

Fibre Fest Dornoch

15th –16th March 2025

Katherine Gray's Dress

1707-2025

Background

This beautiful silk brocade mantua, known as Katherine Gray's dress, is owned by Barbara Francis of Melbourne, Australia.

Barbara was born in England, to a Scottish mother and Australian father, and is a direct descendant of Katherine Gray.

The family moved to Australia in 1950. In 1956, on her 16th birthday, Barbara received the family heirloom from her Scottish godmother. Ever since, Barbara has been piecing together the history of her family, and the 300-year-old gown.

The information accompanying the dress was that it belonged to Katherine Gray who married Hugh Houston of Mickle Ferry. The Dornoch marriage entry for 1738 confirms it.

On a visit to Scotland in 1965, her godmother told Barbara that the dress was worn at a ball attended by Bonnie Prince Charlie in Edinburgh in 1745. This information became folklore in her family.

In 1996 Barbara visited the Victoria and Albert Museum in London with the dress. The curator of costumes identified immediately that the gown was most likely made from Spitalfields' silk designed by James Leman around 1707-1708. Leman was a very fashionable and sought after fabric designer in the early 18th century. The curator also identified that the dress had been altered up to four times with the last taking place towards the end of the 19th century.

So, for 68 years, Barbara has painstakingly researched the provenance of the dress and her direct ancestral line to the original owner before it came into her hands.

This research has taken Barbara all over the world and she is delighted that it is now on display in Dornoch.

July 8th 1738 Robert Ross in Frontenack in the parish of
Crutch and Anna Ross in Skibo were Contracted, & married

July 22^d 1738 John Ross in Skibo and Margaret
Gordon there were Contracted, and Married

October 28th 1738 Donald Forbes & Margaret McKenzie
in Skibo were Contracted, & Married

D^y day William Stronach in Ewicks & Anna Mth in
Achenswick were Contracted

October 31st 1738 William Fraser in Skibo & Janet Don
there were Contracted, & Married

Nov^r 4th 1738 Robert Gordon in Skibo & Katharine
Monro there were Contracted, & married

Nov^r 5th 1738 Hugh Houston Souldier in Lord Lewis
Company & Katharine Gray daughter to John Gray of
Overkibo were Contracted, & married

Nov^r 25th 1738 William McKenzie in Skibo & Janet
McKenzie in Dornoch were Contracted

Decem^r 1st 1738 Thomas Sutherland in Sorea and
Marion Sory in Cyderhall were Contracted, & married

HOUSE OF NARROW GATES,
ST. BOSWELLS, ROXBURGHSHIRE.
TEL. ST. BOSWELLS 2262.

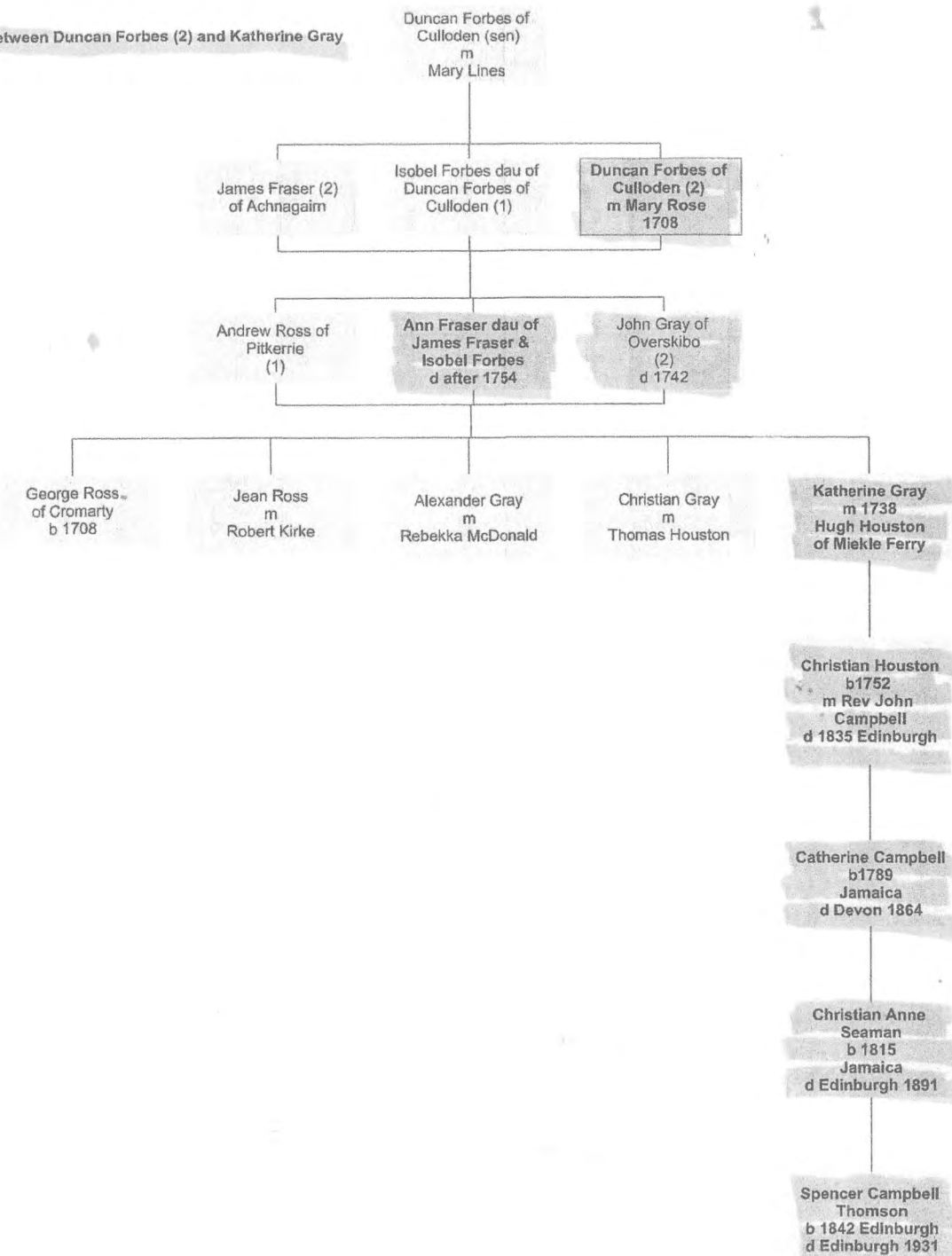
This Brocade Dress is dated
1700 to 1720 + it is complete.

