

Tiger Duff: India, Madeira and Empire
in Eighteenth-Century Scotland

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Alistair Mutch

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For the people of the north east, especially the Mutch family
of Rayne, Aberdeenshire and their descendants, who made the
landscape what it is today.

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Prologue

Bengal, 1773. A party of officers of the Honourable East India Company's army are on a hunting expedition. One of their number has become detached from the main body. A startled tiger charges towards him. The small shot in his musket simply enrages the animal. He fends it off with increasing desperation using the bayonet on the end of the musket, but he is weak from loss of blood and the tiger is powerful. With a last effort he manages to wrest the bayonet off the gun and plunge it into the tiger's chest.

Rolling clear of the dying animal, he is covered in blood from the wounds the tiger's claws have inflicted. His companions are nowhere to be seen, having abandoned him for dead and fled from the tiger. He staggers back to camp and the legend of Tiger Duff is born. Many years later, when he has returned to his native Scotland, children in Banff stare and talk in hushed tones about the six-foot four-inches tall military man with the scar on his cheek.

Patrick Duff (1742–1803), who was to reach the rank of major-general from comparatively humble beginnings, had an eventful life which is not only a good story in its own right but tells us a good deal about Scotland in the eighteenth century. Patrick had an uncle who escaped from Culloden into exile in France after fighting for Bonnie Prince Charlie. Another uncle built one of the finest Adam-designed mansions in Scotland spending the fortune he made in the Madeira wine trade, filled with Chinese silk wallpaper and doors of Spanish mahogany. Patrick completed five voyages to India and back at a time when many travellers to the east didn't survive one. He was sent home in disgrace after taking a leading role in a mutiny of officers, but was able by dint of his practical ability and stubborn persistence in getting what he felt was his due to rise to senior rank. He made a fortune serving the ruler of Oudh, which he was able to translate into a landed estate in Banffshire. Not content with the life of a country gentleman, he fought a parliamentary election against the influence of the powerful Earl Fife. Unwilling to accept defeat engineered, as he saw it, by electoral fraud, he fought and lost

a court case which may well have influenced Walter Scott when he wrote *Guy Mannering*. In the meantime, he had been involved in a major battle to take the Seringapatam fortress of the Indian ruler Tipu Sultan and had finished his military career with the rank of major-general. His comfortable retirement was disrupted by the bankruptcy of his brother, whose debts he was struggling to clear when he and his wife died in Edinburgh in 1802.

In the introduction to the collection of essays on Scotland and the British Empire they edited, John Mackenzie and T. M. Devine assert that, to understand the distinctive role of Scots in empire, ‘we need histories of specific families and areas of the country. Even the grandest theories must be built upon such basic and particularist information.’¹ This book presents one such history, that of the extended Duff and Gordon families. Their story has particular interest in that it spans the histories of the empire of conquest and the empire of commerce. Patrick Duff, later joined by his brothers William and John, was one of many Scottish officers of the East India Company’s army, an army which was a crucial factor in the transmutation of British activities in India from relationships based on trade to territorial expansion and control. The massive expansion in territory in the second half of the eighteenth century laid the foundations for our classic image of the Raj, control of enormous numbers of people and large areas of land based on, ultimately, military might. However, there is another form of imperialism, that based on the unequal distribution of economic resources and opportunities. To the wine growers of Madeira and Portugal in the eighteenth century, the dominance of the distribution of their wine by British merchants must have seemed a good deal like imperialism by trade. The Gordon brothers, James and Alexander, later joined by their nephews James and Robert Duff, were key members of the British merchant elite who controlled the majority of trade in madeira wine. The connection in one family between two different forms of empire reveals the place of Madeira as a key geographical node in the networks of trade that underpinned both and that of madeira wine in lubricating and sustaining imperial rule.

The influential account of the formation of British state and identity presented by Linda Colley in *Britons* places considerable emphasis on a shared protestant distrust and fear of a catholic ‘other’, largely in the shape of France,

¹ John MacKenzie and T. M. Devine, ‘Introduction’ in John MacKenzie and T. M. Devine (eds), *Scotland and the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 25.

in knitting together the different nations that constituted Britain.² However, granted a shared anti-Catholicism, there were still significant differences between different visions of the protestant tradition. The Scots had tried, unsuccessfully, to impose their presbyterian model of church governance on England in the civil war that wracked the islands in the mid-seventeenth century. In revenge, High Church Tories were successful in re-imposing lay patronage on the Church of Scotland soon after the Treaty of Union in 1707. The Act of 1712 created lasting popular resentment in Scotland, leading to many local conflicts, conflicts which indicate major fault lines between English and Scottish conceptions of Protestantism.³ Not only are these fault lines of some importance in forging a distinctive Scottish identity in the empire, but the extended Duff and Gordon network spanned another, still greater fault line. For while the Duffs came from a presbyterian background, the Gordons of Letterfourie were one of the staunchest Roman Catholic families in Scotland. How empire supplied niches for them to prosper and to join the enterprise that was Britain is a further dimension of this story.

This eventful life is chronicled in the many letters generated by the commercial, military and political networks that linked Scotland, London, Madeira and India. Although most of them concerned the business of the day, collectively, and supported by other sources, they give us insight into the character of this extended family network that seized the opportunities offered by the expansion of empire. This was neither the experience of the aristocratic and political elite, nor of the rank and file of empire, still less of the subjects of that empire. Rather it is the story of those in the middle, men (and the story is mostly about men, because that is where the sources lead us) who spotted gaps in the market that their existing connections and abilities could enable them to exploit. Others have used such sources to explore the ‘inner life of Empire’.⁴ However, these sources don’t lead us that way. They are largely silent about emotional issues, being concerned either with the details of trade or with striving for rank. Although they give us clues to the inner life, most of the story they enable us to tell is concerned with external exploits. They are also written from the vantage point of the survivor and the victor, so they tell us little about the peoples, either in India or Madeira,

² Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven, CT, 2005).

³ Laurence Whitley, *A Great Grievance: Ecclesiastical Lay Patronage in Scotland until 1750*, (Eugene, Oregon, 2013).

⁴ Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History* (Princeton NJ, 2011).

amongst whom our central characters made their living. So this can only be a partial story of empire, but I hope it is both a fascinating one within these limitations and a contribution to our understanding of Scotland in the eighteenth century.

I tell the story largely as a chronological narrative, saving my thoughts about contributions to the broader historiography for a summary chapter. However, my task is complicated by seeking to weave together two narratives, that of Patrick Duff in India and James and Alexander Gordon in Madeira. At points this requires me to leave a strict chronological structure to explore themes across the period, such as the nature and structure of military practice in Bengal. At times, too, I have to tack backwards and forwards between India, Madeira, London and Scotland. The timeline that follows this chapter might help as an *aide memoire* for some of the key events and dates. These themes tend to coalesce from chapter eleven onwards, where the connections between events in India and Madeira become clearer. Throughout, I have supplied detailed footnotes to the sources I have used. Following Indian independence in 1947, many place names were changed; to avoid anachronistic and confusing changes of names I have used the eighteenth-century British versions throughout, as deployed in contemporary material. I use ‘Madeira’ with an initial capital letter to refer to the island, ‘madeira’ to refer to the wine produced on and named after the island.

The story begins with the alliance through marriage of the staunchly Roman Catholic family of Gordon of Letterfourie and the presbyterian Duffs. The wealth that the Gordons were able to accumulate in Madeira enabled them to support their Duff nephews, preparing them for careers in the wine trade or Indian military service. We first follow James Gordon to London and Madeira to understand the sources of this wealth, before turning to the Jacobite activities of his brother Alexander. This forms one part of the background to Patrick Duff’s experiences in India, possibly shaping his participation in a mutiny of European officers in Bengal in 1766. Lucky to escape death and sent home in disgrace, we leave Patrick to explore in more detail the nature of the Madeira wine business, drawing on the extensive business correspondence of the Gordons. Understanding how the Gordons made their money, although it might appear something of a diversion from Patrick’s story, is important to locate the connections and resources he could draw upon in his successful struggle to return to India. After an explanation of the evolution of the Bengal artillery in which he was to serve, we come to the episode outlined above which gave Patrick his enduring nickname of

‘Tiger’. The permutations of this story form an interesting example of imperial myth making.

After another brief return to Britain and the tragic early death of his new bride, we follow Patrick to Oudh, where he appears to have made his initial fortune. Having established himself securely, he was then able to help his uncles (by now in partnership with Patrick’s brothers) to develop their sales of madeira wine in India. These years saw his advance in rank, but this was not without struggles which form a central part of his extensive correspondence. These letters also give us some insight into his domestic life, especially the children he had with Indian women. They shed light on the process of remitting money in order to purchase a Scottish estate. The acquisition of the Carnousie estate near Turriff reveals something of the contribution of Indian wealth to the process of agricultural improvement in Scotland. His entry to the landowning elite of Banffshire was cemented by a judicious marital alliance, but in between Patrick returned to India to play a significant role in the war against Tipu Sultan which culminated in victory for the East India Company in 1792. Back in Scotland, Patrick took part in another battle, when he stood in a Parliamentary by-election in 1795 against the candidate of the dominant local magnate, Earl Fife. Although unsuccessful, Patrick’s action in contesting the electoral fraud he perceived to be in operation gives us great insight into tensions in the local elite at the time. At the same time Patrick returned to India for a fifth and final time, where he assumed his rank of major-general at the head of the Bengal artillery. He was not to enjoy his estates and fortune for long, as our story closes with his brother’s bankruptcy and Patrick’s death from consumption.

The very distinctive activities of this one family, spanning both empires of conquest and commerce as well as religious divides, have a good deal to contribute to our understanding of the role of Scots in empire. The conclusion considers what these contributions were in terms of the distinctive Scottish contribution to empire, the impact of that contribution back on Scotland and the implications for our understanding of the construction of a British state and identity. One intriguing aspect is the way our story brings to the foreground the rather hidden place of madeira wine as a key cultural and material element of the construction of an imperial elite.

Timeline

- 1730 James Gordon leaves London for Madeira
- 1739 Marriage of John Duff and Mary Gordon
- 1742 Birth of Patrick Duff
- 1746 Alexander Gordon fights at Culloden
- 1751 At some point, Alexander Gordon arrives in Madeira and becomes partner in wine business
- 1757 Battle of Plassey
- 1759 Patrick sails for India
- 1760 James Gordon returns to Britain; James Duff arrives in Madeira
- 1764 Battle of Buxar; Patrick mentioned in despatches
- 1766 Bengal mutiny; Patrick dismissed the service and returns to Britain
- 1767 Robert Duff arrives in Madeira
- 1768 Pearse appointed to command Bengal Artillery
- 1769 Patrick sails for India; James Duff admitted as partner in wine business.
- 1770 Patrick promoted captain
- 1772 Robert Adam builds mansion at Letterfourie for James Gordon
- 1773 Patrick fights a tiger
- 1774 Robert admitted as partner in wine business; Patrick returns to Britain; marries Ann Duff
- 1775 Patrick sails for India via Madeira; brother William leaves for India
- 1776 Ann dies soon after arriving in India
- 1777 Patrick commands Nawab of Oudh's artillery
- 1780 Patrick commands Bengal artillery on Pearse's absence; promoted lieutenant-colonel; brother John arrives in India
- 1782 Death of Mary Gordon; Birth of David Urquhart Duff, Calcutta
- 1783 Patrick opens up trade for House of Gordon in India
- 1784 James Duff returns to London
- 1786 Warren Hastings recalled from India to face impeachment
- 1787 James Gordon leaves for Scotland; Cornwallis arrives in India as Governor General

- 1788 Patrick sails for Britain to pursue rank
- 1789 Patrick purchases Carnousie estate; promoted colonel
- 1790 Death of John Duff and James Gordon; Patrick sails for India; portrait painted by Romney
- 1792 Siege of Seringapatam and surrender of Tipu; Patrick returns to Britain
- 1794 Patrick marries Dorothea Hay
- 1795 Birth of Margaret Duff; Patrick contests Banffshire by-election
- 1796 William Duff promoted captain
- 1797 Patrick loses case for electoral fraud; Patrick sails for India as major-general and returns in same year; John Duff promoted captain; death of Alexander Gordon; completion of Mains of Carnousie
- 1799 Patrick resigns from EIC army
- 1801 Bankruptcy of James Duff
- 1803 Death of Patrick and Dorothea in Edinburgh
- 1807 Death of Robert Duff; Death of William Duff in combat
- 1812 Death of James Duff, Banff
- 1825 Sale of Carnousie
- 1828 Death of John Duff
- 1859 Dissolution of Gordon, Duff & Co

1 An unlikely alliance

On 21 August 1739, John Duff and Mary Gordon were married in the parish kirk of Rathven, near the Banffshire coast.¹ Nothing unusual in that, except when one realises that Mary Gordon was from one of the most devout and committed Roman Catholic families in the north east of Scotland, the Gordons of Letterfourie. On the Duff side, John's father, Patrick, was an elder in the presbyterian Church of Scotland and the couple's children were to be brought up in the national faith.² The union was to bring considerable advantages to both sides and the connections it established were, in particular, to aid the rise of Patrick Duff from the son of an estate factor to the rank of general in the East India Company's army. Explaining the alliance requires an understanding of the penalties that devout Catholics like those at Letterfourie laboured under.

The sixteenth century saw the presbyterian Church of Scotland established as the national church, the most thorough instantiation of Reformed Protestantism in Europe.³ The new religion, with the support of many lairds who had their own often more secular motives for supporting it, became established in the central lowlands, with particular centres of strength in Fife and Ayrshire.⁴ However, its spread further north was a much more tenuous and protracted process. It never gained much of a hold in the Highlands for

¹ 'Mrs Mary Gordon, Letterfurie's daughter and John Duff in Craigenach in Newton of Alves, were proclaimed in order to marriage July 29 and marriage solemnized August 21 1739. Rathven Parish Register', University of Aberdeen Library and Special Collections (hereafter AULSC) Papers of J M Bulloch relating to Gordons of Letterfourie, MS3051/1/8/4.

² Visitation of Knockando, 26 May 1730. National Records of Scotland (hereafter NRS), minutes of Presbytery of Aberlour, 1709–1736, CH2/6/2.

³ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490–1700* (London, 2004); Alec Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation* (Manchester, 2006); Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven, 2002).

⁴ John McCallum, *Reforming the Scottish Parish: The Reformation in Fife, 1560–1640* (Farnham, 2010).

a further three hundred years, with barriers of language, culture and social organisation proving hard to break down. Within presbyterianism there was a struggle over the course of the seventeenth century between those who adhered to a governance structure which has been characterised as a ‘conciliar’ one, in which presbyteries, or groups of ministers and elders, oversaw the activities of local parishes, and those who cleaved to the hierarchy of bishops.⁵ This Episcopalianism was a feature of the north east Lowlands, where Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire were centres of a more conservative tradition than that obtaining further south. These divisions were tangled up with relations with Scotland’s more powerful southern neighbour, where Charles I was wedded to the notions of both the Divine Right of Kings and the role of bishops. This led to bloody conflicts throughout the seventeenth century, with presbyterianism only being finally confirmed in the settlement of 1690 which followed the entry of William of Orange into British politics.⁶

Banffshire straddled many of these divisions. As a county it ran from the bleak moorlands of the Cabrach down to the fertile lands fringing the Moray Firth. These lands stretching along the coast from the county town of Banff, at the mouth of the river Deveron, to the river Spey and then onwards through Moray towards Inverness, had considerable prospects for agricultural improvement. They also contained some devout and committed presbyterians, men like Alexander Brodie of Brodie. He felt capable of admonishing his minister for not being fervent enough in his messages to his congregation, telling him that he hoped ‘he would not rest in discovering gross monstrous sins, but descend into the secret of the hart, and search spiritual sins that arm or hiden, wjich light of natur cannot tak up nor see.’⁷ But men like Brodie were rather in the minority in this area. The church struggled to settle ministers in places like Rathven; still more did it struggle to make headway in the more isolated and upland portions of the county. The adherence of well-established landowners like the Gordons of Letterfourie to the

⁵ James Kirk, *Patterns of Reform: Continuity and Change in the Reformation Kirk* (Edinburgh, 1989), 343.

⁶ Alasdair Raffe, ‘Presbyterianism, Secularization, and Scottish politics after the Revolution of 1688–1690’, *The Historical Journal*, 53 (2010), 317–37; Michael Graham, *The Blasphemies of Thomas Aikenhead: Boundaries of Belief on the Eve of the Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 2008); Alasdair Raffe, ‘Scotland Restored and Reshaped: Politics and Religion’ in T. M. Devine and Jenny Wormald (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Modern Scottish History* (Oxford, 2012), 251–67.

⁷ *The Diary of Alexander Brodie of Brodie 1652–1680 and of his son James Brodie of Brodie 1680–1685* (Aberdeen, 1863), 165.

Roman Catholicism of their forefathers, then, was a considerable thorn in their side, and one which the government in Edinburgh laboured to remove.

Sir James Gordon, the first baronet of Letterfourie, was Admiral of Scotland in 1513.⁸ James and John were popular names at Letterfourie and it was the admiral's grandson, also named James, who was involved in a bitter feud with the Crichtons of Fren draught. This was a complex dispute between the Crichtons and the Gordons of Rothiemay which originated in a dispute over fishing rights but accelerated into open conflict. This reached a horrific conclusion when in 1630 Viscount Aboyne, the Laird of Rothiemay and a number of their servants, guests of Crichton in their house at Fren draught, were burned to death in a fire which the Crichtons, it was alleged, did nothing to extinguish. This brought about revenge attacks by the Gordons on the Crichtons in which James of Letterfourie was implicated. He was summoned before the Privy Council in Edinburgh in 1634 to explain either his involvement or his failure, as a Baillie of the Marquis of Huntly, to curb the predations of 'broken men' on the lands of those connected with the Crichtons.⁹ Failing to give satisfactory answers, he was committed to Edinburgh Tolbooth in December 1634. Here he stayed until released on caution in March 1635, when he was to remain in Edinburgh while investigations continued. Huntly, who had also been held, pleaded to be released on condition that he and his servants, including Letterfourie, pursue the remaining fugitives from justice. Thus in June 1635 the Privy Council issued a licence for James 'to return home to do service against the broken men of the north under caution of 3000 merks of Robert Irwing of Fedderat'.¹⁰ However, he was included in the ranks of a large number of Gordons to be bound over to keep the peace in August 1635. By December commissioners appointed to investigate disorders in the north called for Letterfourie to be put in the Tolbooth with regards to his confrontation with Adam Gordon of Park and in June 1636 James confessed 'that as baillie and servant to Huntly he had not done as much as he should have to restrain Adam Gordon and disorders he caused.'¹¹ He was released again, in part thanks to a pardon from the king for Huntly.

⁸ The Scottish Nation: Gordon, Electric Scotland, <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/nation/gordon.htm>, accessed 2 April 2012.

⁹ P. Hume Brown (ed) *Records of the Privy Council of Scotland*, Volume 5 (Edinburgh, 1904), 618.

¹⁰ P. Hume Brown (ed) *Records of the Privy Council of Scotland*, Volume 6 (Edinburgh, 1906), 34.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 250.

This tale indicates some of the key loyalties of the Gordons of Letterfourie, which were principally to their religion and their clan. These were to lead later also to loyalty to the Stuart kings, but in the early seventeenth century local loyalties were primary. They were also, it would appear, to be reinforced with violence and lawbreaking when the occasion demanded. In 1630 George Abercrombie, burgess of Inverness, complained that James Gordon of Letterfourie ‘an avowed and excommunicated Papist’ had freed a number of notorious criminals and deprived George of his possessions by force.¹² This followed a letter from the king about abuses committed by Letterfourie when he was in office in Badenoch under Lord Gordon; he was forbidden under caution from returning there.¹³ Meanwhile, James, his wife, and his brother Thomas were also being pursued for their failure to renounce their Catholic faith. In 1630 John Lord Gordon was to pursue them as shelterers of Jesuits and other priests.¹⁴ In June of the following year, after numerous failed attempts to get them to conform, James and his wife were ordered to enter Blackness castle in the light of their scandalous life or face charges of treason; in the same year Thomas was ordered to enter discussions with his minister and attend services.¹⁵ James managed to satisfy the kirk on a number of points and his excommunication was relaxed in June 1631, but Thomas continued to dodge the issue. He asked for and was given more time to consider his position until he was ordered to go to Aberdeen for instruction in July 1632. In 1633, however, he was put under caution ‘to hear sermon at the kirk and not to reset or intercommune “with Jesuits, seminarie nor messe priests”’.¹⁶ However, conformance by the Gordons was in name only; in practice nothing was to shake their adherence to catholicism.

In February 1638 a large group of noblemen, clergy and burgesses met at Greyfriars Kirk in Edinburgh to sign the National Covenant.¹⁷ This document, committing its signatories to defend the presbyterian theology, liturgy and structure of the Church of Scotland, was triggered by the attempts of

¹² P. Hume Brown (ed), *Records of the Privy Council of Scotland*, Volume 4 (Edinburgh, 1902), 67.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹⁴ P. Hume Brown (ed), *Records of the Privy Council of Scotland*, Volume 3 (Edinburgh, 1901), 407.

¹⁵ Brown, *Privy Council*, volume 4, 599, 236.

¹⁶ Brown, *Privy Council*, volume 5, 24.

¹⁷ Alan McInnes, *Charles I and the Making of the Covenanting Movement, 1625–1641* (Edinburgh, 1991); David Stevenson, *The Scottish Revolution, 1637–1644* (Newton Abbot, 1973); *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Scotland, 1644–1651* (Newton Abbot, 1978).

Charles I to impose a version of the English *Book of Common Prayer*. The Covenant was widely signed across lowland Scotland, but opposition to it was led by George Gordon, Marquis of Huntly. The struggles over the Covenant triggered the Civil War that raged across Britain over the 1640s. This brought the Covenanters, who had effective political and military control of Scotland, into alliance with the English Parliamentarians, at least until the execution of Charles I. This alliance brought loyalty to the Stuart monarchs to join Letterfourie allegiances to the Gordons and their faith. Men like Alexander Brodie sought to extend the rule of the Covenanters across the north east, while James Gordon of Letterfourie was to be found in the resistance to them. In 1647 Letterfourie was in charge of the Gordon stronghold of Bog of Gight, together with his brother Thomas and other Gordons.¹⁸ When the castle was taken by the Covenanting general David Leslie James was sent as a prisoner to Edinburgh and Letterfourie was burnt by the victors.

It would appear that James was succeeded at Letterfourie by his brother Thomas, who managed after the end of hostilities to recover the estate. He left it to his son John, who maintained family loyalties. The family's fortunes had no doubt recovered during the restoration of Charles II, and especially given the toleration extended to Roman Catholics by his brother James VII. This toleration, however, coupled with his own Catholicism and the birth of a male heir in June 1688, brought widespread alarm amongst the English Protestant nobility. They conspired to invite William of Orange, who was married to James's daughter Mary, to seize the throne of England. Thus a Dutch invasion fleet landed in the south of England to usher in what was termed the 'Glorious Revolution'. Accompanying them were many Scottish presbyterian exiles, who had fled rather than give up their adherence to Covenanting principles.¹⁹ Amongst their ranks was William Carstares, later to become Principal of Edinburgh University and a close advisor to William. William, although himself from the Dutch Reformed tradition with its Calvinist theology shared with Scottish presbyterianism, was known to favour tolerance. He would probably have preferred a common protestantism across his kingdoms, but this would have opened the door to the hated bishops.

