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5th September, 1988

Jim Bell
Rhian
Evelix Road
Dornoch
Sutherland
IV25 3HR

Dear Mr Bell

Thank you for your letter and your kind comments on my article on sheep farming.

I am very pleased to hear about your work on the settlements of the River Evelix. There is a great need for such sites to be recorded. I have gathered a certain amount of information on this area and enclose some very rough notes on Dempster's muir settlers. It is clear that the earliest settlements on the hill grounds were Garvary, Sleasdairidh and Torbreck on Loch Buie. Puill Fraoich was formerly within the Sleasdairidh grazing and, like many of the other small settlements, was almost certainly created as a result of Dempster's policies. A survey of 1825 which I found among the Court of Session records states that 'Pill fraoich' consisted of 7.8 acres arable and meadow, which at 7/6 per acre, gave as estimated rent of £2 18 6. By comparison, the small settlement of Leadnamone to the east, consisted of 2.5 acres arable and meadow which was valued at 3/- per acre. A rental of the Skibo estate for 1893 or 4 only lists the hill grazing of 'Clais-na-sinneig' let to John Logan and others for £26 on a 5-year lease from Whit 1890.

I hope these notes may be of some use to you. If I find anything else I will pass it on. I look forward to meeting you next spring.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Bangor-Jones

Dr Malcolm Bangor-Jones

See Sketch Map on Tracing Paper

c/o Department of Geography
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Dear Mr Bell

See 2001.35.02.

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Please find enclosed a sketch map of the Evelix settlements, hearth tax returns for Dornoch (1694), and two copies of an article I published in Vernacular Building last year-perhaps you could pass on a copy to your friend Mr Robertson. The journal might well be interested in your survey of Puill Fraoich. Please let me know if this might be possible.

Airdens was owned by the later Grays of Creich until 1716 when Robert Gray, Commissary of Sutherland granted the lands to his nephew Robert, the infant son of James Gray of Creich. Robert Gray of Airdens became a writer in Edinburgh and in 1751 was able to buy Ospisdale where he made substantial improvements. In 1767 he married Margaret the heiress of Robert Gray of Creich. However, it later emerged that he was by then already deeply in debt. In 1777 his estate was sequestrated with debts of £2,875 while Airdens and Ospisdale were valued at £1,606. The lands were sold to Gilchrist in 1783.

George Dempster of Skibo sold Balblair to Sidney Hadwen of Kildonan Lodge in 1861. The lands were described as the "Ninepenny lands of Mackaill including that portion thereof commonly called Balblair with the houses and others; and a small portion of the lands and Barony of Skibo to the east". The remainder of the Skibo estate was sold to Thomas Chirnside of Warribee Park, Victoria, Australia in 1866.

I saw the letter in the Northern Times questioning my interpretation regarding Donald Macleod: if we all stopped where the writer suggests there would be no history worth reading!

*Best with
Malcolm Bangor-Jones*

Malcolm Bangor-Jones