

## The Clan Allan, the Grants of Auchernack and Burnside

According to traditional manuscript histories, the progenitor of the Grants of Clan Allan was Allan, a younger son of Gregory le Grant, who was said to be a chieftain of the Grants in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> This claim, however, is not verified by documented history.

Firstly, there is no evidence that Gregory le Grant was an actual person. This mythical figure has been discussed in another article on this website – *The Surname Grant in Early British Documents 1066-1300* – under the major topic heading *For Members Only, Origins of the Clan Grant*.

Secondly, the claim that Clan Allan originated in the 13<sup>th</sup> century is tenuous – particularly since three centuries lapsed from the time the *sept* was allegedly founded until another member of the clan was noted in the written annals of Scotland. One is prompted to ask: what were they doing in the meantime?

Another proposal for the origin of the Clan Allan was suggested by Sir Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie (c. 1532-1586). In his *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, Pitscottie stated that Thomas Randolph of Strathdon (d. 1294), sometime Chamberlain of Scotland and father of the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Moray, was the “*chief of clanne Allane.*” Randolph was the brother-in-law of Robert the Bruce, and consequently, well-connected to the royal family of Scotland.

According to his critics – and there were many – Pitscottie was an historian of somewhat dubious credentials. His manuscripts were often-times inaccurate, steeped in anti-Catholic rhetoric, and politically biased. And, he always portrayed his own family in a favorable light. Nevertheless, there is no particular reason to suspect that he would intentionally misrepresent the facts relating to an obscure *sept* of the Clan Grant. (*The Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, by Sir Robert Lyndsay of Pitscottie, ed. by Aeneas J.G. MacKay, Vol. I, Edinburgh, 1899, p. 267; *The Records of Elgin 1234-1800*, by William Cramond, Vol. I, Aberdeen, 1903, p. 11)

According to Pitscottie, Robert the Bruce gave the Earldom of Moray to his sister’s son, Sir Thomas Randolph of Strathdon, Knight, and recorded his connection to the Clan Allan as follows:

“*Robert Bruce gaif then this earledome of Murray to his awin sister sone Schir Thomas Randall of Strachdown, knycht, chief of the clanne Allane, quhois warkes can testiefie his lyfe in the withtin book rehearssit befor in the same historie and failzeing of him and airis of his body that it sould returne againe to the croune. This Thomas has tuo sons bot I can not quho was their mother, the eldest callit Thomas, quho but ony successioun of their body was boith slaine at the battell of Dumbliane in Stratherne fight and manfullie to the deid for the defence of this realme invaidit be the Inglischmen our auld enemies.*” (Pitscottie’s *Historie*, *opere citato*, p. 63)

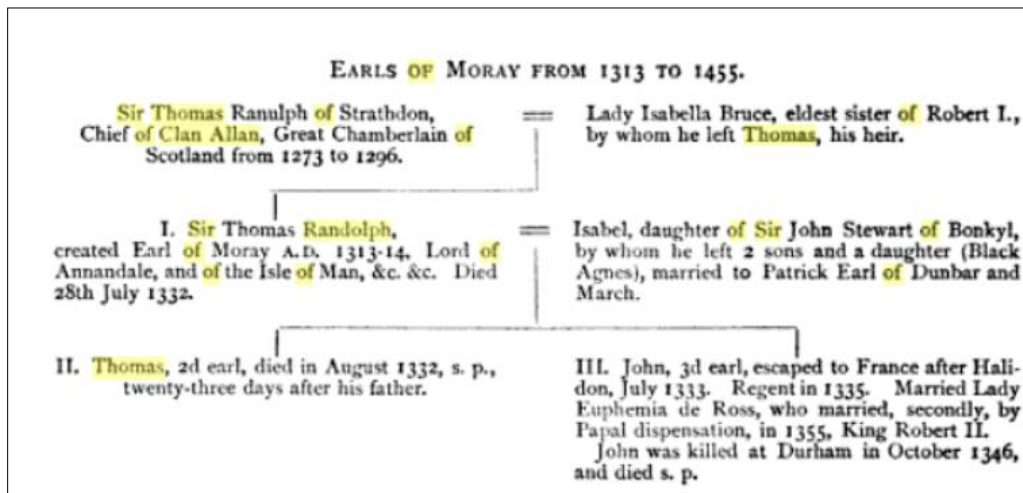
The Rev. John Grant proposed that the Clan Allan was probably among the families already settled in Strathspey before the Grants arrived.