¹⁸ The Scottish Nation: Gordon, Electric Scotland, <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/nation/gordon.htm>, accessed 5 October 2015.

¹⁹ Ginny Gardner, *The Scottish Exile Community in the Netherlands, 1660–1690* (East Linton, 2004).

It was by no means a foregone conclusion that Scotland would accept William in place of its Stuart monarch, given the long tradition of loyalty to that royal line, but memories of the Cromwellian occupation of Scotland and the ambitions of many landowners, their resolve stiffened by returning presbyterian clerics and authors, saw the Scottish Parliament follow its English equivalent and recognise William, albeit on different grounds. This was not to the taste of all however, and here James Gordon of Letterfourie, son of John, re-enters the historical record. John Graham of Claverhouse, ‘Bonnie Dundee’ to his supporters, ‘Bluidy Clavers’ to the Covenanters who he had harried, slipped away from Edinburgh in 1689 and raised an army in support of the deposed king James. At the head of this army he was killed in the moment of victory at the Battle of Killiecrankie in July 1689. Although this was a victory for the Jacobites, as supporters of the exiled king came to be known, his death proved a mortal blow to their cause. This was compounded when the largely Highland army was defeated by forces loyal to William at the Battle of Dunkeld. This featured a stout defence by the extreme presbyterians known as Cameronians, who resisted far superior odds. Meanwhile the garrison in Edinburgh Castle, held for James, was under the command of the Duke of Gordon, with James of Letterfourie at his side. The Duke was not a resolute commander. He was described as ‘a libertine and a fop [...] he is a Roman Catholic because he was bred so, but otherwise thinks very little of revealed religion.’²⁰ He surrendered the castle just before Killiecrankie and was imprisoned there until January the following year. James, one assumes, was allowed to return to Letterfourie.

Certainly, in 1695 he married Grizel, the daughter of Sir William Durn of Dunbar. They had six children, of whom Mary was the youngest. We will meet some of the others in the next chapter. James’s Jacobite loyalties, however, were undimmed by family responsibilities. In 1715, the Earl of Mar, bitter at falling out of favour in the new regime of the Hanoverian King George I, who succeeded Queen Anne in 1714, raised the standard of the son of James VII, James Francis Edward Stuart, the so-called ‘Old Pretender’. The old Duke of Gordon was by this time in Leith, his wife having left him and his son, as Marquis of Huntly, managing his northern estates. He still managed to antagonise the government by ‘hearing mass, and patronizing Jesuits and seminary priests’, acts which saw him confined

²⁰ John Macky, *Memoirs of the Secret Services of John Macky* (London, 1733), 195.

to prison in Edinburgh Castle a further six times.²¹ When revolt broke out, he was again confined, so it was left to his son Alexander to raise family supporters to support the Jacobite cause. James Gordon responded loyally and fought at the rather inconclusive battle of Sheriffmuir. Although neither side could claim an outright victory, in practice the Jacobite cause was badly wounded by their failure to brush aside government forces. This weakened the resolve of many, not least the second Duke of Gordon. He had married Lady Henrietta Mordaunt, second daughter of the Earl of Peterborough and Monmouth in February 1707. She was a convinced Protestant and Whig (that is, government) supporter and this might have been behind the vacillation that Alexander displayed. Although he took a force of 500 horse and 1200 foot soldiers to Sheriffmuir, they did not perform well. Huntly retired to protect his home territories and to seek a truce. He ended up in prison in Edinburgh for six months, but was pardoned as he ‘now proclaimed his total loyalty to the Whig government and he pledged to use his influence to reconcile the north–east to the house of Hanover.’²² This was greeted with contempt by many more committed Jacobites. Of more enduring impact was the Protestantism of his wife. When Alexander died in 1728, his widow ensured that his children were brought up as Protestants, an act of disloyalty in the eyes of faithful Catholics like those at Letterfourie.

This depth of adherence to the twin causes of Roman Catholicism and Jacobitism (which were to continue throughout the century) was why it might seem strange that a daughter of the family should marry a presbyterian of humbler social standing. A clue to understanding this may lie in advice given to James Gordon in 1712, when he was seeking a renewal of a charter on the lands of Corriedown that he held from Huntly as his feudal superior. As Catholics were disqualified by an Act of the Scottish Parliament from registering title to land, this might be done, thought his advisor, by granting the charter ‘to a protestant who may be a friend of James Gordon, which friend may grant bond to him for the Equivalent sown he pays to the marquis for these lands’.²³ The victorious Presbyterians in 1689, following

²¹ B. L. H. Horn, ‘Gordon, George, first duke of Gordon (b. in or before 1649, d. 1716)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, Sept 2013 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11038, accessed 5 Oct 2015]

²² Eric Richards, ‘Gordon, Alexander, second duke of Gordon (c.1678–1728)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, May 2006 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11020, accessed 5 Oct 2015]

²³ Memorandum for James Gordon 11 April 1712 concerning contract between him

confirmation of the presbyterian system of church governance in an Act of 1690, sought to eliminate both the Episcopalians who held to the office of bishop and Roman Catholics. The former, as fellow protestants, they could only remove through ecclesiastical discipline, something was rendered much easier by Episcopalian support for the failed Jacobite cause in 1715. Roman Catholics, however, they could seek to attack by means of secular penalties. Thus in 1689 it was enacted that children of catholics be handed over to their nearest protestant relations for education. In 1700 the parliament passed an ‘Act for preventing the growth of popery’. ‘Considering the hazard,’ declared parliament, ‘that threatens the true Protestant religion as at present settled and established within this realm, and may ensue by the increase and growth of popery and the resorting and resetting of Jesuits, priests and trafficking papists within the same if not timeously and duly prevented and restrained’, they confirmed the status of previous penal legislation and enacted new provisions aimed in particular at Catholic landowners.²⁴ Heirs over the age of fifteen were not to succeed to their inheritance unless they formally renounced their faith. The act was interpreted by Letterfourie’s advisor to leave him entirely dependent on Huntly’s goodwill, something he might not want to rely on given the influence of Huntly’s new wife. What the upshot of this advice was is not clear, but it seems reasonable to speculate that the Protestant on whom James Gordon might rely was John Duff’s father.

How Patrick Duff of Craigenoch made his money is not at all clear. Indeed, it is not even clear where Craigenoch, or one of its numerous spelling variants, was. Bulloch, in his manuscript notes on the Gordons, has John Duff as hailing from ‘Craigenach’ in Newton of Alves.²⁵ The parish of Alves is some twenty–four miles from Rathven, where Mary and John were married and where Letterfourie is situated. However, there is no trace of such a place name in the parish, nor does the record of Scottish Placenames give any help. Alves is still further from Knockando, where Patrick was factor

and Marquis of Huntly. AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie papers, MS Acc 422, box two Letterfury & Buckie Ref Shielman. As the Gordon of Letterfourie collection is not yet catalogued, I have used the existing organization of records to give an indication of where material has been found. The collection is contained in a number of boxes, each of which contains a wide range of material, often unrelated. These are numbered with the exception of a box specifically noted as ‘Tiger’. Within each box, material is grouped into bundles, again often containing a wide range of material. I have used the existing labels for these bundles.

²⁴ Act for Preventing the Growth of Popery, *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707*, <http://www.rps.ac.uk/>, 1700/10/73, accessed 5 October 2015.

²⁵ Papers of J M Bulloch relating to Gordons of Letterfourie, AULSC, MS3051/1/8/4

for the Ballintomb estates of the Grants.²⁶ That Patrick was a man of some means is suggested by his appearance in a list of debts owed by Archibald Grant of Monymusk. As the Grants of Monymusk feature at a number of points in our story, it is worth a brief diversion to introduce them.

Francis Grant (c.1658–1726) was a devout presbyterian and judge of the Court of Session, taking the title of Lord Cullen on his elevation to the bench in 1709. He was an advocate for the Union with England in 1707 as the best means of preserving distinctive Scottish religious and legal traditions. In 1713 he bought the Aberdeenshire estate of Monymusk.²⁷ His son, Archibald Grant (1696–1778), who like his father had studied law at Leiden in the Netherlands alongside many compatriots, took over as estate factor. His jaundiced view of his new charge was gloomy:

The whole land raised and uneven, and full of stones, many of them very large, of a hard iron quality, and all the ridges crooked in the shape of an S, and very high and full of noxious weeds and poor, being worn out by culture, without proper manure or tillage. Much of the land and muire near the house, poor and boggy; the rivulet that runs before the house in pitts and shallow streams, often varying channel with banks, always ragged and broken. The people poor, ignorant and slothfull; and ingrained enemies to planting, inclosing or any improvements or cleanliness; no keeping of sheep or cattle or roads but four months when oats and bear, which was the only sorts of their grain, was on ground. The farme houses, and even corn millns and mans and scool, all poor dirty hutts, pulled in pieces for manure or fell of themselves almost each alternate year.²⁸

He subsequently became known as a pioneer of agricultural improvement and avid planter of trees, converting his estate into a fertile and beautiful spot.²⁹ However, to some extent his hand was forced by his dubious financial

²⁶ Meeting at Knockando, Laird of Knockando, ‘Patrick Duff of Cragganay ffactor for Balintome’ and other heritors to establish school and fix salary. 29 October 1722, NRS CH2/437/1/17, minutes of Presbytery of Abernethy 1722–1815. Note yet another spelling of Cragenoch!

²⁷ Colin Kidd and Clare Jackson, ‘Grant, Sir Francis, first baronet, Lord Cullen (1658x63–1726)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11256, accessed 4 Feb 2014]

²⁸ Spalding Club, *The Miscellany of the Spalding Club*, Volume 2 (Aberdeen, 1841), 97.

²⁹ Henry Hamilton, *Life and Labour on an Aberdeenshire Estate, 1735–1750* (Aberdeen, 1946).

speculations.³⁰ These were many and varied, but centred on two activities engaged in while he was a member of the British Parliament. Having represented Aberdeenshire since 1722 (succeeding to the estate on his father's death in 1726) he was accused with neglect and fraud in connection with the York Buildings Company (which had dealings with Scottish estates forfeited after the 1715 rising) and the Charitable Corporation for the Relief of the Industrious Poor. After a parliamentary investigation he was expelled from parliament and lucky to escape prosecution. These events meant that he had to retreat to Scotland and turn his considerable talents to more productive purpose. In order to do this, however, he had also to clear the substantial debts that he had racked up. Amongst the massive total of £52,718 that he owed in 1730 was a debt to 'Patrick Duff of Craigenoch by heritable bond on Ballentomb, £888-17-9'.³¹ Clearly, Patrick was a man of some substance to be able to lend such sums.

While Monymusk was the main Grant estate, they also had an outlying area in the parish of Knockando on Speyside which had been inherited by Francis Grant from his father. This estate was to feature in John Duff's later career, when his fortunes and those of his sons were entwined with the Grants. For the purpose of his marriage, however, it was the Ballentomb property that was significant. In the marriage contract of 1739 it was the bond over Ballentomb Miln, its lands and associated fishing, taken out in 1727 and valued at 16,000 merks Scots money, that was assigned to the new couple.³² Having made provision for his wife and two other sons, Patrick also transferred to John and Mary 'All and hail his moveable goods gear Corns Cattle horse noll Sheep and sight and Insight plenishing Bonds Bills Accompts debts and sums of money and oysrs whatsoever that shall happen to belong pertain or be resting or addebted to him at the time of the Granting these presents'. In return, James Gordon pledged himself to provide a dowry of 3,000 merks, 1,000 of which was to be paid on his death. Signed at Letterfourie two weeks before the marriage ceremony at Rathven,

³⁰ R. H. Campbell, 'Grant, Sir Archibald, of Monymusk, second baronet (1696-1778)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004) [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/65016, accessed 13 May 2010]

³¹ Archibald Grant, *A True and Exact Particular and Inventory of all and Singular the Lands, Tenements and Hereditaments, Goods, Chattels, Debts and Personal Estate Whatsoever, Which I Sir Archibald Grant, ... Was Seized or Possessed of or Intitled unto in My Own Right* (London, 1732), 14.

³² Memorandum for James Gordon 11 April 1712 concerning contract between him and Marquis of Huntly. AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie papers, MS Acc 422 box two, Letterfury & Buckie Ref Shielman.

this seemed to promise a secure future for Mary. In practice John was to prove himself a poor man of business. His brother-in-law, James Gordon junior, was to prove far more successful, and it is to his early career that we need to turn next.

2 From London to Madeira

James Gordon and Grizel Dunbar had six children, two of whom died early. Their eldest son, Patrick, entered the Scots College at Ratisbon, or Regensburg, in Bavaria in 1718.¹ This was an abbey staffed by Scottish monks which acted as one of the training grounds for priests sent back to Scotland. This reminds us of the intensely catholic milieu in which the Gordons of Letterfourie moved. James's cousin, also confusingly named James, was appointed Vicar Apostolic to Scotland in 1718, having attended the Scots College in Paris. His brother George was 'out' in 1715. A coeval with Patrick's generation was James Gordon of Glaistrum, who also attended the Scots College in Paris and was 'out' in the 45. A further two more distant relations, Robert and George Gordon, were Jesuits who were connected with missions to Scotland.² Patrick Gordon was thus following in family traditions when he spent a year at Ratisbon studying logic, followed by two years at Erfurt studying civil law. This perhaps suggests he was destined for a career in the law rather than the church, but he died in 1737 before his sister's marriage.

This made James (1707–1790) the heir to the estate, but he had already left for London, where we will join him shortly. Another brother, William is recorded as having being murdered crossing the Alps in 1740, although the circumstances are not clear. This left a further brother, Alexander (1715–1797), who in time joined his brother James in Madeira. These four boys were followed by two sisters. Anne was to marry the local landowner James Ogilvie of Logie in November 1726. (Intriguingly, James Ogilvie of Logie is recorded as being ordained as an elder of Rathven church in 1753, suggesting that 'marrying out', for women at least, was not as important as securing

¹ Papers of J M Bulloch relating to Gordons of Letterfourie, AULSC, MS3051/1/8/4; P. J Anderson and William Forbes–Leith (eds) *Records of the Scots Colleges at Douai, Rome, Madrid, Valladolid and Ratisbon* (Aberdeen, 1906), 250.

² Peter Dewar, *Burkes Landed Gentry 19th edition volume 1 The Kingdom in Scotland* (Wilmington, 2001), 519–21.

material stability).³ The youngest child was Mary who, as we have seen, married John Duff in 1739.

We have noted the burdens under which catholics laboured in Scotland, making the options for a second son rather limited. This might have been the spur to his departure for London. We don't know exactly when this was, but it appears to have been sometime around 1725. London was a magnet for Scots who were seeking better opportunities than those available to them at home. For example, Jerry White notes that amongst the Scots who flocked to London in search of opportunity was the catholic architect James Gibb, who arrived from Aberdeenshire in 1708.⁴ Although Scots of all hues, and especially catholics, faced considerable hostility in the capital, it was easier to blend into the relative anonymity afforded by a bustling city of over 500,000 inhabitants. This was aided in turn by the existence of foreign embassies, which could offer safe havens for those who wished to hear mass. The Portuguese embassy after the marriage of Charles II to Catherine of Braganza, daughter of the Portuguese king John IV in 1662, was especially important as a centre for projecting the old faith back into Britain. Indeed, it has been claimed that it is 'clear from documents extant in Portugal that it was always intended that she and her entourage should act as a focal point for English catholics'.⁵ The embassy, based in Golden Square in Soho had a chapel attached at the back which fronted onto Warwick Street. (The existing Roman Catholic church of Our Lady of the Assumption and St. Gregory was built in 1789–90 on the site of the chapel, by then occupied by the Bavarian ambassador, destroyed in the Gordon Riots). In 1729 the trumpeter John Grano, a staunch catholic, recorded in his diary 'my Mamma and I went to the Portuguese Chape and heard Vespers'.⁶ Given the timing, it is entirely possible that James also attended services there.

Catholic merchants could find profitable niches in the capital. Indeed, when James left for Madeira in 1730, the Lord Mayor was Humphrey Parsons,

³ 'This day Edict was served for James Ogilvie of Logie in Letterfury Charles Grant Charity Schoolmr at Broadley John Burges at Mill of Gollachy John Sinclair at Shore of Buckie John Gregory in Woodside and John Smith in Broadhyth yr being ordained elders in face of the Congregation and if any find objection to give in agt any of the Said persons, that they may declare the Same before the ordination', 8 April 1753, 405, NRS, CH2/308/1, Rathven kirk session minutes.

⁴ Jerry White, *London in the Eighteenth Century: A Great and Monstrous Thing* (London, 2012), 17.

⁵ L. M. E. Shaw, *The Anglo-Portuguese Alliance and the English Merchants in Portugal 1654–1810* (Aldershot, 1998), 175.

⁶ John Ginger, *Handel's Trumpeter: The Diary of John Grano* (Stuyvesant, NY, 1998), 305.

the owner of the Red Lion Brewery, then London's leading brewery. He was a high Tory, with pronounced Jacobite leanings, being a frequent visitor to the French court. He was also a catholic, although this was something he practised with discretion at his own private chapel, having publicly to conform to the Church of England in order to hold office.⁷ He was Grano's patron, so it is perhaps not too fanciful to imagine a meeting with the madeira wine merchant William Halloran at the Portuguese chapel at a time when Portuguese wine imports to Britain were growing. We don't know much about Halloran, and the little we do know is largely derived from legal proceedings with James after the former's death, so it is partial evidence. However, it would appear that he was a Galway merchant and so likely to have been a catholic, one member of that city's catholic merchant community largely shut out from trade by a protestant elite at the end of the seventeenth century.⁸ As we will see, this might have facilitated business in Madeira, but before we journey to that island, we need to understand something of the relationship between Britain and Portugal.

Strategic alliances between England and Portugal had their origins in the Middle Ages.⁹ Edward III concluded a treaty in 1373 which saw English archers play a significant role in the Battle of Aljubarrota in 1385 that helped Portugal to win independence from Spain. This fostered important trading links between the two nations, although the balance of trade favoured the English. In 1642, by which time, of course, Scotland and England shared a common monarch in the Stuart Charles I, a commercial treaty was concluded, although its terms were overtaken by the Civil War. In 1654 the Commonwealth regime of Oliver Cromwell concluded a Treaty of Peace and Commerce with Portugal. This followed raids by the Commonwealth fleet on Portuguese ships returning from their colonies in Brazil and a naval blockade of Lisbon. Not surprisingly, the Portuguese regarded this as signed under duress and British merchants were to complain that the free trade and liberty they were promised under its terms were routinely ignored by the Portuguese authorities. A frequent cause of complaint was the interference of the powerful Portuguese Inquisition into the commercial affairs of largely Protestant British merchants. The contract of 1661 which preceded the marriage of Charles and Catherine saw confirmation of the previous treaties. It

⁷ *Ibid.*, 329.

⁸ Will of William Halloran, 13 September 1758, The National Archives, London (hereafter TNA), PROB 11/840.

⁹ The following discussion is based on Shaw, *Anglo-Portuguese Alliance*.

was followed by an important treaty, the Methuen Treaty of 1703, which, in return for the free entry of British woollen goods into Portugal, guaranteed that Portuguese wines would only ever be taxed in Britain at two-thirds of the rate applied to French wines. The alliance with Portugal was important for two reasons. The first was that it gave British merchants access to the lucrative trade with Brazil, which was a Portuguese colony. The second was that the Royal Navy could use Portuguese ports to service its Atlantic fleet. These factors would be significant as transatlantic trade boomed in the eighteenth century, especially given Madeira's geographical position.

Madeira is an island in the East Atlantic, 559 miles southwest of Lisbon and 340 miles west of the African coast. It is a small island – thirty-four miles long and fourteen miles across – but an impressive one, with a mountainous spine rising from precipitous sea cliffs, especially on its northern side. Here it faces the full thrust of Atlantic storms. The island was claimed for Portugal in 1419 and settled thereafter. The new settlers were able to realise the natural fertility of the south side of the island, with its volcanic soils and Mediterranean climate, by channelling water from the north through an extensive network of irrigation canals or 'levadas'. Clinging to the sides of mountains in impressive feats of engineering, their waters were tapped off to irrigate land carefully terraced on steep hillsides. The island was initially a centre of sugar cane cultivation, until this was undercut by both Brazil and, more importantly, the West Indies. Bananas replaced some of the sugar, but the great development was in wine. It was discovered that the heat and motion encountered on long ocean crossings improved the taste of the wine. This has been admirably documented by David Hancock in his extensive history of the development of madeira wine, especially in the context of patterns of consumption in the United States.¹⁰ This transatlantic connection points to the importance of the location of Madeira at a geographical crossroads.

Because of the vital importance of prevailing wind directions in the era of sailing ships, Madeira was ideally placed for ships outward bound from Europe to either India via the Cape of Good Hope or to the Americas. Ships could stop off to take on fresh provisions and in the process both bring in supplies for the islands and take off wine for their ultimate destinations. Portuguese wine enjoyed a considerable boost after the Methuen

¹⁰ David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste* (New Haven: CT, 2009).

treaty, which saw the balance of exports to Britain shift from the south of the country via Lisbon to the wines of the Douro Valley out of Oporto. Thanks to the endemic wars between Britain and France during the eighteenth century, the drinking of Portuguese wines which now enjoyed lower duties became something of a badge of patriotism.¹¹ Madeira shared in this popularity. There had been English merchants trading in wine in the seventeenth century, but now their numbers expanded. By 1727 eight English merchants controlled over half of wine exports from the island.¹² During the century Scottish merchants, with James Gordon a prominent player, came to take up a significant role.

Although a member of the Drummond family, distant relations of the Earl of Perth, was reputed to have resided in Madeira from the early fifteenth century and to have fathered a numerous set of descendants, it seems unlikely that James's involvement owed much to Scottish connections.¹³ Thanks to its long-standing relations with France the drink of choice amongst the Scottish nobility was claret. 'At one time', reports F Marion McNeil, 'Scotland was reputed to drink more claret than any other country, and Edinburgh to have a more discriminating taste in that wine than any other city outside France.'¹⁴ The consequence was that Scotland had limited trade with the Iberian Peninsula generally in the seventeenth century. This owed something, as we shall see, to religious differences between the two regions, but also, argues T. C. Smout, 'one of those inexplicable quirks of national taste: sherry, port and Canary wines were second best to Scotsmen, and while claret was readily available in France, there was no eager market for other wines.'¹⁵ Charles Ludington confirms the pre-eminence of claret in Scotland, suggesting that it was connected to resistance to the Union and the preservation of a distinctively Scottish identity.¹⁶ As he notes, this did not change until the middle of the eighteenth century, as the Scottish

¹¹ John Brewer, 'Commercialization and Politics' in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb (eds), *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1982), 223: 'We are still in the age when drinking Portuguese wine and British beer, was a patriotic, convivial and socially desirable activity.'

¹² Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, 13

¹³ National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh (hereafter NLS), Adv MS 73.1.17, Drummond of Madeira.

