 showing its parish church (St. Drostan's) in the background, East Lomond or Falkland Hill in the distance and Balgonie Place with cows grazing in front of it and is reproduced below. The painting hangs in the Markinch Parish Church.



Fig.13. Painting of Markinch, c. 1820, Reproduced by Permission of Markinch Parish Church, Photograph Courtesy of Mr. Ken Wilkie

Farm Horse Tax 1797-1798

In 1785 the Parliament enacted a duty on all farm horses in the country. Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank was first listed in the Farm Horse Tax Roll dated on Tuesday, 22 August 1797 as having 5 horses, 4 horses were liable for being taxed; 1 horse was not taxed and Ballingall was taxed under the law, 8 shillings.⁴⁸

The Clock and Watch Tax of 1797

In 1797 the Parliament enacted a duty on all clocks and watches in the country. As one might imagine, this tax was very unpopular and within a year the Act was repealed in 1798. Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank was listed on Sunday, 27 August 1797 as having one clock and one gold watch and was taxed under the law 11 shillings and 3 pence.⁴⁹

The Window Tax

The Window Tax was a property tax based on the number of windows in a residence and was imposed in Scotland after the year of 1748. This also was viewed by many as quite unpopular and to avoid paying the tax some homes from the period can be seen to have taken out their windows or to have them bricked up. The earliest Window Tax which listed Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank was on Monday, 22 August 1785 in which Sweetbank had 7 windows and was subsequently taxed 4 pounds, 1 shilling and 2 pence.⁵⁰

Time when Surveyed.		INHABITANTS NAMES, &c.	Folio or Number of Houses.	Seven windows.	Eight windows.	Nine windows.	Ten windows.	Eleven windows.	Twelve windows.	Thirteen windows.	Fourteen to Nineteen to be taxed.	Twenty windows.	Twenty-one windows.	Twenty-two windows.	Twenty-three windows.	Twenty-four windows.	Twenty-five and upwards.	DUTY ON WINDOWS.	DUTY ON HOUSES.
Aug. 22 1785		Markinch.																	
		James Alexander Bridgeford	557																
		David Thomson Markinch	558																
		George Craig Ballingall	559																
		James Smith Ballingall	560																
		William Kempfoot Ballingall	561																
		John Langdale Ballingall	562																
		John Ballingall in Cameron	563																
		George Lowe in Cameron	564																
		Alexander Landale Nether	565																
		William Fraith of Markinch	566																
		Thomas Gairdner Markinch	567																
		John Gairdner Ballingall	568									21						1 15	
		Ballingall Campbell Ballingall	569													50		5	
		William Ballingall Ballingall	570													44		4 8	
		Robert Ballingall Ballingall	571															1 2	
		Robert McNeill Ballingall	572	7														6	
		St. Tridder in Cameron	573			9												17 4	
		William Ballingall Ballingall	574							13								1 2 4	
		John Ballingall Ballingall	575								15							4 8	
		Niel Ballingall Markinch	576	7														1 2	

Fig.14. Window Tax Roll for Niel Ballingall, 22 August 1785 (Last Entry), Photograph Courtesy of ScotlandsPlaces.gov.uk

⁴⁸ Horse Tax Rolls, 1785-1798, *Farm Horse Tax*, Volume 2, E326/10/2/275

⁴⁹ Clock and Watch Tax Rolls, 1797-1798, *Clock and Watch Tax*, Volume 2, E326/12/2/19

⁵⁰ Window Tax, 1748-1798, *Window Tax*, Volume 48, E326/1/48/37

During the next year of 1786, Ballingall was taxed 1 pound, 1 shilling and 2 pence.⁵¹

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Time when Surveyed.	INHABITANTS NAMES, &c.	Positive Number of Houses.	R A T E S.														DUTY	
			Seven	Eight	Nine	Ten	Eleven	Twelve	Thirteen	Fourteen	Fifteen	Sixteen	Seventeen	Eighteen	Nineteen	Twenty	DUTY ON WINDOWS.	DUTY ON HOUSES.
			windows	windows	windows	windows	windows	windows	windows	from nine to ten win. lost.	from ten to eleven win. lost.	from eleven to twelve win. lost.	from twelve to thirteen win. lost.	from thirteen to fourteen win. lost.	from fourteen to fifteen win. lost.	from fifteen to sixteen win. lost.		
July 31 st 1786.	<i>Leuchart Mrs. Cowie</i>	537															1	12
	<i>Henry Tenens in Jiggie</i>	538		8													4	1
	<i>David Fitch in Hayson</i>	539	7														1	1
	<i>Henry Stark Esq. Pitreulo</i>	540															3	1
	<i>Mr. Balfour in Hayson</i>	541						12									14	1
	<i>Robert Balfour in Leuchart</i>	542				10											8	1
	<i>Thomas Lawson in Pitreulo</i>	543	7														1	1
	<i>John Armstrong Esq. Pitreulo</i>	544															3	1
	<i>Robert Edie in Machmoremill</i>	545	7														1	1
	<i>Charles Hall at Machmoremill</i>	546			9												6	1
	<i>Mr. Hutchison in Edinburgh</i>	547		8													4	1
	<i>Mr. Tod in Leuchart</i>	548	7	8													1	1
	<i>John Mathew in Hayson</i>	549				10											8	1
	<i>David Buchanan in Hayson</i>	550								18							1	1
	<i>Mr. John Maitland</i>	551															7	1
			28	24	9	20		12		18							61	10
July 28 th	<i>Logie</i>																	
	<i>John Edie in Pitreulo</i>	552																1
	<i>Robert Edmond in Leuchart</i>	553																1
	<i>Thomas Ritchie Esq. Pitreulo</i>	554																1
	<i>John Donaldson in Leuchart</i>	555																1
	<i>Mr. Logie Maitland</i>	556				10											8	4
						10											8	4
July 1 st	<i>Markinch</i>																	
	<i>James Alexander in Markinch</i>	557																1
	<i>David Thomson in Markinch</i>	558																1
	<i>George Craig in Markinch</i>	559																1
	<i>James Smith in Markinch</i>	560																1
	<i>William Cornfoot at Pitreulo</i>	561																1
	<i>John Landale in Pitreulo</i>	562																1
	<i>John Balfour at Leuchart</i>	563																1
	<i>George Low at Leuchart</i>	564																1
	<i>Alexander Landale in Pitreulo</i>	565																1
	<i>Mr. Fraill in Markinch</i>	566																1
	<i>Thomas Cardine in Markinch</i>	567																1
	<i>Mr. Simpson of Pitreulo</i>	568																1
	<i>Ballantyne in Pitreulo</i>	569																1
	<i>William Bell in Pitreulo</i>	570																1
	<i>John G. Balfour in Pitreulo</i>	571	7															1
	<i>Robert Maitland in Pitreulo</i>	572			9													1
	<i>Mr. Wright in Pitreulo</i>	573								12								1
	<i>Mr. Wright in Pitreulo</i>	574																1
	<i>Mr. Wright in Pitreulo</i>	575																1
	<i>Mr. Wright in Pitreulo</i>	576	7															1

Fig.15. Window Tax Roll for Niel Ballingall, 1 July 1786 (Last Entry), Photograph Courtesy of ScotlandsPlaces.gov.uk

⁵¹ Window Tax, 1748-1798, Window Tax, Volume 48, E326/1/48/59

The Window Tax Roll taken on Thursday, 28 June 1787 showed the same amount that he was taxed as the year before.⁵² The final Window Tax Roll in which Niel Ballingall was listed in was on Sunday, 13 August 1797 and was taxed the same amount since 1786.⁵³

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Survey of Old Window Duty in Life continued

Time when Surveyed.	INHABITANTS NAMES, and Designations.	Progressive Number of Windows.	R A T E S.												DUTY		10 per Cent.		10 per Cent.		
			Seven	Eight	Nine	Ten	Eleven	Twelve	Thirteen	Fourteen	Fifteen	Sixteen	Seventeen	Eighteen	ON WINDOWS.	ON HOUSES.	per 31 Cts. III.	per 31 Cts. III.	per 31 Cts. III.	per 31 Cts. III.	
			Windows	Windows	Windows	Windows	Windows	Windows	Windows	Windows	Windows	Windows	Windows	Windows	Windows	Windows	Windows	L. s. d.	L. s. d.	L. s. d.	L. s. d.
1797 Aug.	Parish of Leslie																				
	Alex ^r Brodie Esq ^r	1	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	67	6 14	"	1	136	"	136
	Col ^l Douglas Strathendry	2	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	28	2 16	"	1	584	"	584
	W ^m Willis Minister	3	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	14	"	"	"	"	"	1 1	"	1	224	"	224
	Capt ^t Scrymgeour	4	"	"	"	10	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	84	"	1	112	"	112
	George Greig Leslie	5	"	"	"	10	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	84	"	1	112	"	112
		5	"	"	"	20	"	"	"	14	"	"	"	"	95	11 7 8	"	5	1332	"	1332
	Parish of Markinch																				
	A. Davenny New Inn	1	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	22	"	"	1	3114	"	3114
	W ^m Selon Kirkforthar	2	"	"	"	"	"	12	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	14	"	1	16	"	16
	John Balfour Esq ^r Balfour	3	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	73	7 6	"	1	1484	"	1484
	Jo ⁿ Gibb Balfourie Miln	4	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	12	"	1	26	"	26
	Ja ^s Wan Plaisterers	5	"	"	"	"	"	12	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	14	"	1	16	"	16
	W ^m Bethune Esq ^r Balfour	6	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	44	4 8	"	1	8108	"	8108
	Neil Balingall Sweetbank	7	7	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	12	"	1	26	"	26

Fig.16. Window Tax Roll for Niel Ballingall, 13 August 1797 (Last Entry), Photograph Courtesy of ScotlandsPlaces.gov.uk

Consolidated Schedules of Assessed Taxes, 1798-1799

Beginning in the year of 1787 taxes were payable to a single consolidated fund and only survived for the year of April 1798 to April 1799. The Consolidated Schedule of Assessed Taxes included houses and windows, inhabited houses, male servants, carriages, horses used in husbandry and dogs. Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank was listed on Wednesday, 8 August 1798 as having 7 windows at Sweetbank and was taxed 12 shillings and 6 pence.⁵⁴

Auchmuty, Markinch Parish

The farm of Auchmuty was located 1 1/8 miles southwest of Markinch.⁵⁵ The property was described in the Ordnance Survey Name Books of 1853-55 as "a large farm house with extensive outbuildings the property of the Earl of Rothes."⁵⁶

⁵² Window Tax, 1748-1798, *Window Tax, Volume 48*, E326/1/48/83

⁵³ Window Tax, 1748-1798, *Window Tax, Volume 48*, E326/1/48/136

⁵⁴ Consolidated Schedules of Assessed Taxes, 1798-1799, *Consolidated Schedules of Assessed Taxes, Volume 12*, E326/15/12/60

⁵⁵ Ordnance Survey Name Books, *Fife and Kinross-shire Ordnance Survey Name Books, 1853-1855, Volume 92*, OS1/13/92/4

⁵⁶ Ordnance Survey Name Books, *Fife and Kinross-shire Ordnance Survey Name Books, 1853-1855, Volume 92*, OS1/13/92/4

How M. A. Markinch Parish No. 21.					
List of Names to be corrected if necessary	Orthography, as recommended to be used in the new Plans	Other modes of Spelling the same Name	Authority for these other modes of Spelling when known	Situation	Descriptive Remarks, or other General Observations which may be considered of Interest
<i>Coul</i>	<i>Coul</i>	<i>Coul</i> <i>Do</i> <i>Do</i> <i>Do</i> <i>Coul</i> <i>Coal</i>	<i>Property, Farm, 1 1/2 Miles N.W. of Markinch</i> <i>Mr. Ballingall</i> <i>Mr. Ballingall</i> <i>Mr. Gray, Banker</i> <i>Mr. Ballingall</i>	<i>1 1/2 Miles N.W. of Markinch</i>	<i>A good farm house with outbuildings garden &c attached.</i>
<i>Coul Cairns</i>	<i>Coul Cairns</i>	<i>Coul Cairns</i> <i>Do</i> <i>Do</i> <i>Do</i>	<i>Mr. Ballingall</i> <i>Mr. Ballingall</i> <i>Mr. Ballingall</i> <i>Mr. Gray</i>	<i>1 1/2 Miles N.W. of Markinch</i>	<i>A few cottages in a small town with garden attached, occupied by laborers</i>
<i>Auchmuty</i>	<i>Auchmuty</i>	<i>Auchmuty</i> <i>Do</i> <i>Do</i> <i>Do</i>	<i>Property, Farm at Auchmuty</i> <i>Mr. Ballingall</i> <i>Mr. Ballingall</i> <i>Mr. Ballingall</i>	<i>1 1/2 Miles N.W. of Markinch</i>	<i>A large farm house with extensive outbuildings the property of the Earl of Fife</i>

Fig.17. Ordnance Survey Name Book for Auchmuty, Markinch Parish, Fife (Last Entry), Photograph Courtesy of ScotlandsPlaces.gov.uk



Fig.18. Ordnance Survey Map showing Auchmuty, Markinch Parish, Photograph Courtesy of the National Library of Scotland

In his typescript, *The Ballingalls of Sweetbank, Markinch*, the Reverend James Ballingall wrote: "In the early days of his Factorship, Niel Ballingall took a lease of the farm of Auchmuty on the Rothes estate. Perhaps he needed a little more money to keep his large family going. This was at the time of the French Wars when farming was extremely profitable. The Rev. James Russell does not know exactly the dates of the lease, but he was succeeded there by a family of the name of Wallace, and then by Mr. Gibb, whose wife was a great-granddaughter of old Mrs. Russell of Cadham."⁵⁷ Ballingall appears to have

⁵⁷ Ballingall, Rev. James. *The Ballingalls of Sweetbank, Markinch*. Typescript, undated

had two other partners in the lease of Achmuty, Thomas and Robert Russell. According to the Horse Tax Roll for Auchmuty it listed all three tenants on Saturday, 23 September 1797 as having 8 horses on the farm and was taxed 16 shillings.⁵⁸

Page 29th 277

Survey of the HORSE TAX, per 36 Geo. III. Cap. xv. in the County of *Perth*
File continued

Date of Assessment.	Masters and Mistresses Names and Designations.	Actual N ^o . of Horses.	Horses liable in Duty 2s.	Horses not liable.	DUTY. L. s. d.		
1797 Sept. 23	<i>Parish of Markinch continued</i>						
	<i>Brought over</i>	278	209	69	20	18	u
	George Forrest Westmiller	3	3	-	-	6	u
	George Brown Carriston	2	2	-	-	4	u
	William Robertson D ^o	2	2	-	-	4	u
	David Campbell Hillton	1	1	-	-	2	u
	John Henderson D ^o	1	1	-	-	2	u
	George Law Olmuir	2	2	-	-	4	u
	Robert Law D ^o	2	2	-	-	4	u
	James Law D ^o	1	1	-	-	2	u
	Robert Trail Gateside	1	1	-	-	2	u
	William Crawford D ^o	2	2	-	-	4	u
	David Dease D ^o	1	1	-	-	2	u
	Andrew Dease D ^o	2	2	-	-	4	u
	John Robertson Banden	2	2	-	-	4	u
	Walter Mitchell Cull	4	2	2	-	4	u
	Andrew Lister Markinch	1	1	-	-	2	u
	James Pratt D ^o	1	1	-	-	2	u
	Thomas Graham D ^o	1	1	-	-	2	u
	James Spittal D ^o	1	1	-	-	2	u
	Alex ^r . Ramsay D ^o	4	4	-	-	8	u
	Andrew Caunie D ^o	2	2	-	-	4	u
	Thomas Spittal D ^o	1	1	-	-	2	u
	George Selkirk D ^o	2	2	-	-	4	u
	Will ^m . Mathew D ^o	2	2	-	-	4	u
	George Pearson Balbirnie Bleachfield	2	2	-	-	4	u
	David Thomson Achmuty Miller	2	2	-	-	4	u
	Geo. Swan Baker Mark ^{ch}	1	1	-	-	2	u
	Neil Ballingall						
	Thomas Russel } Farm of Achmuty	8	8	-	-	16	u
	Robert Russel }						

Fig.19. Horse Tax Roll for Messrs. Ballingall and Russell, 23 September 1797, Auchmuty, Markinch Parish (Last Entry), Photograph Courtesy of ScotlandsPlaces.gov.uk

⁵⁸ Horse Tax Rolls, 1797-1798, Farm Horse Tax, Volume 2, E326/10/2/277

Additionally, Ballingall and Russell are shown in the Consolidated Schedules of Assessed Taxes on Wednesday, 8 August 1798 for Auchmuty and paid 2 shillings and 6 pence for the Window Tax and for the Horse Tax they had 8 horses on the farm and paid 2 pounds, 8 shillings.⁵⁹

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AN ASSESSMENT made upon the several Inhabitants of the
for levying the several Duties under mentioned, from the

pursuant to the Consolidating Acts of Parliament, passed 38th Geo. III. Cap. xl. and xli.
by
Surveyor.

Date of Assessment.	Inhabitants Names and Designations.	Duties on Houses and Windows.				Duties on Horses.				Duties on Carriages with Two Wheels.				Duties on Horses for riding and driving Carriages with Four & Two Wheels.				Duties on Horses used in Husbandry or Trade, and on Mules.				Duties on Dogs.				TOTAL.				
		No.	£.	s.	d.	No.	£.	s.	d.	No.	£.	s.	d.	No.	£.	s.	d.	No.	£.	s.	d.	No.	£.	s.	d.	No.	£.	s.	d.	
1798 Aug. 8. 9 th	Parish of Markinch																													
	Brought forward	112	10			7	10	8		39				2	5	6	4	1	1	4		21	8	160	48	575	570	290	6	8
	Samford Annot Mains of Arviston																													
	Master Landale Balgair																													
	John Mitchell Dunipace																													
	George Brown Balgair																													
	Dr. Thomson of Kirkforth																													
	George Aitken Balfield																													
	Robert Crichton Balgair Mains																													
	John Ireland Branton Bains																													
	John Shearer Carristony																													
	George Tyne Brownfield																													
	John Haining New Mains																													
	James Stuart Morisport																													
	Henry Gurner South Mains																													
	John Law Spittal																													
	St. Mitchell Colton Balgair																													
	Robert Hison																													
	David Reid																													
	John Hutchison																													
	Peter Craig Shyburn Mains																													
	George Forrest West Mains																													
	George Brown Carristony																													
	William Robertson																													
	David Campbell Hillton																													
	John Henderson																													
	George Law Plummer																													
	Robert Law																													
	Robert Trail Balgair																													
	William Crawford																													
	David Reid																													
	Andrew Reid																													
	John Robertson Bandon																													
	Walter Mitchell Boul																													
	George Brown Balgair																													
	John Taylor Auchmuty Mains																													
	John Ballingall Balgair Auchmuty																													

Fig.20. Consolidated Taxes Roll for Messrs. Ballingall and Russell, 8 August 1798, Auchmuty, Markinch Parish (Last Entry), Photograph Courtesy of ScotlandsPlaces.gov.uk

Robert Ballingall (1791-1860), his eldest surviving son, is in charge of the Auchmuty farm. Auchmuty Farm no longer exists as Glenrothes was built on the lands of many farms including Auchmuty around 1949.⁶⁰

The Factor of Balbirnie

The country estate of Balbirnie was designed in the informal style and developed during the 18th-century and 19th-centuries by Robert Robinson and Thomas White.⁶¹ As a result of the estate Factor's position being handed down through the Ballingall family, beginning with the estate's first Factor, Niel Ballingall, a large collection of estate documents and accounts survive today from 1770 onwards. Ballingall continued surveying it seems, as there is numerous plans of surveys drawn up by him dating from the late 18th-century when he first became Factor of Balbirnie. One such plan of survey was dated in the year of 1772 and was drawn of the Mount Frost level in the Balbirnie coalfield.⁶² Coal seams were mined

⁵⁹ Consolidated Schedules of Assessed Taxes, 1798-1799, *Consolidated Schedules of Assessed Taxes, Volume 12*, E326/15/12/62

⁶⁰ Email communication of Neil Sutherland to Michael T. Tracy, 26 September 2017, Markinch, Fife, Scotland

⁶¹ Historicenvironment.scot. Accessed at: portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/GDL 00034

⁶² Plan of Mount Frost level in Balbirnie coalfield, 1772, National Records of Scotland, Ref RHP 23734

at Balbirnie beginning in the late 18th-century up until the 1930s.