“*The probability is that some of them are the remains of the inhabitants who were established in the country, before the Grants obtained possession of Strathspey by purchase or marriage, and that others afterwards settled there. They enjoyed protection, and in time united in a bond of amity with a more powerful family, and assumed the name of Grant, ... Sir Thomas Randolph of Stratherne is called the chief of the Clan Allan, before he was created Earl of Moray. Abernethy in Strathspey was part of the Moray estate; and also there was a particular connection between the Randolphins and the Grants; so that it is highly probable, some of the Clan Allan early settled in Abernethy, and assumed the name of Grant but still preserved the*

memorial of their original (clan).” (*A Survey of the Province of Moray &c*, by Rev. John Grant & Rev. William Leslie, Aberdeen, 1798, pp. 27-28)

Dr. William Forsyth also suggested that the Clan Allan belonged to the original inhabitants of Strathspey and took the surname Grant when the Laird of Freuchie became entrenched there. Nicol Graham, in his *Gartmore MS.* (1747), suggested that it was the custom of highland chiefs to oblige “...all the farmers and cottars that got possessions on their grounds to take their names. In a generation or two, it is believed that they really are of that name, and this not only adds to the number of the clan, and keeps it up, but superinduces the tie of kindred to the obligation and interest of the former.” (*In the Shadow of Cairngorm*, by William Forsyth, DD, 1899, reprinted 1999, p. 64)

Sir Thomas Randolph, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Moray, the son of Thomas Randolph of Strathdon, was also called “*Chief of Clanallan*” in a history of the Cumming and Bruce families. Sir Thomas served as Regent of Scotland from 1329 until his death at the Battle of Dupplin Moor in 1332, while fighting against the forces of John Balliol. (*Family Records of the Bruces and Cumyns*, by Mary Elizabeth Cumming Bruce, London, 1870, p. 450)



[*Family Records of the Bruces and Cumyns &c*, by Mary Elizabeth Cumming Bruce, quoting Sir Robert Lyndsay of Pitscottie, London, 1870, p. 544]

Although Sir Thomas Randolph’s clansmen would not have used surnames *per se* in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, they apparently assumed the names Stewart (Steuart) and Allanach with the passage of time. These names were widely used in Glenochtie, Glenkindle and Glenbucket, in Strathdon, and in the neighboring glens of Livet and Stratha’ en in the country of the Grants.

In 1699, a number of Stewarts and Allanachs were listed among the heritors and men in Stratha’ en, Glenlivet and Glenrinnies. The following men were mentioned in a bond of peaceable behavior addressed to the Commissioners of the Judiciary: James and Alexander Steuart of Achorachan, Patrick Steuart, Thomas Steuart in Clossan and John Allenach in Nevie, Patrick Steuart of Tambae, Thomas and William Steuart in Achnahyle, James, John, Gavan and James Steuart Milner in Achriachan, Patrick Kamerk *alias* Steuart in Easter Inveraune, John Steuart in Drummin, James Allanach and John MckArthur *alias* Steuart in Dovrachie, and John Stuart Mckgillendrish in Bellenallen. If the Randolphs – father and son – were in fact chieftains of the Stewarts of Clan Allan, then certainly some of these men were descendants of it. There were also a number of Grants who signed the bond. (*Historical Papers relating to the Jacobite Period 1699-1750 &c*, edited by Col. James Allardyce LL.D., Vol. I, Aberdeen, 1895, pp. 16 ff.)

James Alan Rennie recounted a fable about an Irishman who came to the parish of Abernethy in search of gold. After enlisting the help of a local turf-cutter, *Alan-nam-Foide*, to assist him in moving a large stone, the Irishman did indeed discover a large cache of gold in an underground cavern. The Irishman gave Alan a few trinkets for his help and made off with a significant hoard of gold for himself. When Alan told his sweetheart what had transpired, she scolded him for allowing the Irishman to escape with bags of gold when Alan was given only a mere gratuity. Upon further reflection, Alan decided to pursue the Irishman and retrieve the gold for himself. He subsequently caught up with him near Castle Roy and slew the Irishman with one blow of his turf-cutting spade. Returning to his sweetheart with his fortune, Alan convinced her to marry him. When she accepted, he promised to take her name, which happened to be Grant, and their progeny were known among the Grants as the Clan Allan. (*Romantic Strathspey*, by James Alan Rennie, London, 1956, p. 89)

Obviously, this tale is just another example of the many folkloric fables attributed to the Clan Grant.