¹⁴ F. Marian McNeill, *The Scots Cellar: Its Traditions and Lore* (Edinburgh, 1973), 33.

¹⁵ T. C. Smout, *Scottish Trade on the Eve of Union* (Edinburgh, 1963), 173.

¹⁶ Charles Ludington, *The Politics of Wine in Britain: A New Cultural History* (Basingstoke, 2013), 117.

nobility sought to emulate their English counterparts. One important factor in the mid-seventeenth century, however, were the changes in the English Navigation Acts occasioned by Catherine of Braganza's arrival in London. The Navigation Acts laid down that goods to the English colonies in the Americas and elsewhere could only be carried in English-registered ships. This was designed with the Dutch in mind, but it also hit the Scots, who were already trading across the Atlantic. Through cunning and duplicity, they were able to build transatlantic trade, but it helped connections with Madeira that Portuguese products were exempt from the operation of the Navigation Acts. This facilitated the growth of shipping in the triangular trade carrying provisions into Madeira, wine to the West Indies and America and goods back to Britain. Smout notes an increase in ships from Madeira in the Clyde in the late seventeenth century.¹⁷ But what was really significant in the growth of madeira was the transatlantic traffic, rather than ships trading directly with Britain.

It is likely that London connections were important in the partnership between James Gordon and William Halloran, as well as their shared religious adherence. Although it was quite possible for Protestants to trade with Portugal, life was not always easy for them. A Captain Robert Anderson, whose brother-in-law and brothers were elders in the kirk of Alloa, built up a successful business trading to Spain until he was forced to relocate to Lisbon in 1696.¹⁸ Here he was joined by his nephew Edward Mayne. The Maynes will figure in the activities of the House of Gordon later, but they are proof that it was possible to trade as protestants in the staunchly Roman Catholic Portugal. Indeed, freedom to exercise their religion was supposed to be guaranteed by the 1654 treaty, but its provisions were often ignored. Despite, for example, there being provision in the treaty for a separate burial ground for protestants, this was not granted in Lisbon until 1717.¹⁹ Matters in Madeira were far worse, for protestants had to be buried at sea until a burial ground was granted in 1761.²⁰ Thus one chronicle from within the British wine merchant tradition recounts that "There was a tradition handed down

¹⁷ T. C. Smout, "The Development and Enterprise of Glasgow 1556-1707", *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, 6(3) (1959), 194-212.

¹⁸ Philip May Hamer, and David R. Chesnutt, *The Papers of Henry Laurens: Sept. 11, 1746-Oct. 31, 1755* (Columbia, SC, 1968), 64; Mayne Families of Scotland, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/81640244/MAYNE-families-of-SCOTLAND#scribd>, accessed 15 October 2015.

¹⁹ Shaw, *Anglo-Portuguese Alliance*, 171.

²⁰ Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, 29.

among the older British firms that one of the earlier partners in Gordon, Duff & Co had such a horror of a watery grave that he begged his partners to bury him under his desk in the old Esmeraldo Palace.²¹ This obstruction of the treaty's provisions owed much to the weight of the Portuguese Inquisition in Portuguese society, employing as it did many thousands of functionaries. This could mean that the testimony of protestant merchants in court cases could be discounted as the unreliable evidence of 'heretics'. It also led to concerns among protestant merchants about the forced kidnap and conversion of their children. It would seem that in these conditions that the Roman Catholicism that was a civil burden in Britain could be a positive advantage in Madeira.

The power of the Inquisition was also of significance in colouring Portuguese attitudes to trade. Aristocrats were forbidden to trade, relying on state office and the profits of imperial adventures. This gave trade low social status and much of Portugal's trade was conducted by the so-called 'New Christians', Jews who had been forced to convert to Christianity in 1497. Much of the Inquisition's activity was centred on accusations of Judaism and the fortunes of New Christian merchants were subject to expropriation. As a result, many kept a large proportion of their capital overseas, reducing their ability to trade. Shaw notes that 'Portugal had to import goods from abroad, but foreigners could not be expected to export their goods on credit to new christian merchants and factors when they could not be assured of being paid for those goods'.²² As a consequence, foreign merchants preferred to trade with their own nationals. They also, of course, benefitted from both the protection of their commerce by their home navy and, in the case of British merchants, their connections with fellow countrymen in the Americas. As we will see, these were vital for the success of the trade in madeira wine.

Thus the partnership of Halloran and Gordon enjoyed some significant advantages. In 1730, according to James's later account, the two men sailed for the island. There they found that their Madeiran partner, Manuel da Costa Campos, had done little to further their business. Having his own estate, the Madeiran was, according to Gordon, 'indolent & unfit for anything in the mercantile way'.²³ In what would be a recurrent theme in James's career, da Costa Campos was accused of a lax attitude towards the running

²¹ Noel Cossart, *Madeira – the Island Vineyard* (London, 1984), 28.

²² Shaw, *Anglo-Portuguese Alliance*, 27.

²³ State of the case betwixt the late Mr Wm Halloran of London & his partner Jas Gordon of Madeira, AULSC Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Ac 422, box ten.

of his business, having neglected to keep proper books of account. While Halloran returned to London, James endeavoured to construct a proper set of accounts with the objective of 'getting by degrees the Acct from under ye management of Manuel da Costa'.²⁴ In this he was assisted by Halloran's nephew William Casey, but he was to argue that he had carried out the bulk of the work:

Mr Gordon having acquir'd the language & being able to see that matters did not go on right began to advise Mr H of it in 1731, and as he made further discoveries into the mismanagement of the house, continued his advice. Ml da Costa by this time had given himself so much up to drinking that he was become a mere Sott, incapable of anything and despis'd by everybody, having through Indolence & his natural easiness of temper let everybody impose on him so much, that he found himself reduced to poverty before he was aware of it, and from a man of good esteem and Substance, sank so low in Credit as hardly to be trusted.²⁵

James discovered to his horror that the partnership was virtually insolvent, so he worked to extricate himself and Halloran from the partnership. Then, keeping the true financial state of the partnership a secret, he 'govern'd things with as much economy and Industry as possible, study'd to make the most of all articles that came, and ship good Wine to the Employers,' with the result that 'the house extricated and put on a more respectable footing than ever it had been'.²⁶ Some corroboration of this might be found in Halloran's will of 1750, in which he spoke of 'my good friend and partner Mr Gordon' in the hope that on his death his nephew William Casey, who had been acting as clerk on Madeira, would be taken into the business.²⁷ It was after this point that relations between the two men became strained, with James alleging that Halloran failed to settle accounts with him and establish their partnership on a clear footing. Halloran's nephew declined to enter the partnership and his other nephew Edward Casey 'an eminent Madeira merchant' died in 1756.²⁸ Thus when William Halloran died in 1758 his estate was left to his three unmarried daughters, Cecilia, Mary and Ann. It was this which occasioned a

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Will of William Halloran, 13 September 1758, TNA, PROB 11/840.

²⁸ *London Magazine or Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer*, 25, 1756, 91.

lawsuit thanks to the daughters' demands for a settlement which would give two-thirds of the business to them. It was a claim stoutly contested by James. Unfortunately, we only have his side of the story, but in 1761 he received a letter from Cecilia Halloran 'desirous of bringing to an Equitable conclusion' the outstanding matters.²⁹ Some confirmation, however, of his allegations about the chaotic nature of Halloran's business affairs came in a letter from the Lisbon merchant John White to his associate Philip Jackson in 1765. White was also being pursued for money by Halloran's executors, although his accounts showed a considerable balance owing in White's favour. John White was looking for help from James as 'Mr Jas Gordon, who always corresponded with me honbly & punctually, will I hope lend a helping hand, his acct's & mine always agreed.'³⁰ In the event he was not able to recover his money, as Halloran's books were in a state of confusion.

This is where the trail ends and we lose sight of James's early ventures in Madeira until later he appears as a substantial member of the British community on the island. His early experiences do provide some pointers to his character. He does not appear to have inherited the martial inclinations of his ancestors. He seems to have been rather cautious and worried in temperament, with careful conduct of business affairs based on exact and thorough recording of transactions being the bedrock of his life. This stood in sharp contrast to his brother Alexander, who would lead an altogether more eventful life while James was off on Madeira. First, however, we need to catch up with the Duffs after their 1739 marriage

²⁹ Cecelia Halloran to James Gordon, 11 August 1761, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 422, box nine, Letters to London.

³⁰ Copy letter from John White of Lisbon to Philip Jackson, London, 19 October 1765, *ibid.*, box two, Bundle of London letters. See also in the same bundle a letter to James Gordon merchant in London from Joseph White, Lisbon, 29 March 1766.

3 Jacobite interlude

If John and Mary Duff lived at Miln of Ballentomb after their marriage, they then soon moved further south. John at some point took over from his father as factor of the Ballentomb lands but he also took on the tack of the lands of Pitchaish on the Ballindalloch estate, further south on Speyside and at the entrance to Glenlivet. Now under the improved farm of Marypark, an early nineteenth century creation, the lands of Pitchaish supported a number of sub-tenants who scratched out a living on poor land.¹ Pitchaish House, by contrast, was clearly above the normal run of houses, having been slated in 1727 at a time when most houses were thatched.² Its assessment for seven windows in the window tax of 1767 suggests that it was a substantial dwelling and John Duff was of some local standing.³ He is referred to as either ‘Pitchaish’ or ‘Mr Duff’ in the kirk session minutes of Inverarvon, at a time when most tenants were referred to by their name with no honorific.⁴ While he did not follow his father in holding office in the church, he was of sufficient local standing to receive a favourable response to his request for room ‘to build a Seat for himself and Family’ which was granted in January 1749.⁵ During this time the couple had a number of children, starting with the eldest, James (no doubt named for his maternal uncle) in 1741. He was followed by Patrick, William, John, Robert and Archie, and two daughters, Annie and

¹ Draft report, 1848, on the formation since 1843 of farm of Mary Park, formerly ‘an extensive tract of waste land, which passed by the name of the Parks of Pitchaish’, National Register of Archives of Scotland (NRAS) catalogue, <http://www.nas.gov.uk/nras/>, Ballindalloch Muniments, NRAS771/Bundle 10, Miscellaneous estate papers.

² Discharge by William Allan, slater in Elgin, to John Grant in Pitchaish, for part payment for slating house of Pitchaish, 18 July 1721, NRAS NRAS771/Bundle 909.

³ Window Tax, 1767 at Scotland’s Places, <http://www.scotlandspplaces.gov.uk/>, E326/1/17/181 1767, Inverarvon parish: John Duff, Pitchaish, 7 windows.

⁴ 13 December 1741; 7 August 1764, NRS CH2/191/3 minutes of kirk session of Inverarvon, 1740–1766.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 15 and 22 January 1749.

Margaret. Their Letterfourie uncle was not always convinced by the Duff family. Complaining to his brother Alexander in 1766 about the expense of kitting out Robert he threw up his hands expostulating, 'but what can I do, that Family you know well the condition of.'⁶ Thirteen years later, having sent John Duff off to India, he 'hoped I shall never have any more such jobs on my hands, yet what to do with his miserable Bror Archie, if returns from the Wst Inds as he went out, the Lord knows.'⁷ Despite this rather jaundiced view of his sister's family, he did fulfil his familial obligations to them. There is much then to support the assessment of William Baird, writing at some point in the years after 1763, that 'there is a sister of the present John [sic, actually James] Gordon of Latterfurry (Letterfourie), married with one of the name of Duff, a respectable farmer; they have five sons, whom their uncle is educating, and by his interest and money providing for them in the army, navy, mercantile and other genteel employments.'⁸ However, before they reached their majority the world of their parents and their relations was going to be profoundly shaken by the events of 1745.

On 23 July 1745 (old style) Charles Edward Stuart, variously the 'Young Pretender' or 'Bonnie Prince Charlie', disembarked from the French ship *Doutelle* on Eriskay in the Western Isles, having evaded the attentions of the Royal Navy.⁹ Those attentions, however, had damaged *Elisabeth* that had accompanied the *Doutelle*, meaning that her cargo of 1,500 muskets and 1,800 broadswords, plus the trained French soldiers she carried, were not available. Charles had undertaken the voyage without the knowledge of his father James or the French court in the hope of stimulating French intervention on his side through a successful campaign in Scotland. The initial signs, however, were not good, as the Prince's natural supporters were wary of committing to his cause without firm assurances of French support. However, one enthusiastic supporter who soon made his way to greet his prince was John Gordon of Glenbucket. Glenbucket is in Strathdon in Aberdeenshire, just over the hills from Glenlivet. John Gordon was a resolute and committed supporter of the Stuart cause, having fought in both the 1689 and 1715

⁶ James Gordon, London to James & Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 10 May 1766, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 422, letter book.

⁷ James Gordon in London to Alexander Gordon at Letterfourie 4 June 1779, *ibid.*, box nine, bundle with sasines.

⁸ Alistair Tayler and Henrietta Tayler, *The Book of the Duffs* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1914), II, 468.

⁹ Jeremy Black, *Culloden and the '45* (Stroud, 1990), 67.

campaigns.¹⁰ He had sold most of his estate to Lord Braco and at the age of seventy-two resided on a farm, but his energy in the Stuart cause was undimmed by material factors. In 1738, having sold his estate, he journeyed to Rome to see his exiled king, hoping to raise arms for him. He returned with a commission as major general, a commission which he now wished to exercise as he rode to Kinlochmoidart to meet the prince on 18 August.

Returning from this meeting with enthusiasm for his task, 'Old Glenbucket' as he was widely known, proceeded to raise men to fight in the continuing campaign. He looked to traditional loyalties but was not above using a variety of threats to 'persuade' the less willing. As Alistair and Henrietta Tayler in their work excavating the significance of the contribution of the two counties of Banff and Aberdeen to the Jacobite cause observe, 'he immediately afterwards returned to Banffshire, where he busied himself in raising men by all kinds of means. It was certainly owing to Glenbucket's energy and enthusiasm that the Rising took such a firm hold in our two counties.'¹¹ In September 1745 Ludovick Grant, a government supporter, wrote to General Cope, that 'Glenbucket marched early Saturday from Strathdoen and Glenlivet and I have the pleasure to write you that a great many of the Protestants in that part of the country have been dissuaded from joining him. By all the information I can have, Glenbucket did not get above 130 men to go with him from Strathdown and Glenlivet, and some of these are deserting him and returning home.'¹² This observation points to the split along religious lines in the Highland glens of Banffshire. While the area around John Duff might have been predominantly protestant in adherence, the higher reaches of Glenlivet were dominated by Roman Catholic adherents. High up in the glen was the college at Scalan, which was a training centre for priests. In 1739 John Tyrie, who had been in charge at Scalan, was appointed as priest for Glenlivet.¹³ He drew lots with William Grant, the missionary in Strathaven, to determine who was to be chaplain for the Glenlivet men. It was Tyrie who was to accompany Glenbucket's regiment into England and back to Culloden. Tayler and Tayler find the names of at least thirty-three men from Glenlivet in the records of confirmed participants. Confirmation of the adherence of the upper reaches of Glenlivet

¹⁰ Alistair Tayler and Henrietta Tayler, *Jacobites of Aberdeenshire and Banffshire in the Forty-Five* (Aberdeen, 1928; second edition), 249–60.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹² *Ibid.*, 17.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 409.

to the Jacobite cause comes with the preaching of Mr Walter Ponton, the presbyterian itinerant preacher assigned to Glenlivet, in the parish kirk of Inveravon on 8 September 1745, he 'having no access to preach in Glenlivate the People being in arms in Rebellion against the King.'¹⁴

Both John Duff's landlord, Captain James Grant of Ballindalloch, and his employer, Archibald Grant of Monymusk, were firm government supporters, but men from both Ballindalloch and Knockando could be found amongst the ranks of the rebels. Indeed, three men from Pitchaish appear in the Taylers' lists, although with no detail on the extent of their involvement.¹⁵ So John Duff and his family were certainly not untouched by the events of the '45, living as they did in the centre of contested loyalties. The nature of these contests can be seen in the response of the Duke of Gordon. Glenbucket had been a Baillie, or officer, of the Duke of Gordon and rested on this in his campaigns to raise men. However, the ducal family was split. As we have seen, the second Duke had married a protestant heiress and his children had been brought up as protestants. The third Duke, Cosmo, vacillated between old loyalties and attachment to his extensive territories before finally declaring his support for the government in November 1745. However, his younger brother, Lewis, resigned his commission as a lieutenant in the navy and became the leading figure in the Jacobite cause in the North-East. His mother's declared allegiances notwithstanding, there was also an element of ambiguity about her attitude, given that she wrote to a Jacobite supporter that 'if my son Lewis had any intention to go into the Prince's service, none would be more unwilling to dissuade him than myself.'¹⁶ Whatever her views, Lewis proved to be a very active organizer, seeking to raise 'cess' or tax for the prince using a range of threats to encourage the unwilling. 'We have been obliged,' he wrote, 'to use great threatenings, although no reall hardships been used; and take my word for it, that, in the lasy way the country is in, together with the unnatural methods the ministers and other disaffected people make use of to restrain the people from doing their duty, there is no raising the quotas of men in the county without seeming violence.'¹⁷ He, as with Glenbucket, was operating within the assumed obligations of feudal bonds of tenure, something which clashed with the message from the

¹⁴ 8 September 1745, NRS CH2/191/3 Inveravon session minutes.

¹⁵ Tayler and Tayler, *Jacobites*: 427, James Gauldie, Pitchaish; 433, Angus McDonald, Pitchaish; 438, Alex Muir, East Pitchaish, surgeon.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 229.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, *Jacobites*, 29.

presbyterian pulpit. In December 1745 Lewis wrote to the government supporter Ludovick Grant. Grant, Lewis complained, had moved armed men outside the bounds of his estate. This was, Lewis argued, a breach of customary practice, pointing out that he had resisted raising men from the lands of Delnahoe ‘which holds of the Duke of Gordon, to the men of which place I had a natural title.’¹⁸

One family which held land of the Duke and which continued to look to the family even if it had abandoned its traditional allegiances was the Gordons of Letterfourie. Here we see again the potent mix of feudal loyalties and religious adherence in the actions of Alexander Gordon, the youngest son. He joined the Prince’s Lifeguards as a volunteer and served throughout the campaign. In this he was supported by the priest at the nearby chapel of Preshome, John Gordon. In his sermons he encouraged the men in his congregation to join the Jacobite ranks and, it was said, ‘went about the country urging the young men to rise, explaining to them that their religion as well as their loyalty made this a duty.’¹⁹ His close neighbour, Andrew Hay of Rannes, was such a staunch supporter of the Prince’s cause that the Taylers devoted an entire book to his exploits. His formation in the ties of feudal obligation is indicated by a letter of 1726 they reproduced from the second Duke of Gordon to his father who was at his house in the Canongate in Edinburgh. ‘Ranas,’ commanded the Duke, ‘I desire you may be at my Mother’s house on Wednesday next being the 14th curt at 6 of ye clock in the morning to accompany me from hence to Gordon Castle in the terms of the obligation in your Charter. Gordon.’²⁰ Hay served as a major in Lord Pitsligo’s Horse, the colonel of which was Arthur Gordon of Carnousie. Carnousie illustrates some of the mixed motivations behind service of the Prince, for not all participants were either forced men, as with many of the rank and file, or convinced Jacobites, as with Letterfourie and Rannes. An account of the time indicates that Carnousie’s participation was something of a surprise as he ‘was esteemed a wise, solid man, and one not wedded to Kingscraft. But as many debts of his never heard of formerly are appearing, this unravels the mystery.’²¹

These men accompanied the prince as he easily took Edinburgh and secured a resounding victory over Cope’s army at Prestonpans. Eager to

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, *Jacobites*, 35.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, *Jacobites*, 266.

²⁰ Alistair Tayler and Henrietta Tayler, *A Jacobite Exile* (London, 1937), 4.

²¹ Tayler and Tayler, *Jacobites*, 204.

prompt a French invasion of the south of England, the Jacobite army proceeded south to take Carlisle and advance via Manchester to push into the English heartlands. By this time an increasingly frightened government had expedited the return of regular army units under the command of the king's son, William, Duke of Cumberland, from the Austrian Netherlands. Avoiding them, the prince's forces reached Derby before an increasingly nervous group of Scots won the day by arguing, in the absence of any French support, for a retreat back to Scotland. On the retreat Pitsligo's Horse covered the rear successfully, but the return to Scotland caused some to have second thoughts. One of these was Arthur Gordon, who sought, unsuccessfully, to parley his surrender into a pardon. The retreating army inflicted a tactical defeat on government forces at Falkirk before straggling back to Inverness, losing men to desertion as they went. Meanwhile, Cumberland advanced slowly and steadily, waiting for weather conditions to improve in order to provide adequate supplies for his men. Suitably refreshed, he proceeded by way of Banff and the coast route, passing Letterfourie to cross the Spey unopposed. Despite the advice of his generals, Charles chose to meet Cumberland at Culloden, setting the scene for a brutal dénouement.²²

Forming up on Drumossie Moor, on boggy terrain which hampered the Highlanders' key weapon, their ferocious charge, Glenbucket's regiment occupied the second line towards the left of the prince's forces.²³ Here they were forced to endure the withering bombardment of Cumberland's artillery. In twenty-five short minutes some two thousand men were slaughtered against reported losses of only three hundred on the government side.²⁴ More were killed following the battle as the wounded and prisoners were executed out of hand. The prince, protected by his Lifeguards, escaped and was successfully to avoid the search for him, giving rise to many romantic stories. His rank and file supporters were to meet much less romantic fates in the brutal aftermath of the battle. For the government were determined to eradicate the Highlands as a source of rebellion once and for all, and in Cumberland they had a keen advocate of methods more brutal than those which old Glenbucket had employed. Such methods found enthusiastic supporters in many lowland Scots and in the presbyterian ministers who had tried so hard to deter Jacobite recruits. In the aftermath of the battle John Duff's minister was not present to give his sermon on 20 April 1746 'having

²² Black, *Culloden*, covers the campaign well.

²³ Lyndsey Bowditch, *Ciùil Lodar/Culloden* (Edinburgh, 2008), 48.

²⁴ Black, *Culloden*, 174.

gone to Inverness with other Ministers in the neighbourhood to wait of his Royal Highness William Duke of Cumberland after a signall victory that he obtained over the Rebels Wednesday last at Culloden where there was four thousand of them killed and taken and the rest Dispersed.²⁵

The young Patrick Duff, now four years old, was likely to have seen parties of government Redcoats marching up to Glenlivet in search of those who had participated in the rising. In October 1746 in Inveravon kirk, 'there was read publicly an order Fromm the Sheriff of Banff and commanding officer there that no person should entertain rebels in their Houses, many loose people without testificates and requiring that information should be sent concerning such if there are any in the country.'²⁶ Houses of rebels were burned and the college at Scalan destroyed. Roman Catholic chapels were a particular target, with the books and vestments from Patrick's great uncle's chapel at Preshome publicly burned at the market cross at Cullen and the building destroyed.²⁷ His uncle Alexander escaped from the battlefield, legend having it that before doing so he was presented with a cameo ring by the prince for his faithful service.²⁸ The picture of the prince on it, however, suggests a later date, perhaps when, in common with many other fugitives, Alexander ended up in France. He appears to have lurked in the neighbourhood for at least a year before making good his escape. In France he would meet up with many other escapees. After successfully eluding his pursuers following a long and physically draining chase, old Glenbucket finished up in Boulogne via Norway and Sweden. Here he joined other Scottish emigres. Arthur Gordon, unable to secure the pardon he sought, died in debt in France in 1753. Lord Lewis Gordon, increasingly mentally unstable, died at the age of thirty in 1754.²⁹ Andrew Hay of Rannes lurked in the Banffshire countryside until 1752, successfully eluding capture. This was a remarkable feat, given that at over seven feet tall he must have been a striking figure! Despite being excluded from the Act of Indemnity, which pardoned many who had taken part, an anonymous correspondent could report in 1747 that 'In the county of Banff, in the village of Keith, the Infomer was in a public house where Colonel Roy Steuart, an attented Rebell, and Hay of Rannes, another of the gang was, and Clune McPherson. All these appear publicly at

²⁵ 20 April 1746, NRS CH2/191/3 Inveravon session minutes.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 12 October 1746.