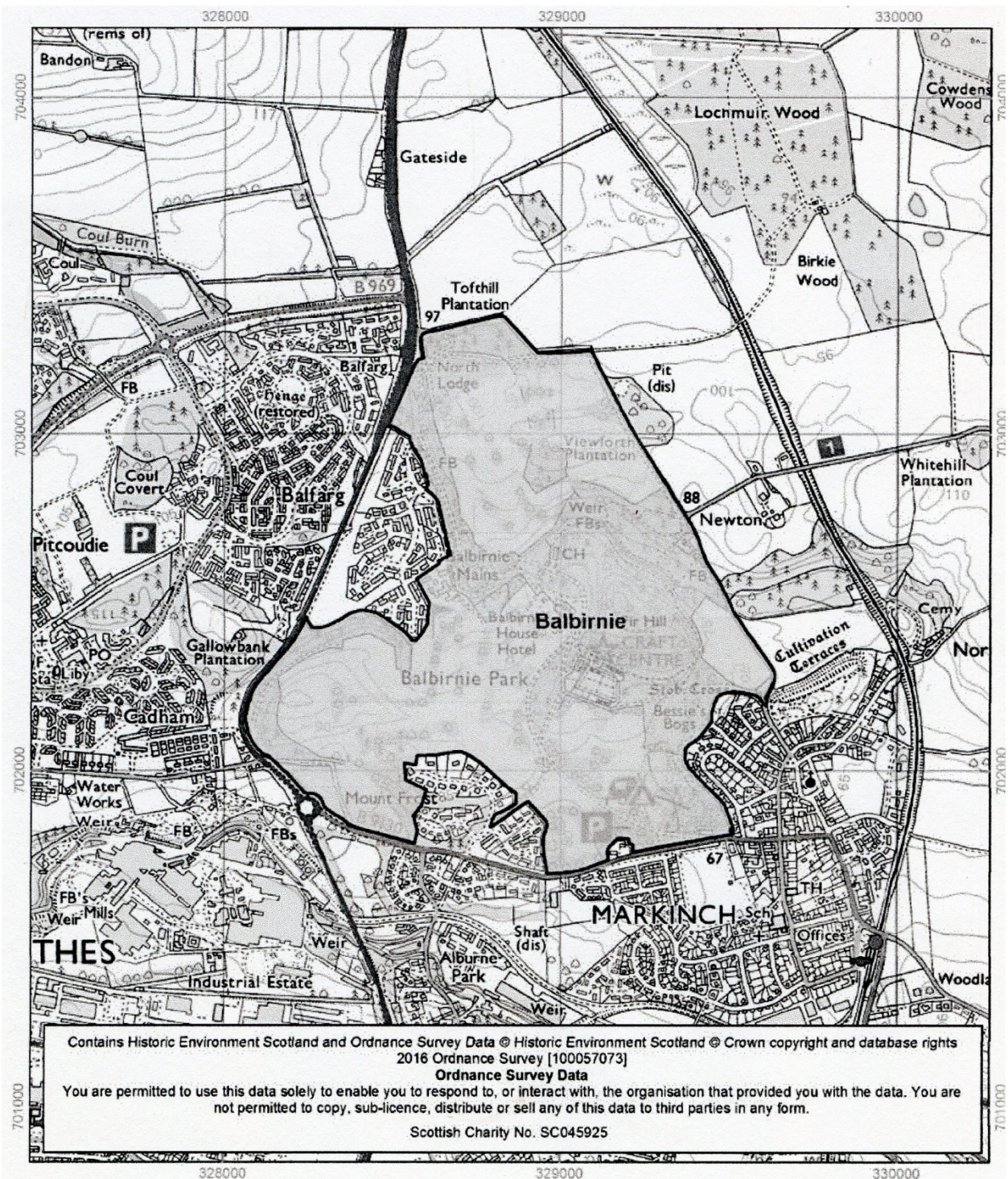


Fig.21. Map of Balbirnie, Photograph Courtesy of Historic Environment Scotland

Niel Ballingall in the early days of his Factorship personally surveyed other coalfields such as Cadham located in Leslie Parish as early as the year of 1770;⁶³ Pitcairn in Leslie Parish;⁶⁴ and Newton.⁶⁵ He also surveyed other lands belonging to John Balfour of Balbirnie including the lands of Pyeston in 1781;⁶⁶ Kinglassie in 1778;⁶⁷ and East Kinglassie in 1780.⁶⁸ One main duty of Ballingall's "was to look after the estate tenants at a time when proprietors were beginning to look at improving their land; finding better breeds of animals; implements and seeds. The tenants did not have the capital to carry out these improvements. This was a major shift in agriculture and Niel played his part in tackling the problems of estate management."⁶⁹

Evidence was found early in Ballingall's Factorship that he knew this author's fourth great-grandfather, George Buist (1750-1797) who was a tenant farmer of Orkie, Kettle Parish and were distant kinsmen. In a contract dated Friday, 18 March 1791 between John Balfour of Balbirnie and George Buist, tenant in Orkie (Orky); William Swan, tenant in Riggs another distant kinsmen of both Ballingall and Buist, and lastly John Sharpe, tenant of Easter Lathrisk; signed by all parties and was witnessed by Niel Ballingall, Factor of Balbirnie and David Whyte, his clerk.⁷⁰

Witness whereof these presents consisting of this
and the three preceding pages written upon
stamped paper by David Whyte clerk to Niel
Ballingall Factor of Balbirnie are subscribed
by both parties At Balbirnie this Eighteenth
day of March One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety
One Years Before these witnesses the said Niel Ballingall
and David Whyte both above designed witnesses
also subscribed a Marginal Note the second page
along with the body

Niel Ballingall witness
David Whyte witness

John Balfour
George Buist
John Sharpe
William Swan

Fig.22. Tact between John Balfour of Balbirnie and George Buist, William Swan and John Sharpe
Signature Page and witnessed and signed by Niel Ballingall and his clerk, David Whyte, 18 March 1791,
Photograph Courtesy and Special Permission by Head of Special Collections, University of St. Andrews
Special Collections Department, Call Number ms38973/TF/1/1/1

⁶³ Plan of Cadham coalfield and part of Balbirnie coalfield, 1770, National Records of Scotland, Ref RHP 23716

⁶⁴ Plan of coal level at Pitcairn, late 18th-century, National Records of Scotland, Ref RHP 23714

⁶⁵ Plan of Newton coalfield, early 19th-century, National Records of Scotland, Ref RHP 23718

⁶⁶ Plan of lands of Pyeston, National Records of Scotland, Ref RHP 23508

⁶⁷ Plan of the town of Kinglassie, National Records of Scotland, Ref RHP 23509

⁶⁸ Plan of the lands of East Kinglassie, National Records of Scotland, RHP 23553

⁶⁹ Gourlay, Ian, Wilkie, Ken, Manson, Bruce. *Markinch: Its Church and Parish*. Markinch: Inkcharm, 2010, p. 143

⁷⁰ Tullis Family Papers. Tullis Russell Paper Mills Collection. *Tact between John Balfour, Balbirnie and George Buist, tenant in Orky; William Swan, tenant in Riggs; and John Sharpe, tenant in Easter Lathrisk*. University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number ms38973/TF/1/1/1

Niel Ballingall appears as a defendant in a Court of Session case in 1789 involving a plaintiff named John Allison.⁷¹ The particulars of the case involve a disagreement of a rental contract between John Allison and Niel Ballingall acting on behalf of General John Balfour. This is not the only legal case that Ballingall was involved in, however. According to the Court of Session records of July 1834, Ballingall was shown as a plaintiff against his son-in-law, Robert Russell, one of his partners in the tenancy of Auchmuty.⁷²

Additionally, there exists in the Estate Papers of Balbirnie correspondence from Niel Ballingall to John Bruce regarding particulars of the estates at Barnsmuir, Auchterarder and Newbigging dated in the year of 1808.⁷³ The letter was written on Thursday, 23 June 1808 and reads: "Yours of the 16th I was duly fav [favoured] with and on Tuesday I surveyed the lands of Newbigging, Walton, Bankhead & Glassly [unreadable] (possibly Glasslyhead). I took with me Mr. Robt [Robert] Russell Newton of Markinch an experienced skillful farmer and examined the whole premises with attention but having no plan or measurement of the ground it is impossible to give you a valuation sufficiently correct, the lands being of very different quality so much as to vary between best and worst as to be [word cut] not knowing the exact extent of the good and the bad. It must be in some [unreadable] works at the annual value. I suppose the whole to consist of about 400 Scots Acres and have inclosed [sic] an EY [estimated] sketch drawn on the top of a hill when I could see the whole and on it I marked the value of the several divisions as I came to them. Also on the end of it, you have a section on appearance of the surface 1st at the West March 2 shillings, the Middle v. 3 at the East March from south to north. The situation is good and might be made exhaustingly beautiful if a Man of Fortune and lands were to let down upon it and [unreadable] but moderate pains to adorn it with good fences and [unreadable] of planting and the lands ly [lie] compact and square and all contiguous the [unreadable] prospect delightful. The line certain as far as I have marked in the sketch can be wrought by [unreadable] as it has a very firm [unreadable] roof, the very same [unreadable] has to [unreadable] westward. But I by no means [unreadable] the limestone east undo through the whole lands from west to east through [unreadable] cut off by a dyke near Walton. The coal said to be good [unreadable]. I have no [unreadable] on because

⁷¹ John Allison and others v. Niel Ballingall, factor for John Balfour of Balbirney. National Records of Scotland, Ref CS271/46017

⁷² Niel Ballingall, factor to General Balfour of Balbirnie v. Robert Russell, National Records of Scotland, Ref CS46/1834/7/12

⁷³ Correspondence of Niel Ballingall to John Bruce, 23 June 1808, National Archives of Scotland, Ref GD152/218/6/14

Shewell Bank 23rd June 1808

Dear Sir

Yours of the 16th I was duly paid with
and on Tuesday I surveyed the Lands of Newbigging,
Wallon, Bantland & Glastyhead. I took with me Mr. John
Rusby, Nicks of Marhunch an Experienced Skilful farmer
and Examined the whole premises with Attention
But Having no plan or Measurement of the Ground
it is impossible to give you a Valuation sufficiently
Correct; the Lands being of very different Quality so
much so as to Vary between best & Worst as 6 to 12
not knowing the exact extent of the good & the bad
It must be in some measure guess work at the
annual Value. I suppose the whole to consist of about
400 Scots Acres & have enclosed an Ey. Sketch Drawn on
the top of a wall where I could see the whole & on it I
marked the Value of the several Divisions and came to
there. Also on the End of it you have a Section on
appearance of the Surface 1st at the West March 2^d
through the Middle & 3^d at the East March from
South to North. The Situation is good and might
be made extremely beautiful if a Man of Fortune
& taste were to set down upon it & take but moderate pains
to adorn it with good farms & Groups of Planting & The
Lands by compact & square & all fortiguous the Church Warr
& prospect Delightful. The Linn certainly as far as I have
marked on the Sketch, can be brought by covering, as it has
a very firm free Stone Roof, the very same as the
has to the Westward. But I by no means think the Arruclon
Gables through the whole Lands from West to East I marked
the Strata put off by a Dyke near Wallon. The Seal said to be got
in a Bone at the Sea Side I have no dependence on because

Fig.23. Letter of Niel Ballingall to John Bruce, 23 June 1808, Page 1, Photograph Courtesy of the National Records of Scotland, Ref GD152/218/6/14

The [unreadable] to the north and coal [unreadable] must be under the level of the side and too hazardous to lay out many upon. There is a great deal of good wood full of grown ash plant and perhaps to the value of more than 500 pounds. The farm steadings bad [unreadable] do poor as you can imagine. The inclosures bad and almost all insufficient. [unreadable] with bits of paling for the season. The lands in wretched order, especially that part in Sir John's [Sir John Sinclair] own hand, [unreadable]. His system of farming would finally ruin the best land in the Kingdom. Very rauping grass fields for tillage yearly when very straw goes off the grain, for some flying crops, than rauping for potatoes after these; without [unreadable] I could not see his own potatoes for thickness [unreadable] darws outragious rents in the [unreadable] for the land and corn and beans [unreadable] potatoes 10p [pence] per acre [unreadable] the beans are dilled and not a fast high would sell for 5p [pence] per acre the corn if rauped would not bring 9 [pounds] 6s [shillings]. If the [unreadable] continued but after years this practice he will ruin the land and perhaps himself. This is the same of the ground of very firm quality a good deal of it good and also perhaps a [unreadable] of the whole very indifferent of which some unfit for the plough, ought to be planted. Viewing the whole only with the eye of a farmer and supposing I, were to take the whole property for 19 years I, should think it rather a sketch to give [unreadable] per acre overhead. Mr. Russell declares he would not exceed 3 pounds, 10s [shillings] if he should want a farm because the surface is much broken with [unreadable] and not in some parts easy to labour. [unreadable]

vicar the whole up to the North and East of them
must be under the level of the sea & too hazardous
to lay out money upon. There is a great deal of good wood
full grown ash plant & perhaps to the value of more than
£5000. The Farm Shadings bad, indeed as poor
as you can imagine; The Inclosures bad & almost all
insufficient. Many Dykes fall down & filled with bits
of peat for the sea. The Lanes in Writched Order,
especially that part in Sir John's own hand, abominably
dirty. The system of farming would finally ruin the best
land in the Shire. Very Raising Grass fields for Tillage
yearly when every straw goes off the ground, for some flying
crops, then Raising for potatoes after them; without doing
I could not see his own potatoes for thistles) to (than the
& what intended after them is strange conduct. by such
means he draws extravagant Rents in the Manland
for the land in farm & Drains 1/4 p. per Acre Potatoes 1/10 p. per
the Drains are Drilled & not a foot high West S. E. for 1/5 p. per
the form of Raising would not bring 1/4 p. If the Rents
continued but a few years this practice he will ruin the
land & perhaps himself. There is some of the ground
of very fine quality a good deal of it good and also
perhaps a third of the whole very indifferent of which
some profit for the plough, ought to be planted.

Viewing the whole only with the Eye of a farmer
or supposing I were to take the whole property for 19 years
I should think it rather a stretch to give 1/4 p. per Acre
Overhead. Mr. Ruffe declares he would not exceed 1/3 p. if
he should want a farm Because the surface is much
broken with hills & hollows & not in some parts easy to
fathom. Drains Waste, Inclosures bad &c.

Fig.24. Letter of Niel Ballingall to John Bruce, 23 June 1808, Page 2, Photograph Courtesy of the National Records of Scotland, Ref GD152/218/6/14

It is my opinion it would [unreadable] a man of fortune for a family seat and who would take pains to farm it with some discretion and might be made of the most beautiful [unreadable] in the Kingdom at a very moderate expense having the best quarry [unreadable] for building and inclosing [sic] in the ground. I could not [unreadable] on Sir John's [Sir John Sinclair] for I [unreadable] the field of marching with him [unreadable] the east [unreadable] was let not long sum at 6 pounds, 6s [shillings] [unreadable] I think 99 years. I am also [unreadable] what field the crop of one acre will produce more [unreadable] four acres of Sir John's {Sir John Sinclair} a purchaser will have a good deal to do to restore the ground however good in quality from the effects of numerous system he is pursuing he cannot long follow it without the rents following rapidly for facts will not always be got to give more rent than the crop is worth when [unreadable] is capable of being made to bear twenty Bolls of Beans [unreadable] p [per] an [unreadable] 25 Bolls when this very year [unreadable] as to the value is incorrect from want of knowing the extent it is no more than might be expected. But I give it as the best general idea, I am able to favour. I am Dear Sir, Your most obedient servant, Niel Ballingall. Orchard is old thus decaying and not very good. A range of high hills on the north of the property shelter the highest of it from the cold north winds."⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Correspondence of Niel Ballingall to John Bruce, 23 June 1808, National Archives of Scotland, Ref GD152/218/6/14

3
 It is my Opinion I would suit a Man of Taste
 for a family seat & Who would take pains to furnish
 it with some decoration & might be made one
 of the most beautiful prospects in the Kingdom
 at a very Moderate Expense having the best Quarry
 for Building & Inclining in the Ground
 I could not but your friend depend on Sir John
 Rentist for I observe the field Marching with him on
 the East the shade was let not long since at 16⁴ per acre
 for a Long Lease of 99 years. I am also
 that field the crop of One acre will produce more
 than four Acres of Sir John's. — a purchaser will
 be a good deal to do to restore the Ground however you
 in Quality from the Effects of the ruinous System he
 is pursuing. he cannot long follow it without his Rents
 falling Rapidly for soils will not always be got to give
 more Rent than the crop is worth when raised.
 On the other hand I am told that in good Management
 some of the Ground there is capable of being made
 to bear twenty Bolls of Rye per acre even 25 Bolls
 when this very year the harvest (an Annual one) has not
 5 Bolls I am certain.
 If my information as to the Value is incorrect from
 Want of knowing the Extent it is no more than might
 be expected. But I give it as the best general idea I am
 able to form. I am
 Dear Sir
 Your most Obedient Servant
 Niel Ballingale
 Orchard is Old }
 Trees decaying }
 & not very good }
 a Range of high hills on the North of the Property shelter the highest of it
 from the cold North Winds.

Fig.25. Letter of Niel Ballingale to John Bruce, 23 June 1808, Page 3, Photograph Courtesy of the National
 Records of Scotland, Ref GD152/218/6/14

A seal was commonly used during the time of Niel Ballingall and most middle-class people had them made either as rings or stamps. Reproduced below is the seal of Niel Ballingall, the Factor of Balbirnie.

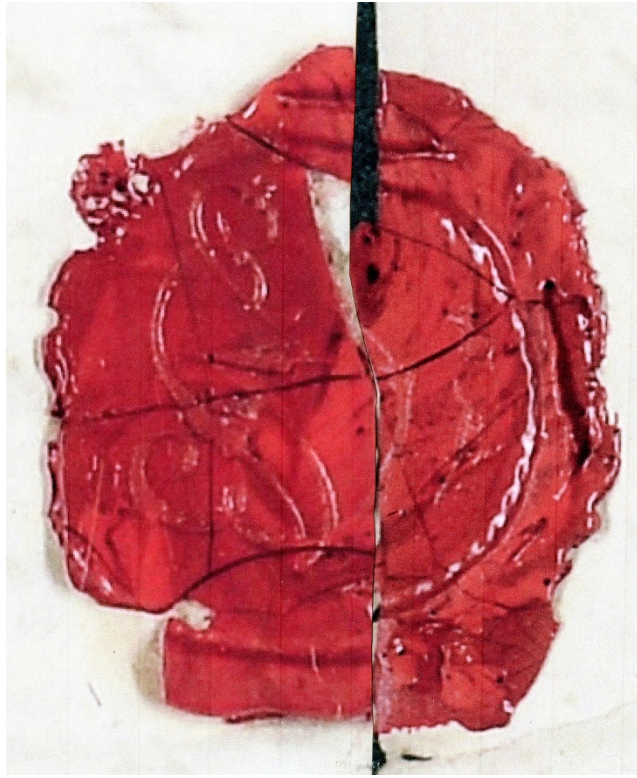


Fig.26. Seal of Niel Ballingall, Factor of Balbirnie, Photograph Courtesy of Michael T. Tracy © 2017 Michael T. Tracy

At the beginning of the 19th-century in 1800-01 evidence indicates that Ballingall designed two buildings located at Number 11 and 11a located on School Street in the village of Markinch.⁷⁵ School Street was named after the old parish school and the two buildings designed by Niel Ballingall are still presently standing.