Although there is no particular body of evidence to suggest this, it is also possible that a representative of the Clan Allan and his followers accompanied an early Grant chieftain to Strathspey when they relocated from their former home in Stratherrick.

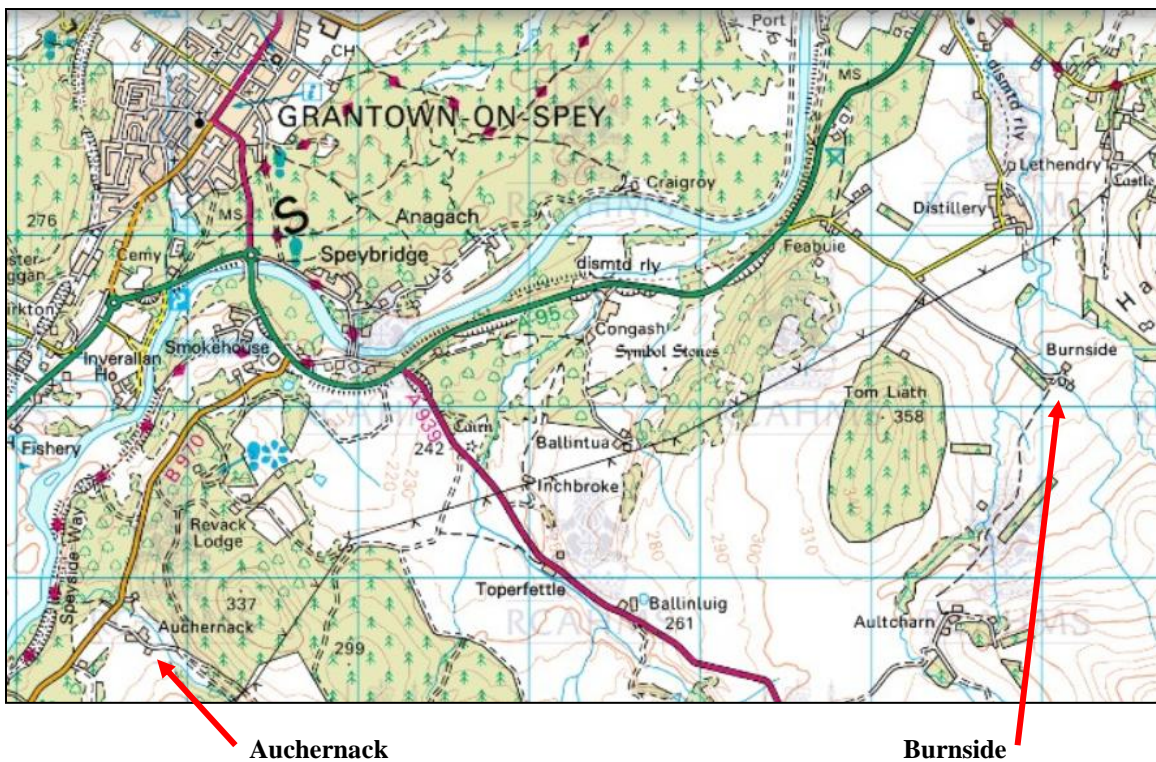
Lachlan Shaw stated that *Dunan* was the first seat of the Clan Allan in Strathspey. *Dunan* (or Downan) was almost certainly near the site of *Clash Dunan*, an ancient *motte* fort built of stones, about a mile northeast of Castle Grant. *Clash Dunan* or *Closh an Dunan* was also the home of Colin Lawson, a hero of the clan in a 16<sup>th</sup> century dispute with the Camerons. (*The History of the Province of Moray*, Rev. Lachlan Shaw, edited by J.F.S. Gordon, Glasgow, 1882, Vol. I, p. 228)

By the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, the chieftain of Clan Allan had moved his family across the River Spey to Auchernack, in the Lordship of Abernethy. According to Shaw, *James Grant in Auchernack* had eight sons. His eldest son and heir was Duncan Grant. Other sons reportedly established cadet families of varying longevity. The second son, Gregor, was said to be the founder of the family of Gartenmore, just across the Spey from present-day Boat of Garten. James was ancestor of Auchterblair in Duthil and John was progenitor of Burnside in Cromdale. Other sons were said to be Allan of Mullochard in Duthil, Mungo of Congash in Cromdale, and Robert of Nevie in Glenlivet. (Shaw, *ibidem*, p. 242)

