

The GRAYS of SKIBO.

Bardachan,
Dornoch. 26th December, 1946.

This short sketch of the history of the Grays of Skibo is taken from documents compiled by Sir Robert Gordon, Historian of Sutherland, entitled 'Genealogical Tables of Sutherland Families' dated 1659. The latter part is an extract from 'Skibo - its Lairds and History' by Peter Gray, Glasgow, published 1906.

It is written at the request of our cousin and loyal clanswoman, Mrs Catherine Crighton, of whose visits to this country we have many pleasant memories.

"May since those died before their task
was finished

Attempt new heights bring even their
dreams to birth

Build us a better world, O not diminished
By one true splendour that they planned
on earth."

The progenitor of the first John Gray of Skibo was

- Andrew** Gray, second son of Sir Andrew Gray of Fowles, Perthshire. This Andrew killed Sir John Scrymgeour, Constable of Dundee, who had a dispute with his father, Lord Gray, and for safety Andrew fled out of Angus to Ross-shire in 1456, where he purchased lands.
- Alexander** Gray, son of Andrew, succeeded to his father's lands of Balmaduthie and others in Ardmanogh and Dingwall in Ross.
- William** Gray, son of Alexander, was Chanter of Ross and had three sons
- John** Gray, second son of William, was Chamberlain to the Bishop of Caithness. He acquired from Bishop Andrew the Church Lands of Culmaly, Rogart and Cuthill. These he subsequently exchanged with the Earl of Sutherland for Greich and Swordale. When the Earl got the Church lands from Bishop Robert he foud Skibo Castle and adjacent lands to this John Gray. He died in 1586.
- (Skibo Castle was included in the grant of lands made by Hugh Freskyn in 1211 to his kinsman Gilbert Murray, Archdeacon of Moray, who made it his home after his appointment to the Bishopric of Sutherland and Caithness in 1223).
- Gilbert**
died 1624 Gray, heir by his second wife Elisabeth Barclay, daughter of the Laird of Pitgarthie. He was first married to Janet Matheson, sister of Sir John Matheson, Chancellor of Caithness, but resigned his office in 1583, and died at Skibo on October 3rd 1624. He married twice and had eight sons and one daughter. The most outstanding member of the family was John Gray who became Dean of Caithness in 1608. He tutored the young Earl of Sutherland and was mainly responsible for the restoration of the Cathedral after its destruction by fire in 1570 by the Mackays of Strathnaver. Gilbert Gray was succeeded at Skibo by his eldest son
- George**
died 1629 Gray. He married Jean, daughter of John Gordon of Embo. She died in 1612, and Sir Robert Gordon pays a very high tribute to her. He says "She was nothing inferior to any other lady in the County and much lamented by all her friends". George Gray died on July 11th 1629, "to the great regret of all the inhabitants of the County and the adjacent Shires where he had been a good patriot during his days", Sir Robert Gordon records.
- Robert**
died 1672 Gray, his eldest son, succeeded him at Skibo. He had sasine dated at Dornoch 19th April 1634 from John, Earl of Sutherland, of the lands of Alustie, Ardalie and others. He married Jean Seaton, a niece of the Earl of Winton, by whom he had three sons and four daughters. It was she who entertained at Skibo in 1657 the ill-fated Marquis of Montrose after his defeat at Carbisdale and capture by Macleod of Assynt, and who insulted the officer in command of the guard by throwing a roasted leg of mutton at his head. Her husband was heavily fined for this offence.