⁷⁵ *Knowing Your Place: A Place-Name Walk in Markinch.* Markinch Heritage Group, 2011, p. 6



Fig.27. 11a School Street, Markinch, Fife, Photograph Courtesy of the Registers of Scotland

In a Report to General Balfour written by Ballingall on Wednesday, 8 March 1809 he gives an analysis of the depth, length and width of various coal seams. It also appears to be some speculation over what has already been worked or in Ballingall's term "wrought" and the potential impact on Balgonie. "Besides if ever this coal has been wrought by the Balgony [Balgonie] on any recommendation betwixt [between] them made an engine on Backside will draw part of Balgony [Balgonie] water and the field may be narrowed by farmers engine works to perhaps 60 fathoms. Not worthy of any engine. In short, I do not think the coal on Backside Enclosure of Balgony [Balgonie] any object worth looking after nor would it pay the expense of felling."⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Report of Niel Ballingall on Backside Coal, 8 March 1809, National Records of Scotland, Ref GD288/228

Mar Coal
The Coal

Report on Backside Coal

Both Slanes Balgarny Coal appears to have been wrought
as far as Backside Soft or 400 yards & there cut off
to the Depth of 30 fathoms from the Surface South March

It is practicable to Work the Depth by a fire Engine
which might give at 30 fath below the Level of the River
120 fathoms breadth & 200 fath Long of this Slane
But unless the Natural Luck is shared out to 30 fath
the Left 30 fathoms I could not answer as the
Engine otherwise would be too Deep the Population
of Backside alone without Balgarny Quarry path
would not answer this end. And I apprehend
Lord Leven has not the power to do this as it is
nearly within the Iron C. Land.

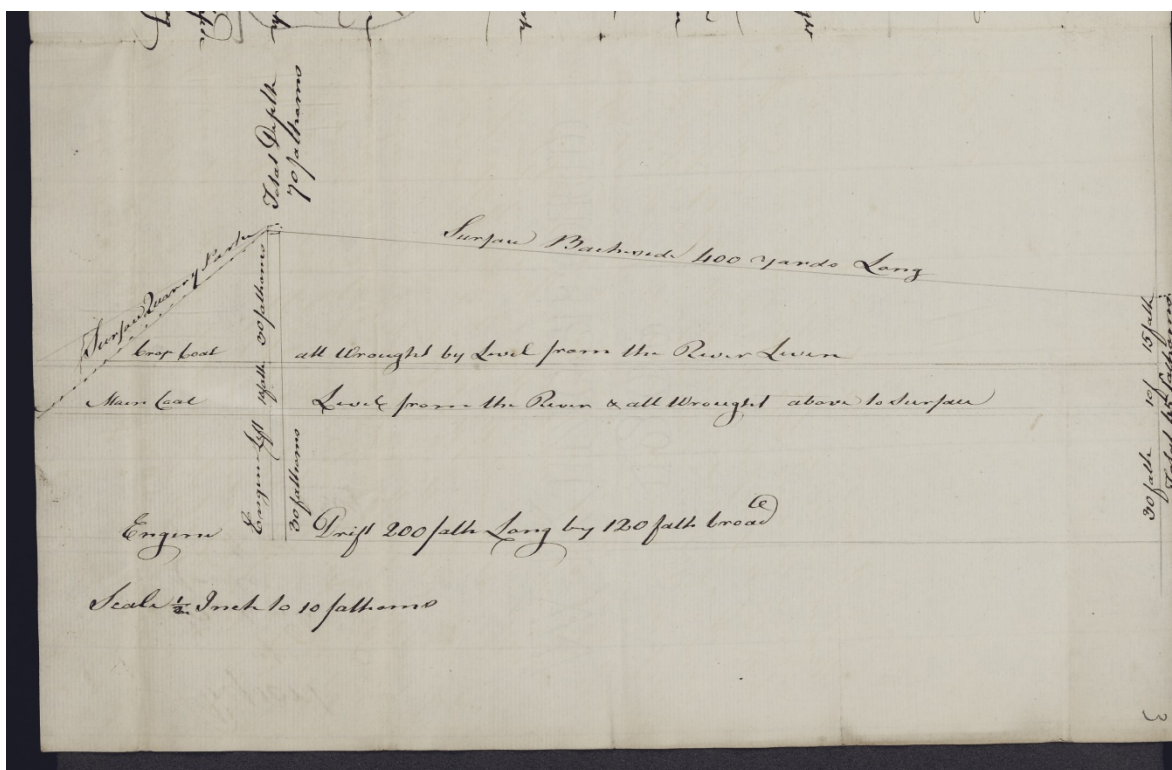
Besides If ever this Coal has been wrought by
the Balgarny Engine or any Communication
between them made an Engine on Backside
Will Draw part of Balgarny Water. and the
field may be narrowed by former Engine Work
to perhaps 60 fathoms. — not worthy any Engine

In short I do not think the Coal on Backside
Exclusion of Balgarny any Object worth looking
after nor would it pay the Expence of getting

Sweet Bank
8th March 1809

Niel Ballingall

Fig.28. Report of Niel Ballingall on Backside Coal, 8 March 1809, Page 1, Photograph Courtesy of the National Records of Scotland, Ref 288/228



Backside was the name of a farm and is mentioned in the Ordnance Survey Name Books of 1853-1855 as being located 3 5/8 miles west by south of Kennoway and described as being “a very excellent farm house, garden and steading situated about ½ miles east of Markinch Village.”⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Ordnance Survey Name Books, *Fife and Kinross-shire Ordnance Survey Name Books, 1853-1855, Volume 93*, OS1/13/93/31

The area to the east of the farm was considered to be the location of the Backside Coal pit and “although Quarry Park is better known as a major source of sandstone for construction, part of it, and largely to the south of the plantation and river, will have contained coal and be associated with Balgonie Engines which originally contained an early pump design to clear mine workings of water.”⁷⁸

Contained in the National Records of Scotland’s repository are the surviving Remarks on Mr. Niel Ballingall’s Accounts with the Rents of the Estate of Balbirny [Balbirnie]. Crop 1814 and the Coal Book of 1815.⁷⁹ These accounts give the reader a unique insight into the rental fees each tenant was paying for the year; the profit the proprietor made and how many loads of coal were taken out of the pits. On the first page of the Remarks on Niel Ballingall’s Accounts it stated that “the Rentals of the Estate which form the charge against the factor are properly summed, and are marked with Mr. Yule’s initials, but for want of the Rentals Crop 1813, they could not be compared so as to ascertain their accuracy. On the whole, however, there is an increase of Rent for Crop 1814 of 232 [pounds] 17 [shillings] and 11 [pence]. This appears from comparing the Rentals with the charge of Mr. Ballingall’s accounts Crop 1813 in which the Abstract of the Rentals of that year are stated.”⁸⁰ An interesting entry discusses what the Factor charges himself and states that “the Factor [Niel Ballingall] charges himself with 2,050 [pounds] received from General Balfour. Mr. Yule has no means of ascertaining the accuracy of this charge which must be done by the General himself.”⁸¹ There is also mention of the Factor’s cousin, George Ballingall (1764-1827) tenant of Rameldry. “In the same account, the factor takes credit for 10 [pounds] paid George Ballingall as an overcharge on Rameldry rent for Crop 1813. Owing to the want of the Rentals for that Crop Mr. Yule does not know what rent was there stated for Rameldry, but in the Rental Crop 1814, it is stated at 260 [pounds] and 3 dozen of Kain. Mr. Ballingall’s lack will instruct the true sum.”⁸² The total profit General Balfour made on his rental properties for 1814 was 454 pounds, 11 shillings and 11 pence and there was a total of 1, 103 loads of coal that were taken out of the estate’s coal pits.⁸³

Ballingall as Factor would also have to place advertisements in newspapers informing interested parties of various leases that were available. One such advertisement was placed in the *Caledonian Mercury Newspaper* and published on Saturday, 24 June 1809 concerning the leave of Balbirny [Balbirnie] West Mill and is reprinted below.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ Email communication of Neil Sutherland to Michael T. Tracy, 18 November 2017, Markinch, Fife, Scotland

⁷⁹ Remarks on Mr. Niel Ballingall’s Accounts with the Rents of the Estate of Balbirny [Balbirnie] Crop 1814, National Records of Scotland, Ref GD288/228

⁸⁰ Remarks on Mr. Niel Ballingall’s Accounts with the Rents of the Estate of Balbirny [Balbirnie] Crop 1814, National Records of Scotland, Ref GD288/228

⁸¹ Remarks on Mr. Niel Ballingall’s Accounts with the Rents of the Estate of Balbirny [Balbirnie] Crop 1814, National Records of Scotland, Ref GD288/228

⁸² Remarks on Mr. Niel Ballingall’s Accounts with the Rents of the Estate of Balbirny [Balbirnie] Crop 1814, National Records of Scotland, Ref GD288/228

⁸³ Remarks on Mr. Niel Ballingall’s Accounts with the Rents of the Estate of Balbirny [Balbirnie] Crop 1814, National Records of Scotland, Ref GD288/228

⁸⁴ *Caledonian Mercury Newspaper*, 24 June 1809, p. 4

CORN MILL AND FARM IN FIFE TO LET
There is to be LET on Lease, for Nineteen Years from
Martinmas 1809,

BALBIRNY WEST MILL, with the **MILL LANDS**,
extending to nearly 30 acres of very superior soil, as
presently possessed by Mr Thomas Thomson.

The Corn Mill, in the centre of a populous district, and
neighbourhood of very extensive manufactories, is new
built, two storeys high, the Kiln joisted with iron, and
fire proof; the Machinery on the very best construction,
with an excellent Threshing Mill, wrought by a water
wheel, which has a powerfull fall; situated on the Water
of Leven, near Balbirnie Bridge, within six miles of Kirk-
aldy and ten miles of Cupar.

There is also an old Mill, with a separate fall, which
may be turned to good account as a Barley Mill, or any
other the tenant may incline.

A more eligible situation for an extensive business is not
often to be met with; and if an active tenant of sufficient
capital appears, the proprietor will build a new farm-house,
and give every encouragement.

Offers may be given in to John Balfour, Esq. of Balbir-
ny, the proprietor, or to Mr Neil Ballingall, his factor, at
Sweetbank, (who will state the whole conditions of lease)
at any time before the 30th July next, when the offer ac-
cepted will be declared, and the others conceald, if de-
sired.

Fig.31. Balbirny [Balbirnie] West Mill Advertisement, *Caledonian Mercury Newspaper*, 24 June 1809

Writing from Sweetbank on Thursday, 13 June 1816 to Major General Balfour, Ballingall informed the General of the plans for a cottage to be built at Newton and drawn up by James Barclay.⁸⁵ Letters to and from the Factor and the General were quite common and numerous letters have in fact survived today. Ballingall was also it seems, appreciative of the work of the colliers on the estate. According to the *Fife Herald Newspaper* of Thursday, 8 December 1825 "Mr. Neil Ballingall, factor to General Balfour of Balbirnie estate, has given to each of his colliers a copy of the Speech delivered by Mr. Jeffrey at Mr. Hume's dinner. We trust the praise worthy example of this public-spirited gentleman

⁸⁵ Letter of Niel Ballingall to Major General John Balfour, 13 June 1816, National Records of Scotland, Ref GD288/238

will be very generally imitated by those placed in situations which connect them, in a similar way, with that portion of society, for whose benefit the admirable address in question is principally intended.”⁸⁶

There is evidence that the Factor helped others besides the employees and colliers of the estate. In July of 1826, Ballingall helped a prisoner be released from jail in Edinburgh. The prisoner’s name was George Dickson, aged 33 and serving a term of 14 years for the crime of theft in which he pleaded guilty to the offence.⁸⁷ In July of the same year, Ballingall petitioned the High Court at Edinburgh for clemency.⁸⁸ In his petition for clemency, he asked the High Court to look again at the particulars of the initial case noting that the theft of goods was committed by William Downs who persuaded the convict to sell the stolen goods as Downs owed him money and further to review his gaoler’s current report. It is unclear as for the relationship between Dickson and the Factor, if any, however, the old Factor indeed wrote a character reference letter on Dickson’s behalf.⁸⁹ It is also unclear if the High Court granted clemency to the prisoner, George Dickson.

In the summer of 1818, General Balfour asked his Factor to give him a report on the possibility of insuring all of his farm steadings. On Wednesday, 1 July 1818 Ballingall wrote an extensive account of his observations and recommendations to the General.⁹⁰ Ballingall begins by writing “Upon examining the insurance clauses in the present leases they do not appear to me at all sufficient to protect the property with the exception of the new lease of Rameldry which ought to be a pattern for all the rest for whence the tenant is left at liberty to insure he is limited to too small a sum, that the Proprietors half of the premium may be kept a mere trifle and unless the tenant happens to be an intelligent man, he does not insure at all. This ought not to be left to any tenant the proprietors ought to insure and bind the tenant to pay ½ premium yearly along with the rent. Neither ought the insurance to be limited merely to the steading. For if a fire happens and burns down the steading it is more than probable it will also devour the stock yard, victual and granarys [sic], threshing mill, furniture and harness, even if the live stock escape, and supposing this to take place, I would ask what security has the landlord for his rent, if the tenants whole stock is consumed by fire, it is evident the landlord will get no rent whatever.”⁹¹

⁸⁶ *Fife Herald Newspaper*, 8 December 1825, p. 2

⁸⁷ National Archives, Kew. Prisoner Papers of George Dickson. Ref HO 17/10/1

⁸⁸ National Archives, Kew. Prisoner Papers of George Dickson. Ref HO 17/10/1

⁸⁹ National Archives, Kew. Prisoner Papers of George Dickson. Ref HO 17/10/1

⁹⁰ Memorial for General Balfour on insuring his farm steadings by Niel Ballingall, 1 July 1818, National Records of Scotland, Ref GD 288/287

⁹¹ Memorial for General Balfour on insuring his farm steadings by Niel Ballingall, 1 July 1818, National Records of Scotland, Ref GD 288/287

Memorial for General Balfour
made out at his desire that he
may decide on some general
data to what extent he may
think proper to insure all
his Farm Steadings, and to de-
cide whether the Stock Yards
and Farmers Stock ought to
be left exposed to the risk of
Fire, or ought to be covered by
Insurance as well as the Steading
and to what extent.

Upon Examining the Insurance Clauses
in the present leases they do not appear
to me at all sufficient to protect the
property with the exception of the New Lease
of Karmeldy which ^{thought} to be a pattern for
all the rest for where the Tenant is
left at liberty to insure he is limited to
too small a sum, that the Proprietors
half of the premium may be kept a mere
trifle and unless the Tenant happens to
be an intelligent man, he does not
insure at all — This ought not to
be left to any Tenant the Proprietors
ought to insure and bind the Tenant to
pay $\frac{1}{2}$ premium yearly along with
the Rent. Neither ought the Insurance to be
limited merely to the Steading. For if a
Fire happens and burns down the Steading it
is more than probable it will also devour
the Stock Yard, Utensils, and Granaries, Mashing
Mills Furniture and Harrows, even if the live
Stock escape. And supposing this to take
place, I would ask what security has the
Landlord for his Rent. If the Tenants whole
Stock is consumed by fire, it is evident the
Landlord will get no Rent whatever.

Fig.32. Memorial for General Balfour on insuring his farm steadings by Niel Ballingall, 1 July 1818,
Photograph Courtesy of the National Archives of Scotland, Ref 288/287

Ballingall concludes his account to General Balfour by recommending that it is in both the interests of the tenant and landlord to cover against losses by fire for the farm steadings on all his properties.⁹² On Thursday, 24 July 1828 a lease notice was published in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant Newspaper* regarding the farm of Clatto in Kettle Parish asking interested parties to contact General Balfour at Balbirnie or his factor, Niel Ballingall at Sweetbank which is reprinted below. The lease discusses the subject of losses against fire.

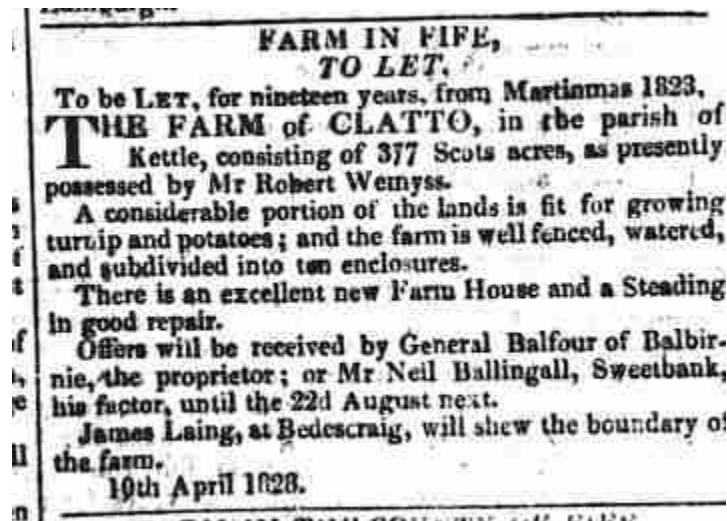


Fig.33. Clatto Farm Advertisement, *Edinburgh Evening Courant Newspaper*, 24 July 1828

Outlined in a detailed report sent by Ballingall to General Balfour in London dated April of 1833 is an example of Ballingall's leadership while the General was gone. He wrote: "I have endeavoured to attend several things in your memorandum of the 4th instant. I went to Forthar and decided that as all the materials necessary for a new Draw Kiln were procured from the tiring [sic] of the lime quarry and within a few yards distance and that no expense except workmanship would be incurred and that the repair of the old kiln would be very nearly as expensive as building a new one and it is to be founded this day by Alexander Russel and I am to send him three masons and some labourers that it may be pushed with as much expediton as possible. I went to Wester Finglassie and decided that Mr. Ireland's two cot houses and old byre should stand till another year. Mr. Kirk as soon as his seedtime is over intends beginning improvements on his house and steading and both he and Mr. Ireland are very anxious to have the road towards Leslie contracted for and begun. I have not yet got offers but intent to draw out specifications showing the manner how it ought to be done and show these to any contractors that offer. Last week I appointed three contractors for the road from Clatto Steading towards Devon to meet me and the tenant of Clatto on the ground and I decided to accept James Nielson's offer because he was not only the cheapest but the most experienced road maker of the three. I then examined the new bridge over the water run betwixt the Hoglands execution and ordered it to be raised at the east end without which a steep pull could not be avoided on the Clatto side and also that a rough ledging of whinstone should be added to make it perfectly safe and this is agreed to be done by Thomas Campbell and the tenant together as both acknowledged it would make a great improvement. I also went to Clatto Barns and saw the old stable just about falling down and fixed with Mr. Speedie the tenant and Thomas Campbell to build as much on the north side of the new plan as would keep his beasts from the danger of being killed and no more to be done this season. I also examined a number of drains formerly

⁹² Memorial for General Balfour on insuring his farm steadings by Niel Ballingall, 1 July 1818, National Records of Scotland, Ref GD 288/287

marked out and now filled by the tenant with stones in a very workmanlike manner; these appear to answer the purpose completely and will ensure the tenant of a good crop. I also examined the march ditch betwixt Clatto and Lady Mary Crauford's of Skelpie. The thinnings of Drumreel Wood were sold by public roup the amount about 13 [pounds]. I also went to Corston inspected the new dyke, found it sufficient also the garden dyke very well executed. The bridge cannot be begun till the water in the Eden subsides. Wood for gates and water slaps are wanted and I have ordered David Allen to cut long trees for that purpose also stoops and bars for several ages. I have also appointed to meet Mr. Chape of Wellfield and will hear his opinion about the disputes with Colonel Millar. Inshunie pond is now completed and will at all times furnish excellent water. I attended a meeting of heritors at Leslie on Thursday last with Lord Rothes and Captain Douglass and some smaller heritors. An assessment was laid for 50 [pounds] being for a new roof to the minister's barn, levelling the new burial ground and some provision for the poor about 25 [pounds] to carry them on till December next. There was also a meeting of heritors at Markinch to proportion the Cholera expenses. You still have 2 [pounds] to pay in addition to your subscription of 10 [pounds]. A good many of the middle rank were found to have subscribed fully more than their legal proportion. I have advertised against all trespassers making footpaths through the fields and intend to watch to be able to convict them if found. I yesterday examined the fence of the Northhall park and found the stone fence had been very injudiciously placed on the very verge of the old Brunton quarry now planted about Northhall and the whole stones of that dyke have been rolled down the steep slope by idle persons occupying the footpath, it is impossible to bring them up again unless they were to be carried on men's backs an expense too great to be thought of. I intend for this season to fence it with a strong paling as the fence ought never to be renewed with stones especially in such an improper situation, about half of it is not above one foot high.'"⁹³