Two generations later, John Grant of Lettoch in Abernethy founded Delnabo and Lineorn (or Lynachork) in Stratha'en. Badinedin, Balliefurth, Balliemore, Milntown and Muckrach in Abernethy, and Ochcork (Mid-Finlarig) in the parish of Duthil were also said to be sometime cadets of Clan Allan. (*The Descent of the House of Auchernack*, an unpublished report by George A. Dixon, MA; *The Family of Grant*, an unpublished manuscript by W.A. Craw, WS, circa 1980)

According to traditional manuscripts, Blairfindy in Glenlivet was also said to have been a cadet of Clan Allan, but there is no evidence to substantiate this claim.

James Grant in *Aichkernik*, also known as *McAllan*, is mentioned in a remission by King James VI to John Grant of Freuchie and his clan in 1569. This is the earliest known reference to the chieftain of Clan Allan. He was to become a prominent member of the clan and a close advisor to the Laird of Freuchie. *McAllan* was apparently married twice. His wife in 1581 was Janet Calder.



In 1584, James Grant *in Auchernect*, along with other prominent members of the clan, signed an obligation to assist and defend their aging chief, John Grant of Freuchie. James was one of several clan chieftains who signed the document “...with our handis at the pen, leid by Mr. William Gregour, notar publict, at our command.” Although Auchernack apparently could not write his name, he was nonetheless an important member of the Clan Grant and one of the “curators” of the Laird of Freuchie.

This same James Grant witnessed an agreement between John Grant of Freuchie and Lachlan McIntosh of Dunachton in 1586. (It is interesting to note that Auchernack was spelled five different ways within this same document: *Awchcharnek*, *Aucharnek*, *Auchcharnok*, *Aucharnaik*, *Auchernect*.) In the same year, James Grant *in Auchcarnage* witnessed the last will and testament of *Johne Grant of Fruquhy*.

Although James Grant had apparently held the lands of the two Auchnarrows, Downan and Port for a number of years – properties previously appertaining to *Patrick Grant Riach* – it was 1585 before he finally received a charter (deed) to them from King James VI. Four years later, he sold the same lands to John Grant of Freuchie “for a great sum of money,” thereby reuniting the two portions of the Barony of Freuchie under the *de facto* Chief of Grant. The charter of sale was signed: “*I, James Grant in Achernack wt my hand at the pen led be Villaim Cuming, notter publict.*” (*The Chiefs of Grant*, by Sir William Fraser, LL.D., Vol. III, Edinburgh 1883, pp. 137, 157-158, 292, 395-396, 400-401)

James Grant “*in Auchernack*” died sometime during the years 1606-1614 and was succeeded by his eldest son, Duncan. Other known offspring were Gregor, the eldest son by his wife Janet Calder; Allan who was alive in 1605; William who was tenant in Ochcork in Finlarig; and a daughter named Agnes. *James Grant McAllan*’s eldest son and heir, Duncan Grant in Auchernack, was wadsetter in Lettoch in 1623 and died *circa* 1638. (Dixon, *opere citato*)

A century later, another chieftain of the Clan Allan – also named James, probably the grandson of the chieftain mentioned above – assumed a prominent role in the affairs of Clan Grant. He served as Chamberlain to James Grant, 7<sup>th</sup> Laird of Freuchie. The chamberlain

essentially looked after the business interests and finances of the laird and served as his right-hand man.

In 1647, James Grant *of Auchcherneck* (rendered later in the same document as *Auchchernaig*) was mentioned in a dispute with his neighbor, John Grant of Lurg, regarding a mill in the braes of Abernethy and the marches between their properties. He signed a bond of bodily service to James Grant of Freuchie and his heirs in 1655, and in turn received a disposition from the Chief for the lands of Auchernack, its fishings in the Spey and the mill of Abernethy.

In 1658, James Grant *in Achchernik* signed a supplication by the Presbytery of Strathspey to Parliament to allow the unused stipends of vacant parishes to be utilized for the building and maintenance of a school. The plea was also signed by other prominent members of the clan, ministers and the moderator of the Presbytery.