²⁷ Tayler and Tayler, *Jacobites*, 266.

²⁸ Copy article from *Illustrated London News*, 14 June 1930, AULSC, MS3051/2/10/7, Papers of J M Bulloch relating to Gordons of Letterfourie.

²⁹ Tayler and Tayler, *Jacobites*, 206, 229.

mercats and everywhere and act as propriators of their estates and visite their neighbours openly and stir up the Humours of the people and keep them well in heart by telling them of descents and French invasions, and ye Civil Majestrates takes no notice of it.³⁰

However, by 1752 Rannes had joined other Scots emigres from the district, such as William Gordon of Park and George Hay of Mountblairy, in French exile. Hay's estate bordered on Carnousie, and in 1753 he married the widow of Gordon of Park, Janet Duff. These connections not only show how these men were linked by bonds of neighbourliness and family, but also how they were connected to those landowners who had remained loyal to the Hanoverian cause. For Janet was the daughter of Lord Braco (1729–1809), the major landowner in lowland Banffshire and a committed Whig. He thoroughly disapproved of his daughter's matrimonial activities, and of his new son in law, but he was bound to them by ties of family. Men like Braco and Findlater, although they disapproved of their neighbours' conduct, sought to protect them. Thus Braco wrote to Ludovick Grant during Cumberland's advance through Banffshire asking 'You'l doe me a great favour if you'l apply to the General for a protection for Carnousie's House, who was verie friendly to me before he enter'd into this unhappie rebellion.'³¹ After the passage of time they also lent their support to the pleas of the exiles for a safe return home. Rannes, for example, returned home in 1763 and Braco, by then Lord Fife, applied for a formal pardon in 1772. This was eventually granted in 1780.³² Alexander Gordon, however, had a different escape route and a very different career as a Madeira wine merchant.

Meanwhile, however, back in Banffshire John Duff's family was growing. To outward appearances he was prospering. We have seen that he successfully applied for his own pew in the kirk, a badge of respectability. In 1764 he was called upon to settle a dispute over fallen timber. John Cuming testified to the kirk session that 'after coming out of the Church he went to Mr Duff Baillie in the Country who was then in the Kirkyard and acquainted him yt Alexr McKenzie in Tombrach had Carried of a part of a tree from his priviledge & that he wanted an order to Search for it.'³³ At the same time John Duff gave in his bill to the kirk session as surety for money borrowed from the poor's fund. However, the fact that it took until 1768 with some threats

³⁰ Tayler and Tayler, *Jacobite Exile*, 16.

³¹ Tayler and Tayler, *Jacobites*, 205.

³² Tayler and Tayler, *Jacobite Exile*, 21.

³³ 7 August 1764, NRS CH2/191/3, Inveravon session minutes.

of legal proceedings to get the bill paid off suggests something of the straits that John had got into.³⁴ Principally, this appeared to be with mounting rent arrears on the Ballintomb estate of Archibald Grant. The balance on his account varied from over £3,000 Scots in 1749 to an amount of £918 Scots in 1756 for which Duff gave his bill at Monymusk.³⁵ However, he could not clear this balance, being unable to collect rents thanks to a dispute with one Francis Taylor. In 1757 Duff complained that Taylor had been inciting other tenants not to pay their rents. By this time some had paid but ‘some cannot pay before the Summer Markets unless they dispose of cows and render them incapable of Labouring.’³⁶ “I have met with such disappointments in money matters,’ lamented Duff, ‘that its not in my power to pay any to Sir Archd on my own account at this term, But I have a fund in your County that will Certainly [answer?] at Whitsunday, So I must Begg a Delay until that time.’³⁷ Matters had got worse by the new year:

I proposed to have sent you also all that I could raise of my own in payment of the balance of my acceptance, But Francis Taylor and his family made such a Clamour [through?] the Country, That not one Single person in the three adjacent Countys to whom I owed Sixpence but came immediately and Made pressing demands for Sums, that they promised not to Demand this year, which has greatly disconcerted my measures & even gone a great length to ruin my credit [and made it?] impossible for me to pay you any towards the balance of my acceptance before the Summer Markets.³⁸

These troubles must have been behind his decision to relinquish the tack of Pitchaish in 1760, with letters to the estate factor authorising him to sell stacked corn to meet arrears of rent while he was out of the country.³⁹ As Alexander Gordon, by now safely in Madeira, wrote to his brother James who had returned to London ‘I see how it is with our poor sister whose

³⁴ Ibid., 2 January 1765, 23 December 1766, 15 December 1767, 18 January 1768.

³⁵ Stated account twixt Sir Arcd Grant of Monymusk Bart and John Duff of Pitchaish, 30 January 1756. NRS Grant of Monymusk papers, GD345/1014/80, John Duff of Pitchaish

³⁶ John Duff at Pitchaish 22 December 1757 to Robert Young. NRS, Grant of Monymusk papers, GD345/1014 /170

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Rents of Ballentomb 1758 from John Duff 4 January 1758, NRS, Grant of Monymusk papers, GD345/1014 /174.

³⁹ Tayler and Tayler, *Duffs*, II, 469.

condition is truly to be lamented, God help her, and may she and her poor family never want you, for you are and must be their support, they have none other to keep them from misery & want.⁴⁰ More than ever the Duff family was dependent on their uncles in far-off Madeira.

⁴⁰ Alexander Gordon in Madeira to James Gordon in London, 22 September 1762, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 422, box nine, letters from Madeira.

4 To India and back

On 23 June 1757 British forces under Robert Clive (1725–1774) won a decisive victory over the Nawab of Bengal and his French allies at the Battle of Plassey. Not only did the settlement that followed enrich the rapacious Clive, but it marked a decisive shift in the British relationship with India. Founded in 1600, the East India Company was designed as a trading body, which used military forces and alliances with local rulers as means to defend its commercial activities. After Plassey, the emphasis, fuelled by the opportunities for plunder offered to individuals either through military prowess or administrative corruption, switched decisively to territorial expansion. What also followed was a massive expansion in the need for European officers to lead the mainly local rank and file, a need which Scots in particular rushed to fill.¹ By 1772, two hundred and fifty of the company's eight hundred officers were from Scotland.² Amongst their number was Patrick Duff.

What Patrick's preparation for military service had been has not been recorded. A distant relative, 'Petter' Duff of Whitehill, served in India a little later and his father wrote to Lord Fife that 'every step after has been taken to prepare him as far as the education here would doe and its now fixed that he goe to an Academy in France att Calmar in Upper Lusatica to learn the French languadge and to compleat him in the Military line as it was mentioned to us a proper step'.³ From his later letters it would seem that Patrick had more than just a basic education. We do not know just how Patrick

¹ G. J. Bryant, 'Scots in India in the Eighteenth Century', *Scottish Historical Review*, LXIV, 1 (1985), 22–41; Victor Kiernan, 'Scottish Soldiers and the Conquest of India', in G. G. Simpson (ed), *The Scottish Soldier Abroad 1247–1967* (Edinburgh, 1992), 97–110; P. E. Razzell, 'Social Origins of Officers in the Indian and British Home Army 1758–1962', *British Journal of Sociology*, 14 (1963), 248–60; Patrick Tuck (ed) *The East India Company: 1600–1858* (6 vols, London, 1998), V, *Warfare, Expansion and Resistance*.

² Bryant, 'Scots in India', 23.

³ Patrick Duff of Whitehill to Lord Fife 3 April 1781, cited in Tayler and Tayler, *Book of the Duffs*, II, 238

secured his education, although one would suspect that it was uncle James who helped to fund it. However, at the age of seventeen he sailed for India in 1759 as a cadet in the 89th Regiment. Commissions in the regular army needed to be purchased and were eagerly sought after by the sons of the nobility. This required ‘interest’, that is patronage from those with favours to distribute. This combination may well not have been available to Patrick, and the Taylors think he went as a ‘gentleman volunteer’, that is as men who ‘lived and messed with the officers, but did duty as non-commissioned officers. If they distinguished themselves they stood a good chance of obtaining commissions without purchase.’ They note that the 89th was raised by Catherine Gordon, daughter of the Earl of Aberdeen and wife of the third Duke of Gordon, and so James Gordon might have been able to draw on traditional family loyalties. A fellow recruit was John Macpherson from Badenoch, who went out as an ensign.⁴ John (?1742–1784) was the same age as Patrick; his elder brother, Allan (1740–1816), would later follow him to India and become a correspondent of Patrick’s. The Macpherson brothers had closer Jacobite connections than Patrick as their father had died fighting for Charles at the Battle of Falkirk in 1746. Family legend has the six-year-old Allan throwing stones at the redcoats firing buildings in Badenoch.⁵

Following his arrival in 1760, Patrick, together with John Macpherson, was involved the campaigns on the Malabar coast which saw the taking of the French fort at Mahé in 1761.⁶ This was a French foothold in the predominantly Dutch-influenced territory on the south–west coast of India, an important area for the spice trade. The fort was returned to the French in 1763. Patrick then tells us that he was a volunteer on an expedition against the Marathas, but with no details. At the time, the Marathas controlled the vast bulk of India south of Delhi. In 1758, they took control of the Punjab, which brought them into conflict with the Afghan empire of Ahmad Shah Abdali. The two sides met in 1761 at the Battle of Panipat, which resulted in victory for the Afghans and massive slaughter of the Marathas, both during and after the battle. Patrick’s expedition was evidently a seaborne one, as he notes that his ship was dismasted and had to put into Batavia, then the headquarters of the Dutch East Indies in what is now Indonesia. This

⁴ W. C. Macpherson, *Soldiering in India 1764–1787* (Edinburgh, 1928), 359.

⁵ Stephen Foster, *A Private Empire* (Millers Point, NSW, 2010), 32.

⁶ Henry Beveridge, *A Comprehensive History of India, Civil, Military, and Social, From the First Landing of the English, to the Suppression of the Sepoy Revolt; Including an Outline of the Early History of Hindoostan* (3 vols, London, 1862), I, 642.

would, then, have appeared to have been an attack on one of the islands off Mumbai, whose mainland harbour was a major East India Company trading centre. At some point Patrick had transferred from the 89th and joined the Royal Regiment of Artillery as a lieutenant fireworker. Positions in the artillery offered lower social status and the work was considered arduous, with less chance of promotion. However, to those with practical aptitude without patronage to ease their passage it offered more opportunities. In 1763, Patrick transferred to the Company's Bengal artillery.

This was a crucial time for the Company's fortunes in Bengal. As a result of Plassey they were in a position of effective rule of this vast and rich province, controlling Mir Jafar, the Nawab of Bengal. He, however, discontented with British demands for money, sought to engage in an alliance with the Dutch. Discovering this, the British forced him to leave office in favour of his son in law, Mir Qasim. In turn, however, he came to resist British demands and in 1763 his forces overran the British settlement in Patna. The troops that responded included those from the 89th regiment under the command of Major Hector Munro (1726–1805). Munro was the son of a merchant from Sutherland who joined Loudon's Highlanders in 1747.⁷ In the aftermath of Culloden he was engaged in the search for rebels, most notably Cluny Macpherson who, however, evaded capture and escaped to France to join the other exiles we met in the last chapter. In 1764 Munro, now a major, took charge of the troops outside Chapra. A strict disciplinarian responding to a body of men who had been disaffected, he promised stern retribution for any further insubordination. However, the native troops or sepoy's mutinied in September, imprisoning their officers overnight and declaring that they would no longer serve the company. They were surrounded by loyal troops and marched to Chapra, where Munro had their commanding officer single out twenty-four ringleaders, who were convicted at a summary court martial and sentenced to death. It is here that one assumes Duff, as an artillery officer, must have witnessed their horrific execution, for they were strapped to the mouth of a field gun and blown to pieces.⁸ Faced with the hostile reaction of the remaining native troops, Munro ordered the cannons to be loaded with grapeshot and turned them on the protesters. This brutal

⁷ Andrew Mackillop, 'The Highlands and the Returning Nabob: Sir Hector Munro of Novar, 1760–1807', in Marjory Harper (ed), *Emigrant Homecomings: The Return Movement of Migrants, 1600–2000* (Manchester, 2005), 233–61.

⁸ J. W Fortescue, *A History of the British Army* (20 vols, London, 1911), III, 95.

response restored order and the troops were ready to confront Mir Qasim's forces.

These were formidable, as Mir Qasim had allied with the Nawab of Oudh, Shuja-ud-Daula, and the Mughal emperor, Shah Alam II. This gave them an army of some forty thousand men facing the British forces of seven thousand. However, the uneasy nature of the alliance was a key weakness, and the discipline of the British forces was also important in their securing of a complete victory. The efficiency of their field guns was also a factor, causing considerable casualties in the densely packed masses before them.⁹ It was a battle in which, Patrick recorded, 'Major Munro who Commanded was pleased to thank me for my behaviour on that day, and accorded me the honour to mention my name in a letter to the Board.'¹⁰ John Macpherson was also at Buxar, but still in the infantry. His brother Allan arrived with a detachment under the command of Sir Robert Fletcher just after the battle. Allan had joined the British army in 1757. He served in the 42nd Regiment – the Black Watch – in America, managing to rise to the rank of sergeant. At some point he came to the attention of Lieutenant Thomas Fletcher, who used his brother Sir Robert to get Allan a commission in Bengal. All three were involved in campaigns following the victory, which saw the pursuit of the defeated enemies to their strongholds. Unable to take the Mughal stronghold of Chunargarh, where John Macpherson was badly wounded, they pursued Shuja-ud-Daula to Allahabad, where they laid siege to the fortress. Here, while commanding the battery whose guns breached the walls, Patrick 'received a shot which broke my leg.'¹¹ Although the leg was reset, this caused a permanent limp. In 1785 he had to tell his brother James that the boots he had sent him were no good, as the maker had forgotten that one of his legs was an inch and a half shorter than the other.¹²

The subsequent Treaty of Allahabad, coupled with the defeat of the Maratha forces at Panipat, laid the foundations for the British domination of northern India. The Marathas' defeat meant that their ability to resist the British was compromised. The Treaty gave the East India Company the rights to collect imperial taxation across Bengal, while paying tribute to

⁹ Ibid., 99

¹⁰ Memorials, nd, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426 Tiger box, bundle four. The letter to the board, mentioning lieutenant Duff, is in Arthur Broome, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Bengal Army* (London, 1850), 482.

¹¹ Memorials, nd, *ibid.*

¹² Patrick Duff, Bengal to James Duff, London, 15 September 1785, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426 Tiger box, bundle two.

the emperor to support the court at Allahabad. Shuja-ud-Daula was forced to pay a war indemnity to the Company and lost some territory, but was restored to Oudh. The Company agreed to protect him from external attack in return for payment, thus making him dependent on them. His capital at Lucknow was to be important for many British residents, not least Patrick Duff. However, for the time being, his leg mended, he was assigned to one of the three brigades created to defend the new territories. Each brigade was composed of one regiment of European infantry, one company of artillery, six battalions of native troops and a troop of native cavalry. The first brigade was quartered at Monghyr, three hundred miles from Calcutta, the second at Allahabad, to protect the emperor's court and the third, in which Patrick served, at Bankipore on the outskirts of Patna.¹³

The European officers who commanded these brigades were deeply conscious of their status, as well as being aware of how they were looked down upon by their fellow officers in the regular army. In 1762 colonel William Draper of the 79th Foot serving with the Madras army wrote that 'most of the Company's officers are People of very low Education. They are seldom Fit for the Stations of Field Officers Either from Behaviour or Knowledge.'¹⁴ Commissions in the regular Army were purchased and so dominated by the English, and to a lesser degree, the Scottish and Irish upper classes.¹⁵ Not surprisingly, their views were resented by the Company's officers. Colonel Pearse of the Bengal artillery (who had also served in the Royal Artillery) later observed that 'From our services here we are fitter to command ...we extracted from their [the Royal officers'] system of discipline what was adaptable to our state, and so formed one, which differed from theirs in points, in which the nature of the country, the manners and religion, showed us that it was necessary.'¹⁶ Their positions demanded administrative and logistical competence, which made them ever more jealous of preserving their material standing. At the same time, the lifespan of such officers, both through military action but more probably through illness, was parlous and so it is not surprising that many sought to make as much money as possible in as short a time as possible in order to return to Britain. Allan Macpherson's journals are

¹³ Henry Strachey, *Narrative of the Mutiny of the Officers of the Army in Bengal, In the Year 1766*. (London, 1772), 3–4.

¹⁴ Gerald Bryant, 'Officers of the East India Company's Army in the Days of Clive and Hastings', in Patrick Tuck (ed), *Warfare, Expansion and Resistance* (London, 1998), 33.

¹⁵ Razzell, 'Social origins'.

¹⁶ Bryant, 'Officers', 53.

peppered with references to sickness and death among the officer corps. In May 1772, for example, he recorded that ‘Last night Mr Sayer, a Gentleman Cadet, went to Bed in perfect health, but was taken ill with a pukka fever in the night and died before daylight.’¹⁷ In such circumstances, as Bryant observes, ‘the Company’s officers saw no contradiction between preserving their honour and making as money as possible.’¹⁸ This seems to have applied very well to Patrick. Throughout his career, as we will see, he was determined to get what he felt was his due, with a keen sense of his rights. He appears to have been a capable officer. Certainly at Bankipore he rose to the rank of lieutenant-captain; it was here, as well, that he was pivotal in a dramatic event, the mutiny of European officers in 1766.

In 1765 Clive returned to India, charged with bringing expenditure and corruption under control in Bengal. As Beveridge observes, there is a certain hypocrisy involved here, as the widespread corruption that undoubtedly existed could be seen simply as following his example. ‘It is impossible,’ he says, ‘...to forget how much of the corruption might have been traced to the bad example which Clive himself had set, and there is therefore something painfully incongruous in the high-flown style which he sometimes employs.’¹⁹ Given that, and given that what happened next is largely documented through the writing of his secretary, Henry Strachey, in a report later presented to Parliament, it can be difficult to unravel events but his evidence still indicates some of the tensions and arguments among the officers of the East India Company. The catalyst was the removal of ‘batta’, or expenses for officers serving in the field. After the settlement of 1764, double batta was paid and it was this that Clive ordered to be removed from 1 January 1766. This provoked simmering resentment amongst the lower ranking officers, who set to work organizing for a collective resignation of their commissions. This was done in complete secrecy: ‘In each brigade a committee of correspondence was appointed, with full authority to answer all letters that might come from their associates, and to agree to, as well as to propose such measures as they should think proper. Near two hundred commissions of captains and subalterns were in a short time collected and lodged in the hands of the adjutants and quarter-masters, in order to be delivered to the commanding officers of the respective brigades, on the 1st of June.’²⁰

¹⁷ Macpherson, *Soldiering*, 94.

¹⁸ Bryant, ‘Officers’, 40.

¹⁹ Beveridge, *Comprehensive History*, I, 689.

²⁰ Strachey, *Narrative*, 6.

The officers were trading on their distinctive status as employees, aware, Strachey noted, that the act of Parliament establishing the rules for discipline in the Company's army implied that officers had to have a contract before being subject to the rules of war.²¹ The Company had not provided such contracts and so the officers felt that resigning their commissions would be, at most, a matter of civil rather than military punishment. In order to bolster their position, they bound themselves, under the penalty of five hundred pounds, to support any officer brought to court martial, as well as establishing a fund to support any officers forced out of the service. It was alleged this fund was augmented by 'a considerable sum ... said to have been contributed privately by gentlemen in the civil service, in aid of the military cause.'²² It is useful to note at this point that this was not the first time that officers had threatened collective action to defend what they saw as their just privileges of rank. Sir Robert Fletcher, seeking to excuse his ambiguous conduct in the 1766 events argued that he was motivated by his memories of 'the violence with which they [his junior officers] had engaged, during the months of March, April, and May 1765, in an association for resigning, on a more trifling cause.' In this case the spark was the promotion of an incoming officer over the heads of incumbents in a way which violated their sense of seniority.²³ Earlier, in 1760, Clive had given a commission to an officer who had come round from Madras which caused so much offence that eight Bengal captains resigned their commissions in one day. One of them, Thomas Rumbold, was subsequently appointed to the Civil Service and was a member of the Bengal Council from 1766 to 1769; another, Alexander Grant, returned to Bengal as a merchant and army contractor.²⁴ Although he died in 1765, these events may have been behind deeper opposition to Clive and the making of connections between civil and military establishments. It was their suspicions of merchant support that made Clive and Strachey feel that the combination of officers had broader causes.

Concerns had been raised about widespread fraud and corruption amongst the Company's servants, seizing the lucrative opportunities opened up by the rapaciousness of Clive. For Strachey, 'the licentious disposition of

²¹ Ibid., 75.

²² Ibid., 7.

²³ Broome, *History*, lxi.

²⁴ Williams, *Bengal Native Infantry*, 66. Rumbold was subsequently appointed as Governor of Madras in 1777, using his term of office to syphon off large sums of money. His term of office arguably prompted the war with Hyder Ali that involved Pearse of the Bengal artillery.

the Company's civil Servants not only coincided with, but actually infected the military branch.²⁵ In their more lurid imaginings, their concern was that the military would seek to remove the existing civil government. Their more immediate response to the concerns of their officers was that they were prompted by greed. In April 1766 Clive received a letter via Calcutta from the officers of the third brigade, 'representing in very exaggerated terms the high, price of provisions, necessaries, &c.; and requesting that the late double allowance might be continued.'²⁶ This was countered by an argument that not only were prices in Bengal not significantly different from other areas under the Company's control, but that 'Luxury indeed is bound less; and hence arise the imaginary wants, and the real difficulties, of officers on the Bengal establishment.'²⁷

The letter from the third brigade was signed by nine captains, twelve lieutenants and twenty ensigns, amongst their number being captain Patrick Duff.²⁸ ('Aware of the consequences likely to ensue thereon,' says Hickey, 'they adopted a practice then used in the Navy, signing their names in a circle, or what sailors called "a round Robin" to avoid any individuals being singled out for punishment.')²⁹ It was later noted that artillery officers were particularly prominent in the agitation in the third brigade. Patrick was not just content with signing letters; his devotion to the cause was the reason why the conspiracy was uncovered before the deadline the officers had settled on. In April Sir Robert Barker, commander of the third brigade, wrote to his opposite number at Monhgyr, Sir Robert Fletcher, that 'returned am I to quarters, and to the mortification of seeing one half of the cantonments burnt down, by a very unlucky quarrel between two officers. This is not all, for I find that since I have been away, strange meetings and strange measures have been taken by the gentlemen of my brigade; and I have a good deal of reason to think it is not confined to this brigade alone, about the reduction of batta.'³⁰

One of the two officers was Patrick Duff who, angered that ensign Davies had not agreed to join the officers' combination, had set fire to his quarters. Shades here of events in Banffshire in his childhood! As Strachey reported, the subsequent court martial found that 'the dispute arose from

²⁵ Strachey, *Narrative*, 2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 132.