Life at Balbirnie was also eventful and impressive as this article in the *Fife Herald Newspaper* illustrates. On Thursday, 6 August 1840 the paper published a story on the return of John and Georgiana Balfour to their home of Balbirnie after their marriage. "On Tuesday last week, the tenantry on the extensive estates of John Balfour, Esq., of Balbirnie, accompanied by many of the neighbouring gentlemen, the workmen on the estates, and the inhabitants of the surrounding villages, met to welcome him and his lady home from their marriage tour... The procession then encircled the porch, and a venerable-looking deputation of senior tenants, consisting of Mr. Neil Ballingall, Sen., Mr. Kirk of Kinglassie, Mr. Ireland, Drumdreel, Mr. D. Ballingall, Rameldrie, and Mr. Russell of Balfrag, conveyed the congratulations of the tenantry..."⁹⁴

⁹³ Gourlay, Ian, Wilkie, Ken, Manson, Bruce. *Markinch: Its Church and Parish*. Markinch: Inkcharm, 2010, p.p. 143-146

⁹⁴ *Fife Herald Newspaper*, 6 August 1840, p. 2

The Water Engineer

As we will see, Ballingall's early genius and judicious forethought as a water engineer were considered legendary. By 1824 the estate of Balgonie was in a state of financial collapse. It was owned by James Balfour who was the Laird of Whittinghame, who had made a large fortune in the East Indies, which enabled him to purchase the estate of Balgonie.⁹⁵ Niel Ballingall eventually took over Balgonie as the estate factor also in 1824. According to Professor David Munro in his book, *Loch Leven and the River Leven: A Landscape Transformed* wrote "By [1824] his [Niel Ballingall's] reputation not only as an agricultural improver but also as a water engineer were legendary. He had demonstrated the ways in which landowners could squeeze a greater income from their estates not only by promoting the more productive use of land but also by diversifying into industry. Proprietors who had first looked to an increase in revenue from farms could now see the possibilities to be derived from leasing mills on the River Leven to industrial operators. To do this effectively, however, they had to employ men of skill to act as their agents, factors, surveyors and managers. Neil Ballingall, who was all of these rolled into one, vigorously engaged himself not only in land improvement but also in the development of coal and lime works, road building and the more effective control of water from the River Leven for industrial use."⁹⁶

On Wednesday, 22 December 1824 all interested parties including the landowners and mill owners on the River Leven and most likely Niel Ballingall met for the first time at the Plasterer's Inn near Balbirnie Bridge to discuss options on how the River Leven could be used to provide a more regular supply of water during the period of drought.⁹⁷



Fig.34. Old Gullet Bridge, River Leven near Scotlandwell, Photograph Courtesy of Stanley Howe, Geograph.org.uk Photograph 4006542

⁹⁵ Ballingall, Rev. James. *The Ballingalls of Sweetbank, Markinch*. Typescript, undated

⁹⁶ Munro, David. *Loch Leven and the River Leven: A Landscape Transformed*. River Leven Trust, 1994, p. 22

⁹⁷ *Fife Herald Newspaper*, 16 December 1824, p. 1

“Ballingall, who had been a prime mover in the development of a scheme to control the flow of water at Balbirnie Mills, fully appreciated the benefits to both mill owners and landowner alike, but few industrialists had till then seriously entertained the possibility of a scheme of improvement that would entail major changes to the upper course of the River Leven and the water level of Loch Leven.”⁹⁸ The scheme devised by Ballingall and others included the partial drainage of Loch Leven and creating a “cut” through some four miles of the meandering river leading from it. Professor Munro writes that “this could only be achieved by straightening the River Leven and perhaps lowering the level of the loch, an engineering operation far larger than any that had been previously undertaken in this part of Scotland.”⁹⁹ Thusly, this ingenious scheme was devised to regulate the flow of the River Leven through a waterway linked to Loch Leven. As a result of the expertise of Niel Ballingall and others, this would prove to ensure the future economic success of the riverside factories and put Markinch on the industrial map.¹⁰⁰



Fig.35. The Water Lade and Railway Viaduct, Photograph Courtesy of the Markinch Heritage Group

In 1828 Ballingall gave evidence to an enquiry that was held into the use of the water of the River Leven and the regulation of it. General Balfour was appointed as a Commissioner under the Act of Parliament in 1827. Ballingall explained to the Commissioners that the “Coal Engine Water Wheels” which raised the water from the estate's coal working had the first call and that the tenants of the estate down the river were entitled only to the surplus water at times when the river was low in dry seasons.¹⁰¹ Ballingall was instrumental in the promotion and completion of the Loch Leven scheme and lived to see its completion in May of 1832.

⁹⁸ Munro, David. *Loch Leven and the River Leven: A Landscape Transformed*. River Leven Trust, 1994, p. 22

⁹⁹ Munro, David. *Loch Leven and the River Leven: A Landscape Transformed*. River Leven Trust, 1994, p. 22

¹⁰⁰ The Industrial Age. Accessed at: www.markinchheritage.org.uk

¹⁰¹ Bennett, George. *Niel Ballingall, Estate Factor*. Typed Manuscript, p. 3. Fife Archives. Reference Number A/AAO/4/1/2, Reference Number GDC/16/131/1/25

The Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville

The 8th Earl of Leven and 7th Earl of Melville, David Leslie-Melville (1785-1860) was a distinguished Scottish peer and Admiral in the Royal Navy. Later in his life, he was a Representative Peer (Tory) for Scotland.



Fig.36. David Leslie-Melville taken by Camille Silvy in 1860, Photograph Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG Ax50462)

The Earl's estates in Fife included Bellfield, Collessie, Dernie, Kincapple, Kirkcaldy, Letham, Markinch, Milton, Nisbetfield, Springfield and Thornton. There are four letter books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville that are presently held at the University of St. Andrews Special Collections Library in St. Andrews. These letter books concern the management of the Earl's estates and contained in these volumes are references and letters to Niel Ballingall, the Factor of Balbirnie covering the years of 1807-08¹⁰² and 1813-1816.¹⁰³ These letters give the reader a unique glimpse into the daily responsibilities of a Factor and more importantly, the interaction between the Earl of Leven and Melville's Factor and the Balfour's Factor, Niel Ballingall. The numerous duties and energies of these Factors included the collection of rents and feu duties, the negotiation and discharge of bills, the purchase and sale of property and chattels and the management of tenants and agricultural activities.

¹⁰² Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume II, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21

¹⁰³ Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

Herewith contained in the Second Volume of the Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville are the entire letters he wrote to the Factor of Balbirnie, Niel Ballingall covering the years of 1807-08. The first letter written by the Earl of Leven and Melville's Factor addressed to Niel Ballingall at Sweetbank was dated Saturday, 19 September 1807 and reads as follows "Mr. Balfour at St. Andrews is unwell and cannot travel to instruct the Kirk. I have therefore at Lord Leven's request spoke to a mason and wright here who will be down on Tuesday when I hope you will be at house to furnish them with the estimates. It would be proper that the contractors and the neighbouring Heritors who are of the Committee particularly coal were present if they [unreadable] to know when your Lordship proposes to return. The Mill Wright Moodie wrote me the enclosed letter which I received last night. I expect him today or tomorrow. If your Lordship [unreadable] near his work at Causseyside you will see the machine. As the season is now so far advanced, we would not get a mill made by Mr. Money Penny's man in time for our wheat. It would require at least three months for a millwright here to make one. This one being ready to be put up is lucky. It can be erected within three weeks. Enclose your Lordship a copy of our old post [unreadable] Memorial."¹⁰⁴

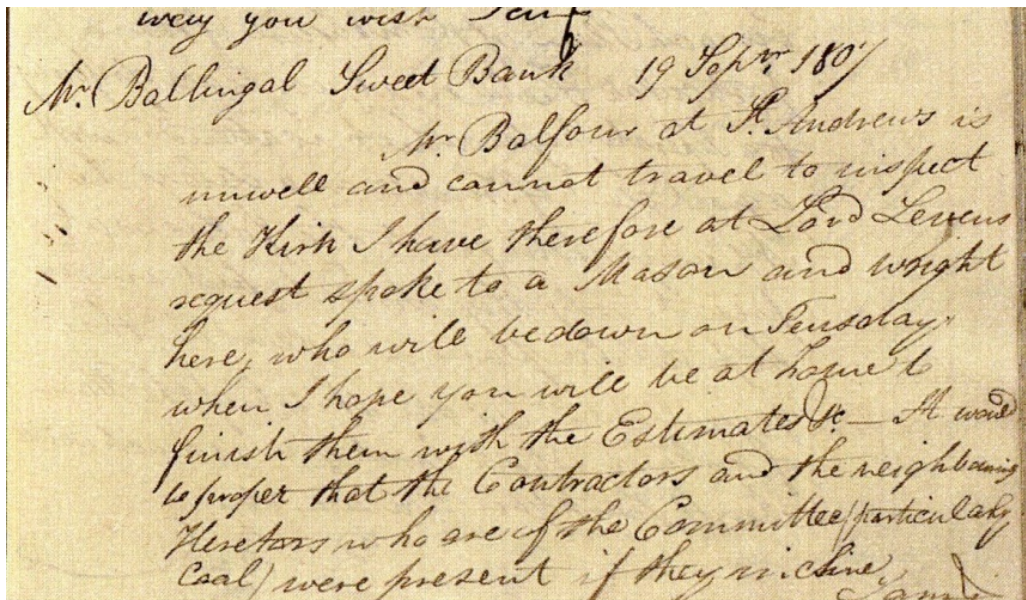


Fig.37. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 19 September 1807, Page 1, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

¹⁰⁴ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 19 September 1807, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume II, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21

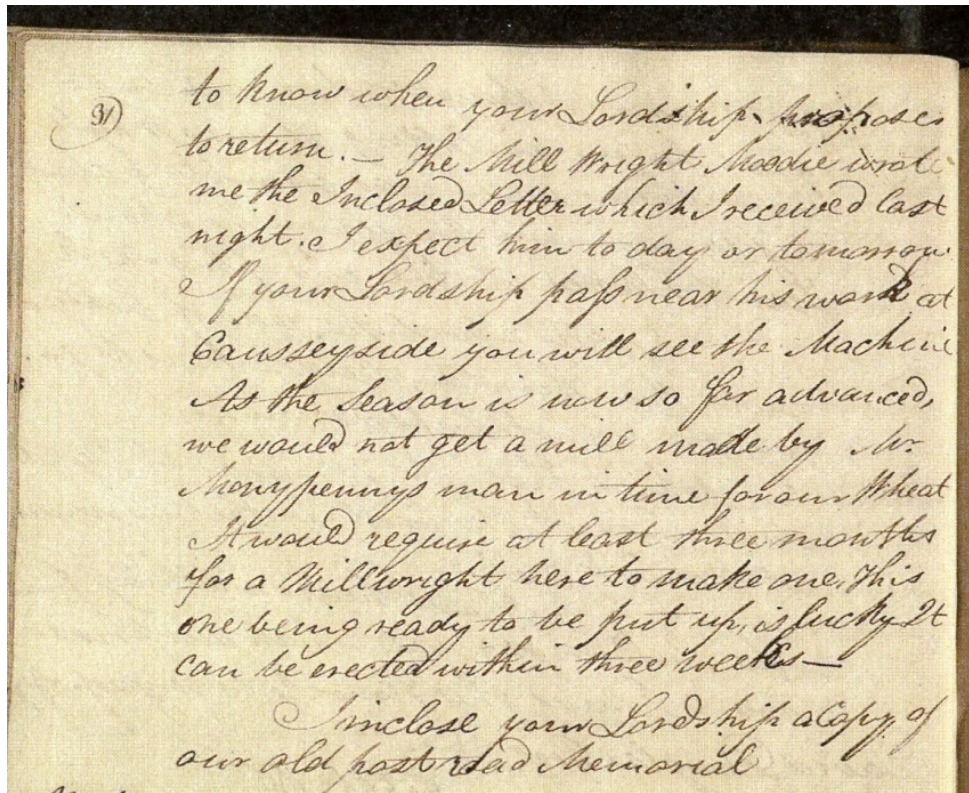


Fig.38. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 19 September 1807, Page 2, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

In a follow-up letter to the Factor Niel Ballingall dated Monday, 5 October 1807: "I am favoured with yours of the 1st, I now inclose you Lord Leven's claim in the submission as to Bighty Muir and will thank you for a copy of Mr. Balfour's. When you examine Lord Leven's and I look over Mr. B's [Balfour] we can if necessary state anything additional that occurs. I will be at home till Thursday if you should find it convenient to come here. Inclosed I send you the Visitors Report of Markinch Kirk. When the contractors do what is needed, a meeting of the Heritors may be called. If Tuesday or Saturday could be fixed it would be more convenient for me than any other day."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 5 October 1807, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume II, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21

During the period of 1807-10, a spire was added to the tower of the Markinch Parish Church and completed in the same year as well as alterations and a major extension of the church to the north. A little more than a week later on Tuesday, 20 October 1807 the Factor of Lord Leven-Melville wrote Ballingall again stating "I wrote you with Lord Leven's claim in Bighty Muir submission I will thank you to return it to me with your answer if you have any, in order that the articles may proceed."¹⁰⁷

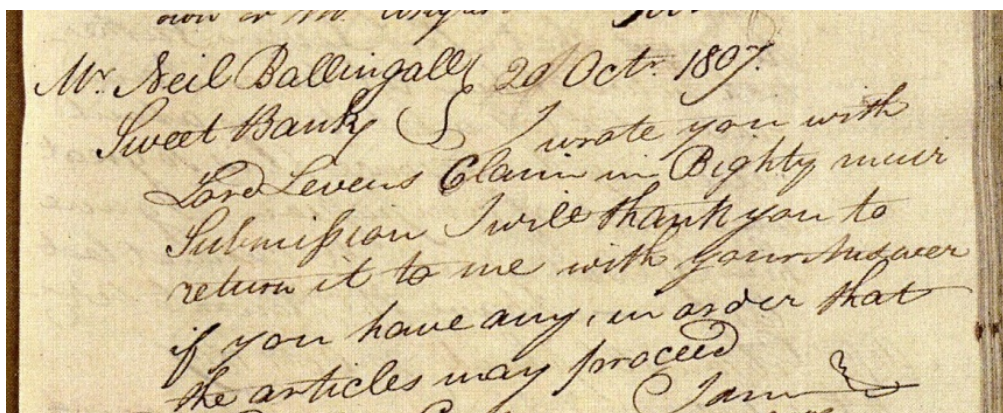


Fig.41. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 20 October 1807, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

The next communication that Lord Leven-Melville's Factor sent Ballingall was on Wednesday, 30 December 1807 in which he wrote "I forgot to give you minutes of a meeting of the Heritors held here on 28 August which I now inclose that they may be put in the Book. I will thank you for the scale of the submission as soon as possible also for a copy of the minutes and old dimension of the Kirk in 1788."¹⁰⁸ Shortly later on Tuesday, 5 January 1807 [sic] Lord Leven-Melville's Factor wrote Ballingall at Sweetbank the following: "Dear Sir: I was fav [favoured] with your inclosing [unreadable] minutes of last meeting at Markinch Heritors and agreeable to your desire I have made out or sub [subject] to Mr. May which has been revised by Mr. Govan. I have sent it to Mr. Johnston to be revised and soon as I get it back I will extend it and get it signed by Lord Leven. I now return your principal minutes of the Heritors 28 March 1806. Please send me a file copy of the other minutes and a copy of the old division."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 20 October 1807, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume II, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21

¹⁰⁸ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 30 December 1807, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume II, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21

¹⁰⁹ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 5 January 1807 [sic], Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume II, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21

Mr. Ballingall
Sweetbank } Dear Sir

5 Janry 1807

I was fav^d with your
inclosing Ext^d Minutes of last Meeting of
Markinch Heritors and agreeable to your
desire I have made out a Subst to Mr. May
which has been revised by Mr. Govan. I have
sent it to Mr. Johnston to be revised and so
soon as I get it back I will extend it and
get it signed by Lord Leven

I now return your principal Minutes
of the Heritors 28 March 1806. Please send
me a full Copy of the other minutes and a
Copy of the old division. I am &c

Fig.42. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 5 January 1807 [sic], Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

On Friday, 20 May 1808 a correspondence addressed to Niel Ballingall at Sweetbank read as follows: "As Mr. Johnston still persists in adhering to his [unreadable] respecting the Kirk of Markinch and as that [unreadable] in fact recognized in agreed measure the claims he was making I do not consider it proper to acquiesce in it but thought the one proposed by Mr. Govan and are preferable as there thus no chance of an amicable decision. Please make out a Scroll of Petition to the Sheriff which I have endorsed for your perseverance and appreciation. I have as much as possible avoided saying anything about the repair of the church because the Sheriff himself will see this when he comes to look at it. I presume that Balbirnie and the other Heritors who [unreadable] our way will join in the appreciation and I have made it out in their names accordingly."¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 20 May 1808, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume II, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21

Mr. Ballingall
 of Sweetbank

20 May 1808.

As Mr. Johnston did persist in
 gathering to his subscription respecting
 the Kirk of Markinch and as that Petition
 was fact recognised in a great measure
 the claims he was making I do not
 consider it proper to acquiesce in it but
 thought the one proposed by Mr. Gowan
 and me preferable as there is thus no
 chance of an amicable division I have
 made out a Petition of a Petition to the Sheriff
 which I have endorsed for your perusal
 & approbation. I have as much as possible
 avoided saying any thing about the
 repair of the church because the Sheriff
 himself will see this when he come to
 look at it. I presume that Balgownie &
 the other Heritors who voted our way will
 join in the approbation & I have
 made it out in their names accordingly

Jarr &

Fig.43. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 20 May 1808, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

A further correspondence to Ballingall dated Monday, 22 August 1808 read "Inclosed is the [unreadable] about the Kirk request here on the 20th instance before me and my clerk. It will be proper that you send it to Mr. Money penny with the copy [of] minutes of Heritors and any other papers you may find requisite. Meanwhile probably come and see the Kirk."¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 22 August 1808, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume II, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21

Mr. Ballingall
Sweetbank

August 22nd 1808

Inclosed is the Subm^r about the Kirk
signed here on the 20th Instance Before
me & my Clerk It will be proper that
you send it to Mr. Menzies with
the Copy Minutes of Heretore & any other
papers you may find requisite. We
will probably come & see the Kirk.