The Dress came from Catherine Grey
of Skibo Castle, Spencer C. Thomson's
Great Grand Mother.

Shona Cooks must have the
miniature of her mentioned in one
of the letters - She married
Houston of Creech -

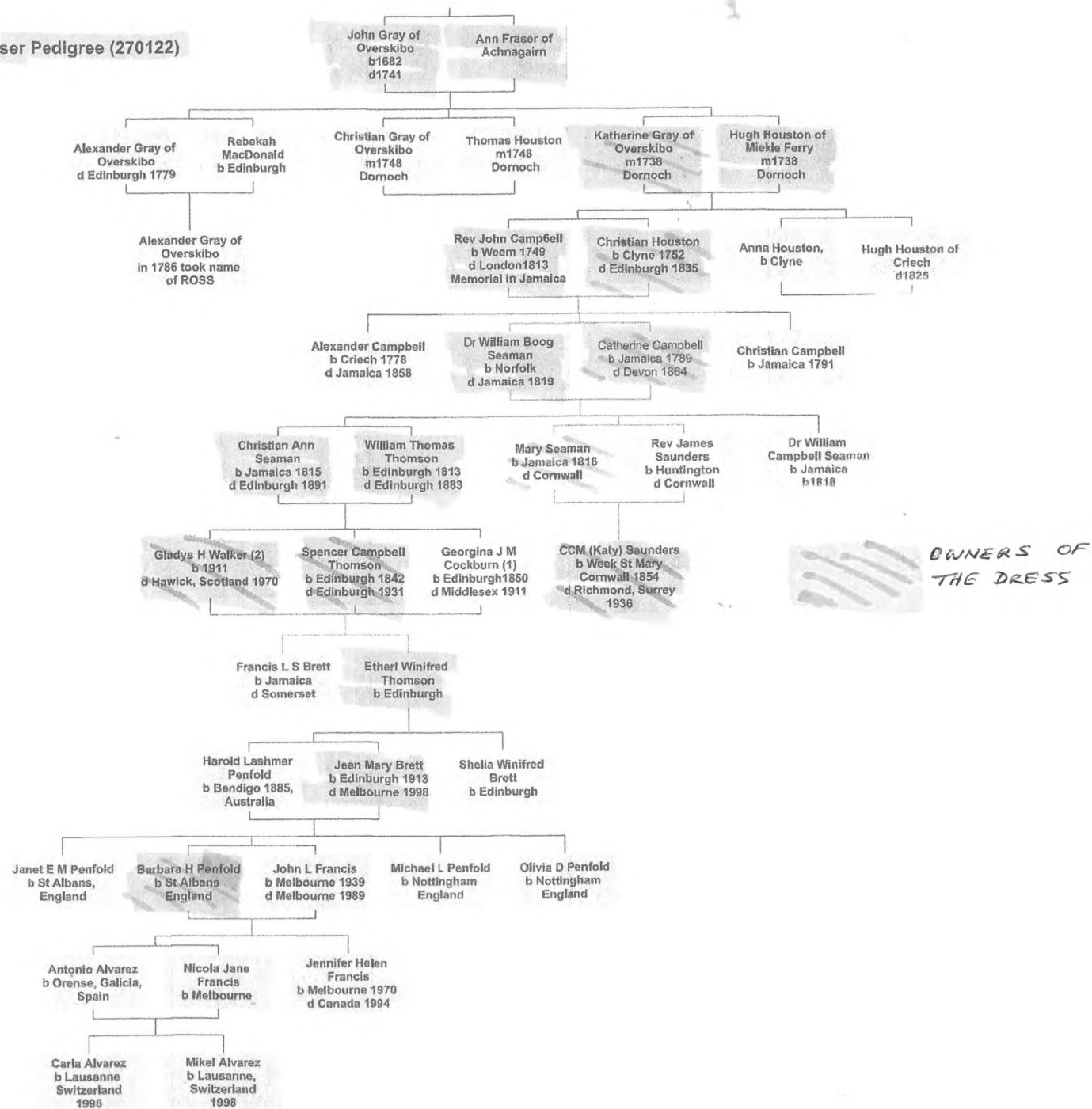
Madeline. Loch.