²⁹ Alfred Spencer, *Memoirs of William Hickey* (4 vols, London, 1948), I, 144.

³⁰ Strachey, *Narrative*, 136.

ensign Davis's refusing to give up his commission to captain Duff, who would have forced it from him.' Both men were immediately sent to Calcutta, Patrick, having been dismissed the service, to await the boat which would return him to Britain. Clive wanted to go further: 'those officers who were the occasion of the fire at Bankipore will, I hope, meet with the punishment they deserve.'³¹ While Clive was disappointed in Patrick's sentence, he was at least alerted to the officers' plans. This enabled him to rally loyal officers and call for support from Madras. His appeals for support from the merchants of Calcutta fell on surprisingly deaf ears, reinforcing his suspicions that the conspiracy to threaten his authority was wider than the military.

With his plans in place, Clive marched on Monghyr, where he was assured by Sir Robert Fletcher that he could contain the agitation. Among the officers at Monghyr were the Macpherson brothers, who both signed the protest of officers there. Later events indicated that Fletcher was responsible for stirring junior officers to complain. It might be that Allan Macpherson was Fletcher's connection to the officers, especially as Allan was under Fletcher's patronage. In subsequent testimony, Allan insisted that Fletcher had sought to dissuade him from taking part, offering to pay the five hundred pounds he would forfeit by withdrawing from the combination.³² This might, of course, have been testimony designed to protect his patron. Fletcher had received a letter in which his officers complained that 'we find we cannot live upon the present allowances, but must every month run in debt, as long as we have any credit. We must appear upon the parade as becomes officers, and keep up our respective ranks, or disobey public-orders: we must eat and drink as befits the climate, or fall sacrifices to hunger and sickness.'³³

The complaining officers resented the insinuations that they had behaved without military honour, arguing that they had been driven to their action by the ways in which their requests had been ignored. As they protested: 'All of us are sorry to be obliged to take this method of preventing ruin and misery from falling upon ourselves and connexions; and sincerely wish, that our masters may ever meet with a set of officers as much attached and devoted to their service as we have always wished to prove ourselves, and who may maintain the affairs of the company, to the latest posterity, in that splendour to which we have happily raised them.'³⁴ This cut no ice with Clive, who

³¹ Ibid., 138.

³² Broome, *History*, lxxii.

³³ Strachey, *Narrative*, 151.

³⁴ Ibid., 151.

took determined action to secure a commanding position in order to cow what he viewed as mutineers. What he then discovered, through his loyal officers who appealed to their peers, was that the whole combination had been encouraged by Fletcher, in order to thwart Clive's efforts to reform operations in Bengal. Fletcher was arrested at Patna on 3rd July and subsequently court martialled. This decisive action by Clive caused the combination to waver and most withdrew their resignations. Some were subsequently court martialled, but none received a stronger punishment than being cashiered and dismissed the service. Allan and John Macpherson, marched back to Calcutta, were pardoned and reinstated. This lenience, Strachey thought, was down to doubts in the minds of those in charge of the courts about the legality of the Company's position (as well as, perhaps, some sympathy with the demands of their fellow officers). Strachey concluded that 'had it not been for this tenderness, it is scarcely probable, that out of, six officers found guilty of mutiny, and other military offences, not one should have been capitally convicted. Lieutenant Vertue of Colonel Smith's brigade, who was tried under Lord Clive's warrant, for disobedience of orders and desertion, endeavoured to avail himself of the omission of a contract, protested against the jurisdiction of the court, and refused to plead. The court however rejected the prisoner's protest, and proceeded to the trial.'³⁵ The result, however, was just that a number of officers joined Patrick on the journey home. Clive ensured that contracts were issued to all the remaining officers, making it clear that military punishments would apply in future.

In his exploration of the role of Scottish soldiers in the construction of the British Empire, Victor Kiernan, noting the 1766 mutiny, mused that 'it would be interesting to know more about what part Scotsmen played on such occasions.'³⁶ The story told here sheds some light on that question, suggesting that Scots indeed played a significant role. As well as Patrick and the Macpherson brothers, Allan and John, John Forbes of Aberdeenshire was involved.³⁷ He had joined the same regiment, the 89th, as both Patrick Duff and John Macpherson in 1761. Not only was he involved in the 1766 affair, but he was also a prime mover in a later agitation, also concerned with questions of reward and promotion, in the 1790s. He retired as major-general

³⁵ Ibid., 75.

³⁶ Victor Kiernan, 'Scottish Soldiers and the Conquest of India', in Grant G. Simpson (ed), *The Scottish Soldier Abroad 1247–1967* (Edinburgh, 1992), 104.

³⁷ Raymond Callahan, *The East India Company and Army Reform 1783–1798* (Cambridge, MA, 1972), 195.

in 1800, 'with a competent fortune' that enabled him to buy an estate near Dunbar.³⁸ These instances suggest that it would be rewarding to explore the backgrounds of the participants in the combination further. They certainly suggest that Scots were particularly representative of the concern with rank and seniority that permeated the officers of the East India Company. At this point, however, it might have looked like Patrick's short military career, so full of early promise, had come to an early end. Clearly it didn't but we will need to pick it up again later, turning our attention now to his brothers and uncles in Madeira.

³⁸ Forbes, John of the East India Company (HEICS), Major-General, <http://www.patrickpeople.co.uk/files/24985.htm>, accessed 16 March 2016.

5 Making money in Madeira

Perhaps it is not altogether surprising that one would struggle to find any mention of Patrick's involvement in the 1766 mutiny in the voluminous correspondence of his uncle James after 1760. James's return to London saw extensive correspondence between the business partners and their extended family network. These letters give us insight not only into the operation of a networked family business but also into Patrick's military career. Up to this point we have been following a chronological trajectory, but the next few chapters roam over the third quarter of the eighteenth century to show how an Anglo-Madeiran business operated and with what consequences for Patrick's extended family. The money and contacts made in the Madeira wine business had impacts on his fortunes in India. In turn, once firmly established in India, he was able to open up new markets for the House of Gordon.

The letters help us to understand the character of some of the key players and the dynamics of their relationships. First, however, it is useful to have a sense of how this particular network operated across the second half of the eighteenth century. In 1760, James sailed back to London, leaving the Madeira operations in the hands of his brother Alexander. Having a London partner was invaluable in the business. From here, he could not only solicit orders and monitor quality but, more importantly, have access to the burgeoning shipping and insurance markets. In 1771 the house entered into a joint venture with the Philadelphia merchant Samuel Pleasants for a ship laden with corn to depart from Virginia.¹ Insurance was arranged in London, as it was far cheaper than in Virginia. While a partner resident in London

¹ Samuel Pleasants, Philadelphia to James Gordon, London, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box ten, overseas letters.

was desirable for such arrangements, still more valuable was a trusted family member. Not that James was particularly keen about leaving the relative peace of Funchal for the noise and bustle of London. Although Funchal was busy enough when ships arrived and wine was to be loaded, James could retreat to his country house at Quinta do Til.² From his position high above the town, he could look out over Funchal bay and see ships arriving. In front of him were the tower houses of fellow merchants, also designed to stand above the houses of the town in order to monitor shipping movements. Down on the shore were the great cellars of the wine warehouses, where wine was stored before being shipped out in small boats to the waiting merchant ships anchored in the bay.

At the same time that his uncle sailed for London, James Duff (1741–1812) arrived in Madeira to be trained in the craft of a wine merchant. What was also key in managing a business across international networks was having trusted and educated managers for Madeira. James Gordon, as we will see, didn't always trust his brother's business acumen, but it was a stroke of fortune that some of his nephews proved to be reliable partners. In 1767 Robert Duff (?1748–1807) joined his brother James in Funchal. After eight years James had proved himself sufficiently to be admitted as a partner. In the same year, 1769, the Danish merchant Henry Schmidt also became a partner. This arrangement enabled James Gordon to start the process of withdrawing some of his capital as well as allowing Alexander also to return to London. James had hoped that this would mean he could retire to Letterfourie to build a new house to replace the dilapidated family seat. However, in practice it seemed to be Alexander who spent more time in Scotland.

In 1774 Robert, after a seven-year apprenticeship, was also taken into partnership, enabling his brother James to take over from their uncle in London. James Gordon was finally able to enjoy the elegant Robert Adam-designed house that he had commissioned at Letterfourie. James lived the life of a Scottish country gentleman there until his death in 1790 at the age of 83, unmarried and childless. He was succeeded by Alexander, who had married Helen Russell in 1778. Alexander spent much of his later years in trying to secure the baronetcy of Gordonstoun for his son. Meanwhile, James and Robert continued to run the wine business, but ran into trouble when James suffered extensive losses from dabbling in insurance. The causes and outcomes of that will feature much later in our story, for they also had

² Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, 37.

a considerable bearing on Patrick's own retirement. For now, we can put some flesh on this outline, starting with the relationship between James and Alexander Gordon.

From his letters, James seems to have been extremely cautious by disposition, with a voracious appetite for information. We have seen that a key focus of his claim against Halloran was that it was he, James, who had set the business on its feet by his close attention to getting the books in order. This was to remain an ever present theme in his dealings with both his brother and his nephews. He frequently complained that he was not being kept informed about the situation of the Madeira trade. In 1771, for example, he exhorted James Duff to 'frequently send your printed Price Cards whether the market is encouraging or not. I left a great no of them at my Departure from the Island, but in Ten Years time I could not get my Brother nor any of you to send me above half a dozen, tho' repeatedly desired them to be sent every now & then.'³ This insight into both his concerns and his particular relations with his brother confirms an earlier message five years earlier when he complained to Alexander that 'I'm sure the longer I live here in Madeira business the poorer I shall be, for I have not had the comfort of ever knowing how things may be with us even in general ...since I left the Island 6 years ago.'⁴

Underlying this desire for information, which produced a voluminous correspondence, was a caution borne both out of experience and, it would seem, a personal disposition. So Alexander confessed in 1764 that 'I am very sensible of the laborious task you have & how disagreeable it must be to one of your temper to have before you the prospect of being Squeeze'd a little with many of the Houses bills rung on you & the probability of more appearing perhaps in a short time.'⁵ This recognition seemed to flow from a tension between the two brothers about how trade should be conducted. Often we only have one side of this tension, so that we don't know what drew Alexander's note in 1761 that 'I am much down in the mouth at your manner of Expressing yourself in your Particular Letter to me.'⁶ Clearly

³ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 4 September 1771, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, letter book.

⁴ James Gordon, London to James and Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 14 July 1766, *ibid.*

⁵ Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, Jamaica Coffee House, London, 29 February 1764, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box two, bundle of London letters.

⁶ Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 22 August 1761, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box nine, letters from Madeira.

James was worried about how the business on which he depended was going to be conducted in his absence. This concern rested on his worries about his brother's more adventurous and impulsive nature. Alexander sought to reassure him that 'the books are as regularly kept as any in the place'.⁷ His assertions about his personal conduct suggests what might be concerning James: 'I study economy in the family and in my own particular as much I believe as any individual in the place if that can any contribute to make you easy you may be assured of it'.⁸

This had some foundation in Alexander's conduct. In 1767 James complained that he had met Sir William Dunbar, a family relation, in the street who told him that Alexander still owed him six pounds for a watch. 'Why,' expostulated an exasperated James, 'do you let such things ly by so long? It don't look well'.⁹ In 1770 Alexander confessed to a correspondent in Scotland that he had fallen out with his friend Newton, having said something in the heat of argument. Francis Newton was a fellow former Jacobite who had achieved considerable success in the Madeira wine trade.¹⁰ Given Alexander's record of fighting for his beliefs and then having to flee after Culloden, this suggests a rather rash temperament which coloured his approach to business. There are hints in a letter from an unidentified Madeiran correspondent of James Gordon that Alexander had upset relationships on the island after James had left for London in 1760. Although it is hard to interpret in the absence of other evidence, the comment about Alexander that 'because I don't want to look like many people that your Excellency knows in this island, I always maintain with him the same friendship, and for me it is enough that he's a brother of your Excellency to wish continue servicing him when there is an occasion that until now did not happen' does suggest some adverse reaction to the younger brother.¹¹ Some confirmation of this comes very much later when the house got into trouble after James Gordon's death. Robert Duff in his explanation of the causes of these problems referred to Alexander's 'very

⁷ Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, Jamaica Coffee House, London, 29 February 1764, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box two, bundle of London letters.

⁸ Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, Jamaica Coffee House, London, 29 February 1764, *ibid.*

⁹ James Gordon, London to James and Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 1 January 1767, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, letter book.

¹⁰ Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, 140.

¹¹ Unidentified correspondent, Funchal to James Gordon, London, 1 December 1765, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box two, bundle of London letters (in Portuguese).

adventurous & speculative disposition.¹² As James complained to his brother in 1767, ‘your Spirit is beyond your ability, you know my strength, yet I suppose you’ll dislike my telling you so, and give me such a swipe as you did once before’.¹³ Alexander appears to have been always more interested in country pursuits than commerce. He spent much more time back in Scotland than James, prompting the latter’s resentment. Letting Alexander at Letterfourie know about Madeira matters in 1779, James resignedly observed, ‘I hardly believe you would spare time from roaming in the fields, to read them with attention.’¹⁴ However, he expressed his dissatisfaction, complaining that ‘I wish to God I knew your plan with regard to your Commercial Concerns in future, the consideration is of great importance. I have often hinted it to you; as to myself I neither can or will forever continue in my present line, I’m weary of it & less fit than ever heretofore.’¹⁵

As James pointed out to Alexander, the Madeira trade ‘is your Sheet Anchor & let me warn you not to lose sight of it yet a while.’¹⁶ James felt the weight of this falling on his shoulders. He recognized that ‘being less bold than some other folks’ he might seem excessively cautious, but this caution was born of experience.¹⁷ In 1772, in particular, he observed a wave of bankruptcies amongst fellow merchants, problems which affected even the largest houses. ‘Poor Newton,’ he reported, ‘has been & still is, most terribly sweated with some of his greatest friends, & yet runs very great risques to serve & help to support them, I shall not mention their names tho’ I know them well, wish with all my heart no bad consequence may ensue.’¹⁸ James supported his fellow merchant Murdoch with a large sum which ‘has given me the severest sweat I ever had in my life time.’¹⁹ These frights explain why James was cautious, his letters peppered with gloomy prognostications about

¹² Robert Duff, London, to Thomas Gordon, Edinburgh, 28 July 1802, AULSC, Letterfourie, box ten, letters 1790.

¹³ James Gordon, London to James and Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 16 February 1767, AULSC, Letterfourie, letter book.

¹⁴ James Gordon in London to Alexander Gordon at Letterfourie, 12 October 1779, AULSC, Letterfourie, box nine, bundle with sasines.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon, Letterfourie, 11 May 1774, *ibid.*, box ten, letters 1770.

¹⁷ James Gordon London to Alexander Gordon and Co, Madeira, 27 July 1779, *ibid.*, box nine, bundle with sasines.

¹⁸ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 23 July 1772, *ibid.*, letter book.

¹⁹ James Gordon, London to William Dunbar, Grenada, 8 September 1772, *ibid.*

the future of the Madeira wine trade in general and the fortunes of his own house in particular.

The cautious approach of James continued in his relations with his nephews. 'I observe your caution to me not to be idle,' he wrote to James Duff in 1768, 'while others miss no opportunity to Speculate for the benefit of their respective houses; it is certainly good advice, but I suppose they consult their Funds to be spare'd for Speculation.'²⁰ We will explore the management of the business further, although it appears that the Duff brothers also found their uncle excessively cautious, while having to listen to his continuing exhortations to attend to their business practices. It appears that the boys spent some time in London, possibly attending a mercantile academy, before setting off for Madeira. When Robert arrived in London in May 1766 James reported that 'I must put him to learn to dance &c.'²¹ James thought he was bound for India, but in March 1767 he was sending him to Madeira as 'I think it would be nonsense to detain him here for ye sake of being a few Mos at an Academy, which generally is of no great use, I'm of opinion he will turn out well, as he seems good humoured & sensible.'²² Here he joined his older brother, who seems to have had an early wobble at the thought of settling down on Madeira. His uncle Alexander reported that 'his thought of going with Mckenzie to Jama were the Results of folly & Giddyness to be sure, he says he never proposd any such thing.'²³ James was bound to a five-year apprenticeship. He proved to be assiduous in his attendance on his counting house duties, although Alexander complained that 'the worst thing of him in regard to the Counting House is that he will be at no pains to continue the improvement of his writing.'²⁴ This was a continuing theme. In 1771 James Gordon complained:

I did like to see Robert Duff's Writing & I thought it a pretty good hand,
But now perceive he is in the high Road to spoil it, if he continues to
write so small, his Letters will dwindle into nothing, which is a Pity. His

²⁰ James Gordon, London to James and Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 25 January 1768, *ibid.*

²¹ James Gordon, London to James and Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 10 May 1766, *ibid.*

²² James Gordon, London to James and Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 6 March 1767, *ibid.*

²³ Alexander Gordon, Madeira, to James Gordon, London, 21 September 1762, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 422, box nine, letters from Madeira.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Brother James committed the same Fault. I make allowance however, for hurry of Business, tho' it's really with difficulty I can cleverly get thro' some parts of James Duff's Writing. It looks fair enough, but it is far from being distinct or plain.²⁵

The criticisms could be couched in James' rather heavy handed attempts at irony. In 1772 he sent out a pair of boots for Smith and a gold watch and chain and a sword for James Duff, complaining that 'these Encomendas of Mr Duffs are indisputably needful but Mr Smith's Boots are not so necessary. There is nothing in riding over the Country in wet weather without Boots or in wading up to the knees to get to your Loges sometimes in Town, but without a Chateau de Chasse of 5 or 6 Guineas value Gold Chain etc no man of fortune would be.'²⁶

Not surprisingly, these interventions were resented by men who now had experience in running affairs and this is hinted at by James Gordon confessing that 'you must expect admonitions from time to time, & I shall always approve of Partners mutually putting one another in mind of their duty.'²⁷ Despite these tensions, both brothers, as we have seen, were taken into partnership. Soon after James Duff had arrived on the island and proved his worth, his uncle arranged for items to be sent out to him so that he could engage in business on his own account. As we will see, successful Madeira merchants traded in much more than wine. The first thing at which James tried his hand was the sale of fifty Cheshire cheeses. James wrote back in 1762 that 'I reckon myself greatly obliged to you for the Adventure of Goods you sent out to Mr Mowat & me, as well as many other kindnesses & shall make it my study to behave in such a manner as to show my Gratitude to you and my uncle here for your many favours bestowed on me.'²⁸

Mowat was also employed in the counting house, but in September 1762 jumped ship to enter partnership with Ferguson and Murdoch. This enabled Ferguson to return to London and Murdoch to go to America, another illustration of the distributed nature of the networks. It also illustrates the way in which the community of British merchants had inter-related and cross

²⁵ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 14 June 1771, *ibid.*, letter book.

²⁶ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 23 April 1772, *ibid.*

²⁷ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 21 September 1771, *ibid.*

²⁸ James Duff, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 5 January 1762, *ibid.*, box nine, letters to London.

cutting relationships. These were an uneasy mix of competitive rivalries and the friendship induced by operating in a foreign land. What united them was the need to ensure supplies at competitive prices from island winegrowers and to protect their interests from the interference of the Portuguese authorities. However, this could sit uneasily with their manoeuvring for advantage. As James Gordon warned his nephews in 1772 'you have neighbours watchfull & ready to hook every thing their own way. It is the same with us all here, tho' we keep very fair with each other.'²⁹ This reference to the Madeira community in London was in particular with relation to Scottish merchants. Ferguson, James Gordon reported, was 'very intimate' 'with most of the Scotch, whom we owe the least obligation to, and I am perfectly acquainted with them'.³⁰ This suggests that James, although being on reasonable terms with Scottish merchants in particular, preferred to keep something of a distance. Of the leading Scottish merchants, Francis Newton, he reported in 1769 that 'I do assure you that your frd Newton is using the strangest arts that can be devised by the heart of Man to undermine me' with a key customer.³¹ His brother Alexander, who we have already seen quarrelling with Newton, assured his brother that 'I shall avoid having any words with Smart or Newton that you yourself would Condemn me for in any Shape. There are false Brothers in every Society, nor is this place without them, and It is a pity they should not be sensible at least that they are known for such, with such people shame often operates more powerfully than conscience, the point is to expose it properly.'³²

However, it was also possible for them to combine and help each other. In 1781 Newton had been a great help in a dispute with the Amsterdam merchant Muilman over a Swedish ship in which the two firms had shared a cargo.³³ Having got over these tensions, what exercised the Gordon brothers' minds more was the incursion of new merchants who threatened to upset established methods of working. In 1763 Alexander complained to his brother about a new partnership between Andrew Donaldson and Jaoa

²⁹ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 1 October 1772, *ibid.*, letter book.

³⁰ James Gordon, London to James and Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 10 May 1766, *ibid.*

³¹ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 16 October 1769, *ibid.*

³² Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 21 November 1762, *ibid.*, box nine, letters from Madeira.

³³ Henry Ogilvie, London, to James Gordon, Letterfourie, 28 July 1781, *ibid.*, box ten, overseas letters.

Jose who were bidding high prices to secure supplies. What was particularly irritating about their actions was that ‘it is most Certain we never had a fairer prospect of bringing the Portuguese to reason this year.’³⁴ Ten years later James Gordon reported from London that the American George Spencer was upsetting the merchants in London: ‘the Exotic from your Island Mr G. Sp_____r is vastly assiduous, & uses no ceremony to Introduce himself, or get introduced to all wine merchants & wine drinkers, with offers to Shipp at 40/ p pipe less than any of the Factory at Mada, of which body he & his Patron despise being members.’³⁵

This reminds us that the British merchants were organized collectively in order to regulate their affairs with the Portuguese state. They had a building on the Torr de Sec which Alexander complained was an extravagant construction which caused dissent among the expatriate community.³⁶ However, the community of British merchants was united by the defence of its shared interests against aspects of Portuguese governance. Before considering this, however, it is only right to acknowledge the warm messages that James received from a number of British merchants on his leaving the island. From Newton and Gordon came the assurance that ‘we cannot help regretting the loss of so good a friend & agreeable Companion & we assure you it’s a most fatal blow to our Society here.’ One might imagine that this could have been something of a form response, but a more personal touch came from Thomas Heberden who wrote, ‘I am convinced I still live in the memory of a dear Friend, whom I have always so justly esteemed since I had ye favour of being first acquainted with his merits.’³⁷ Other tributes suggested that ties of personal friendship also developed between those thrown together by the demands of commerce. They had to band together in the face of what they saw as a capricious regime, which greatly threatened their shared commercial success.