Fig.44. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 22 August 1808, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

On Friday, 7 October 1808 a letter was written to Ballingall and read as follows "I find that Tuesday will not suit Mr. Balfour and as Wednesday is an Election Day I cannot attend. I, therefore, cannot attend [unreadable] Friday which I hope will suit you. I will write Mr. Martin and Mr. Balfour."¹¹²

Mr. Ballingall
Sweetbank

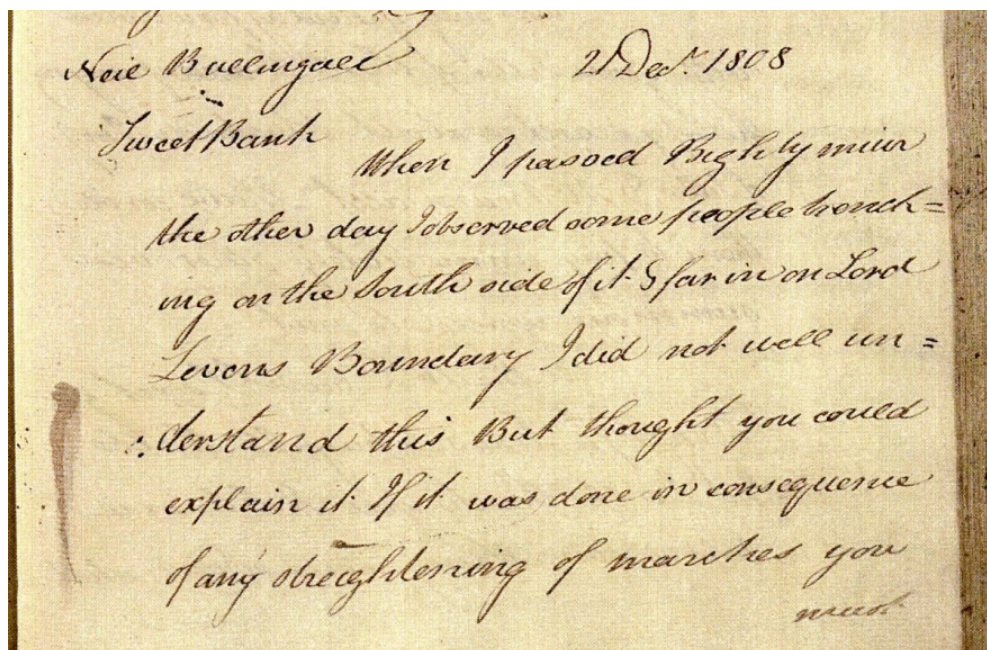
7 Oct. 1808

I find that Tuesday will not suit Mr.
Balfour and as Wednesday is an Election Day
I cannot attend I therefore cannot attend sooner
than Friday which I hope will suit you
I will write Mr. Martin and Mr. Balfour
to come I am &c

Fig.45. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 7 October 1808, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

¹¹² Letter to Niel Ballingall, 7 October 1808, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume II, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21

An interesting letter written to Ballingall on Wednesday, 21 December 1808 stated "When I passed Bighty Muir the other day I observed some people trenching on the south side of it s[o] far in on Lord Leven's boundary. I did not well understand this but thought you could explain it. If it was done in consequence of any straightening of marches you must."¹¹³



Niel Ballingall
Sweetbank 21 Decr 1808
When I passed Bighty Muir
the other day I observed some people trench-
ing on the south side of it s[o] far in on Lord
Levens Boundary I did not well un-
derstand this But thought you could
explain it If it was done in consequence
of any straightening of marches you
must

Fig.46. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 21 December 1808, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

After Christmas and on Saturday, 31 December 1808 the Earl of Leven and Melville's Factor wrote Ballingall from Cupar stating "I was very sorry that the [unreadable] of the day prevented you from coming to Markinch on Saturday last as I wished to have had some conversation with Mr. Balfour and you regarding the excambion [an exchange of land in Scots law]. It is needless to [unreadable] you have different it is to please such a number of people. The plan in which Mr. Balfour and you judged best for their interest produced very considerable discontent and often consulting lawyers on the subject. I was told by some of them that we could not remove them out of the fields where they were in at present and therefore that altho we could not move them out of that field after [unreadable] taken [unreadable] on the subject I was satisfied we would not and therefore to put an end to the [unreadable] have his [unreadable] in the field it was in and that if any of them chose to have their pieces in different fields laid in one spot Lord Leven would be glad to accommodate them. I went over the plan with them and we fixed that."¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 21 December 1808, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume II, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21

¹¹⁴ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 31 December 1808, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume II, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21

Mr. Ballingall }
Sweetbank } Cupar 31st Decem^r.
1808.

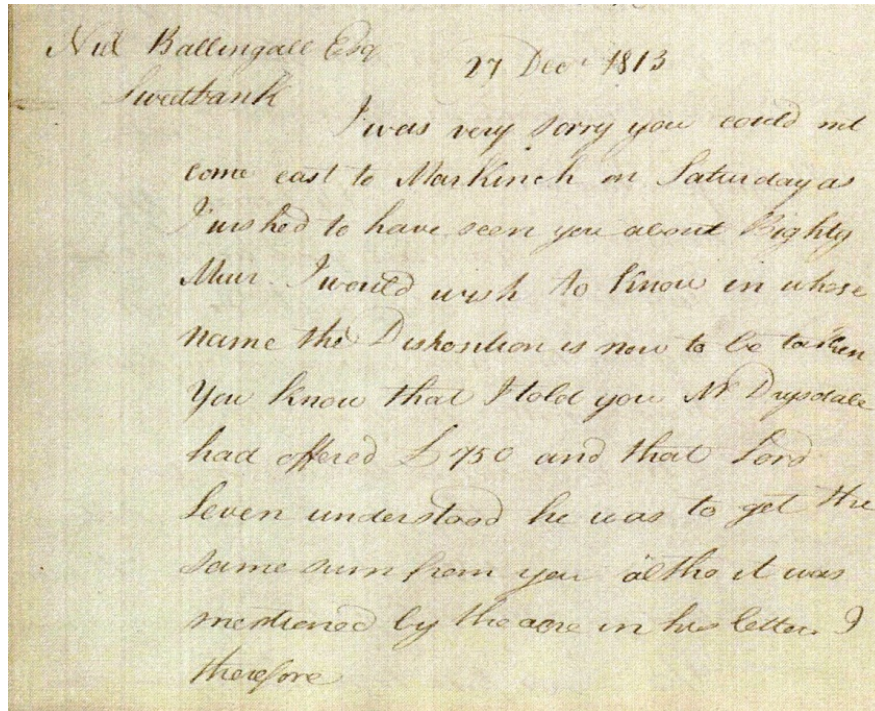
I was very sorry that the busi-
ness of the day prevented your coming
to Markinch on Saturday last as
I wished to have had some conversation
with Mr. Balfour and you regarding
the Eccambrin

It is needless to tell you how diffi-
cult it is to please such a number of people
The plan which Mr. Balfour and you
judged best for their interest produced
very considerable discontent and after
consulting Lawyers on the subject as
I was told by some of them that we could
not remove them out of the fields where
they were in at present and therefore
that altho we could carry all the spots
in one field together we could not move
them out of that field after I had taken
a view in the subject I was satisfied we
would not and therefore to put an end to
the business I proposed that each should
have his Lence in the field it was in
and that if any of them chose to have
their pieces in different fields laid in
one spot Lord Leven would be glad
to accommodate them I went over the
Plain with them and we fixed that

Fig.47. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 31 December 1808, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA880.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

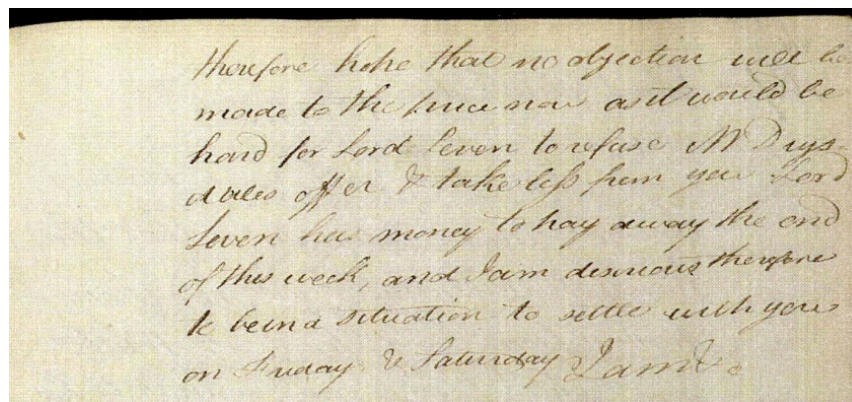
Herewith contained in the Third Volume of the Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville are the entire letters he wrote to the Factor of Balbirnie, Niel Ballingall covering the years of 1813-16. The first letter written by the Earl of Leven and Melville's Factor addressed to Niel Ballingall at Sweetbank was dated on Monday, 27 December 1813 and read "I was very sorry you could not come east to Markinch on Saturday as I wished to have seen you about Bighty Muir. I would wish to know in whose name the Disposition [unreadable] is now to be taken. You know that I told you Mr. Drysdale had offered 750 pounds and that Lord Leven understood he was to get the same sum from you altho it was

mentioned by the acre in his letter. I therefore¹¹⁵ hope that no objection will be made to the price now as it would hard for Lord Leven to refuse Mr. Drysdale's offer and take less from you Lord Leven has money to lay away the end of this week, and I am desirous therefore to be in a situation to settle with you on Friday or Saturday."¹¹⁶



Niel Ballingall Esq
Sweetbank 27 Decr 1813
I was very sorry you could not come east to Markinch on Saturday as I wished to have seen you about Biggley Muir. I would wish to know in whose name the Disposition is now to be taken. You know that I told you Mr Drysdale had offered £750 and that Lord Leven understood he was to get the same sum from you altho it was mentioned by the acre in his letter. I therefore

Fig.48. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 27 December 1813, Page 1, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections



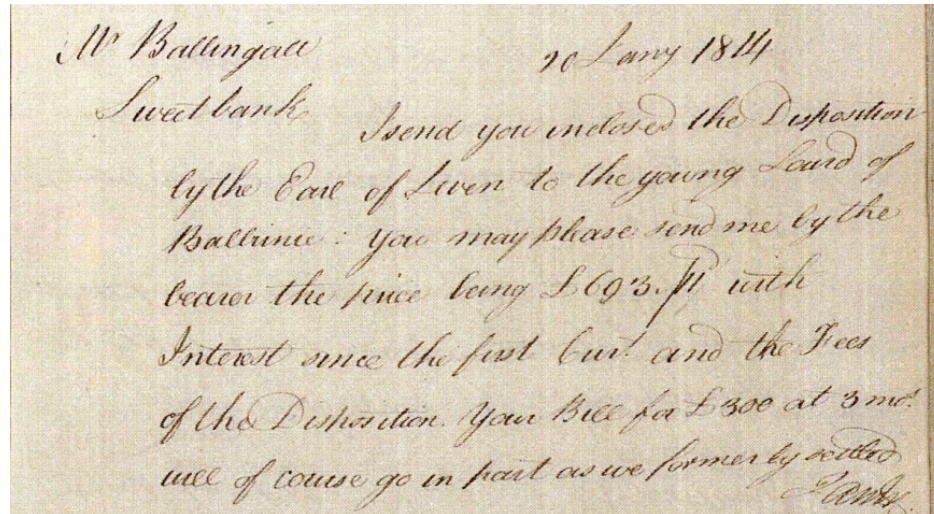
Therefore hope that no objection will be made to the price now as it would be hard for Lord Leven to refuse Mr Drysdale's offer & take less from you. Lord Leven has money to lay away the end of this week, and I am desirous therefore to be in a situation to settle with you on Friday or Saturday I am Dr

Fig.49. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 27 December 1813, Page 2, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

¹¹⁵ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 27 December 1813, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

¹¹⁶ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 27 December 1813, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

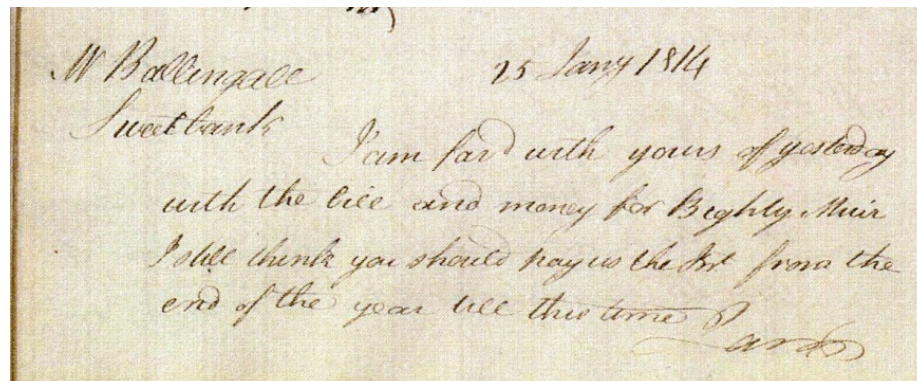
On Thursday, 20 January 1814 a letter was written to Ballingall viz. "I send you inclosed the Disposition by the Earl of Leven to the young Laird of Balbirnie: you may please send me by the bearer the price 693 [pounds] with interest since the first curt [current] and the fees of the Disposition. Your bill for 300 [pounds] at 3 mos [months] will, of course, go in part as we formerly settled."¹¹⁷



Mr Ballingall
Sweetbank 20 Janry 1814
I send you inclosed the Disposition
by the Earl of Leven to the young Laird of
Balbirnie: you may please send me by the
bearer the price being £693. 10 with
Interest since the first Curt and the Fees
of the Disposition. Your Bill for £300 at 3 mo.
will of course go in part as we formerly settled.

Fig.50. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 20 January 1814, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

A few days later on Tuesday, 25 January 1814 the following communication was sent to Ballingall viz. "I am far'd [forwarded] with yours of yesterday with the bill and money for Bighty Muir. I still think you should pay us in the int. [interest] from the end of the year till this time."¹¹⁸



Mr Ballingall
Sweetbank 25 Janry 1814
I am far'd with yours of yesterday
with the bill and money for Bighty Muir
I still think you should pay us the int from the
end of the year till this time.

Fig.51. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 25 January 1814, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

¹¹⁷ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 20 January 1814, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

¹¹⁸ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 25 January 1814, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

A letter written on Wednesday, 4 May 1814 to Ballingall read "I inclose the Decreet of [unreadable] of Bighty Muir which now belongs to Mr. Balfour."¹¹⁹

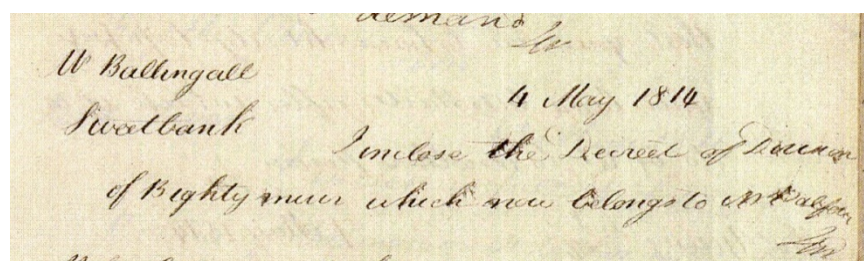


Fig.52. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 4 May 1814, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

On Saturday, 16 July 1814 a letter to Ballingall read "I am fav'd [favoured] with yours of yesterday. I have no objections to take the little tail of ground cut off by the new road off David Galloway's hands at [unreadable] if he agrees to it. I do not know as to the agreement of Lord Leven taking nothing for the ground of the new road but I think it would be fair that both roads should be valued and the ground given and taken as certain and provided the old road can be shut up. It occurs to me that Lord Leven will get less land than what he gives away. I will be down at Lammas [means loaf mass, typically 1st August. The Lammas Fair takes place annually in St. Andrews on the second Monday and Tuesday in August and is said to be Scotland's oldest surviving medieval market] and settle with you about Lord Leven's assessments."¹²⁰

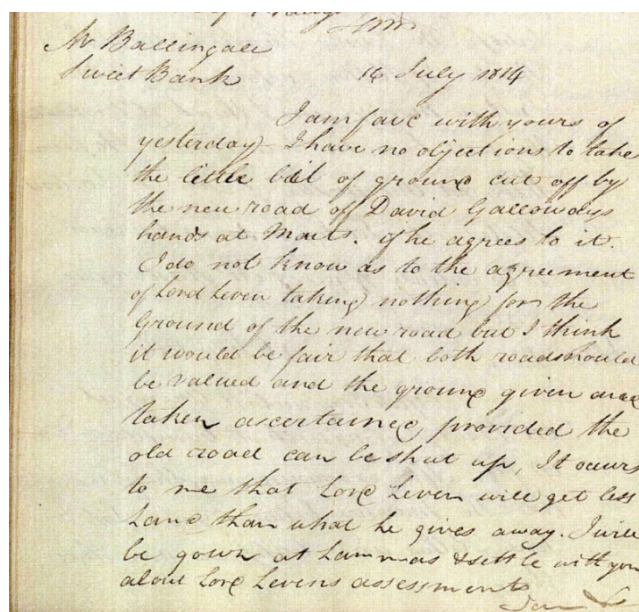
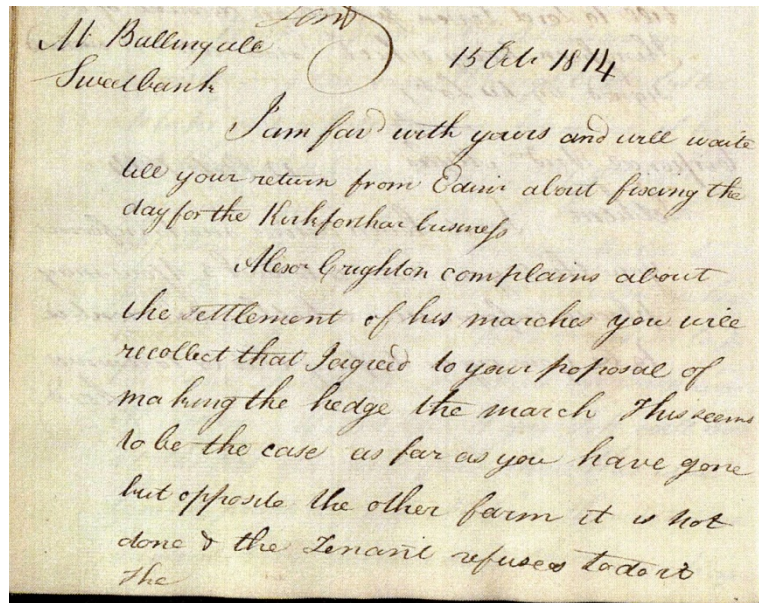


Fig.53. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 16 July 1814, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

¹¹⁹ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 4 May 1814, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

¹²⁰ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 16 July 1814, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

A further correspondence was written on Saturday, 15 October 1814 reads "I am fav [favoured] with yours and will waite [sic] till your return from Edin [Edinburgh] about fixing the day for the Kirkforthar business. Alex Crichton complains about the settlement of his marches you will recollect that I agreed to your proposal of making the hedge the march. This seems to be the case as far as you have gone but opposite the other farm it is not done and the tenant refuses to do it.¹²¹ The whole sh [should] be completed otherways matters should be restored to their former state. David Galloway says he can get no settlement for the ground taken up with the new road. This you sh [should] do when the old road is shut up and added to L'd [Lord] Leven's property [a] final settlement will take place but at present, the trustees must pay the tenant for the damages."¹²²



Mr Ballingale
Sweetbank

15 Oct. 1814

I am fav'd with yours and will waite
till your return from Edin' about fixing the
day for the Kirkforthar business

Alex Crichton complains about
the settlement of his marches you will
recollect that I agreed to your proposal of
making the hedge the march This seems
to be the case as far as you have gone
but opposite the other farm it is not
done & the Tenant refuses to do it
The

Fig.54. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 15 October 1814, Page 1, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

¹²¹ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 15 October 1814, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

¹²² Letter to Niel Ballingall, 15 October 1814, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

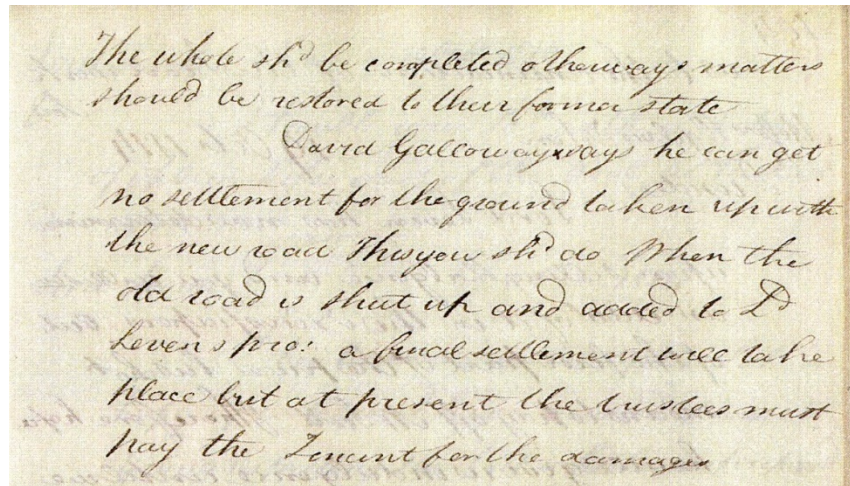


Fig.55. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 15 October 1814, Page 2, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