Link Between Duncan Forbes (2) and Katherine Gray



1

Penfold Gray Fraser Pedigree (270122)



14th September 1956

HOUSE OF NARROW GATES,
ST. BOSWELLS, ROXBURGHSHIRE.

TEL. ST. BOSWELLS 2262.

Scotland

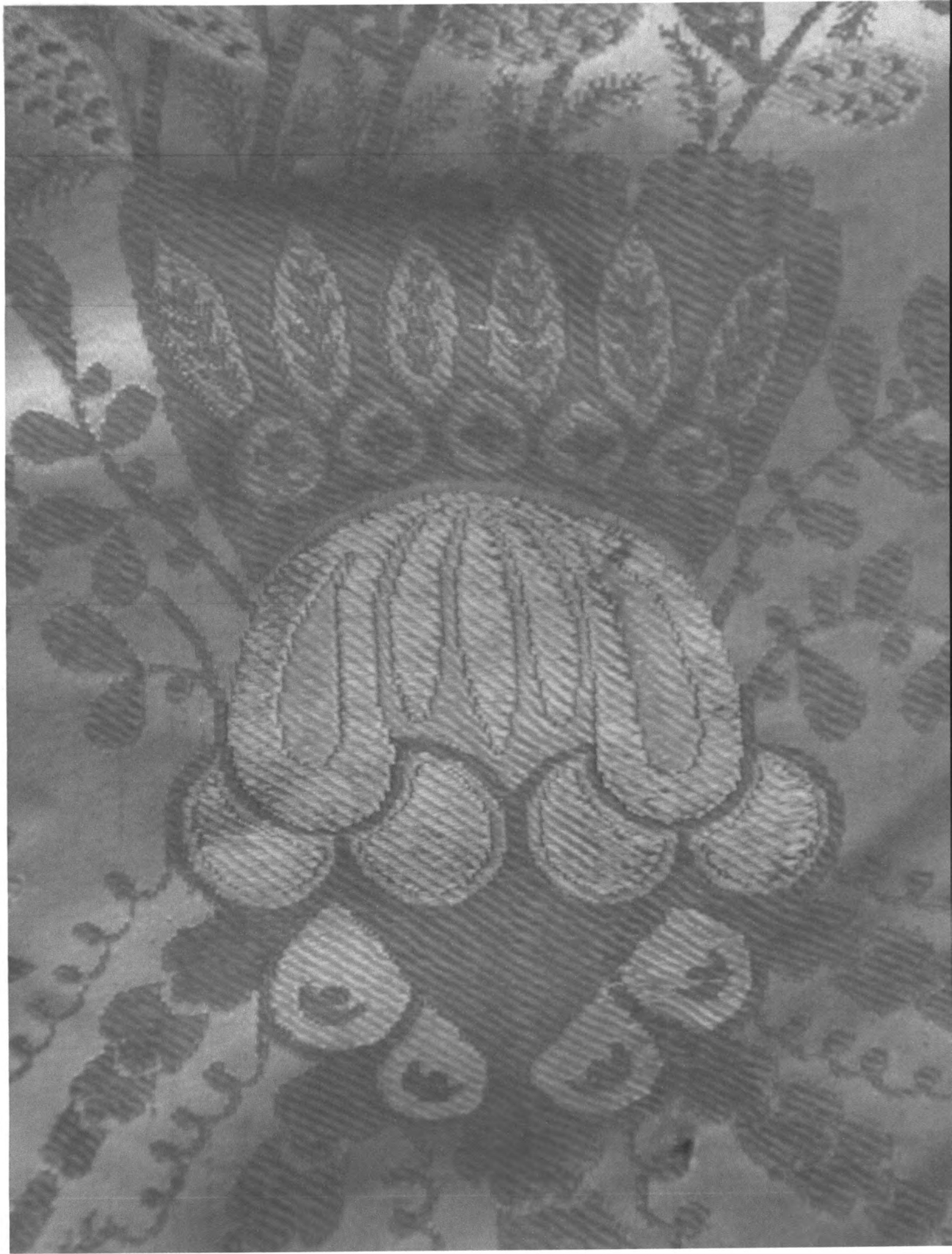
My dearest Godchild Barbara,

I am today packing up the dress for you. It is lovely, & I hope you will like it. I am enclosing various letters & notes about it from Katie Saunders, (whom your mother may have met) to whom the dress belonged. K.S.'s mother & your Gth-Gth Father's mother were sisters, Miss Campbells, so through Spence Campbell Thomson, the original owner of the dress Catherine Grey of Skibo, was a direct ancestor of yours. I tell you this, which sounds very dull to you probably, but it then is in effect a family heirloom & as

such you will not have to pay import
duty on it. I have seen it stated that
its money value in 1912 was £50 to £100.
I am insuring it for £50, which is the
highest value I can insure it for sending
it by post. It will have to go by
over seas mail, but I hope it will
arrive in time for your birthday.