The prime function of the Madeira factory was the protection of those shared interests. ‘You are under a strange govern[men]t,’ complained James

³⁴ Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 12 February 1763, *ibid.*

³⁵ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 19 July 1773, *ibid.*, letter book.

³⁶ Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 30 July 1761, *ibid.*, box nine, letters from Madeira.

³⁷ Newton & Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 11 April 1761; Thomas Heberden, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 9 February 1761. *Ibid.*, box nine, letters to London. See also, at the same location, letters from James Smart, 14 February 1761 and Henry Hill, 7 April 1761, both from Madeira to James Gordon, London.

Gordon in 1773, 'where nobody can tell well what they are about from one week to another, with new Laws & Decrees unexpectedly coming upon them'.³⁸ The letters, of course, give us the perspective of the British merchant; from the Portuguese side, the view was coloured by resentment at the domination of trade by foreign merchants with what were seen as privileges imposed by one-sided treaties. By 1768, David Hancock has calculated that British merchants accounted for sixty-three per cent of the Madeiran wine trade.³⁹ Such domination raised tensions that impinged on merchants like the Gordons. A serious challenge to foreign merchants came from the rise to power of Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, 1st Marquis of Pombal.⁴⁰ James Gordon may have met him at the chapel in Golden Square attached to the Portuguese Embassy, as Pombal was ambassador to Britain from 1739 to 1744. In 1755 a dreadful earthquake struck Lisbon. A massive tidal wave was followed by the outbreak of fires. Thousands, many of whom had been at worship, died and the centre of the city was utterly destroyed. Pombal seized the opportunity to design the centre on rational Enlightenment lines. His dedication to efficiency and economic development saw him seek to curb the power of the church. The Jesuits were expelled in 1757 and a system of secular education put in place. This reforming zeal extended to attempts to wrest back control of foreign trade. The persecution of New Christians was ended in the attempt to revive a native merchant class by the establishment of state trading companies. The most significant of these was the Duoro Wine Company. British merchants were now forced to buy their wine from the Company, rather than direct from the vineyards. They complained that they were last in line for supplies and their hold on the northern wine trade was significantly weakened. The Gordons feared that something similar would follow for Madeira.

In 1766 Alexander reported to London that 'Things with us are just now in a distracted condition, a new Governor with new powers and authority new Judges of different degrees, new law, and in fine a formidable military force, being dayly expected here from Lisbon.'⁴¹ James replied that 'I cant conceive what they mean except to establish a Wine Company such as at

³⁸ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 6 April 1773, *ibid.*, letter book.

³⁹ Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, 138.

⁴⁰ Shaw, *Anglo-Portuguese Alliance*, 28 et seq.

⁴¹ James & Alexander Gordon, Madeira to Richard and Benjamin Smith, London, 20 October 1766, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 422, box ten, overseas letters.

Porto & the Military force intended to awe the people who surely must be miserable by it.⁴² However, by October in 1768 James was convinced that disagreements between the two governments had been settled and the threat of a wine company averted. That didn't mean, though, that matters were settled. In November 1768 James wrote:

with regret see the imposition ye British Commerce lays under at your place from the vile temper of your present Government. 'Tis a pity they are pamper'd so much by a constant supply to their wants, were it otherwise they would be humbler, & must know that if their Nation quarrels with this Country, Mada and its present Kingdom must both go to the D___l, but saying this is no comfort to you or protection against bad treatment from them were a quarrel to happen.⁴³

What he meant can be seen in his advice to his shipper not to send any more herring for the Madeira market as 'a temper prevails there as well as in Portugal to oppress the British Merchts settled amongst them, and some part that remain'd of Thornton's fish & the greatest part of Keys, was stopt from Sale & condemned as unwholesome.'⁴⁴ It was the frequent change in laws and the prohibition of items for import that was frustrating for merchants who depended on import sales to balance their reliance on revenues from wine. 'Can anything be so much against Reason, Justice & Common Sense,' complained James, 'as in consequence of a Law promulgated this day, Goods that were free & Entered yesterday should be liable to seizure.'⁴⁵

One commodity that was prohibited from entry in order to protect island distillers was brandy. This was a matter of some consequence to wine traders, as small amounts were added to fortify the wine. The island brandy was thought by merchants like the Gordons to be 'harsh firey Brandy' and they much preferred French brandy. Their answer was to circumvent the laws by subterfuge. This would need to be negotiated by merchants on shore ' & it is only by indulgence we are now & then permitted under the Rose to land phps 5 or 6 pipes at a time or a few more.' Masters must 'must by no means declare

⁴² James Gordon, London to James and Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 1 January 1767, *ibid.*, letter book.

⁴³ James Gordon, London to James and Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 14 November 1768, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ James Gordon, London to John Rankin, Dundee, 15 November 1768, *ibid.*

⁴⁵ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 6 April 1773, *ibid.*

it, nor needs the Master say anything about it.⁴⁶ At other times more devious stratagems were advised. In 1773 he advised the captain of a ship that 'I must also particularly advert to you to cause plaister the Heads & Chines of the Pipes all over that they may pass for Pipes of Sweet Oil, such as no doubt you have seen imported at your place from Spain, this is intended for the greater facility of Introduction at Mada where Brandy is prohibited.'⁴⁷

Ideally, James Gordon would have preferred that the British government take action to enforce treaty provisions which he felt were routinely broken by the Portuguese authorities. In 1767 he was optimistic that Lord Chatham 'is very resolute in having redress of all Commercial Grievances & oppressions so long complained of by British subjects in Portugal.'⁴⁸ However, as so frequently happened, the commercial grievances of British merchants were subordinated to wider matters of state. Three years later he warned James Duff that a great fleet was being prepared for war with Spain. The talk of the political town was that this might engender a rupture with Portugal, which at that stage had repaired its relations with its neighbour.⁴⁹ This could have had serious consequences for Britons in Portuguese possessions. As their partner Smith was a Danish subject he was 'consequently not obnoxious to a Portuguese Government should therefore things come to the worst he may be instrumental to screen you from persecution and ruin, he is a man of honor, principle, & Integrity, in whom I hope you may confide.'⁵⁰ The house also tried to protect their position by subtler methods. In 1774 James was sourcing a service of plate for the governor, which would presumably help friendlier relations.⁵¹

These political factors were a backdrop to broader relations with the island's inhabitants. As we have seen, the British merchants had interests in buying supplies of a particular quality at prices favourable to themselves. This potential for an adversarial relationship fostered what might be seen as stereotypical attitudes on the part of the Gordons. We have already seen that, in setting up in the trade, James was disparaging of the bookkeeping

⁴⁶ James Gordon, London to John Rankin, Dundee, 18 October 1774, *ibid.*

⁴⁷ James Gordon, London to Scott & Fraser, Gothenburg, 18 November 1773, *ibid.*

⁴⁸ James Gordon, London to James and Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 1 January 1767, *ibid.*

⁴⁹ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 27 September 1770, *ibid.*

⁵⁰ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 27 September 1770, *ibid.*

⁵¹ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 22 January 1774, *ibid.*

capacity of his Portuguese partner. In trying to interpret orders for goods from Britain for island customers, James was frustrated by their lack of precision. 'Their Bombast', he complained on one occasion, 'makes me doubtful how to please them.'⁵² On another he returned to his theme: 'because they express themselves by such useless tautologys & repetitions as confound common sense, & make one at a loss how to describe things so as to humour their whims.'⁵³ On top of these attitudes was the very real concern that he might have no legal redress against defaulting customers. In 1771 he advised that a Portuguese subject had brought legal action against the British merchant James Fearn seeking attachment of his Madeiran effects. As this action would take priority over claims by foreign merchants he advised that it 'will leave nothing, or next to it, for the rest, & in any Event their Affairs will turn out Wretchedly.'⁵⁴ He asked James Duff to warn the shopkeeper Thomas Corras of the situation 'to endeavour to secure himself and to be on his guard for the future.'⁵⁵ This might be regarded as self-interest, but Corras appears on a number of occasions to suggest a closer relationship. In warning Duff of the perilous financial position of another Portuguese contact, James declared that 'I shall do what I can to keeping Thos Corras duly supplied with Goods for his shop.'⁵⁶ Their relationship had subsisted since at least 1764, when Alexander exhorted his brother 'for Gods sake think of Thomas Corras.' The order here was for textiles as 'he sells more than any in the place & thrives, therefore I want to stick by him, be always very careful of the quality.'⁵⁷ Another indication of a friendly relation with individual Madeirans came with the recommendation from James Duff that a training opportunity might be found in London for the son of Snor Bernadino Nicolao Escorio Lomelino de Menezes, who had an estate on the north side of the island. He had, explained James, 'of late been much in

⁵² James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 31 May 1772, *ibid.*

⁵³ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 31 August 1774, *ibid.* These contentions receive some support from the form of expression employed in the letters in Portuguese, which adopt what can only be described as an excessively polite, if not servile register. 'My master and sir have all my veneration' begins one from Domingos Afonso Barroso to James Gordon in 30 July 1764: *ibid.*, box two, bundle of London letters.

⁵⁴ James Gordon, London to William Nichols, Bristol, 27 August 1771, *ibid.*, letter book.

⁵⁵ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, January 1771, *ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 29 February 1764, *ibid.*, box two, bundle of London letters.

English company here & always behaved well, we think him a very good lad & if you chuse to pay him any attention, that it will be well behaved, & not to be followed by any inconvenience whatever'.⁵⁸ Surviving friendly letters in Portuguese to both James and Alexander Gordon, indicating that both were fluent in the language, complement an impression of good relations with Madeiran locals. 'I believe,' declared James, that 'I understand their language as well as any of you.'⁵⁹

James, it would appear, had built up a network of connections with Madeiran landowners and farmers which were cemented by his ability to source a variety of goods, from fabrics and furnishings to spectacles and musical instruments, from Britain. Such networks, which appeared to rest on genuine friendship, were further consolidated by the employment of Madeirans in the house's business. Thus the son of Domingos Afonso Barroso was employed in some capacity before he headed off for study at the University of Coimbra in mainland Portugal.⁶⁰ Local employees in turn supplied valuable intelligence about the state of the crops and the likely negotiating position that suppliers might adopt. As we have seen, there are hints, although nothing more than that, that Alexander's hot headed temper might threaten this carefully constructed network of relations. There were, however, more potent threats to mutual prosperity.

One such threat that made both Madeiran inhabitants and British merchants dependent on British naval might was that of the privateers that periodically threatened the shipping on which the island's trade depended. In 1761, reporting that a French privateer had taken two prizes – a Rhode Island ship with corn and a Philadelphia ship with wheat and staves – Alexander lamented that 'It's a hardship We can have nothing to protect our Commerce.' He had a grudging respect for the skills of the French captain, finding him 'a very active Clever Young fellow and scarcely anything can Escape him that he's a Match for.'⁶¹ 1761 was a particularly bad year for French privateers. In May a small French ship had no luck, as it was 'no match for any London ship, being of small force.'⁶² In August the *Rubis* of Bayonne limped into

⁵⁸ James Duff, Madeira, nd, but c. 1771, *ibid.*, box ten, overseas letters.

⁵⁹ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 31 May 1772, *ibid.*, letter book.

⁶⁰ Domingos Afonso Barroso, Funchal, to James Gordon, London, 30 July 1764, *ibid.*, box two, bundle of London letters (in Portuguese).

⁶¹ Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 6 September 1761, *ibid.*, box nine, letters from Madeira.

⁶² Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 15 May 1761, *ibid.*

Funchal having had 'a smart Engagement with an English ship of 16 guns to the N. E. of this Isld who beat him off after killing 4 of his men & wounding 10, some of them mortally.'⁶³ It had previously taken a ship heading from Carolina to Lisbon with a cargo of rice. The Gordon brothers had 160 barrels of rice on board, but trusted that insurance would cover their losses. Finally, in November the sloop *Beaver* had a small French privateer of four guns and sixty men '(strength sufficient to do a great deal of Hurt to this trade)' in its sights. It was, thought Alexander, 'a little dirty tub of a vessel but they say sails well', hailing from Bordeaux.⁶⁴ All these activities necessitated the formation of convoys of outbound ships. In August 1761, 'the Vessels are all getting ready to sail under Convoy of the Amazon who is to take them under her Convoy to give them a good [offing?]' and clear them of two privateers that at present infest our Coast.⁶⁵ The officers of these naval vessels formed important recipients of the hospitality that British merchants offered, not just as thanks for their protection, but also, and more importantly, with a view to building reputation and securing wine orders.

⁶³ Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 18 August 1761, *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 21 November 1761, *ibid.*

⁶⁵ Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 22 August 1761, *ibid.*

6 Hospitality as business

The Crowd was Great and everyone had more Guests than could well accommodate, In my own particular I was vexed not to have it in my power to shew all the Civilitys to some you recommended that I could have wished, this was owing to our being full before I recd many of your letters, & to Doctor Fotheringhams forcing upon me two Women passengers much against my own Inclination but there was no helping it, I had six or seven people that lodg'd with me & generally 10 to 12 at Dinner wch threw us into no Small Confusion & hurry and prevented our doing all the business that otherwise might have been done.¹

Such was Alexander's verdict on the arrival of the Jamaica fleet in Funchal Roads in 1761. Offering hospitality to those passing through Madeira was a central part of the activities of British merchants. It was done in the hope of eventual orders, but also with an eye to building reputation. Hospitality requests often had their origins in Britain, where James vetted applications and sent on letters of recommendation to the island. Requests for hospitality that originated with James in London had two sources: solicitations he received and those he actively sought. So in 1762 an A. Gordon of Hampdon, Hertfordshire, asked James, whom he referred to as 'Your Affectionate Cousin and friend', if he could give his nephew Gordon Skelly who was 'appointed Lieut in a Ship – that goes to Guinea – and touches at the Madeiras' 'a Line to your House there.'² Much later, after James Duff had returned to London, he was approached by his friend David Forbes to facilitate the visit to Madeira of his sister-in-law Margaret and brother Robert. His brother, William Forbes (1756–1823) of Callendar House near Falkirk was

¹ Alexander Gordon, Madeira, to James Gordon, London, 21 November 1761, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box nine, letters from Madeira.

² A. Gordon, Hampdon, Hertfordshire, to James Gordon, London, 30 December 1762, *ibid.*, box nine, Pitsligo pew drawing.

a fabulously wealthy copper merchant, known as ‘Copper Bottom Forbes’. He had made his fortune selling copper to the Navy for sheathing the keels of ships to protect them against insects which would bore into their timbers. His wife was ill and it was felt that the Madeiran climate would help her to recover. Accordingly, in 1793 James provided an introductory letter to the partners in Madeira, informing them that Robert, who would accompany her, would have a line of credit on the house, guaranteed by William Forbes, of two thousand pounds.³

The other route for hospitality requests came through the connections that James Gordon made in London. Seven of the letters in 1771 came through the offices of Robert Grant. ‘Our friend Robert Grant of this Place’, wrote James, ‘who is well acquainted wt the Navy folks is an advocate for us.’⁴ Accordingly, four of those recommended via Grant were naval officers, but two were secretaries to admirals on their way to take up service in the West Indies. The final recipient was Robert Grant’s brother, William, who, having been in partnership with Robert, was heading for Grenada, a popular destination, as we will see, for Scots on the make. Robert, who hailed from Strathspey, was an eminent Canada merchant who played a significant role in the fur trade through the North West Company.⁵ As well as specific requests, however, James also alerted his partners to more general opportunities. So in 1769 James alerted the island partners to the departure for India of the *Aurora*, carrying on board Henry Vanstittart, Luke Scrafton and Colonel Ford, on their way to take up commanding roles in India. (The ship was lost with all hands rounding the Cape of Good Hope). He had attempted to offer Vanstittart the house’s hospitality in Madeira but ‘they are all engaged other ways by Interest superior to mine.’ Despite this, James encouraged his partners to introduce themselves as ‘it is right that every house of Character should be known more or less to men of distinction that pass your way.’⁶ Six years later he became aware of passengers of rank heading for Barbados and

³ William Forbes, London, to Gordon, Duff, Madeira, 15 January 1793, Falkirk Archives (hereafter FA), Forbes of Callendar papers, A727.484 letters 30 December 1792 – 21 November 1793, /3.

⁴ James Gordon, London, to Alexander Gordon & Co, 18 April 1771, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, letter book.

⁵ Strathspey in the Canadian fur trade, <https://williamgrantofcarron.wordpress.com/2012/04/09/strathspey-in-the-canadian-fur-trade/>, accessed 20 June 2016.

⁶ James Gordon, London, to Alexander Gordon & Co, 21 September 1769, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, letter book.

urged a more proactive stance: ‘one of you will do well to go on board of Lee in good time to prevent their being pickt up by any body else.’⁷

The ship *Stanley* carrying Margaret Forbes and her brother in law arrived off Funchal in February 1793. From it her brother wrote to Gordon, Duff & Co advising them that ‘as Mrs F is in a very poor State of health She will require a bed chamber immediately upon her coming ashore.’⁸ They had had a rough voyage with westerly gales confining them in the Bay of Biscay for eighteen days, but ‘notwithstanding the bad weather Mrs F bore the fatigue exceedingly well and I think was rather benefited by the exercise and Sea air.’⁹ Unfortunately, Margaret and Robert were faced by the problem that confronted all travellers to Madeira in the eighteenth century, the lack of harbour facilities at Funchal. Indeed, after one particularly bad spell of weather in 1774, James had complained that ‘these news have given the Island of Mada a very frightfull character with respect to the risk of sending Ships there in the winter time, which will dwell on people’s minds for some time & I fear be hurtfull to the place.’ He was particularly worried that the West Indies fleet, which was the mainstay of the island’s commerce, especially the wine trade, would no longer call at the island. ‘What a pity it is, ‘he continued, ‘that you have no harbour, which certainly might be made, tho’ I’m sure it never will, & it is not impossible but the Island may in time lose most of its trade for want of a place of safety for Ships.’¹⁰ Goods and people thus had to be transferred into small boats and landed on the beach, causing the house to write back to Robert Forbes that:

they would have sent a boat off last night, had it not been impracticable on account of the late hour and high wind. A boat should have been sent on board this morning, but the boatmen dissuaded Messrs G. D, & Co from doing it on account of the wind, wch they still fear is too high. Mrs Forbes had better be well wrap’d up otherwise the Spray of the sea will in probability very much wet her – a Chair shall be ready at the landing place.¹¹

⁷ James Gordon, London, to Alexander Gordon & Co, 3 April 1775, *ibid.*

⁸ Ship *Stanley* off Funchal to Mr Gordon 22 February 1793, FA, Forbes of Callendar papers, A727.484/6.

⁹ Draft letter Robert Forbes to James Duff 25 February 1793, *ibid.*, A727.484/8.

¹⁰ James Gordon, London, to Alexander Gordon & Co, 2 April 1774, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, letter book.

¹¹ Gordon Duff to Robert Forbes 23 February 1793, FA, Forbes of Callendar papers, A727.484/7.

Having made it safely onshore, the two travellers not only stayed with Robert Duff but also accepted invitations to dinner from Messrs Ahmuty and Masterton and Mr and Mrs Murdoch. Unfortunately, Robert Forbes' sanguine hopes that 'by the attention of Doctor Gordon and the fineness of this climate I am in great hopes she will very soon recover' proved too optimistic.¹² Margaret died on the island; she was 28. She was buried in the English cemetery in Funchal, a marble headstone being sent out to be erected by Gordon, Duff. Robert Forbes arrived back in England in July 1793 and promptly wrote to thank James Duff. 'I shall always retain,' he observed, 'a grateful recollection of the uncommon attention and kindness shown to me by your House.'¹³ This was not an empty token; in January the following year the house at Madeira wrote to William Forbes to thank him for a gift of silver tureens. Orders for wine would follow.¹⁴

Not all offers of hospitality ended so tragically. Lord Adam Gordon, on his way to India, reported the Madeira merchant Thomas Heberden to his friend James Gordon in London, 'seemed very much pleased with the Behaviour he met here.'¹⁵ Abraham Leslie wrote from Calcutta to thank James for 'the Civilities received from him [Alexander Gordon] at Madeira on our way out in Consequence of your kind Recommendation.'¹⁶ While these were men on their way to India, the surviving letters of recommendation suggest the dominance of the West Indies in visits to the island. Thirty of the fifty letters of recommendation in the surviving letter book were for those on their way to Caribbean islands. The largest number, nine, were for those heading to Grenada. This fertile island had been ceded to Britain by France under the Treaty of Paris at the end of the Seven Years War and Scots on the make eagerly took up the opportunities it offered. Amongst them were William Dunbar of Durn, a cousin of James and Alexander. He had lived with James in London before heading out for Grenada 'in a genteel Station'.¹⁷ William had also been 'out' in 1745, a member of Lord Pitsligo's Horse and his trip to Grenada was an attempt to restore family fortunes.¹⁸ The family house of

¹² Draft letter Robert Forbes to James Duff 25 February 1793, *ibid.*, A727.484/8.

¹³ Robert Forbes to James Duff London 7 July 1793, *ibid.*, A727.484/65.

¹⁴ Gordon Duff & Co, Madeira to William Forbes, Callendar 18 January 1794, *ibid.*, A727.522/2.

¹⁵ Thomas Heberden, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 19 May 1764, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box two, bundle of London letters.

¹⁶ Abraham Leslie, Calcutta, to James Gordon, London, 4 February 1766, *ibid.*

¹⁷ James Gordon, London, to Alexander Gordon & Co, 9 December 1771, *ibid.*, letter book.

¹⁸ Tayler and Tayler, *Jacobites*, 148.

Durn would in due course be considered for purchase by Patrick Duff, but that lay well in the future. Jamaica was the next most popular destination, but all the major settlements were included. In 1774 Henry Smith reported from Madeira that ‘Mr Baillie stayed at our Ho, & show’d a great deal of friendship he seems to be an exceeding good & worthy man, he gave us room to expect his Ho. In the Wst Indies will take from us yearly 30 pipes of wine more or less.’¹⁹

Hospitality was not only given to those heading out as merchants or planters. Eminent figures were also cultivated, like James Goldfrap, Secretary to Governor Leyburn of Grenada. Perhaps the most prestigious guest was the visit in 1770 of the Earl of Dunmore, Governor of New York.²⁰ John Murray (1730–1809), 4th Earl of Dunmore, had restored the respectability of his family after their Jacobite allegiances, but he proved a singularly unsuccessful figure in America. His proclamation in 1775 promising freedom to slaves who would fight for the British against the Virginia Patriots was a key event in provoking the War of Independence, a war that proved to have a far reaching impact on the Madeira wine trade. He is best known now for the extraordinary hothouse built in the gardens of Dunmore House in the shape of a pineapple.²¹ The hospitality afforded him is testament in part to the effort put in by James in London to cultivate members of the British elite.

However, figures of lesser social standing but, arguably, greater commercial importance were also afforded hospitality. These were the ships’ captains. Not that they lacked social status; on the *Barwell* in 1792, the captain, four mates, surgeon and purser were ‘all gentlemen by education and family.’²² Alongside the commodities they loaded on their ships, they were carriers of information, connecting the static nodes of a network that stretched across the Atlantic. In 1762, Captain Partington left Madeira carrying 100 pipes for Alexander, who reported ‘we part very good friends, he leaves me with some Letters for Capt Howe & his officers, seems very desirous to serve the House & desires to be remember’d to you.’²³ Hospitality whilst on the island could

¹⁹ Daniel Henry Smith, Madeira, to James Gordon, London, 21 January 1774, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box ten, letters 1770.