The Kirkforthar ditches were presumably built by Ballingall and were used to drain the bog land that during his time would have partly covered the Balbirnie estate. These ditches can still be seen today. Mr. Sutherland writes "Ballingall was likely charged with reclaiming the land for agriculture while leaving the Star Moss on the outskirts of Star available for peat cutting. A substantial drainage ditch acting as a flowing watercourse and fed from various channels can still be seen south of Kirkforthar Feus itself. [At one time this water and that from Pitillock Burn which crosses the railway would have fed mills to the north at Muirhead and beyond]." ¹²³



Fig.56. Kirkforthar Ditch at southernmost end looking south, Photograph Courtesy of Mr. Neil Sutherland, Chairman, Markinch Heritage Group

¹²³ Email communication of Neil Sutherland to Michael T. Tracy, 21 October 2017, Markinch, Fife, Scotland



Fig.57. Behind Kirkforthar Feus property, Photograph Courtesy of Mr. Neil Sutherland, Chairman, Markinch Heritage Group

Ballingall's experience as a water engineer would later be utilized in the lowering of Loch Leven proposed in 1824 and eventually completed by May of 1832. For further information on the Kirkforthar ditches please see this author's manuscript entitled "*The Kirkforthar Ditches.*"

A letter to Ballingall on Friday, 3 March 1815 read "I have received your letter with the sketch about the Treaton march. I saw also Crichton's yesterday and had a long conversation with him. I recommended to him to refer the matter to two neutral person, one to be named by each party, and told him that he far as Lord Leven was concerned his L'd [Lordship] would acquiesce in the decision. He spoke of Thos [Thomas] Carswell's at Begside on his part and you may name another, and I hope the business will be settled. It occurs to me that the strong hedge sh'd [should] be kept and that the value of the ground given and taken should be ascertained and the quality of it considered. The [unreadable] of water running through Birrell's farm¹²⁴ and into the old tract is agreed [unreadable] in my opinion to the land which Mr. Crichton would get because it prevents him getting the land improved on the north side of it besides occupying a considerable part of the ground. I should consider therefore that the ground to be got by A. Crichton is of no use to him beyond the south [unreadable] of the water tract. Compensation will therefore to all to be made for this. If this is done I have recommended to A. Crichton to be satisfied. It would have been better however that you had managed this matter before taking possession of the ground opposite to your farm."¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 3 March 1815, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

¹²⁵ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 3 March 1815, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

Mr Ballingall
Sweetbank

3 March 1815

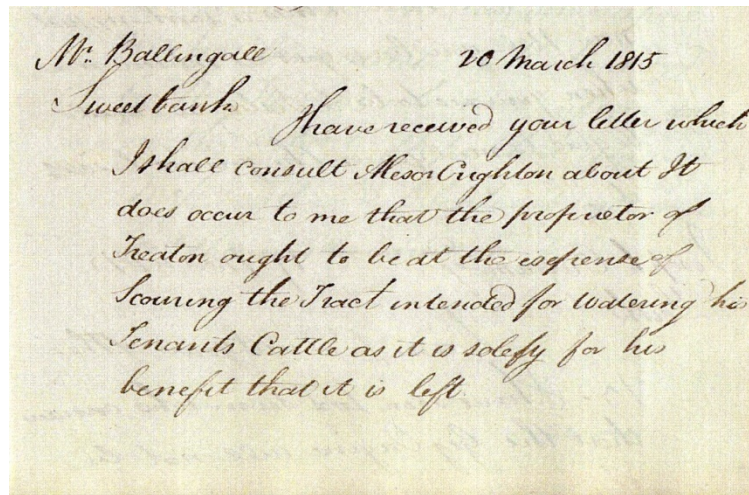
I have received your letter with
the sketch about the Tualora marsh
I saw Mr Craighead yesterday and
had a long conversation with him I
recommended to him to refer the matter
to two nautical persons, one to be named
by each party, and told him that so
far as Lord Taverne was concerned his lot
would acquiesce in the decision. He spoke of
Thos Cairwell at Bogside on his part
and you may name another, and I hope
the business will be settled. It occurs to
me that the strong hedge sh^d be kept
and that the value of the ground given
and taken should be ascertained and
the quality of it considered. The rule of
water running through Benelofarm
and J.

Fig.58. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 3 March 1815, Page 1, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

and into the old track is a quieted. I give
my opinion to the land which Mr Craighead
would get because it prevents him getting
the land improved on the north side of
it besides occupying a considerable part
of the ground. I should consider therefore
that the ground to be got by Mr Craighead
is of no use to him beyond the south bank of
the water tract. Compensation will therefore
be made for this. If this is done I have
recommended to Mr Craighead to be satisfied.
It would have been better however
that you had arranged this matter
before taking possession of the ground
opposite to your farm J.

Fig.59. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 3 March 1815, Page 2, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

On Monday, 20 March 1815 a letter was written to Ballingall from Lord Leven and Melville's Factor stating "I have received your letter which I shall consult Alex [Alexander] Crichton about. It does occur to me that the proprietor of Treaton ought to be at the expense of scouring the tract intended for watering tenant's cattle as it is solely for his benefit that it is left¹²⁶ of Markinch from which you will see that you will receive very shortly a considerable sum to keep down your advances. I have wrote him to know who is his agent that you may arrange about the security. Lord Balgonie has not yet returned me the bill but I expect it every day when I will get it dis [dispensed] and send you the cash. I am to see Lord Leven within a day and will go over the advertisement of Balgonie with him. I think it will do very well."¹²⁷



Mr. Ballingall
Sweetbank 20 March 1815
I have received your letter which
I shall consult Alex Crichton about It
does occur to me that the proprietor of
Treaton ought to be at the expense of
scouring the Tract intended for watering his
Tenants Cattle as it is solely for his
benefit that it is left

Fig.60. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 20 March 1815, Page 1, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

¹²⁶ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 20 March 1815, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

¹²⁷ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 20 March 1815, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

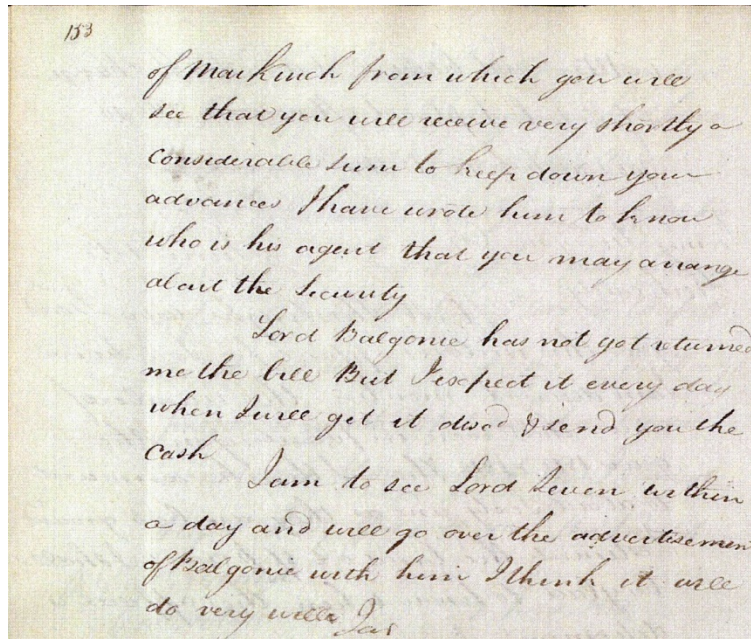


Fig.61. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 20 March 1815, Page 2, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

The Factor for Lord Leven-Melville sent a communication to Niel Ballingall on Monday, 5 June 1815 reading "I shall communicate what you mention to our mill tenant. It is not the ditch at the back of the Ward Feus that I meant it is the ditch on the west side of the ground called Flemings Acre which appears to have been scoured this year or last where you will see that more ground is occupied by the ditch than was necessary to drain Lord Leven's land."¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 5 June 1815, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

Mr Ballingall
Sweetbank

5 June 1815

I shall communicate what you mention to our Mill Tenant

It is not the Ditch at the back of the Wardens that I meant It is the ditch on the west side of the ground called Fearnings acre which appears to have been scooped this year or last where you will see that more ground is occupied by the ditch than was necessary to drain Lord Levens land

Fig.62. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 5 June 1815, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

In an undated letter to Ballingall presumably written in June of 1815, the factor for Lord Leven-Melville wrote "As I cannot get the old Markinch Road disposed till it is made arable I stopped. I beg you to get this done as Lord Leven's claim for rent of the¹²⁹ new road will not stop till it is done."¹³⁰ "This letter may refer to a road, no longer existing, from around what is now known as Croft Crescent, Markinch, west across an area once known as Inchunie and past Mount Frost towards Cadham and Leslie."¹³¹

¹²⁹ Letter to Niel Ballingall, undated [June of 1815], Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

¹³⁰ Letter to Niel Ballingall, undated [June of 1815], Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

¹³¹ Email communication of Neil Sutherland to Michael T. Tracy, 5 December 2017, Markinch, Fife, Scotland

Fig.63. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank undated June 1815, Page 1, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

Fig.64. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank undated June 1815, Page 2, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

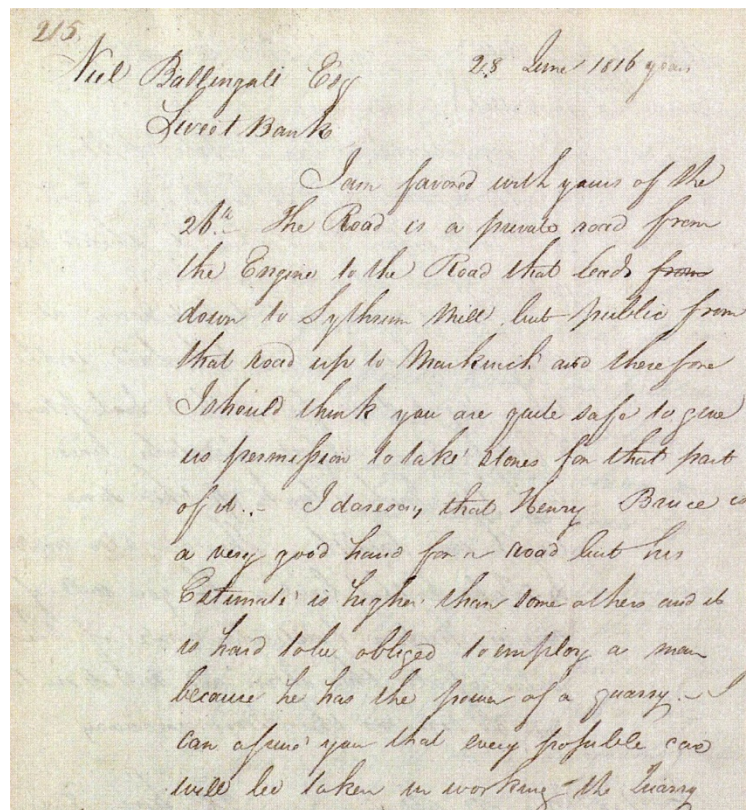
The next letter written to Ballingall, a year had passed and was dated Friday, 14 June 1816 reading "I have frequently mentioned to you the necessity there is for a change taking place respecting the water which comes from Westmile to Middlemill I beg that you will immediately get this rectified to prevent any unpleasant difference betwixt [between] the Proprietors."¹³²

Fig.65. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 14 June 1816, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

A week later on Friday, 28 June 1816, the Factor for Lord Leven-Melville wrote Ballingall again stating "I am favoured with yours of the 26th. The road is a private road from the engine to the road that

¹³² Letter to Niel Ballingall, 14 June 1816, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

leads down to the Sythrum Mill, but public from that road up to Markinch and there from I should think you are quite safe to give us permission to take stones from that part of it. I dare say that Henry Bruce is a very good hand for a road but his estimate is higher than some others and it is hard to be obliged to employ a man because he has the power of a quarry. I can advise you that every possible care will be taken in working the quarry.”¹³³



215. Niel Ballingall Esq
Sweet Bank

28 June 1816 years

I am favored with yours of the
26th. The Road is a private road from
the Engan to the Road that leads from
down to Sythrum Mill. but public from
that road up to Markinch and therefore
I should think you are quite safe to give
us permission to take stones for that part
of it. I dare say that Henry Bruce is
a very good hand for a road but his
Estimate is higher than some others and it
is hard to be obliged to employ a man
because he has the power of a quarry. I
can assure you that every possible care
will be taken in working the quarry.

Fig.66. Letter to Niel Ballingall of Sweetbank dated 28 June 1816, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

In a letter dated Saturday, 10 August 1816 the Factor wrote to Ballingall stating “The overseer which we have appointed for the road thinks that he found put the stones out of your quarry for the one half of the money which your quarrymen charge and offers to contract at this rate. This being such a material difference I hope you will prevail upon the General to allow Andrew Graham to quarry the stones and I pledge myself that everything shall be done as you direct.”¹³⁴

¹³³ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 28 June 1816, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

¹³⁴ Letter to Niel Ballingall, 10 August 1816, Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

W Balingall 10 Aug 1816
 Sweetbank
 My dear Sir
 The overseer which we
 have appointed for the Road thinks
 that he found put the stones out
 of your quarry for the one half
 of the money which your quarry
 men charge of the money which
 and offers to Contract at this
 rate This being such a material
 difference I hope you will
 prevail upon the General to
 allow And^r Graham to quarry the
 stones and I pledge myself that
 every thing shall be done as you
 direct

Fig.67. Letter to Niel Balingall of Sweetbank dated 10 August 1816, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

The final communication written by the Factor for Lord Leven to Niel Balingall was undated but written during the month of August 1816 and reads "I have wrote you several times respecting the complaints made by Mr. Hill of the water to his mill being kept up. I beg you will write me as soon as possible as he is now become very impatient. Did you receive the 5 [pounds] I sent you about the quarry."¹³⁵

W Balingall
of Sweetbank 27
 I have wrote you several times
 respecting the Complaints made by Mr Hill of
 the water to his mill being kept up. I beg
 you will write me as soon as possible as he is now
 become very impatient. Did you receive the 5
 pounds I sent you about the Quarry

Fig.68. Letter to Niel Balingall of Sweetbank undated August 1816, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

¹³⁵ Letter to Niel Balingall, undated [August of 1816], Letter Books of the Factor of David Leslie-Melville, Volume III, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msDA881.F4B21

A Celebration

In 1837 Niel Ballingall reached a milestone as Factor of Balbirnie, for in that year he marked 67 years in the position and the occasion was marked with a grand dinner in his honour. The *Fife Herald Newspaper* of Thursday, 31 August 1837 wrote of the event "The dinner was given by the tenantry of Balbirnie to Mr. Ballingall, who has for so long a period been the factor on that estate, took place on Thursday last, at the New Inn. As it was not exclusively confined to the tenantry, but embraced the large circle of Mr. B's [Ballingall's] friends in the district, the audience was very full. Above 100 sat down to a sumptuous dinner, prepared in McNab's best style, a large tent having been previously fitted up for the occasion J. B. Fernie, Esq., of Kilmux in the chair Mr. Kirk, farmer, Kinglassie, croupier. After the usual national toasts had been successively given and duly responded to by the meeting, the Chairman proposed the toast of the evening, preceding it by a neat and appropriate speech, and, in the name of the tenantry, presented Mr. Ballingall with a richly chased silver jug, on which was engraved the following inscription: 'Presented to Neil Ballingall, Esq., by the tenantry, as a mark of respect for his upright and honourable conduct during 67 years in which he has been factor on the estate of Balbirnie, 24 August 1837.' Mr. Ballingall returned thanks. It was most gratifying to him, he said, to receive these proofs of the kind regards of a company so numerous and intelligent, many of whom had known him so long. He assured them he had uniformly endeavoured to attend to the interests of both landlord and tenant, being convinced that they were inseparably united; and while had had with pleasure seen the estate of Balbirnie become enlarged to twice its former extent and more than quadrupled in its rental, he felt great satisfaction of saying that he had only had two sequestrations of tenants during the whole of that period, and these two were, moreover, bachelors, a class for which they all knew, he jocularly remarked, he had not a great degree of sympathy. There were a great number of other toasts and speeches during the evening, and of course, General Balfour and the different members of the Balbirnie family were not forgotten; and altogether the evening was spent with the greatest conviviality and harmony."¹³⁶ Since about 1823-24 Niel's son, William Ballingall (1800-1888), became his assistant and successor as Factor on the Balbirnie estate.

Death of Isabella Ballingall

Isabella Ballingall did not survive after the birth of her thirteenth and last child. Although the exact cause of her death is unknown she died on Monday, 2 March 1807 in Sweetbank at the age of 40.¹³⁷ She was buried in the Markinch Churchyard on Wednesday, 4 March 1807 and her burial record reads "Russell, Isabella, spouse of Neil Ballingall in Sweetbank, 4 March 1807, [buried] left side of father-in-law; David Ballingall at Balbirnie Mill interred 5 September 1805."¹³⁸

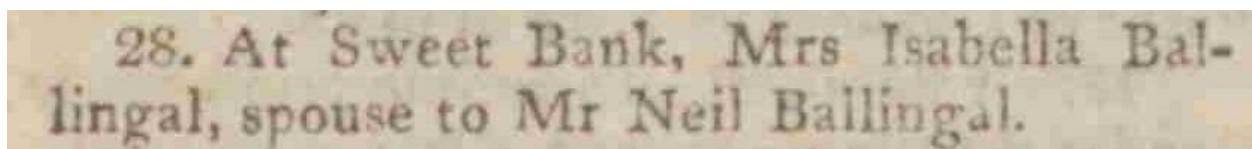


Fig.69. Death Notice of Isabella Ballingall, *The Scots Magazine*, 3 March 1807, Page 78

¹³⁶ *Fife Herald Newspaper*, 31 August 1837, p. 3

¹³⁷ Burial Record of Isabella Russell, 4 March 1807, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0040 0052

¹³⁸ Burial Record of Isabella Russell, 4 March 1807, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0040 0052

The Will of Niel Ballingall

At the age of 87, the old Factor decided on Sunday, 4 June 1837 to make out his Last Will and Testament.¹³⁹ He named his surviving sons (Robert, James, William and Niel) as his executors and his surviving daughters were to receive his bed linen, furniture and table linens.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, his daughter, Rachel, was to receive 450 pounds as well as a 100-pound yearly annuity for taking care of him during his old age, however, Rachel predeceased him in 1839.¹⁴¹

The Portraits of Niel Ballingall

A grandson of Niel Ballingall, the Reverend James Ballingall (1846-1926) would later write about “two portraits that were painted of Niel Ballingall, both by Charles Lees of Cupar, noted for his painting of *The Golfers: A Grand Match Played Over St. Andrews Links*



Fig.70. The Golfers: A Grand Match Played Over St. Andrews Links, 1847, by Charles Lees, Public Domain Photograph

¹³⁹ Last Will and Testament of Niel Ballingall, 4 June 1837, Cupar Sheriff Court (SC 20/50/14)

¹⁴⁰ Last Will and Testament of Niel Ballingall, 4 June 1837, Cupar Sheriff Court (SC 20/50/14)

¹⁴¹ Last Will and Testament of Niel Ballingall, 4 June 1837, Cupar Sheriff Court (SC 20/50/14)

and both were surviving in the 1920s. The first [portrait], in middle age, was painted for his daughter, Mrs. [Ann] Leburn [1802-1857], and was last known in possession of one of the Patullo family, grandchildren of Mrs. Leburn. The 2nd [portrait] done when he was about 80, was in possession of the Reverend James Ballingall. There was also a marble bust by Sir John Steell, done for his daughter, Mrs. [Elizabeth] Peat [1795-1863] of Viewforth, Edinburgh, and last known to be in the possession of Reverend James Ballingall's niece, Mrs. Cuthbertson."¹⁴²

The Agriculturalist

Ballingall was an industrious agriculturalist and lived through the height of the Scottish Enlightenment when new science was being brought to bear on Scottish agriculture. Known as the 'age of improvement' this exciting period of time relied on the best approach to farming in Scotland. Examples of this approach were: enclosure by stonewalling between farmlands; liming of the fields were begun which in turn made the soil better and improved the grazing's of livestock; and finally, crop rotation was introduced. All of these improvements made great and lasting improvements to agriculture in Scotland and Niel Ballingall played a small integral part in the advancement of agriculture not only in Markinch Parish but also in the Kingdom of Fife and beyond its borders.