Going round the Cape may delay it a
bit.

Uncle Jack & I have not been
away from home this Summer. We
had a good dry Spring, but a miserable
Summer, & today is barely the only
hope it may be the beginning of a good
Autumn. A very happy birthday to you
when it comes, love to you all
your loving God mother. Aunt Gladys.







I posted my letter to ^{19th Oct 720} you & Spencer at 10 o'clock this morning & the 12 post brought me yours! Thank you very much for the cutting. I hope she will make him a good wife. — I am so delighted you wore the dress. I would have loved to have seen you in it. — I am sure it suited you well. I had a satin pelliccoat the 1st time I wore it quilted crimson. (They were used in those days so were easy to ^{than} get.) Afterwards I had the lace one. I think I prefer the latter. The lace was only ordinary pelliccoat lace. & I used it up years ago! I think both styles were used. I think you will find it in plates of about 1720. ^{to 1750} I got one from Covent Garden years ago but have not got it now. I know S^{rs} Poulthorpe is some

time in middle of October. Mine is at beginning. We are both October Opals now perceive! Yes, the S. has come. — but I do not think with last. weather has turned cold too! I shall have to cut down my trees before I get to begin my furniture. — Cheerio! in with me all night! I am so sorry pelliccoat is not off the back with yet. — I shall be very much love to see you better. — I shall be happy to return to S. — I shall be with you again soon.

Bournemouth

THE ADDRESS TO BE WRITTEN ON THIS SIDE

19 OCT 20



Mrs Spencer Thomson
10 Eglinton Crescent
Edinburgh

If you come
across her she
will be delighted
if you spoke
to her. She is very
appealing. I have
a companion a
Miss Broadbent.
With lots of love

to you both
your loving
R.S.

Please Spencer
look upon this as
a joint letter & do
write when you can.

Sep 29/21

Dearest Gladys. I was so very glad to get yours today.
It seems such a long time since I had heard from
either of you. I think I owe Spencer a letter.
"Contra" wrote the other day & said you had gone ahead
for Spencer's cure. I was just going to write to him
& put "Please forward". In fact I had sat down to
do so when I was interrupted. & then I waited thinking
one of you would be sure to write. I was so glad you
went. It must be delicious air. Spencer's bath sounds
rather an ordeal. That is today the thick mist & iodine
part. but such soaking must get out the rheumatic
poison in the nerves. I shall be anxious to hear further
news. Your account of the Monro wedding is most
charming. I saw the account in the Times of Sep 8:
it said the best man was Capt. G. Bedie. I knew his
mother when she was a little girl. She was Lily Monro.
& was staying in Edinburgh with Leila her aunt & her
father. She was a pretty fair girl about 14 I think.
I think she married twice. Mrs Campbell was her
sister Ida, her husband was in the Seaforth Highlanders.
I think he was Col. of the Regt. ^{at one time} but am not sure.

Mrs Robertson the mother of the Skelton who was butler
was "Weetie" I forget her real name. She was
said to be very like my mother -

This might be the case - as my
mother was always said to be like the Monros.
& very like the bride room's father - "David"
Spencer with know all these names.

The Times gives a short list of guests & among
them is Lady Macdonald ^{hon} Mrs Ernest Wollingham.

They are Sisters & were daughters of "Ross-Cromarty".
Spencer knew them I am sure - or some of them.
They are his cousins - quite as near as the

Monros. They are all related to him (us)
through the old lady in the miniature -
Catharine ^{our great-grandmother} Grey. who married Horace Wren of Creech.

Her brother Alexander Grey. was the ancestor of
the Ross-Cromartys - Alexander Grey. took the
name of Ross & was Grey-Ross. Then the
Grey was dropped & they became Ross-Cromartys.

I wish I could trace the Greys - my idea is stronger
they were attainted as Jacobites & Catholics
& dropped out altogether. I saw somewhere that
the Greys remained Catholics till 1732.

2

You don't say if "Allan" is a handsome man. He
should be. The Monros were a fine handsome race.

Lady Monroe is

very nice I believe.
of Sir Lewis Pelly.

She was a daughter

well known people. You see I knew the 3 dear

old "Aunts" Monros who lived in Devonshire.

They were Spence & my ^{g?} mothers' near cousins.