In 1660, acting on instructions from the Privy Council and the Committee of Estates, the Laird of Freuchie apprehended the notorious outlaw known as the *Halkit Stirk* (white-faced calf). James Grant of Auchernack was dispatched to Edinburgh with a letter to the councilors warning of possible reprisals by the outlaw's friends. The letter also gave Auchernack authority to negotiate on the Chief's behalf the terms of transfer of the criminal to the proper authorities. Eventually, the *Halkit Stirk* was transported under heavy guard to the Tolbooth of Aberdeen.

James Grant *of Auchcherneck* was named as one of the curators in the testament of James Grant, 7<sup>th</sup> Laird of Freuchie, in 1677. In that same year, he matriculated the following coat of arms in the Court of the Lord Lyon: *Gules, a star argent betwixt three antique crowns, or.* His motto was "*Stand Sure, Craig Revack!*" *Craig Revack* is a significant hill behind Auchernack in the Parish of Abernethy. (Fraser, *opere citato*, pp. 459, 243, 344, 280-281, 351-352, 532)

The kirk of Inverallan in Grantown is a congregation of the Church of Scotland situated about a mile and a half south of Castle Grant. The church was built during the years 1885-86 and financed by Caroline, Dowager Countess of Seafieid, as a memorial to her late husband, Sir John Charles Ogilvie-Grant (1815-1881), 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Seafieid, 1<sup>nd</sup> Lord Strathspey, Baronet, Knight of the Thistle, and to her recently deceased son, Sir Ian Charles Ogilvie-Grant (1851-1884), 8<sup>th</sup> Earl of Seafieid, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lord Strathspey. Both were Chiefs of the Clan Grant.



**Massive Carved Wood Panel at Inverallan Kirk, Grantown**

A large hand-carved Scots pine panel is mounted prominently on the rear wall of the sanctuary, underneath the gallery. The panel was found in 1874, when the house of Shillochan, in Duthil parish was demolished. It was taken briefly to Castle Grant, but installed in the sanctuary of the church when it was dedicated in 1886.

The massive panel features a variety of carvings – motifs of Celtic tracery, two paraphrased verses from the *Bible*, and the heraldic arms of eight significant families in the north: Cumming of Altyre, Gordon of Huntly, Rose of Kilravock, Calder of that Ilk, Grant of Auchernack, Forbes of Auchintoul, Leslie of Balquhain and Lumsden of Cushnie.

The two passages of scripture from the book of *Psalms* are as follows:

**MARK·THE·VPRYCHT·MAN·AND·BEHOLD·THE·  
IUST·FOR·THE·END·OF·THAT·MAN·IS·PEACE·PSALMS**

**THE·RICHTEOVS·CRYE·AND·THE·LORD·HEARETH·THEM·  
AND·DELYVERETH·YEM·OVT·OF·AL·YAIR·TROVBL<sup>S</sup>**

It is the opinion of this reporter – and this is purely speculative – that the carved panel was commissioned by James Grant of Auchernack, chieftain of the Clan Allan, Chamberlain to the 7<sup>th</sup> Laird of Freuchie. Its purpose was to illustrate his noble ancestry by portraying the heraldic arms of some of his paternal and maternal ancestors.

Two observations can be made regarding the heraldic carvings.

Firstly, the families represented by the carvings resided in diverse locations in the north of Scotland. Only the family of Auchernack resided in Strathspey. The others were situated in the *laigh* of Moray, Nairnshire, and Strathbogie and Aberdeenshire to the east.

Secondly, the Grant arms – although specifically identified on the carving as *Grant of Avcher* (Auchernack) – featured a shield with three crowns, which was the unique heraldic device of the Chiefs of Grant and no other clan or family. This would indicate that Auchernack did not understand the basic concepts of heraldry, or more likely, he had not yet matriculated his own arms at the time the carving was executed. Since his matriculation was not accomplished until 1677, that would indicate the panel was carved before that date.

In former times, it was not uncommon for gentlemen to compile genealogies or “birth briefs” to illustrate their noble ancestry. These were sometimes composed to validate an honor which was about to be bestowed or justify the subject’s betrothal to a woman of superior rank. Graphic depictions, such as the massive carving in the Inverallan church, were not common, but there are numerous examples of paintings and illustrations showing a family’s lineage or family tree – some portraying coats of arms – in the castles and manor houses of distinguished Scottish families of the landed gentry. (The French have taken this practice to the extreme with their “*seize quartiers*” – elaborately painted illustrations featuring as many as sixty-four noble ancestors with their coats of arms prominently displayed for all to see.)