Sir John Sinclair (1754-1835) was a well-respected Scottish politician and writer on agriculture and finance and was considered to be the first person to use statistics in the English language, in his pioneering work, the Statistical Account of Scotland in which he supervised the compilation of the 21 volumes. Sinclair had numerous correspondences with the leading figures of his era which included George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and others from around the world. Niel Ballingall also had an extensive correspondence with him, furnishing him with valuable information for his statistical work.¹⁴³ Ballingall was a leading agriculturalist in Markinch Parish and was always amongst the first to introduce the newest and most approved systems.¹⁴⁴ One such plan of Ballingall's was published in Sinclair's *An Account of the systems of husbandry adopted in the more improved districts of Scotland, Volume I* entitled: *Plan of a Heap of Earth and Lime, in alternate strata*.¹⁴⁵ Sinclair writes "Considering these circumstances, I was much pleased to find, that a mode had been discovered by Mr. Niel Ballingall in Fife, which obviates these difficulties. His plan is, to lay the calcined lime down on any thick head-ridge of good earth, within the field where it is to be applied, and the instant it is so, two men are ready to make up a compost of the lime-shells and earth; three cart-loads of earth to one cart of shells, raised to a ridge long and narrow, five feet high, that rain may not enter it. The moisture in the earth, slacks or reduces the lime to a powder; it swells to a considerable bulk, and then all cracks and openings are closed with a spade, and a little more earth put over the whole. In this way, he has had it frequently mixed up for six months, and in one particular instance fifteen months, before it was carted away; and yet when carried on to the land and spread, the whole mass put on the appearance of white lime, flying with the wind, as if newly from the kiln. This mode he means always to follow, being certain of its advantage. It can be mixed as intimately with the soil as if new from the kiln, and he has had crops from it in this way, superior to an equal quantity of hot lime, (This is an important fact, it being generally supposed that when inserted in the form of hot lime, in a state of perfect powder, its effects are greater and more immediate than in any other way. By Mr. Ballingall's plan, the lime can be carried to the field

¹⁴² Ballingall, Rev. James. *The Ballingalls of Sweetbank, Markinch*. Typescript, undated

¹⁴³ *Caledonian Mercury Newspaper*, 29 April 1843, p. 3

¹⁴⁴ *Caledonian Mercury Newspaper*, 29 April 1843, p. 3

¹⁴⁵ Sinclair, John. *An Account of the systems of husbandry adopted in the more improved districts of Scotland, Volume I*. Edinburgh: A. Constable, 1813, p.p. 192-196

in autumn, or even in winter, which, though an old practice, could not be done with equal safety, as under the proposed system) both tried without dung. The application commonly is to the summer-fallow; he has also applied it to pasture, quite hot, and in compost as above described, and found both answer well; but the time of application was July, and he soon found, that it ought to lie at least one year or more before the field was ploughed. Mr. Ballingal having used from 500 to 1000 bolls *per annum*, for several years, his experience may be confidently relied on. He remarks, that lime, if exposed to rain, or even to frost, and slacked like mortar, loses half its effect; no care can then mix it intimately with the soil. His land is wet, and often when the lime is drive, unfit for carting upon the field, nor are the ridges prepared for spreading the lime; without having fallen upon such a plan, therefore, he could never have used lime to equal advantage. He adds, that an intelligent neighbour of his, brings his lime from the kiln, lays it in small heaps, about a firloft of shells in each heap, or four heaps *per* boll, on the fallow; covers these instantly with earth, which slacks the lime, and when it is completely so, he spreads it in powder, quite hot, on the fallows, and ploughs it in with a light furrow. This saves labour and expence. He never uses water in slacking lime, and the effects of his practice are very good; the earth, or rather the moisture in it, slacks the lime most completely, and no water is necessary. (A correspondent contends, that lime is best laid on the land in small heaps, and immediately covered with earth, which in a damp or moist season slacks or falls it; but he frequently puts on water from a water-cart, which slacks it directly, and is immediately spread in that quick state, harrowed, and ploughed in, when it mixes most intimately with the soil. Lime should be in powder, and the land in a powder-like state, when it is laid on.) This is an excellent practice, and very common in many counties; and many intelligent farmers prefer it to the other plan, which they think would be attended with too much expence to be generally imitated. At the same time, an intimate mixture with the soil, is of the utmost importance in the application of lime; any plan that contributes to that object merits attention. Having often heard farmers complain of the difficulty they experienced, in procuring water, in sufficient quantities, thoroughly to slick their lime, in some districts; and in others, of the loss they sustained in carrying on their lime husbandry, by unexpected rains, I have procured, from Mr. Ballingal, the following sketch, which, with the reference thereto, will fully explain his system.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Sinclair, John. *An Account of the systems of husbandry adopted in the more improved districts of Scotland, Volume I.* Edinburgh: A. Constable, 1813, p.p. 192-196

Plan of a Heap of Earth and Lime, in alternate strata, as practised by Mr Niel Ballingal in Fife.

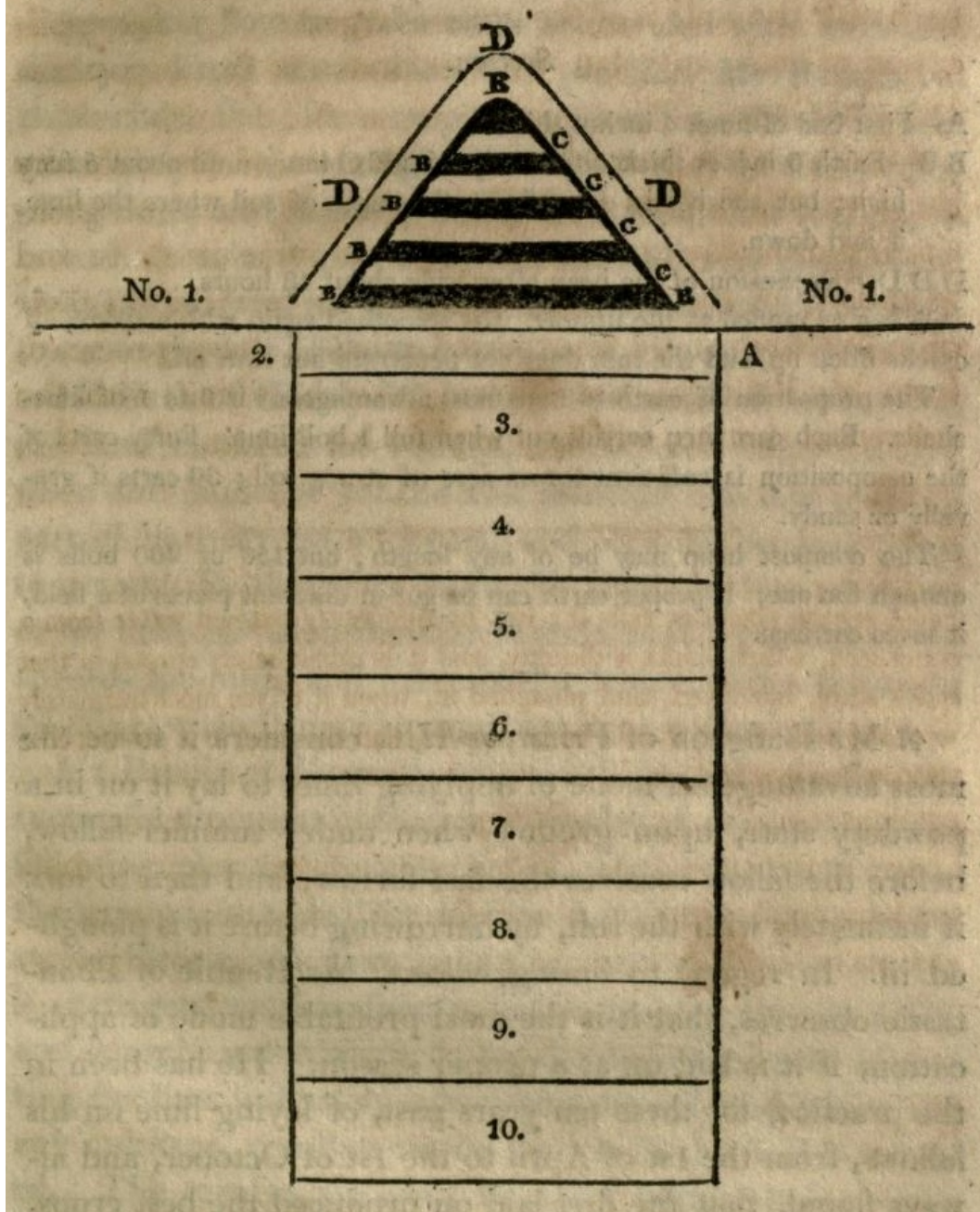


Fig.71. Sketch drawn by Niel Ballingall of his Plan of a Heap of Earth and Lime in alternate strata from John Sinclair's *An Account of the systems of husbandry adopted in the more improved district of Scotland*, Volume I, Page 195

Reference to the Plan and Section of the Compost Midden.

No. 1. 1.—Surface of the ground.

No. 2.—A small trench made under the surface, afterwards filled with lime 4 inches deep.

Fig.72. Reference to the Plan and Section of the Compost Midden, Plan of a Heap of Earth and Lime in alternate strata from John Sinclair's An Account of the systems of husbandry adopted in the more improved district of Scotland, Volume I, Page 195

No. 3.—First space dug out equally deep as No. 2. the earth of which is thrown back, and left to cover up the end of the heap when completed.

No. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.—Similar trenches, 8 feet by $3\frac{1}{2}$.

Section.

A—First bed of lime, 4 inches thick.

B B—Earth 6 inches thick alternately with C C lime, until about 5 feet high; but the height depends on the depth of soil where the lime is laid down.

D D D—Expansion of the heap after lying about 48 hours.

When expanded to the utmost, it is smoothed again with a spade, all cracks filled up, and the rain does not penetrate but runs off.

The proportion of earth to lime most advantageous is 3 to 1 of lime-shells. Each cart then carries out when full 1 boll lime. Forty carts of the composition is sufficient for an acre of strong soil; 30 carts if gravelly or sandy.

The compost heap may be of any length; but 150 or 200 bolls is enough for one. If proper earth can be got in different places of a field, it saves carriage.

Fig.73. Reference to the Plan and Section of the Compost Midden, Plan of a Heap of Earth and Lime in alternate strata from John Sinclair's An Account of the systems of husbandry adopted in the more improved district of Scotland, Volume I, Page 196

In the same work, Sinclair gives an account of driven threshing mills and notes Niel Ballingall's views by writing "that the advantage of a mill, strong and well constructed, well managed, and with fanners, is of the greatest importance, but a slight mill [that is] constantly breaking, and with no fanners, no farmer would accept of as a present."¹⁴⁷

In an earlier volume of *An Account of the systems of husbandry adopted in the more improved district of Scotland* written in 1812, Sinclair writes of the duration of leases and notes that "Mr. Neil Ballingall took a farm of 380 Scotch, or 482 English acres, in the county of Fife, at 15s [shillings] per acre, on a lease of 31 years. The whole of it required draining, liming, fallowing, etc., at an expence, varying from L. [pound] 10 to even L. [pound] 20 per acre. The whole improvement, owing to the extent of the farm, and the great expence attending its improvement, which the tenant could only gradually defray, was not compelled till the nineteenth year of the lease. Can a stronger proof be adduced of the absolute necessity of granting a lease of 31 years, in similar cases. The farmer was no gainer, even at the low rent of 15s [shillings] per acre, for the first 19 years, expending, on completing his improvements, the profit derived from the parts already improved; but he went on with cheerfulness, expecting to be reimbursed by the possession of a completely improved farm, at a moderate rent, for eleven years, capable of being cultivated, by half the number of men and horses formerly used, actually maintaining double the number of cattle, and producing three times the quantity of grain it was capable of doing before the improvement commenced; all this, at 15s [shillings] per acre, insured a competent reward for his exertions."¹⁴⁸ In Sinclair's appendix of this work he listed Ballingall as one of "the intelligent farmers, from whose communications the preceding account of the husbandry of Scotland has been drawn up."¹⁴⁹

In May of 1814, Sir John Sinclair sent a letter he received from Ballingall to the conductor of the *Farmer's Magazine* to publish his letter. Ballingall's letter concerned his account of the means by which his field was saved by the grub worm that attacked it. The following is his communication that was published in the *Farmer's Magazine*: "In a recent communication from Mr. Niel Ballingal of Sweet Bank in Fife, he gives the following account of the means by which a valuable field was preserved from the vermin that attacked it. He begins with remarking, that during the Spring of 1813, the grub worm was most destructive; in particular, that he had a field of 20 acres of oats, (on old grass ploughed up) where slugs innumerable, and the grub worm together, threatened absolute destruction to the whole crop. He ordered half the field to be limed with hot lime, at 4 o'clock in the morning, and then immediately rolled it with a heavy roller, (cast-metal). The roller destroyed the slugs even where the lime was not applied, and still more completely where it was. But neither the lime nor the roller had any effect on the grub, and destruction went on. The field otherwise, promised a most productive crop, being in high order. Mr. Ballingall next prohibited shooting crows on any part of the farm, or at all disturbing them. The consequence was that every morning this field was covered by them, (a rookery being at two miles distance). Not a clod but they had turned over, and devoured such numbers of grub worms, that very soon the ravages on the crop ended; and he had afterwards the prospect of a full crop at least 150 bolls on a field, where, but for the crows, he would not have had either straw or corn. He is convinced, therefore, from his own experience, that farmers would have cause to regret the extirpation, or even too much diminishing the number of crows. He is convinced that Providence intended them to be

¹⁴⁷ Sinclair, John. *An Account of the systems of husbandry adopted in the more improved districts of Scotland, Volume I*. Edinburgh: A. Constable, 1813, p. 80

¹⁴⁸ Sinclair, John. *An Account of the systems of husbandry adopted in the more improved districts of Scotland: with some observations on the improvements of which they are susceptible*. Edinburgh: A. Constable, 1812, p. 94

¹⁴⁹ Sinclair, John. *An Account of the systems of husbandry adopted in the more improved districts of Scotland: with some observations on the improvements of which they are susceptible*. Edinburgh: A. Constable, 1812, p. 94

useful. The grub season, had it not been for the crow (and the magpie, equally an enemy to the grub), would have destroyed more grain in this county (Fife), than all the crows in it would have done in seven years.”¹⁵⁰

As a respected agriculturalist, Niel Ballingall was a member of the Fife Farming Society which was formed on Tuesday, 4 March 1794 presumably since its inception.¹⁵¹ Accordingly, there is a record of Niel Ballingall being an office bearer of the Fife Farming Society in October of 1816. There exists a printed summons to Niel Ballingall, President of the organization made out by William Miller, formerly tenant in Sythrum, against the office bearers of the Fife Farming Society.¹⁵² The summons and documents recount the rules and regulations of the Society as drawn up in 1794 and further that Miller was a paid member from 1795 until 1815 but was refused help when he was roused [to sell or let by public auction] out of his farm in 1811 and therefore became indigent.¹⁵³ Miller was asking for an annual allowance of 3 pounds to be paid to him back-dated to 1811.¹⁵⁴ Unfortunately, the outcome of this case cannot be determined. It is also probable that Niel Ballingall continued to be associated with the Fife Farming Society until his death.

¹⁵⁰ *The Farmer's Magazine Volume XV*. Edinburgh: David Williams, 1814, p. 315

¹⁵¹ Summons of William Miller to Niel Ballingall, 17 October 1816, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msdep117/2

¹⁵² Summons of William Miller to Niel Ballingall, 17 October 1816, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msdep117/2

¹⁵³ Summons of William Miller to Niel Ballingall, 17 October 1816, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msdep117/2

¹⁵⁴ Summons of William Miller to Niel Ballingall, 17 October 1816, University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msdep117/2

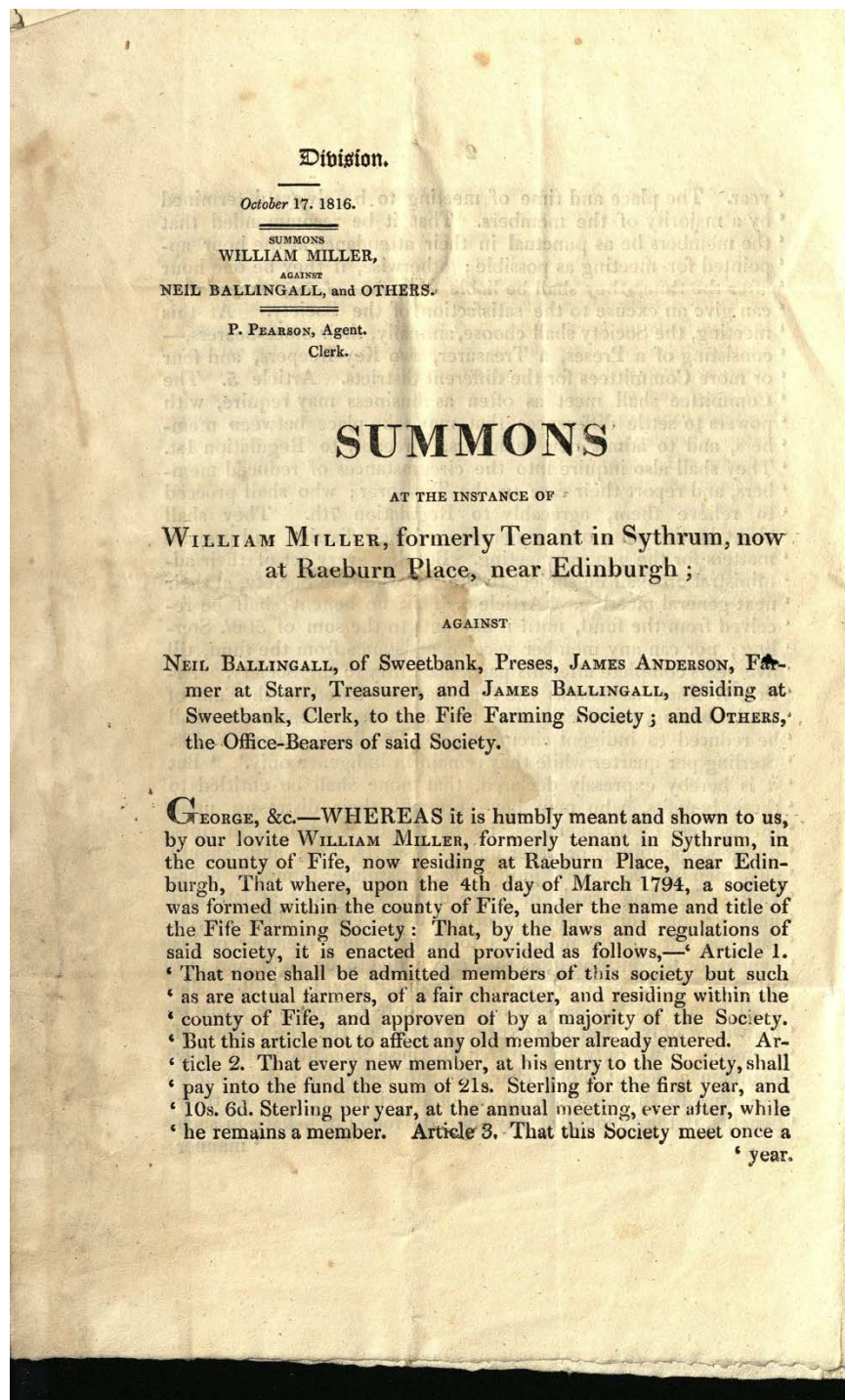


Fig.74. Front Page of the Summons of William Miller to Niel Ballingall, President of the Fife Farming Society and Other Office Bearers, 17 October 1816, Photograph Courtesy of the University of St. Andrews Special Collections, Call Number msdep117/2, Special Permission for the Use of This Photograph Granted By the Head of Special Collections

Elder of Markinch Parish Church and Clerk to the Heritors

It was said that Ballingall could with great readiness quote the scriptures from memory.¹⁵⁵ At a date that cannot yet be determined, he was elected to become an Elder of the Established Church in Markinch.¹⁵⁶ He was described as a “liberal friend to the poor and the virtuous, but the uncompromising opponent of the vicious, he endeared all to him who had the pleasure of his acquaintance, by his cheerful conversation, abounding in anecdote of the olden times, interwoven with moral instruction, well adapted to the improvement of the mind of the young, in whose society he delighted to spend his evening after the labours of the day. Indeed, it was perhaps when seated at the head of his numerous family some thirty years ago, that he shone forth in the most delightful of all characters, that of a parent training up a family, both by precept and example, in the way they ought to walk as regarded their duty to God and to man.”¹⁵⁷

Ballingall's affiliation with Markinch Parish Church dates back to 1785 with his first marriage to Miss Betty McKenzie and after his second marriage to Miss Isabella Russell in 1788, all of his thirteen children were baptized in the church spanning the next seventeen years. There is evidence to suggest that Niel Ballingall extended the church graveyard during the years of 1803-05¹⁵⁸ but exactly to what extent and in what manner is not clear given that there was housing surrounding the graveyard. He may well have supervised the installation of the gates.