²⁰ James Gordon, London, to Alexander Gordon & Co, 27 June 1770, *ibid.*, letter book.

²¹ Anna Keay and Caroline Stanford, *Landmark: A History of Britain in 50 Buildings* (London, 2015), 176–81.

²² Sir Evan Cotton, *East Indiamen: The East India Company’s Maritime Service* (London, 1949), 24.

²³ Alexander Gordon, Madeira, to James Gordon, London, 2 April 1762, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box nine, letters from Madeira.

cement such friendship and lead the way to further services. In 1772 James wrote to Captain Cooper of the *Royal Charlotte*, then at anchor in the Thames but bound for Jamaica, thanking him for acting to recover a debt from Evan Evanson on the island.²⁴ One hundred pounds of his promissory note for £168 given in 1763 had been cleared in 1766, but, despite a reminder in 1768, the balance was still outstanding. This indicates some of the difficulties of carrying out business at such distances, especially when trust broke down. Nine men were recommended for hospitality in this capacity. So, for example, in 1769 James wrote ‘this goes by Capt Suttie, one of the best men alive, A Gentleman by Birth and Education, & an intimate acquaintance of mine, be particularly civil to him.’²⁵ Again, two years later, Captain John Lenox commanded the *Anson*: ‘Lenox is one of the honestest Fellows in the World. Use him well. If you don’t, he wont forgive me, nor will I you.’²⁶ Even if captains could not call on the island, they were not to be forgotten. In 1766 Captain Tovey sailed for Antigua, but he was so fully laden that he could not pick up wine at Madeira. Still, advised James ‘a small prest would be well bestowed, as he is a very good kind of man & much our Friend.’²⁷

Having such friends was vital in the business of securing room for cargos. Many captains were also part owners of their ships. Ships were conventionally owned in shares of multiples of sixty-fourths, often spread across a number of owners. A managing partner would act as ship’s ‘husband’, managing the loads the ship carried. This meant that, despite his better judgment, James and his house became involved in the ownership of ships in order to retain the favour of captains and secure places for their cargos. His reluctance came from the risks involved in ship ownership and concerns about the commercial conduct of some captains. ‘They are’, he moaned in 1773, ‘the most ready means in the world to melt down a fortune’.²⁸ His experience with one ship, the *Lovely Betsy*, seems to confirm this gloomy judgment. He had a quarter share in the ship, for an initial investment of £300 and a subsequent call for £96. His dividends from 1769 to 1773 amounted to some £81,

²⁴ James Gordon, London to Captain James Cooper, Ship Royal Charlotte, now in the Thames, 22 February, 1772, *ibid.*, letter book.

²⁵ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 16 October 1769, *ibid.*

²⁶ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 4 December 1771, *ibid.*

²⁷ James Gordon, London to James & Alexander Gordon, 8 April 1766, *ibid.*

²⁸ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 9 March 1773, *ibid.*

which he judged 'a poor affair indeed'.²⁹ He expected to make a loss when the ship was sold in 1774. Despite this experience, the letters suggest that he had invested on behalf of both himself and his partners in seven ships in 1774/5. As he said when taking a sixteenth of the *Charming Sally* in 1772, 'there is a prospect of their doing well & being of service to the house, & refusing sometimes the requests of friends proves the loss of them entirely, the only reason why we must on some occasions comply with their desire against our Inclination.'³⁰ He was badgered in 1774 to take a share in a new ship being built for one of the captains in his network whose previous ship he had also part owned. He had agreed reluctantly as 'you don't refuse to help out the person who applies to you, & you think may be of service to the House.'³¹ A few days later he had to confess that he had given into pressure and the house now had a one-eighth share.

Having made such investments, they had to be maximised. As James noted of the rival house of Pringle and Cheap, ship owning merchants could seek to prevent their captains trading with other houses. In 1770 James Duff reported from the island that he had requested room for some wine on a ship chartered by the Murdoch house bound for Quebec. He 'received a disobliging & surly denial from Mr Fearn, who now manages that houses concerns here.' It might be recalled that Fearn was to get into financial trouble in 1771 and clearly had a bad track record from James' comment that he 'does not seem to have yet profited by experience, sufficiently to remember that human affairs are changeable'.³² Thus it was breaking with convention when the husband of the *Charming Sally* took business from the rival firm of Ferguson and Murdoch. James agreed to let it pass and not mention it further 'except some of these days in a joking way, & you, if you think fit, may laugh with their House about it there.'³³ However, ownership meant that James kept a close eye on how his ships were trading. In 1766 he complained to Alexander about the latter sending wine by Captain Peters when it should have gone out by a Captain Ochterlony, 'being largely concern'd in that ship.'³⁴

²⁹ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 27 January 1773, *ibid.*

³⁰ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 21 December 1772, *ibid.*

³¹ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 12 October 1774; 20 October 1774, *ibid.*

³² James Duff, Madeira, nd (but c. 1771), *ibid.*, box ten, overseas letters.

³³ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 27 January 1773, *ibid.*, letter book.

³⁴ James Gordon, London to James & Alexander Gordon, 8 April 1766, *ibid.*

James was not always happy about entrusting his investments to captains. Cleveland, captain of the *Lovely Betsy*, he considered a little too young and wild. Others were careless about drawing bills and not settling them for long periods: 'they never think how irregular it is, or how inconvenient for me to let them ly over so, & I'm loth to speak to them often about it, as I find you have a dependence upon them.'³⁵ One captain who gave James particular problems was Patrick Lawson, a captain with a particularly chequered career. Lawson was denounced twice for smuggling, in 1779 and 1783, and ended up fleeing to India.³⁶ That perhaps casts some light on his troubled relations with James Gordon, hints of which appear in surviving letters, although in this case from Lawson's side. In January 1772 Lawson approached Gordon seeking his investment in the *Lord Holland*, an East Indiaman built to replace a ship of the same name lost off the coast of India in 1769. Lawson bought the command of the ship from the previous captain, Nairne, and had the prospect, he promised, of also acting as the ship's husband. He needed to find investments for nine-sixteenths of the boat, with a sixteenth being valued at £1,220. This was a huge investment and clearly something went wrong, since in October Lawson wrote that 'Sorry am I to have received such a letter from you, My Dr Friend do you think me capable of dirty work.' James had invested on the understanding that Nairne would resign his command, but he became suspicious that this would not be the case, demanding the return of his money. 'Forgive me Sir,' Lawson pleaded, but you have in my humble opinion been persuaded by party contrary to that fund of good Sense & to that benevolent disposition which fills your mind.'³⁷ More doubts were raised by the actions of John Haskins, a ropemaker, who had taken a share of one thirty-second in the ship and was looking to recover money owed – an action prompted, Lawson suspected, by Nairne's party in order to financially distress him.³⁸

Clearly, Lawson must have escaped his creditors, for we know the *Lord Holland* sailed to China. His first voyage was a success, but the next news we have in letters to James came in January 1778 when a letter arrived in London from the ship pleading for James to discount a bill for £1,000 which 'will in a

³⁵ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 20 October 1774, *ibid.*

³⁶ Cotton, *East Indiamen*, 39.

³⁷ Patrick Lawson, sl to James Gordon, London, 14 October 1772, *ibid.*, box ten, London letters.

³⁸ Patrick Lawson, Hampton to James Gordon, London, 17 November 1772, *ibid.*

manner secure my Ship, my Liberty & in short everything.³⁹ This clearly won some time for Lawson, but in September the following year James received a letter from George Riddoch in the River Shannon advising him that Lawson had had a good voyage but had so many demands on him that he doubted whether he could get over it. Riddoch's advice was that James should get out to Ireland to clear up matters before other creditors arrived.⁴⁰ Lawson, Hickey tells us, was denounced by a member of his crew for smuggling and was relieved of his command.⁴¹ That James continued to support Lawson, perhaps in a desperate bid to get his money back, can be seen in a letter from December 1779 in which Lawson thanked him for his support in a meeting of creditors. Without this, Lawson feared 'dismissal from the Company's Service would ensue.'⁴² Quite how the matter ended is not clear. Lawson went on to captain another ship, the *Locko*, for the East India Company, but Gordon's involvement is unrecorded. What his experience does show, however, is how perilous investment in ships and their captains could be. At the same time, it also shows how dependent on them Madeira merchants were for their business.

After all, the key objective of the hospitality they displayed was the winning of reputation which then might be crystallised into wine orders. In January 1794 the house at Madeira had received and erected the marble memorial stone to Margaret Forbes. In May they received an order for 'two pipes of our choice old wine and a quarter cask of Malmsey', an order valued at £97 5s. This lay in their stores until June 1795, 'in hopes of an opportunity of shipping it but none having offer'd, nor any chance of a vessel for the Clyde coming this way, we judged it advisable to Ship the wine to Hull as we understand there are easy Conveyances from thence to the Clyde, and other Houses here are doing the same. We have therefore shipt the wine on the *Hygeia* Capt Lee to go round vis Barbadoes and London to your address in Hull for which we inclose your bill of lading.'⁴³ This shows some of the process that shipping wine back to rich customers involved. The *Hygeia* sailed from Barbados in July and the wine arrived in Hull in November 1795. From

³⁹ Patrick Lawson, sl, to James Gordon, London, 16 January 1778, *ibid.*

⁴⁰ George Riddoch, River Shannon, to James Gordon, London, 2 September 1779, *ibid.*, box ten, letters 1770.

⁴¹ Spencer, *Memoirs*, I, 214.

⁴² Patrick Lawson, sl, to James Gordon, London, 29 December 1779, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box ten, London letters.

⁴³ Gordon Duff, Madeira to William Forbes, Callendar, 13 June 1795, FA, Forbes of Callendar papers, A727.566 /1.

there it was put on board the *Jannet Sarah* for Leith, where it was received by the wine merchants Ramsey Williamson in December 1795.⁴⁴ William Forbes must have been satisfied with his wine, despite the long wait, for in 1798 James Duff wrote to him from London that ‘the Norval arrived safe at Jamaica, from where she is expected to sail, in a Convoy appointed to leave that Island, early in present month. Upon the Ship’s getting in the River, I shall acquaint your Brother here, that care may be taken of your wine.’⁴⁵ The hospitality and care shown had resulted in a long term relationship, one also bound up with networks of friendship and influence. Something of these networks can be explored further when we look at what the letters tell us about other customers.

⁴⁴ Gordon Duff, Madeira to William Forbes, Callendar, 13 July 1795, *ibid.*, A727.566/3; /5 John Delamain, Hull to William Forbes, Callendar, 21 November 1795; /8 Ramsey, Williamson, Leith to William Forbes, Callendar, 14 December 1795.

⁴⁵ James Duff, London to William Forbes, Callendar, *ibid.*, A727.634/1.

7 Wine drinkers

Ludington's examination of wine consumption in Britain in the eighteenth century only mentions madeira in passing, with his main focus being the contrasting fortunes of claret and port.¹ He hints that madeira was a luxury good, with an important but generally small presence in aristocratic cellars. Within this limited British market, it would appear that the Gordons aspired to the provision of top quality, premium products. In a record of the wine consumed in the London house of the Duke of Gordon in the years 1753 to 1758 the domination of claret in Scottish aristocratic households is clear.² Of a total of 422 bottles, 287, or nearly sixty-eight per cent were claret. By 1767, however, madeira accounted for over sixty-four per cent of consumption. It had not appeared in the figures for the 1750s at all, although five bottles of 'Malmasimadeira', that is, the sweet heavy malmsey of the island, did appear.

In 1758 the wines of Portugal quite definitely overtook those of France, with the consumption of port jumping from thirty-four to 215 bottles. Wines from the south of Portugal were present, but only in small quantities; replacing them were the wines from Madeira. It would appear that the suppliers were the Gordons of Letterfourie, for in 1765 James reported that he had tasted wine destined for the Duke of Gordon and Lord Aberdeen 'on the Key on a cold frosty morning after being all night in the Lighter, I did not think much of it then, it lays now in a Warm Vault in Miles Lane.'³ However, consumption of madeira seemed to peak in 1767. The wine books for London finish in 1772, but the decline in the popularity of madeira can be seen in the Gordon Castle wine books, which take up the story from 1769. In that year 601 bottles of madeira were consumed, as against 1,891 of

¹ Ludington, *Politics of Wine*, 129, 170, 176.

² London wine books, NRS, Gordon muniments, GD44/52/113/1 1758–1766, GD44/52/113/4 1767–1772.

³ James Gordon, London, to James and Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 5 December 1765, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 422, letter book.

claret.⁴ Clearly, old consumption habits died harder in the north of Scotland. Port consumption was only just below that of madeira at 589 bottles, but it was the Portuguese mainland product which was to win out. It maintained steady consumption over the years to 1782 as both the overall volume of consumption declined and as the range of drinks offered expanded.

James Gordon was constantly worried about threats to the popularity of madeira amongst his customers. In 1766 he was worried about wine from the Canaries: 'Tenerife certainly hurts us greatly, & will do so more & more, abundance of that Wine comes here and has a much readier Sale than the Mada by far, of which last there is a deal of trash at Market, as well from the Island as America which degrades the General Character of our Wine, & I lately had occasion to taste a parcel of Vidonia really very good, & of as delightful a pale Colour as ever was seen.'⁵ He need not have worried, if the Gordon wine books are a reliable guide. Wine from the Canaries appeared in the London wine books in 1768, but never more than four bottles in a year. At Gordon Castle more bottles, eleven, also were consumed in 1768 but consumption thereafter was never more than seven bottles a year. Far more prescient was his worry in 1774 that a poor vintage in Madeira would mean that the island's wines were 'like to be cut out by the Sherry which in quality is infinitely beyond most of the Mada that comes here, & very like the best of it.'⁶

While consumption of sherry in London was negligible, the Gordon Castle books do indeed confirm the growing popularity of the Spanish wine, which peaked at 372 bottles in 1782. By then, it had completely eclipsed madeira and was close to the consumption of claret. Port, however, was by now, at 926 bottles, the clear favourite. There may have been some special factors involved in the experience of Gordon Castle with madeira, but these figures, broad and approximate though they are, demonstrate both the vagaries of fashion and the nature of one of the House of Gordon's key customer groups, the Scottish aristocracy. For the madeira consumed at Gordon Castle was supplied by their namesakes. In 1772, Alexander, who at that stage had returned to Letterfourie, had gone to Gordon Castle to be present at the

⁴ Gordon Castle wine book 1768–70, NRS, Gordon muniments, GD44/52/113/5.

⁵ James Gordon, London, to James and Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 28 January 1766, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 422, letter book.

⁶ James Gordon, London, to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 2 March 1774, *ibid.*

opening of the pipes. The wine, he reported, was very good, but one pipe arrived half-empty.⁷

We can follow the journey of that wine which tells us something about one key segment of the Gordons' customers and about the process of getting wine to them. In 1771 James wrote to the factor at Gordon Castle that he had forwarded an order for two pipes of wine to be ready for the arrival in Madeira of the *Janet and Anne* from Aberdeen under captain George Craik.⁸ Craik ran annual voyages from Aberdeen to the West Indies, advertising a voyage to Tobago, Grenada and Jamaica, touching at Madeira, to depart from Aberdeen in February.⁹ As James explained, 'Mada wine is found by experience to improve by passing thro' hot Climates, & being long at sea, for which reason, scarce any comes directly from the Isld to Great Britain, but mostly all by the W. Ones.'¹⁰ The house in Madeira reported in July that they had loaded the two pipes, well secured with ten iron hoops, and further enclosed in wooden cases, on board the ship. 'One of the pipes,' they advised, 'is old wine fittest for immediate use & it may not be amiss to acquaint you that our wines are of such a nature as to require being kept as dry & warm as possible because cold & dampness hurts them.'¹¹ It was not until January 1772, six months after leaving Madeira, that the wine arrived in Aberdeen harbour. Here the pipes were found to be in poor condition, with one having leaked badly. James Burns reported that he had attempted to tighten them up and recase them, and that he was waiting on a carter to take them to Gordon Castle. It was not until April that he could report that the carter had set out.¹² It is a little surprising given the execrable state of the roads that the pipes were not sent by sea, for it was not until 1 June 1772 that the wine book records the receipt of two pipes, estimated at 784 bottles, in the cellars at Gordon Castle.¹³ Meanwhile the payment for the wine – £32 for the

⁷ James Gordon, London, to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 30 November 1772, *ibid.*

⁸ James Gordon, London to James Ross, Gordon Castle, 9 March 1771, NRS, Duke of Gordon muniments, GD44/38/20.

⁹ David Dobson, *American Data from the Aberdeen Journal, 1748–1783* (Baltimore, 1998), 72, 74, 78.

¹⁰ James Gordon, London to James Ross, Gordon Castle, 9 March 1771, NRS, Duke of Gordon muniments, GD44/38/20.

¹¹ Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira to James Ross, Gordon Castle, 3 July 1771, *ibid.*, GD44 45/6.

¹² James Burns, Aberdeen to James Ross, Gordon Castle, 10 January 1772, *ibid.*, GD44/43/56; William Taylor for James Burns, Aberdeen to James Ross, Gordon Castle, 6 April 1772, GD44/43/62.

¹³ Gordon Castle wine book 1770–1774, *ibid.*, GD44/52/114/1.

pipe of old wine, £31 for the last vintage plus freight and packing charges – had been pursued by Alexander in September 1771. No wonder that he was embarrassed by the leakage and that a cask of the best Malmsey and a box of preserved lemons were ordered in compensation. James did not miss the opportunity to reprimand his nephews as leaking casks were ‘damnably disagreeable to whoever has a Connection with the house that Shippes wine in such Casks. This has happened so frequently of late to me that I am quite put to the Blush.’ Their neglect, he continued, cost the house in both reputation and cash. ‘There is a neglect somewhere,’ he fulminated, ‘either in your Coopers or those who ought to have a Sharp look out for them. When I was in Madeira I was particularly Vigilant & even Impertinente that way.’¹⁴ Nevertheless, the Duke of Gordon continued to be a good customer.

As David Hancock has pointed out, ‘founding partners of Madeira’s wine houses began by appealing to personal contacts: to their families and to the patronage and peer groups from which they had come. Almost always, these groups were based on shared ethnic or religious background.’¹⁵ This is borne out by the Gordon of Letterfourie letter book, but their correspondence also indicates development over time. A central principle for the Gordons was that they would not sell on their own account, nor would they engage in speculative ‘adventures’. ‘We are not at all in the wine trade here, nor did we ever import any for sale,’ James Gordon informed a prospective customer in 1772.¹⁶ He advised one of his long term suppliers in Hamburg who was thinking of obtaining a return cargo of madeira for sale in London that ‘I think Madeira is generally an unprofitable Speculation to this Place, & fear you will get nothing, but rather loss, by your small Concern [in] it, tho’ I wish the contrary.’¹⁷ Writing to his nephew in Madeira, James commented that ‘I think the whole business is like to turn into Particular Orders, at least they will be the most material Part of it, and we must look after them.’¹⁸ By ‘particular orders’ he meant orders which he had directly solicited for specific customers. Such orders continued trends which had been consolidated since he had returned to London, and which turned on two groups of customers: wealthy individuals and London wine merchants.

¹⁴ James Gordon, London, to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 23 April 1772, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 422, letter book.

¹⁵ Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, 145.

¹⁶ James Gordon, London to John Fern, Lichfield, 28 April 1772, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 422, letter book.

¹⁷ James Gordon, London, to Klefker and Paschen, Hamburg, 28 June 1771, *ibid*.

¹⁸ James Gordon, London, to James Duff, Madeira, 21 October 1771, *ibid*.

Although the records of the business before 1761 are missing, it does seem reasonable, based on the continuing business after that date, to assume that Gordon, using his own landed background, carefully cultivated his network of Scottish aristocratic contacts. In 1767, for example, following a visit to Scotland, James ordered a hogshead of wine each for Sir Robert Abercromby of Birkenbog, General Abercromby and William Urquhart of Craigston, all local landowners. ‘Let the wine be the best,’ he cautioned, ‘or I can never show my face in the Country.’¹⁹ Comments like this suggest that Gordon was aiming for a premium niche in the market, aware perhaps that he could not rival the efforts of competitors in other markets. The aim of expanding the customer base was clearly a key part of his return to London in 1761. As his brother wrote to him from Madeira, ‘as to particular wines, tho many people may decline ordering them on acct of the high price, others must have them Cost what they will, I need not suggest to you the means of obtaining a share of such orders from England, perhaps an acquaintance and friendship with some Gentn of fortune and influence in the other end of town may be in no bad way.’²⁰

James was not keen on his new role, finding the busyness of London disconcerting. His letters complain of being in competition with ‘so many Buzzers & Sollicitors’.²¹ Knowing his brother’s rather reserved disposition, Alexander sought to encourage him: ‘With the short acquaintance you must as yet have of London, and the few connections you can hitherto have made tis no wonder others should have the advantage of you, yet I think, judging from what you have been able to do in so bad a year, and in the Beginning of your Solicitations, there is no room to despond.’²² Nevertheless, James’ efforts appear to have borne fruit. The first set of customers in 1763 give a good indication of who were prime targets for the premium products on offer.²³ Wine was ordered for Henry Drummond Esq, Richard Bull Esq, Sir Robert Smyth Bart and Humphrey Morris Esq. The first two were to become Members of Parliament, the first with Scottish connections.²⁴ Drummond

¹⁹ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 1 January 1767, *ibid.*

²⁰ Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 18 August 1761, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 422, box nine, letters from Madeira.

²¹ James Gordon, London to James & Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 20 March 1768, *ibid.*, letter book.

²² Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 18 August 1761, *ibid.*, box nine, letters from Madeira.

²³ Despatch notes, 19 April 1763, AULSC, *ibid.*, box nine, Pitsligo pew drawing.

²⁴ ‘Bull, Richard’ and ‘Drummond, Henry’, *History of Parliament Online*, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/>, accessed 28 May 2014.

was a wealthy banker whose father had been executed for his part in the 1745 Rising. When he entered Parliament in 1774, it was as a supporter of Lord North. Bull was the son of a wealthy merchant and a demanding customer. Clearly a repeat customer, James Gordon was worried in 1774 ‘that Mr Bull’s pipe sounds as if it were half leaked out, which is the Devil, I do not in the least blame you for it, tho’ must tell you of it, Mr Bull is a Gentn of fortune & a Member of Parliam[en]t, & I shall have an ugly piece of work about it, as there is no persuading such people that we are free from blame.’²⁵

These orders also indicate something of the variety of products and delivery mechanisms. All of the orders were to be in casks made of staves sourced from Hamburg rather than America. Leakage was a persistent worry and the Hamburg staves were felt to be of higher quality, with clear implications for supply routes. These orders were all to go round via the West Indies. As Gordon explained to a prospective customer, Lady Davers of Bury St Edmunds, not only were there very few ships returning direct to London from Madeira, but also ‘by which progress they say it is greatly improved.’²⁶ The wine would be shipped to her at her own risk to be paid for by a bill due thirty days after it was presented to her which would be drawn after the bill of lading was produced – meaning that customers paid for their wine before it arrived. As we saw with the wine for the Duke of Gordon, long delays were built into the process, leading to understandable anxieties on the part of customers. In 1766 James wanted to know ‘what is become of Lord Adam Gordon’s Wine? He has been a long time at home, asks me about it, and I can say nothing of it, if you address’d it to Mr Stewarts Care, I’m amazed he don’t send it home, so many ships come constantly from Grenada, there is also a pipe of Mr Booths wanting, he came to me about it.’²⁷ He suggested to another customer, Ralph Carr of Newcastle, that ‘Sea Hazard from Bbdos to London of a fine River built ship in the height of Summer I look upon to be very little.’²⁸ Because of this, he suggested, most customers did not take out insurance. Three of the 1763 customers ordered old wine, but that for Henry Drummond was to rest for two years in Barbados. All of them ordered a

²⁵ James Gordon London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 12 October 1774, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 422, letter book. Smyth had a country estate in Farnham, Suffolk; it has not been possible to establish the identity of Morris; William Betham, *Baronetage of England* (5 vols, London, 1803), III, 182.