- Gilbert**
died 1716
- Gray was served heir to his father on February 25th 1693. He made generous provision for his family of three sons and four daughters during his lifetime and died on July 14th 1716. His eldest son and successor
- George**
died 1737
- Gray married three times. His first wife, Barbara Mackay of Scourie died in 1717; his second wife was niece of Viscount Stair and bore him two daughters; his third wife was Isobel, third daughter of the Laird of Newmore, and their eldest son
- Robert**
died 1776
- Gray succeeded his father. He was served heir male to his grandfather of Skibo Castle and Mainie in 1737. His two half-sisters Isobel and Jean raised an action against him in 1740 charging him to enter himself as heir to his father. Whereupon he raised a process of recovery of family documents and the banner of hereditary constable of Skibo which bore the armorial bearings of the family and the motto "Constant". The legal proceedings thus cost him his inheritance which he had to surrender in 1744. Robert Gray held a commission in the Army and thereafter devoted his attention to his profession. He died on 13th April 1776, and thus a long line of unbroken succession extending to close on 250 years came to an end and the Gray family ceased to have any further connection with the proprietorship of the Estate of Skibo.
- Gilbert**
died 1789
- Gray, third son of Robert, did not succeed to the family estate, by reason that the property had now gone out of the family, and settled in Milton, Evelix. He married Jean Ross and had
- Alexander**
died 1799
- Gray born 30th June 1738. He was an elder in the Cathedral Church of Dornoch for 20 years and is remembered there by a marble tablet in the nave of that Church. He died 16th June 1799. His wife's name was Mary Ross; she only survived him by a few days and died 23rd June 1799. Their son Peter died 16th June 1799 aged 16 years. Their oldest son
- Robert**
died 1808
- Gray died 23rd June 1808 at the age of 36 years. He married Sarah, daughter of Andrew Munro, Tulloch, Bonar. They had three daughters and two sons. Alexander died 4th July 1837; William married Margaret Polson. The three daughters married -
- Mary - Donald Sutherland, Embo.
Helen - Gilbert Gunn, Rogart.
- Margaret**
died 1862
- Gray, eldest daughter, born January 1798, died 6th April 1862, married
- Robert**
died 1870
- Murray, Bardachan, 25th December 1817. He died 16th November 1870. They had a family of eight sons and four daughters, Robert, Mary, Alexander, William, Peter, Angus, Ann, John, Alexandrina, Hugh, Donald, Jane.
- Robert**
- married Lilly Mackay and had four sons - Alexander, William, Peter, Robert.
- Mary /**

Mary died 1905	married Alexander Ross and had six sons and one daughter Robert, Hugh, Margaret, John, Alexander, Angus, George.
Alexander	" Ann Sutherland and had two sons and four daughters Margaret, Angus, Isobel, Robert, Catherine, Mary.
William died 1870	" Susie Burton and had one daughter Margaret.
Peter died 1861	" Alexandrina Macleod and had one son Robert.
Angus died 1860	unmarried, served in the 93rd Highlanders for 15 years in the Crimea, China, India. Died in India 19th November 1860, and buried at Rawalpindie.
Ann died 1899	married Robert Murray and had two sons and two daughters Alexander, Hugh, Margaret, Jane.
John died 1916	" Ann Mackenzie and had six sons and one daughter. Daniel, John, Robert, Alexander, William, Hugh, Susie.
Hugh died 1892	unmarried.
Donald died 1882	married Jane Campbell and had three sons and five daughters. John, Margaret, Jane, Robert, Susie, Charlotte, William, Annie.
Alexandrina died 1917	" William Mackay and had five sons and five daughters Annie, Robert, Neil, Peter, Mary, Margaret, Jane, William, Ina, Hugh.
Jane died 1920	" William Murray and had three sons and five daughters George, Margaret, Mary, Christina, Robina, Alexander, Anne, Donald.

The grandchildren of Margaret Gray and Robert Murray,
16th December 1946:-

Mary's	-	George, Peterhead.
Alexander's	-	Robert, Catherine. Halifax, N.S., Canada.
Donald's	-	Susie, Charlotte, Ann. Boston, U.S.A.
John's	-	John William, Hugh. N.S., Canada.
Alexandrina's-		Robert, Margaret, Jane. Golspie.
		Ina, Morness, Rogart.
		Hugh, Alberta, Canada.
Jane's	-	Margaret, Erchless, Inverness-shire.
		Christina, Alberta, Canada.
		Alexander, Galashiels, Selkirk.
		Mary, Merton Place, Edinburgh.
		Donald, Bardachan, Dornoch.