Dispersed throughout these pages are instances of the Factor's willingness for example to help a prisoner be released from jail to his generosity of giving to each of his colliers a copy of the speech delivered by Mr. Jeffrey at a dinner praising the colliers of the estate for their dedication and hard work. There is, however, another illustration of this public-spirited gentleman which awakens this author's esteem for his ancestor more than his response to the following petition signed by 50 local weavers of the area to the heritors: “The Petition of the Weavers of Markinch and Neighbourhood to the Heritors of the Parish of Markinch. Humbly sheweth, That from the stagnation of Trade and other causes many of us have been, out of employment for some time, and from the High price of the necessaries of Life are quite unable to sustain for any length of time the miseries of our present situation. We are very sensible of and grateful for the exertions the Heritors are making for our relief, and trust the good resulting therefrom will be equal to the expectations of the Donors. At the same time, we humbly beg leave to state that when we are without Work we are also without Credit, and under these circumstances, any pecuniary relief that the benevolence of the Heritors could bestow would, without Work, be inadequate to keep us from starvation but with Work might be highly useful in alleviating the distress of those individuals who have large families; and may be judiciously applied in the way proposed. But could a Credit be established, or money raised to purchase Yarns to keep us in employment, the Manufactured Goods might be sold to repay the money advanced, with very little if any loss to the Heritors and might be conducted in such a way as they thought most proper and would greatly benefit the Petitioners. Your Petitioners therefore sincerely beg and humbly hope that the Heritors will take this into their immediate consideration and adopt some means of relief for so large a portion of the community now suffering the deepest distress.’ In October of 1817 Niel Ballingall wrote to the Heritors as follows: ‘Having it not in my power to attend you today I send the Minute Book with

¹⁵⁵ *Caledonian Mercury Newspaper*, 29 April 1843, p. 3

¹⁵⁶ Gourlay, Ian, Wilkie, Ken, Manson, Bruce. *Markinch: Its Church and Parish*. Markinch: Inkcharm, 2010, p. 144

¹⁵⁷ *Caledonian Mercury Newspaper*, 29 April 1843, p. 3

¹⁵⁸ Historic Environment Scotland Portal. Kirk Brae, St. Drostan's Church Graveyard with Boundary Wall Gates and Railings. Accessed at: portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB37645

my son. Receive this with the following papers: Petition of 50 Weavers given to Mr. Wright, the Parish Minister [George Wright was the Markinch Parish Minister from 1801 until October 1817]. All the principal Heritors being absent at the time I had no orders from them. But the case of such numbers in want of work was very deplorable. I, therefore, took the risk on myself and bought yarn to the value of 260 [pounds] and paid wages nearly 40 [pounds] Total Advance 300 [pounds]. Mr. Robert Ingles constructed the Manufacture, kept the whole Petitioners in Work till Trade revived, and now they have plenty of work. The Goods were consigned to my Correspondent in London with orders to sell at Prime Cost all are sold and no loss sustained except the Interest of the 300 [pounds] laid out by me. I have no legal Claim on the Heritors, but if they chose to allow 10 [pounds] or 12 [pounds] to cover the loss of Interest I shall have nothing to regret.' The Heritors granted him 10 [pounds] as repayment of the Interest."¹⁵⁹ During this period of time, Ballingall was the Clerk to the Heritors although it cannot be determined how long he held this position.

Death of Niel Ballingall

Ballingall was listed in the 1837 *Pigot and Co.'s National Commercial Directory* as being a Factor at Markinch.¹⁶⁰

MARKINCH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD.

THE parish of MARKINCH is bounded by Kennoway on the east; on the west by Dysart, Kinglassie, and Leslie; on the north by Falkland and Kettle, and on the south by Wemyss: it extends from north to south five miles and a half, by a mean breadth of two, its southern end being considerably wider. The parish has a general slope towards the south; it is under the best state of cultivation, enclosure, and plantation—and must be ranked amongst the most beautiful parts of this shire: it is traversed by the streams of the Leven and the Orr, and the great road through the county crosses it. The village of Markinch stands near the centre of the parish, at the distance of ten miles s. of Cupar, and eight s. e. of Kirkcaldy: it occupies an open situation, on a piece of irregular rising ground; and on the highest part of the eminence is seated the church. Weaving of linens is the principal employment of the inhabitants, and a woollen manufactory adds to the industrious aspect of the place; in the neighbourhood are two paper-

mills and three bleach-fields, and the district abounds in coal. The parish contains Balgonie Castle, one of the seats of the Earl of Leven, and from whence his eldest son takes the title of baron: the castle is an edifice of great antiquity and strength; it stands on the south bank of the Leven, in the midst of some fine woods. About half a mile to the east is the castle of Balfour, surrounded by pleasing plantations and inclosures; and in a delightful situation is the house (or castle) of Balbirnie, a good substantial mansion. Besides Markinch, the parish comprises two or three villages of lesser note, possessing no object worthy of description; amongst these, however, the village of Dubbieside is an exception—a neat little place on the coast, and an agreeable resort for sea-bathers from the adjacent more inland district. The places of worship in Markinch consist of a church of the establishment, and a united secession chapel. Three annual fairs are entitled to be holden within this parish, little or no importance, however, is attached to them.

POST OFFICE, William Hutchison, *Post Master*.—Letters from all parts arrive every forenoon at a quarter before eleven, and are despatched every day at a quarter before one.

. The names without address are in MARKINCH.

<p>GENTRY & CLERGY. Balfour General Robert, Balbirnie Ballingall Mr. Neil (factor) Markinch Ballingall Mr. Wm. (writer) Markinch Greig George, esq. Balgairvie Halley Rev. William, Markinch Paston Mrs. Barn's lee Sievright Rev. James, Markinch</p> <p>BAKERS. Allan George Gibb Thomas</p>	<p>BLEACHERS. Donaldson David & Co. Rothes Londale David & Co. Lochty Russell William & Co. Balgonie</p> <p>BOOT AND SHOE MAKERS. Galloway George Immerly Alexandr. Mathie William Potter George</p> <p>FLAX SPINNERS. Baxter & Stewart, Meltown, Balgonie</p>	<p>Wilson George, Haugh mill GROCCERS & SPIRIT DEALERS. Baird T. and W. Cassels John Gibb Miss Kinnimont Mrs.</p> <p>LINEN & WOOLLEN DRAPERS Cassels John Murray William Selkirk George Webster David</p> <p>Melville Henry Mitchel Andrew Oman Mrs.</p>
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Fig. 75. 1837 *Pigot and Co.'s National Commercial Directory* listing Niel Ballingall (Second Entry)

¹⁵⁹ Bennett, George. *Niel Ballingall, Estate Factor*. Typed Manuscript, p. 5. Fife Archives. Reference Number A/AAO/4/1/2, Reference Number GDC/16/131/1/25

¹⁶⁰ *Pigot and Co.'s National Commercial Directory for Scotland*. London: 1837, p. 407

As Niel grew older, his son, William Ballingall (1800-1888) assisted him with his duties as Factor beginning in about 1823-24. The old Factor it was said, continued to be driven around the estate by his only unmarried daughter, Rachel (1799-1839).¹⁶¹ According to his grandson, the Reverend James Ballingall “the old man [Niel Ballingall] sank gradually into a peaceful and happy old age. He died in his chair...”¹⁶² Another description stated that he “retained all his faculties; and even when his memory began to give way as regarded the things of the present day, he returned to the occurrences of early-life...”¹⁶³ Niel Ballingall died on Tuesday, 18 April 1843 at Sweetbank at the age of 92.¹⁶⁴ His death was well reported on by the various newspapers of the period. The *Fife Herald Newspaper* published the following “Died at Sweetbank, Markinch, on the 18th current, aged 93 [sic], Mr. Ballingall for 72 years factor on the estates of Balbirnie.”¹⁶⁵



Fig.76. Death Notice of Niel Ballingall, 27 April 1843, *Fife Herald Newspaper*

A poignant obituary of the late Factor was published in the *Caledonian Mercury Newspaper* and is reproduced below.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ Gourlay, Ian, Wilkie, Ken, Manson, Bruce. *Markinch: Its Church and Parish*. Markinch: Inkcharm, 2010, p. 146

¹⁶² Ballingall, Rev. James. *The Ballingalls of Sweetbank, Markinch*. Typescript, undated

¹⁶³ *Caledonian Mercury Newspaper*, 29 April 1843, p. 3

¹⁶⁴ Death Record of Niel Ballingall, 18 April 1843, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0060 0188

¹⁶⁵ *Fife Herald Newspaper*, 27 April 1843, p. 2

¹⁶⁶ *Caledonian Mercury Newspaper*, 29 April 1843, p. 3

DEATH OF NIEL BALLINGAL, Esq. — In our obituary of this day we have recorded the death of Mr Niel Ballingal, Sweetbank, at the advanced age of 93, one of the most enlightened and enterprising men of the eventful period in which he lived. Born in 1750, of humble parents, Mr Ballingal had but a limited education, such only as at that period could be obtained in our parochial schools; but having been apprenticed to Mr Jamieson, then a writer at Brymers Newton, father of our respected Sheriff-Substitute, Mr Ballingal had the benefit of his library, of which he made the most diligent use. When about twenty years of age he became factor to John Balfour, Esq. of Balbirnie, grandfather to the present proprietor, and here again he had the means of gratifying his thirst for knowledge. No subject was too deep for his understanding, and no labour was spared in overcoming difficulties arising from a defective education. Accordingly, at an early period he became a contributor to the periodicals of the day upon subjects both agricultural and scientific. With the late Sir John Sinclair he had an extensive correspondence, furnishing him with valuable information for his statistical work. As a mining engineer, his working of the extensive coal fields on the Balbirnie estate, and projecting the great water-engines on the river Leven—erected nearly sixty years ago—for draining the coal fields, bear evidence of his early genius and judicious forethought; for it is admitted by the most eminent engineers of the present day, that those engines could not have been more judiciously devised or more appropriately placed for the object in view. As an agriculturist, he was always amongst the first to introduce the newest and most approved systems, and encouraged the improvement of the soil, by draining and otherwise, as the surest means for securing national independence as well as individual prosperity; and, while the steady friend of the industrious farmer, he never lost sight of the rights of the proprietor, but demonstrated that the true interest of the latter lay in aiding the tenantry to adopt the improvements of the times, and thereby increase the productiveness of the soil. As a public man, the name of Mr Niel Ballingal was as well known throughout the county of Fife as it was justly esteemed and respected. A liberal friend to the poor and the virtuous, but the uncompromising opponent of the vicious, he endeared all to him who had the pleasure of his acquaintance, by his cheerful conversation, abounding in anecdote of the olden times, interwoven with moral instruction, well adapted to the improvement of the mind of the young, in whose society he delighted to spend his evenings after the labours of the day. Indeed, it was perhaps when seated at the head of his numerous family, some thirty years ago, that he shone forth in the most delightful of all characters—that of a parent training up a family, both by precept and example, in the way they ought to walk as regarded their duty to God and to man. Throughout his long life he enjoyed excellent health, and, until within a few years of his death, retained all his faculties; and even when his memory began to give way as regarded the things of the present day, he returned to the occurrences of early life, and could quote the scriptures with a readiness that only terminated with his earthly existence. Few men, indeed, have left a more spotless character than this venerable patriarch of nearly a century.—*Fifehire Journal*.

Fig.77. Death Notice of Niel Ballingal, Caledonian Mercury Newspaper, 29 April 1843

A week later on Tuesday, 25 April 1843 he was buried in the Markinch Churchyard in Markinch on the left side of his daughter, Rachel Ballingall (1799-1843) in the grave of his spouse, Isabella Russell.¹⁶⁷

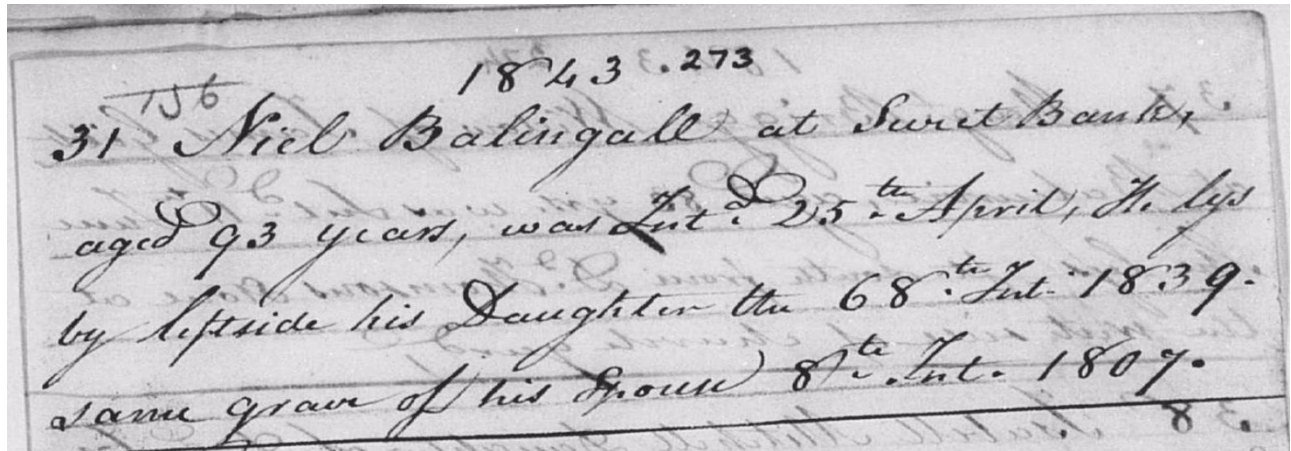


Fig.78. Burial Record of Niel Ballingall, 25 April 1843, Markinch Parish Records, Crown Copyright

His gravestone still stands presently and reads "Sacred to the Memory of Neil Ballingall, Sweet Bank, died 18 April 1843 aged 92. John XI.25. [I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.]"

¹⁶⁷ Burial Record of Niel Ballingall, 25 April 1843, Markinch Parish Records, Old Parish Records 447/0070 0275



Fig.79. Graves of Niel Ballingall and Family, Markinch Parish Churchyard, Markinch, Fife, Photograph Courtesy of Michael T. Tracy © 2010 Michael T. Tracy

On Friday, 17 May 1844 an inventory was conducted on the estate of Niel Ballingall.¹⁶⁸ A summary of his estate is as follows: the value of his household furniture was 233 pounds, 8 shillings and 6 pence; balance due to the deceased by John Balfour, Esq., of Balbirnie as of Tuesday, 18 April 1843 was 1,097 pounds, 3 shillings and 4 pence; balance due to the deceased by James Balfour of Balgonie as of Tuesday, 18 April 1843 was 96 pounds, 10 shillings and 5 pence; amount of sums in the national and other banks upon accounts in the joint names of William and Niel Ballingall was 1,716 pounds, 4 shillings and 9 pence; value of estate was listed at 6,935 pounds, 7 shillings and 29 pence.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Inventory of Niel Ballingall, 17 May 1844, Cupar Sheriff Court (SC20/50/14)

¹⁶⁹ Inventory of Niel Ballingall, 17 May 1844, Cupar Sheriff Court (SC20/50/14)

Niel Ballingall was a self-educated and very talented individual. With only a limited education, he pursued his quest for knowledge as a young man. No subject was too deep for his understanding, and no labour was spared in overcoming difficulties arising from a limited education.¹⁷⁰ He began surveying various properties in the area and his talents caught the eye of General John Balfour and he was eventually tapped to succeed his boss, A. Small as Factor of Balfour's vast estates at Balbirnie in 1770. Balfour continued to use Ballingall's surveying talents as there are in existence various early survey plans dating to 1770, his first year as Factor to Balfour.

Ballingall was named after the minister of Kennoway twenty years earlier. He grew up in Kennoway Parish and learned from his father about agriculture, as the family was long ago farmers of the area dating back generations. Once he was appointed Factor of Balbirnie he married Betty McKenzie in 1785 and it was said that they gave the name of Sweetbank to the newly constructed Factor's house on the Balbirnie estate.



Fig.80. Sweetbank House, Markinch, Fife, Scotland, Photograph Courtesy of the book "Markinch: Its Church and Parish, Page 144

But their marriage did not survive a year as Betty died shortly later. Niel would meet Isabella Russell and two years later they were married and had thirteen children together. They were married for nineteen years when Isabella died at the age of 40 in 1807. Niel would never remarry again.

He took over the tenancy of the farm of Auchmuty on the Rothes estate in the early days of his Factorship. He did some farming when his time permitted and he was a member of the Fife Farming Society for years and was an office bearer of the society as well. Ballingall soon demonstrated that he was an agricultural improver.

¹⁷⁰ *Caledonian Mercury Newspaper*, 29 April 1843, p. 3

While the Factor of Balbirnie, he not only engages himself in improving the land but also in the development of coal and lime works on the estate including improving the Balbirnie Mill. Niel and eventually his sons had a hand in or were at a meeting or on a committee of nearly everything that affected the parish of Markinch. This included the partial drainage of Loch Leven and creating a “cut” through some four miles of the meandering river leading from it. He was considered a vigorous water engineer as a result of the scheme he helped to create and plan. The “cut” as it became known as was opened in May of 1832 while Ballingall was still living.

Niel Ballingall was one of the most influential Factors of his time and would serve in that position for 72 years. His son and even his grandson would also serve in the position until 1916. Three generations of the family were Factors of the estate of Balbirnie, a feat that the residents of the parish of Markinch can be justly proud. One might well imagine the Factor of Balbirnie riding to various places on the estate surveying lands from on top hills; managing the coal pits; farm steadings requiring repair; overseeing the construction of new buildings, roads and bridges to build and repair; heritors meetings to attend; placing advertisements in newspapers seeking new tenants; negotiating new tenant leases and disputes about march dykes; writing endless and numerous reports to General Balfour and the drainage of the then bog lands in parts of the estate which included the planning, construction and implementation of the Kirkforthar ditches which can still be seen over two hundred years later and in the eyes of this author, is a truly remarkable engineering feat of its time. Clearly, Niel Ballingall was an informed and industrious individual during an exciting, eventful period in the history of Scotland. Few men, indeed, few Factors have left a more indelible record of achievement than this Factor of Balbirnie. His deeds not only benefitted his current generation but also the present generation. Niel Ballingall is warmly commemorated here in grateful esteem and recognition by his distant first cousin, Michael T. Tracy. This work is dedicated to the Memory of Niel Ballingall.

Memoratus in aeternum (Forever Remembered)

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