& they were real dears. They told me lots of family

history - which I did not then half value -

It may amuse you to hear an old tale of theirs

about Allan. There is a legend that whenever a

great change is to happen to the family living at

Allan. a great noise is heard - This ^{Major Monro} ~~(Pride room)~~

Great grandfather was dead. & this Great grandmother

was living at Allan. One daughter was away at

school. David the son (the Broom's grandfather)

was with his Regiment - only Mrs Monro & her 2

daughters (the Aunt Kate & Aunt Mary (of my childhood))

were there. It was a still hot summer night

not a breath of air not a leaf stirring - They were

all in bed & it was mid-night. Suddenly a

most awful crash was heard. as if hundreds of

tons of stones were flung upon the roof of the

house. They all rushed from their beds. Every

one in the house had heard the unaccountable noise

Bright moonlight calm summer night — ~~Nothing~~
happened for it. The Mother said something
would happen. And it did.

Next day the daughter at school
came home from for her holidays. ^{Unexpectedly} bringing
a schoolfellow with her. for a visit. & that
time after, "David" got unexpected leave & came
home. — fell in love with the school girl & within
an incredibly short time Mr. Morris & her 3 daughters
had to seek another home — as the marriage was

very quickly arranged. — Such is the old tale —
I wonder if that noise was ever heard since. The old house was burnt when I
was a child.
I am glad to hear Alan is better. Councillor certainly
is devoted to him. Winnie too. I am delighted to hear
he is going to India. She has not written to me for a
year. As Allick is going on the Excellent I suppose
he is off the Renown. There is a new Captain. I think
& I fancy most of the crew is changed.

Pleasant that you found you knew the McLaurens —
Mr. Artindale

I have another friend in Italy just now at Luffano.
at the Hotel Bristol. She has been in Italy twice Spring.
By the bye Spencer said he had met her daughter Mrs. Callendar
at Mr. George Lee's. I remember. — ^{her husband} Mr. (Leo) Callendar was a W.S.
(I think) in Edinburgh. He died a year or two ago. Her sister
is a Mrs. Colley — Wetherley Colley — rich people — but I think
all the Artindales have lost money lately in railways.

West Hill,
Richmond, Surrey.

Feb 17th /12

My dear Spencer

Thank you very
much for your very
kind letter and
enclosure

I am very very
grateful to you & wife

Keep the brocade carefully

H Sanders
Brocade

· Wtch you return

Bon voyage.

With best love

Yr affec Cousin

C. C. M. Saunders

Duncan Forbes and the origin of the Silk Brocade Dress C1700 – 1709

Duncan Forbes was born at Bunchrew, near Inverness on November 10th, 1685. He was the second son of politician Duncan Forbes of Culloden (1644-1704) and his wife Mary Innes.

The fifth of nine children, he had seven sisters and an elder brother, John who was 12 years his senior. Despite the age difference, the two brothers were close friends all their lives. Duncan's sister, Isobel married James Fraser 2nd of Achnagairn and their daughter Anne Fraser married John Gray of Overskibo as her 2nd husband. Anne was therefore not only the mother of Katherine Gray but the niece of Duncan Forbes.

There is documented evidence of Duncan lodging at Overskibo on several occasions, which suggests he was close to this branch of the family).

Where is the dress during this time?

Duncan was educated at the local grammar school before progressing to Marischal College, Aberdeen in 1699; the University of Edinburgh in 1705; completing his legal studies at Leyden University in the Netherlands.

He returned home in 1707 and on 10 October 1708 married his childhood sweetheart and second cousin Mary Rose, whose family owned nearby Kilravock Castle. Their marriage was short lived; after giving birth to a son, Mary died. Duncan never remarried. He rose to prominence during the Jacobite disturbances and was largely responsible for keeping fractious rebels under control. He became Lord President, a title he held until his death in 1747.

In the absence of any other contenders, I believe Duncan Forbes had the means and opportunity to purchase the silk brocade from the Spitalfield's Silk Market en route home from the Netherlands, as a present for his bride to be. This is supported by a published letter to his brother John saying that he will be returning aboard the Duke of Marlborough's ship bound for London. The date was 1707. London was buzzing at that time in the aftermath of the Great Fire and Spitalfields was in the heart of it.

One will never know exactly what happened, but we do know that the dress is dated from 1700 to 1710, and that the material originated from Spitalfields. It seems likely to have been made up shortly afterwards either as a wedding dress or for another special occasion. Following Mary's untimely death, the dress was put away, eventually passing to Duncan's niece Anne living at Overskibo. Records show that John Gray, Anne's husband (and Katherine's father) died in 1742 so they were probably still living there at the time of Katherine's marriage to Hugh Houston in 1738.

The information that has passed down all these years that the dress belonged to Katherine Gray of Overskibo must have signified something special: it now seems likely that it was first worn by Mary (Rose) Forbes and secondly by Katherine Gray at her marriage to Hugh Houston.

This scenario was validated by the Family Historian at the Inverness Archives in 2021.