The Grants of Auchernack, chieftains of the Clan Allan, fell on difficult times during the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. John Grant of Auchernack and Delnabo, the son of James Grant, Chamberlain of the 7<sup>th</sup> Laird of Freuchie, was described as “fatuous” and plunged the family into bankruptcy. He spent time “in prison” – perhaps debtor’s prison – during the 1680’s and ceded the estate of Delnabo to his brother, Lachlan. John’s only known son, James, lived a life of virtual anonymity and died in 1721, leaving two sons, Duncan, his heir, and Ludovick in Badinedin, forester of Abernethy.

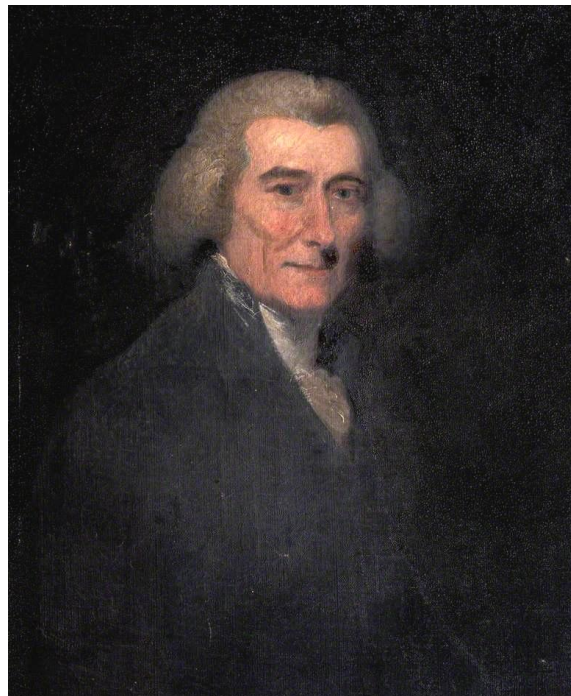
Duncan Grant was born *circa* 1696 and served heir to his grandfather in 1736. He was described as “*a facile good natured Man*” during litigation with his brother-in-law, Ludovick

Grant of Lettoch, but he apparently plunged the family into even greater financial straits. In 1772, he had to assign his crops and cattle to John Grant of Tullochgriban on account of his debts. Duncan Grant died in 1776, leaving four daughters. His nephew, Neil Grant, an unemployed “*sawer of wood*” in Edinburgh, inherited Auchernack and the chieftainship of the Clan Allan.



**Farmhouse of Auchernack, near Nethybridge, Parish of Abernethy**

The following year, persuaded by poverty – and apparently by a distant relative, Dr. Gregory Grant – Neil Grant appeared before the Court of the Lord Lyon in Edinburgh. He renounced “... *all lands, heritages, titles and honours*” to which he had right as heir to Duncan Grant of Auchernack, whereupon Dr. Grant became chieftain of the Clan Allan.



**Dr. Gregory Grant (1726-1803),  
a portrait by William Staveley (1796),  
Grantown Museum & Heritage Trust**

This proceeding before the Court of the Lord Lyon was witnessed by prominent members of the Clan Grant, including the Chief, Sir James Grant of Grant, Baronet; James Colquhoun, younger of Luss, advocate; Colonel Alexander Grant of Arndilly; James Grant, younger of Corrimony, advocate; John Grant of Lurg; and Ludovick Grant, WS (Writer to His Majesty's Signet, in Edinburgh). It is interesting to note that this unusual event occurred one hundred years after James Grant of Auchernack, Chamberlain to the Laird of Grant, matriculated his arms before the same Court of the Lord Lyon.

Although it was not specifically stated, Dr. Gregory Grant probably paid off the debts of his distant cousin, Neil Grant, in return for the farm of Auchernach and the chieftaincy of the ancient *sept* of Clan Allan.

Dr. Gregory Grant was a prominent physician. In fact, he was President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. He was a younger son of a junior line of the Clan Allan – the Grants of Burnside in the parish of Cromdale. Gregory Grant studied medicine on the continent and returned to Edinburgh, where he established a prosperous medical practice. He married Mary, daughter of Sir Archibald Grant, 2<sup>nd</sup> Baronet of Monymusk, and supervised the founding of the Grantown orphanage with a bequest from his wife's mother, Lady Grant.