From: Barbara Francis [mailto:barbara@bhfrancis.com]

Sent: 16 April 2015 09:57

To: Emily Taylor

Subject: Enquiry re heirloom dress

Dear Emily,

I'm not sure if I have the correct email address for you so I hope this email reaches you.

My name is Barbara Francis and I was given your name by Rosemary Harden following a visit to the Museum of Costume in Bath in October last year. I'm hoping you might be able to assist me in the research I've been carrying out on an heirloom silk brocade dress I inherited on my 16th birthday in 1956. Attached are a few photos of the dress including one of a previous owner, Katy Saunders, wearing it probably to a fancy dress ball (not sure of the date but Katy was born in 1854 so maybe she was in her 30's or 40's in the picture ??)

The dress was sent to me in Australia by my Scottish godmother, who was the 2nd and much younger wife of my great grandfather who inherited it from his first cousin in 1912, the Katy Saunders in the picture. I do not know who Katy inherited it from. However my godmother told me that the original owner of the dress was a Katherine Grey of Skibo Castle in Scotland who was a direct ancestress of mine, and that the dress was dated 1700-1720.

At the time I didn't half value what I had and it was 1985 before I started researching, first the owner, and then the dress itself. Accompanying the dress were a few letters which gave me some clues about the original owner and I've been able to trace much of the Grey line, but because of the time span involved there are some anomalies which I haven't yet resolved. So a few years ago I changed tack and started researching the dress. However living so far away means that it is very much a stop-start affair.

Herewith a brief summary of what I've learnt to date:

1. From the National Gallery of Victoria, Australia (1987) : the material is probably 1700 to 1710 (although could be older); due to extensive alterations the date of the dress could not be determined.

2. From the Curator of Textiles at the V & A (2011) : the material is a James Leman, Spitalfields' Silk – probably Bizarre style and therefore dated 1700-1705. Dress extensively altered.

3. Different views from experts at the V &A and Museum of Costume, London as to whether the dress would have been made up straight away or the material kept for a later occasion.

4. Although Katy is wearing a white frilly blouse and petticoat in the picture she mentions in a letter that she preferred a crimson petticoat; and although the dress has undergone extensive alterations I think they might have occurred before Katy acquired it, whenever that was.

5. When I was in Bath last year the Costume Museum was holding a Georgian Exhibition and I was amazed to see several examples of 'coat' dresses with petticoats, amongst the earliest dresses, and mention of extensive alterations often occurring. This is the closest I've got to finding out what my dress may have once looked like, and I started to speculate as to how it could have been altered. I have also wondered how such expensive material found its way from Spitalfields to the far north of Scotland in the early 1700s and for what purpose it may have been originally made that resulted in it being handed down through so many generations of my family. I'm hoping that by learning more about the dress itself I can piece together more accurately a fascinating part of my family history.

Following on from my query to the Bath Costume Museum I received this reply from Rosemary Harden which I will now reproduce here:

Dear Barbara

Thank you so much for sending through photographs of your dress. The fabric is quite beautiful, and what a fascinating provenance for the dress.

It sounds as though you have a good idea of the date of the actual silk from which the dress is made. It really does look very special. Your question is about the alterations of the dress. From what I can see of these images it does look as though the dress has been altered a couple of times, which to be honest is what I would expect of any 18th century dress.

Just about all the dresses here in the Fashion Museum collection have been altered at least once, first in the 18th century, and then also later, generally we think in the later 19th century to fit in with a vogue for fancy dress, and costume balls where you might dress up as your ancestor. I wonder if that is what happened with your dress?

Identifying exact dates of various alterations in an historic dress is quite like detective work. You would have to look at styles of stitching, types of thread used, lines of old stitching etc. etc. I wonder if one of the leading dress collections in Australia – such as The Powerhouse in Sydney – might be able to point you in the direction of a textile conservator or 18th century expert who could help you to look at your dress in that way?

One other thought, I wonder if it might be worthwhile contacting the National Museums of Scotland in Edinburgh to see if they have any thoughts about how this wonderful fabric ended up in the north of Scotland? Emily Taylor is the curator there who looks after earlier dress, and she may have some helpful advice for you.

Good luck with your continuing research, and thank you for visiting the Fashion Museum

Best wishes

Rosemary

Rosemary Harden
Fashion Museum Manager
Bath and North East Somerset Council
Assembly Rooms
Bennett Street
Bath BA1 2QH,

And so you now know, Emily why I am contacting you! And more particularly as I will be spending a few days in Scotland (mostly Edinburgh) from 21st to 26th June this year I was wondering whether you would be around then and we could meet up? If that were possible I would bring many more photographs with me, or I could bring the dress with me if you wished. There are a few logistic problems travelling with it from Australia but I did it once before when I took it to the V & A so I could do it again.

I look forward to hearing from you and to see if you can help me piece more of my jigsaw puzzle together and adding to this wonderful history lesson I've been having along the way.

With best wishes

Kind regards

Barbara

Barbara Francis
907/8 Waterview Walk
Docklands
Victoria, Australia 3008

From: **Barbara Francis** barbara@bhfrancis.com*
Subject: **Ryanair Boarding Pass**
Date: 19 June 2015 22:32
To: **Lin John Appleton** j.l.appleton@btinternet.com

Featuring 100+ playable games, take on gaming's greatest icons at the National Museum of Scotland.
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National Museums Scotland, Scottish Charity, No. SC 011130

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Featuring 100+ playable games, take on gaming's greatest icons at the National Museum of Scotland.
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From: Emily Taylor [mailto:E.Taylor@nms.ac.uk]

Sent: Thursday, 23 April 2015 12:23 AM

To: 'Barbara Francis'

Subject: RE: Enquiry re heirloom dress

Dear Barbara,

Thank you for your e-mail. I'm sorry it's taken me a few days to get back to you - I've been working in the store a lot lately so haven't had much leisure at my desk. I already have another enquirer booked in for the week of the 22nd-26th June, so I would be very happy to meet you then, if you would like to make an appointment. If we met at our Collections Centre I could look out some of the other items in our collection that are 19th century alterations of 18th century dresses, which might be the best way for you to see some of the different alterations and how we date them.

As it happens I wrote my PhD on eighteenth century garments in Scottish collections or with a Scottish provenance, many of which were altered, so your enquiry is quite familiar territory. I'm interested to see the open sleeves and bodice adjustments on your garment. I can immediately think of one other dress which I have seen in the private archives at Blair Castle (Perthshire), which uses a similarly early eighteenth century textile adjusted to have an open sleeve. I don't keep my PhD research at work, but if you were to make an appointment I could look into it with a little more detail before then.

Regarding how the textile found its way to Scotland I can confirm that luxury (often Spitalfields) woven silks can be found quite regularly in upper class Scots households in the 18th century. Sea links to London were quite regular, especially between east coast ports such as Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh. I think I'm right in saying that items were often shipped up to Edinburgh, where they might dock before being sent on either by land or sea. My knowledge of this comes from reading 18th century accounts and correspondence, but I can try and find published research for you if that might be useful. I have attached one article, which though not immediately relevant does feature discussion of how domestic Scottish weaving industries were using dye products imported from around the globe at this time.

I would suggest it might be worth looking into the Greys of Skibo Castle if you would like

to know a little more about how and where the dress may have been worn. Sometimes working forwards with research can join the dots. Some of the Scottish aristocrats and gentry would live between Scotland and London, and certainly later in the 18th century there were strong Scottish kin networks in London - see for example the 'Scots in London'

book published by Prof. Stana Nenadic: http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/history-classics-archaeology/about-us/staff-profiles?uun=snenadic&search=¶ms=&cw_xml=profile_tab5_academic.php Knowing a bit more about the movements of the family might offer clues to how and why they might have acquired and worn garments.

Although I can't access the website to check the National Register for Archives of Scotland should allow you to check whether there are any of the Grey family papers accessible: <http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/catalogues-and-indexes> The National Archives of Scotland are in Edinburgh, so if there was anything useful you might be able to look at it on your visit. I would warn that early Scots and the handwriting can be a bit impenetrable at first!

I hope that is some use.

Please let me know what day would suit you best if you would like to make an appointment. We normally begin viewing appointments at either 10:30 or 14:00, please just let me know which might suit you better. I will send further details as necessary.

Kind regards,

Emily.

Emily Taylor
Assistant Curator, European Decorative Arts

Art and Design
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From: Barbara Francis [<mailto:barbara@bhfrancis.com>]

Sent: 24 April 2015 08:09

To: Emily Taylor

Subject: RE: Enquiry re heirloom dress

Dear Emily,

Thank you so much for your email, I was delighted to hear from you. You are obviously the person I've been waiting to cross my path for a very long time, and to think that you will be available to meet with me during my very brief visit to Edinburgh is just amazing.

So yes please I would like to make an appointment with you. I will be arriving in Edinburgh on Sunday 21st June, departing Saturday 27th June and I haven't planned anything as yet. So any time between the 22nd and 26th would suit but I guess the earlier in the week the better as it would give me more time to follow things up that may arise. Either 10.30 or 1400 is OK with me, whatever suits you best.

What I haven't mentioned is that I will bring the dress with me – much better than trying to work from photos, and I'd love you to see the real thing.

Although I have a couple of published pedigrees of the Grey family in my possession, and have some general information I haven't yet tried locating any papers as yet, so will definitely follow that up during my visit.

I can't tell you how much I'm looking forward to meeting with you and learning more about the story of this beautiful dress I inherited.

Kind regards

Barbara

From: Barbara Francis barbara@bhfrancis.com
Subject: FW: Enquiry re heirloom dress
Date: 21 June 2015 07:26
To: Lin John Appleton j.l.appleton@britainia.ac.uk

From: Emily Taylor [<mailto:E.Taylor@nms.ac.uk>]
Sent: Monday, 27 April 2015 7:21 PM
To: 'Barbara Francis'
Subject: RE: Enquiry re heirloom dress

Dear Barbara,

I've booked you in for an appointment with me on at 10:30 on Tuesday 23rd of June. The booking is at National Museums Collection Centre, which is on the outskirts of Edinburgh. I will copy a directions link below.