After obtaining the chieftaincy of the Clan Allan, Dr. Grant matriculated the following arms: *Gules, a star of seven points waved between three antique crowns, or*; Crest, a burning hill proper; Motto, *Stand Sure*.



Colquhoun Grant, WS (1721-1792), Dr. Grant's older brother, was perhaps the most colorful descendant of the family of Burnside. Unlike most of his fellow clansmen in Strathspey who tacitly supported the government in the 1745 rebellion, Colquhoun joined the forces of Prince Charles Edward Stuart. When the Prince's troops forced their way into the city of Edinburgh, he was among the first wave of soldiers to breach the gate and overpower the guards. It is said that the first indication that the people of Edinburgh had that their city was under siege was from three Dragoons riding hard up the High Street toward the castle chased by young Colquhoun Grant, alone and on foot. The Dragoons managed to get safely inside the castle and closed the gate. Arriving too late, Colquhoun reportedly stuck his dirk into the castle's wooden gate in a gesture of defiance.

Colquhoun Grant also fought at the battle of Prestonpans, in East Lothian, and participated with twenty eight others, armed only with broadswords, in routing a party of Dragoons and capturing two pieces of ordnance. For this, he was congratulated personally by the Prince, presented with a small profile cast medallion, and chosen to serve as one of the Prince's personal guards. After the defeat at Culloden, Colquhoun escaped to his family's home in Cromdale. He eventually returned to Edinburgh, where he studied law and became a Writer to the Signet. The Society of Writers to His Majesty's Signet is a private association of solicitors in Edinburgh, founded in 1594.

Colquhoun Grant, WS, was agent for the Laird of Grant and a prominent member of Edinburgh society until his death in 1792. (*The Family of Grant, opere citato*)



Major Lewis Grant was head of the family of Auchernack in 1798. Capt. Gregory Grant, Royal Navy, was chieftain at the time of his death in 1844, and was survived by his sisters, Miss Grant of Birchfield, and Mrs. Grant of Burnside, whose husband was the a brother of Colquhoun Grant. (*Pre-1855 Gravestone Inscriptions on Speyside*, compiled by Alison Mitchell for the Scottish Genealogy Society, pp. 54-59)

The Clan Allan has survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This reporter has been in contact with three descendants of the clan in recent years.

David Renwick Grant, an adventurer and author, is best known for his trek around the world with his family in a horse-drawn wagon. The journey was detailed in his book, *Seven Year Hitch: a Family Odyssey*. The best description of the journey might just be the blurb on the website of *Amazon.com*:

*“Of all the weird and wonderful ways to attempt to travel the world, the Grant family's journey by horse-drawn caravan must be the most extraordinary. They had to cope with war in Yugoslavia, arrest in Mongolia, deportation from China, yet still they managed to make it back to Britain – seven years after they set off. The family plodded ten thousand miles across fifteen countries in three continents and in doing so, secured a place for themselves in the Guinness Book of Records. The Seven Year Hitch is a well-honed and comical look at family life in the pressure cooker environment of a tiny living space and an inspirational tale of how fireside dreams can be turned into bracing reality.”*

David’s cousin, W.A. Craw was a Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh. He compiled an interesting manuscript history of his family and introduced your reporter to another cousin, Alexander Colquhoun “Sandy” Grant, a former solicitor in West Africa. Sandy and his wife, Alisoun, purchased Inverquharity Castle, a 15<sup>th</sup> century tower house near Kirriemuir, Angus, in 1970. Over a period of time, they restored and furnished the castle, and lived there for over forty years.



**Inverquharity Castle, Kirriemuir, Angus**



James Grant, historian  
Clan Grant Society – USA  
standfast@charter.net

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<sup>1</sup> *The Genealogy of the Grants said to be written by Mr. James Chapman Minister of Cromdall, &c. in Anno 1729*, from the Publications of the Scottish History Society, Vol. 33, MacFarlane's Genealogical Collections, Vol. I, edited by James Toshach Clark, Edinburgh, 1900; *Ane Account of the Rise and Offspring of the Name of Grant*, printed for Sir Archibald Grant, Bart., of Monymusk, 1876, Charles Harcourt Chambers, Nairn, 1872; and another manuscript known as the *Birkenburn MS*, said to have been compiled by Rev. Francis Grant of Knockando Parish, *circa* 1782.