I'm very pleased you are able to bring your dress with you. It will be interesting to see the object, and you are right there is always much more information looking at the item itself!

We will have to look at your dress in the meeting room beside reception, and leave it there while visiting the store. We don't introduce objects into the store unless they have been quarantined or frozen, this helps us minimise our pest risk, but is certainly not a judgement on your garment. Your items will be very secure in the meeting room.

Directions to the Collections Centre are on the below webpage:

<http://www.nms.ac.uk/about-us/services-and-expertise/our-research/national-museums-collection-centre/>

On arrival at the Collections Centre just announce your name and mine at the gate intercom and I will meet you at reception.

Best wishes,

Emily.

Emily Taylor
Assistant Curator, European Decorative Arts

Art and Design
National Museums Scotland

Barbara Francis

From: Barbara Francis <barbara@bhfrancis.com> on behalf of Barbara Francis
Sent: Wednesday, 7 July 2021 9:26 PM
To: Barbara Francis
Subject: Enquiry re heirloom dress

From: Barbara Francis <barbara@bhfrancis.com>
Sent: Thursday, 25 June 2015 8:06 AM
To: Emily Taylor <E.Taylor@nms.ac.uk>
Subject: RE: Enquiry re heirloom dress

Dear Emily

Thank you so much for giving me your valuable time yesterday to inspecting my dress and passing on your knowledge and expertise. It was fascinating to hear an expert talking about it and I now better understand the circumstances in which similar dresses would have been worn, and why. And it was good to learn about the many and varied remodelling/alterations that could have taken place – particularly by Katie Saunders or whoever gave the dress to her!

Like all research the more one learns the more questions that are raised and I feel I'm still a long way from unravelling all its secrets. But with the information I've obtained from my own research, which in some instances is at odds with the information that accompanied the dress, together with the knowledge I know have on the material and the design etc I'm going to have to start all over again. But this time it will be starting from the presumption that the dress was made up at the beginning of the 18thC and therefore Katharine Grey was unlikely to have been the original owner of the dress. It will be fun to see where it takes me.

Thank you so much again. I hope you don't mind if I need to ask you a few more questions from time to time!!

With best wishes

Kind regards

Barbara

Barbara Francis

From: Barbara Francis <barbara@bhfrancis.com> on behalf of Barbara Francis
Sent: Wednesday, 7 July 2021 9:57 PM
To: Barbara Francis
Subject: Enquiry re heirloom dress
Attachments: Costume in Detail p3-4.jpg; Costume in Detail p5-6.jpg; Costume in Detail p9-10.jpg; Costume in Detail p17-18.jpg

From: Emily Taylor <E.Taylor@nms.ac.uk>
Sent: Thursday, 2 July 2015 10:51 PM
To: 'Barbara Francis' <barbara@bhfrancis.com>
Subject: RE: Enquiry re heirloom dress

Dear Barbara,

I've looked out some of the key texts dress historians use to help date garments (details listed below & images attached and to follow), all of these give line drawings of different construction techniques. In retrospect I may have been wrong about the idea of your dress being converted from an earlier mantua style, with a slight train, which you can see in diagrams IX and XII from *The Cut of Women's Clothes*. I was thinking of the style which is given a slightly later dating, c.1740s, see Diagram XIII. Pre-1750 is not my strongest period, so it was difficult to think accurately off the top of my head.

It might be that your dress was converted from something more like *Patterns of Fashion* p22. Or was made up into a formal dress in the 1730s and 1740s, then converted into the pleated back style in the 1740s/50s, such as you can see examples of in the *Costume in Detail* illustrations. I would treat the dating of the garments illustrated with caution. As you can see from the information below these books were all published in the 1960s and sometimes the dating refers to the fabric rather than the cut of the dress – similar to the situation you are in regarding the dating of your garment. Some of these items are likely to have been made up slightly later than the textile.

I hope, however that this is useful. If you do want to take it further I would suggest having someone with a knowledge of historic pattern cutting look at the garment might be useful. Or, someone (perhaps a student) who is able to take patterns from garments might be able to take the pattern, note some of the alterations and you could compare that with publications such as these I have highlighted.

The historic dress lady I mentioned is Jenny Tiramani. She has worked closely with collections such as the V&A and at the very least may be able to suggest further contacts/a next step, certainly the School of Historical Dress would be able to offer more accurate insight for you regarding the pattern, than I might:
http://theschoolofhistoricaldress.org.uk/?page_id=295

The Cut of Women's Clothes 1600-1900, Norah Waugh, pub. 1968

Costume in Detail 1730-1930, Nancy Bradfield, pub. 1968

Patterns of Fashion Englishwomen's dresses & their construction c.1660-1860, Janet Arnold, pub. 1964

Best of luck with your further research, please feel free to contact me if you have further questions.

Emily.

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