²⁶ James Gordon, London to Lady Davers, Bury St Edmunds, 9 June 1772, *ibid.*, letter book.

²⁷ James Gordon, London to James & Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 8 March 1766, *ibid.*

²⁸ James Gordon London to Ralph Carr, Newcastle, 13 July 1773, *ibid.*

pipe of wine, holding (usually) 110 gallons. They were all charged £29 10s a pipe for old wine, so these were significant purchases.

The quality of the wine seemed to outweigh the risks concomitant on this process. The letter book records sixty-one individual customers across the country to whom bills were presented. Of course, the many London customers would not show up in such a count, given the possibility of the personal presentation of bills, but Gordon's success in working his personal contacts can be seen in the letters. Ordering in 1766 a hogshead for Lord Oliphant, a Scot returned from estate management in Jamaica and resident on Great Pulteney Street in London, he urged 'this is a Worthy honest Gentn with whom I dine almost every Sunday, let me not be put to the Blush for the Wine & be oblig'd to desert his hospitable House.'²⁹ In the following year another Scot in London, Adam Drummond, MP, ordered a pipe.³⁰ In 1770 he drew attention to a particular order: 'there is one pipe for Lord North's Secretary which must be Superlatively good, it is so recommended in order to give us a name in that end of the Town.'³¹ This injunction must have been followed, for in the following year there was an order for Lord North himself, Prime Minister from 1770 to 1782.³² This was a significant order, for soon after there was another of five pipes for the Duke of Portland, 'who I suppose intends part of them for some others of the Nobility his friends. They are to lay at least 12 Months in Grenada, & if their Quality is approved of, I am told (Can't say if it will happen so) large Orders will be the Consequence.'³³ Amanda Vickery tells us in her study of Georgian domestic life that 'wives were unlikely to trespass on the masculine preserves of horse furniture and port', and orders for madeira seem to confirm this.³⁴ There were only three women amongst these sixty-one customers: a Mrs Lewis of London in 1770, Lady Davers of Bury St Edmunds in 1772 and Mrs Bloomberg of Kirby over Carr in Yorkshire in 1775.

²⁹ James Gordon, London to James & Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 28 January 1766, *ibid.*

³⁰ James Gordon, London to James & Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 7 February 1767, *ibid.*

³¹ Alexander Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 8 March 1770, *ibid.*

³² James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 30 October 1771, *ibid.*

³³ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 6 November 1771, *ibid.*

³⁴ Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven, CT, 2009), 127.

This part of the strategy, therefore, seems to have paid off. It was accompanied by a complementary focus on supply to wine merchants and taverns, again with quality in mind. The main customer here was the Metholds, wine merchants of Fenchurch Street. They first appeared as customers in 1761, when they ordered fifteen butts (which seems to be used interchangeably with a pipe as a measure, although often filled to 120 rather than 110 gallons).³⁵ They were, said Gordon in 1773, ‘good men, tho’ hard, but sure pay’.³⁶ Despite occasional disputes, they were regular customers, with orders up to fifteen butts at a time. In 1770 he was delighted to hear from them that the wine they had supplied from him to the London Tavern was better than that of Newton, a key competitor.³⁷ The London Tavern, rebuilt in 1765, was the premier meeting place in London. ‘There is just finished ye most Sumptuous Tavern ever seen in London,’ wrote James in 1768, ‘... the trade of it will be immense if once acquires a fame for Good Wines’.³⁸ He sought to obtain orders from this growing network of taverns catering for an expanding middle class market.³⁹ Consistent with the focus on the premium market, he secured an order in 1773 for a pipe for the St James Coffee House, which was, ‘resorted to by many of the Nobility of the Court, & Officers of the Guards, & if the wine is liked, this order will in all probability be productive of your shipping many more Pipes.’⁴⁰

The other leg of business was the Atlantic trade. While Hancock focuses on British North America, for the Gordons the key market seems to have been the West Indies. In the letter book there were forty-six letters to destinations in the West Indies, compared to nineteen to British North America. Within the West Indies the dominant destination was Grenada, with twenty-seven letters, reflecting in turn the influx of Scots to that island following its capture from the French in 1762. Numbers of Scots passed through Madeira carrying recommendations from James Gordon for hospitality on the island. One was his cousin William Dunbar, going to assist in the management of the

³⁵ Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 12 April 1761, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 422, box nine, letters from Madeira.

³⁶ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 6 January 1773, *ibid.*, letter book.

³⁷ Alexander Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 27 February 1770, *ibid.*

³⁸ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 25 February 1768, *ibid.*

³⁹ George Rudé, *Hanoverian London 1714–1808* (London, 1971), 70.

⁴⁰ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 29 March 1773, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 422, letter book.

estate of De Ponthieu and he became a frequent correspondent.⁴¹ Another was Roderick Williamson, who took twenty butts of wine, sent in quarterly loads, from 1770.⁴² Writing to John Reid in Jamaica, Gordon advised this method of splitting orders. Their payment arrangements were generally to draw bills at dates ranging from thirty to ninety days sight. In this case he 'having a friend in London that would always be ready to honour our drafts, accmpd with Bills of Lading & Inv of the Wines Shipped him, & to make things as easy & convenient as possible we shall be willing to draw at six or even eight months sight for the first year at least.'⁴³ The problem with such customers, however, was securing payment. By 1775 Williamson owed over £1200.⁴⁴ Similar problems led Gordon to despair:

I would have you totally to drop Consigning Wine & West India Schemes on the Houses acct. I shall never more encourage one pipe that way, nothing but destruction can follow it, I have not the Scrape of a Pen from St Christs, Antigua or Jamaica, & as for the last of these Places, my real opinion is that the Merchts we meet with here, whom we deem by all appearances men of honor & honesty, & such as may be rely'd on for Punctuality, Lose all sense of either after they get to that Isld, & so universal is this Contagion amongst them, that I can except no one of those I ever made tryal of, for they think no more of remitting for a Consignment from Mada, or a Madeira debt, than of ye world to come, wch never enters into their heads.⁴⁵

Despite observing of Jamaica merchants that 'they are all R_____ls and 'tis Ruin to have any concern with them', the house continued to trade to the West Indies, sending seventy pipes to Jamaica in 1771.⁴⁶

The West India trade was disrupted by the American War of Independence, something which had serious consequences for the next order from the Duke of Gordon. It also prompted a re-orientation on the India trade. Such

⁴¹ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 9 December 1771, *ibid.*

⁴² Alexander Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 21 May 1770, *ibid.*

⁴³ Alexander Gordon, London to John Reid, Jamaica, 4 January 1770, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ James Gordon, London to Roderick Williamson, Grenada, 5 April 1775, *ibid.*

⁴⁵ James Gordon, London to James & Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 30 April 1768, *ibid.*

⁴⁶ James Gordon, London to James & Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 25 January 1768, *ibid.*, letter book; James Duff, Madeira to unknown correspondent (presumed James Gordon in London) undated but from internal evidence April 1771, box ten.

a reorientation to the East was aided by Patrick's return and success in India. The money that the Gordons made in Madeira and the networks they built among aristocratic customers were both helpful in furthering Patrick's career. In order to complete this background, we also need to understand the other side of the coin, the suppliers that the Gordons dealt with, which is the focus of the next chapter.

8 Suppliers

Effective participation in the Madeira wine trade was about much more than wine. The letter books are of greater assistance for external suppliers than for the local island vineyard owners, who only feature as ghostly figures in the background of activities. We have noted already the preference of the house for staves from Hamburg; they also needed iron hoops to secure the pipes, which were generally constructed on the island. An alternative was to have casks made up in England and freighted out with commodities such as flax or wheat.¹ This points to the importance of trade in a range of commodities. As Alexander pointed out in 1763, ‘We must watch all oppo[rtunitie]s of making something by Imports for I’m afraid our exports without this will make but a poor Figure.’² The challenge was the small size of the market for goods against which to set the cost of high value wines, for ‘there is no knowing what to send or avoid sending to your trifling market, which today is in want & tomorrow is glutted by the smallest supply.’³ In addition, restrictions were placed by the government on what might be imported, restrictions which were perceived by merchants to be arbitrary and unpredictable. Such factors gave rise to considerable uncertainty, raising the value of information.

Three major commodities are indicated by the letters that survive: grain from Poland, exported via Danzig; herrings from Gothenburg; and Irish provisions via Cork. One voyage in 1766 indicates how trade with the Baltic built on existing Scottish shipping and mercantile networks. George Bellenden, who had worked as a surgeon for the Swedish East India Company before joining the extensive community of Scottish merchants in Gothenburg, became one of the major merchants in the port, trading extensively in

¹ Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 29 February 1764, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box nine, letters from Madeira.

² Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 12 February 1763, *ibid.*, box ten, overseas letters.

³ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 6 April 1773, *ibid.*, letter book.

timber.⁴ In July 1766 James Gordon ordered a cargo of five hundred barrels of herrings.⁵ Herring were a sought after commodity at the island, provided that they arrived in August or September, ‘as from that time their consumption begins, which lasts for some months.’⁶ Gordon contracted with the shipowner John Rankin of Dundee for the vessel *Fame* under Captain Thornton to pick up this cargo. In parallel, he ordered six tons of raw flax from Lorentz Brockhusen of Riga to be shipped to Gothenburg.⁷ This was to be supplemented by one hundred bars of Swedish iron, another industry in which expatriate Scots had played a major role.⁸ When the flax arrived from Riga one bale got wet, so the rest were sent on, ‘as we hope he will be the first ship to Madeira he being the first cleared out for that Island and indeed we know of none else.’⁹ Gordon was pleased to report that Thornton got his herring first to market before a glut.¹⁰ They were not so fortunate in other years, but the relationship continued until Bellenden’s death in 1770, when the business transferred to another Scottish expatriate firm, that of Scott and Fraser.

Dealings with Gothenburg were consistent throughout the period, whereas the choice of supplier for wheat, another key commodity, depended on price differences between the Baltic and North America. For several years the house dealt with Trevor Corry & Co in the port of Danzig (modern Gdansk) where names such as Stary Szkoty (Old Scotland) bear witness to long established Scottish merchant involvement.¹¹ Corry, the British consul, was from a Northern Ireland family descended from Scottish emigrants. Cargoes of wheat were obtained from him between 1768 and 1770, but in 1771 supplies were switched to North America – New York in 1772, Quebec in 1773 – because of lower prices and a glut on the island. ‘It is lucky you have yours in Roomy Cool Granaries & take the proper care to make it keep thro’ the Summer,’ wrote Alexander to his nephews in 1771, ‘being the only means

⁴ Anders Svensson, ‘British merchant and tradesmen in the 1700s Gothenburg’, *Traders and trading in the 1700s Gothenburg*, <http://blog.zaramis.se/2011/12/28/brittiska-handelsbus-och-handelsman-i-1700-talet-goteborg/>, accessed 6 June 2014.

⁵ James Gordon, London to George Bellenden, Gothenburg, 8 July 1766, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, letter book.

⁶ James Gordon, London to Scott & Fraser, Gothenburg, 13 April 1773, *ibid.*

⁷ James Gordon, London to Lorenz Brockhusen, Riga, 7 July 1766, *ibid.*

⁸ Steve Murdoch, *Network North: Scottish Kin, Commercial and Covert Associations in Northern Europe, 1603–1746* (Leiden, 2006), 203.

⁹ George Bellenden, Gothenburg to James Gordon, London, 8 November 1766, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box ten, overseas letters.

¹⁰ James Gordon, London to George Bellenden, Gothenburg, 7 April 1767, *ibid.*, letter book.

¹¹ T. M. Devine, *Scotland's Empire 1600–1815* (London, 2003), 10.

to prevent you losing by the adventure.¹² In 1777 James was corresponding with Joseph Porter in the Italian port of Livorno (referred to as Leghorn by British merchants of the time) about a cargo of Indian corn grown in Tuscany. ‘We have many more Articles,’ continued Porter, ‘that would give a good profit at Madeira such as silks Damasks Paduroys Lustrings Taffetys, Silk Stockings &c as also a Little fine Oil & Wine in Chests, some barrells of anchovies, a few napolitan Hams, Olives, Almonds, and if they have any Apothecaries (the consequence of Luxury) a Chest of Hanna, a Little Sena and other Drugs of which this is the Emporium.’¹³

The other major commodity import was of provisions – butter, beef and candles – out of Ireland. In 1771 Alexander contracted with Peter Long of Waterford for a half concern in a cargo of beef, butter and pork on the *Lovely Betsy* up to a maximum of £400. Alexander’s half would be paid for in wine for Long to sell on. However, Long, who Alexander had agreed to deal with because of previous business with his father, failed to reply to letters ‘for which I sett him down as a good for nothing fellow.’¹⁴ In addition to these commodities, the house also traded in dry goods. There were two groups of customers for these. In some cases they were for Madeiran individuals with whom they dealt. In May 1764 one unidentified Portuguese correspondent wrote to James in London ‘Grácia has brought me this letter she has wrote for you. I desire you will favour me with procuring a pair of spectacles for her of the focal distance 8 inches.’¹⁵ Sometimes these requests were not so easy to fulfil. In 1773 James complained that sofas for ‘Amto Joao’, ‘cost extravagantly high, they are large bulky uncommon things, & even the Fr[eigh]t amo[un]ts to a great deal of money.’¹⁶ In other cases they supplied local shopkeepers with fabrics and clothing from both Britain and Hamburg. In 1761 Alexander was requesting textiles which were wanted, ‘particularly

¹² Alexander Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 21 September 1771, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, letter book.

¹³ Letters addressed to James Gordon at London, from James Porter, Leghorn, 20 June 1777, The British Postal Museum and Archive, London, Sydney Turner collection, PH155.

¹⁴ Alexander Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 11 January 1772, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, letter book.

¹⁵ Unidentified correspondent, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 17 May 1764, *ibid.*, box two, bundle of London letters (in Portuguese). See also other letters in the same bundle of 1 and 7 December 1764 requesting the supply of musical instruments.

¹⁶ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 21 January 1773, *ibid.*, letter book.

by the Shopkeepers we have accounts with.¹⁷ In the previous year he referred to goods ‘for Consumption in our own shops’, but the context seems to suggest it was more for shopkeepers regarded through personal relations as ‘ours’, men like Thomas Corras who we saw Alexander looking after in a previous chapter.¹⁸ In 1762 local shopkeepers who were good payers were complaining of the shortage of items like candles, of which ‘there’s not a pound wgt for sale on the Isld.’ In addition ‘a few more Printed Cottons & Linnens some of them a little bettr & higher priced’ would, thought Alexander, find a ready sale.¹⁹ Ten years later, Alexander had ‘given order for a few Norwich Stuffs on your Acct solely but you should send Patterns of what you want, without which (their Prices, Qualities and Colours being so various) ‘tis hard to know what will do for you.’²⁰ The Gordons sought by correspondence to maintain an extensive network by which they could obtain goods from a wide range of sources. Thus the Hamburg firm of Klefeker & Paschen supplied not only staves, but also a range of textiles. In 1770, for example, as well as 1200 staves they shipped a barrel of starch and five chests containing textile goods ranging from table cloths to pieces of velvet.²¹

The Gordons preferred to charter ships and arrange cargos themselves, especially where timely arrival, as in the case of herrings, was key to securing the best prices, but on occasion they chose to spread the risk through joint ventures. While ‘entering into joint adventures is what you would neither like nor do I’, in some cases this was found to be necessary because the return on the cargo was likely to be lower, as when they combined with four or five other merchants to import a cargo of Indian corn in 1761.²² They even shared a cargo with their great rivals, Newton and Gordon, in 1781, testament to the shifting nature of relationships between merchants bound together by shared interests but mutually suspicious as to which would gain

¹⁷ Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 14 February 1761, *ibid.*, box nine, letters from Madeira.

¹⁸ Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 8 October 1760, *ibid.*

¹⁹ Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 28 November 1762, *ibid.*, box ten, overseas letters.

²⁰ Alexander Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 6 August 1771, *ibid.*, letter book.

²¹ Klefeker and Paschen, Hamburg 26 October 1770, Invoice of several goods, Shipt by the English Snow the Hamburg Packet Capn Geo Geary, by order of Mr Alexander Gordon & compt at Madeira University of London Senate House Library, London, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS 754/5.

²² James Gordon, London to James & Alexander Gordon, 10 May 1766, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, letter book; Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 27 October 1761, box nine, letters from Madeira.

most advantage. In other cases, merchants wished to share in the potential returns offered by a return cargo of wine. Thus in 1771 Samuel Pleasants of Philadelphia had chartered a vessel to load in Virginia with Indian Corn, wheat and flour. Of the £900 value of the cargo, half was to be borne by the Gordons, two-thirds of which was to be paid in wine, the rest in cash or bills.²³ The least desirable joint venture was when outbound cargos were shared with customers in order to secure their loyalty. We have seen that the London wine merchants, the Metholds, were major customers, regularly taking orders of fifteen pipes. They were not easy men to deal with, but James was anxious to keep such regular business. Accordingly, he felt obliged to let them share in a cargo: 'I cannot help letting them in for advance on a Sum by way of adventure equal to what they had last time, tho' I'm sensible of the inconveniency & loss by doing so, but this unwise indulgence was given them many years ago long before I knew them, & when Mada wine did not stand in half the price it does now, so don't blame me for such things as I consent to them sometimes for fear of Harpies here always ready to snap at anything & everything that they can come athwart.'²⁴

All this trade required intermediaries to handle currency exchanges. The Amsterdam firm of Muilman was engaged to provide this service for Northern European destinations. Much the greatest letter traffic, however, was with Lisbon, chiefly to the merchant house of Mayne & Co. There was a connection here to Captain Anderson, who we met as a pioneer of trade between Scotland and Iberia. His sister married a member of the Mayne family, and it was his nephew Edward Mayne who took over his Lisbon business on his death in 1712. His descendant, William, returned to London in 1757 to run a banking business with his brother Robert. He and his brother both entered Parliament and William was raised to the Irish peerage as Lord Newhaven in 1776.²⁵ They transacted Portuguese currency for the Gordons until a disagreement over a wine order in 1773 caused the Gordons, with some difficulty, to engage James Montgomery of Lisbon, son of an Irish politician to transact their business.²⁶ Their difficulty in finding a new agent

²³ Samuel Pleasants, Philadelphia, to James Gordon, London, 30 March 1771, *ibid.*, box ten, overseas letters.

²⁴ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 10 February 1775, *ibid.*, letter book.

²⁵ Hamer and Chesnut, *Papers of Henry Laurens*, 64.

²⁶ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 8 March 1773, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, letter book.

was that Montgomery was already aligned with Newton and Gordon, and they were reluctant, for reasons of confidentiality, to share facilities.

At the centre of all this activity was James in London and to complete the picture we need to look at his activities there. They were to prove significant for Patrick in building the network of connections that would facilitate his return to India. His uncle features as a regular source of advice and influence, as well as an important staging post in the journeys of all the Duff brothers to India. The people James knew in London were not just important customers, but, as we have seen, figures at the highest level of the British political establishment. Their influence would be vital in furthering Patrick's career, something which in turn helped to build the Madeira house's business in India. Although having a family member in London was a critical advantage, James did not appear, from the tone of the letters from some of those friends, at all keen about returning from the peace of Madeira and the friendships he had struck up there. 'I am sorry to observe that you do not find the Grand City of London so much to your liking as you could wish,' wrote one, hoping that James would soon get used to the cold weather.²⁷ Henry Hill hoped that he was finding more satisfaction in the city 'than the busy scene at first encouraged you to expect.'²⁸ As we have seen, however, a key task for James was to work his personal networks in order to secure orders, starting with the many Scots who had come south to seek their fortunes. They were regarded with suspicion by many Londoners who resented their conspicuous success in business: 'men very fit for business, intriguing, cunning, tricking', without 'much honour or conscience' in the words of one hostile commentator. As White reminds us, 'for decades, Scottish heads on pikes decorated Temple Bar, the gateway between London and Westminster used by thousands every day. They remained a grisly reminder of the old enmity until they finally fell to the ravages of time in the early 1770s.'²⁹ In such a climate, coffee houses provided a venue in which Scots could build their social networks.

Eighteenth-century London was characterised, White argues, by an 'obsessive desire to associate' which led to the formation of a myriad clubs, 'small gatherings of friends from every walk of life who met weekly or more frequently in public houses and coffee houses to dine or sup together, drink, gossip, discuss business opportunities, combine in ventures and assist each

²⁷ Murray, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 4 April 1761, *ibid.*, box nine, letters to London.

²⁸ Henry Hill, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 7 April 1761, *ibid.*

²⁹ White, *London*, 95.

other where possible.³⁰ Hickey notes the specific place of madeira wine in such gatherings; at an annual meeting at the Red House in Battersea Fields the dinner consisted ‘of venison and all sorts of dainties, the liquors being claret and madeira, purchased for the occasion.’³¹ While not as riotous as the debauched gatherings favoured by William Hickey, James gradually became sufficiently at home to partake of club life. Sending an order for two pipes of madeira to be sent to the Boar’s Head Tavern in Eastcheap, he commented that ‘I belong to a Club at this Tavern, where they are Impertinentes como tantos Diabos, in their Madeira.’³² ‘Naughty as many devils’ suggests that his madeira loosened tongues and conduct. The Boar’s Head Tavern was a leading City destination, famous as the Shakespearean location of Falstaff’s revels. This suggests that after ten years James, although often thinking longingly about a return to Scotland, was well ensconced in London.

From his base in the City, first in Bury Court and then, from 1768, the Jamaica Coffee House (‘having moved from the Place where I am mention’d in the Printed London Directory’) James carried out not only an extensive correspondence, but also built on the unique contacts to be made in the centre of a growing empire of trade.³³ The joint shipment of goods from Virginia, for example, was to be insured in London, given the advanced development of marine insurance in the city. His location allowed him to check on the unloading of ships and the quality of the wine after its long voyage. After hearing that the fleet from the West Indies had arrived in 1761 Alexander wrote ‘your Curiosity will no doubt carry you some times to the Quay, when you will be able to judge how we have been able to acquit ourselves in regard to the quality of the Wines we have shipd Round, the Vintage was extremely indifferent and I am exceedingly anxious to know how they turn out and how they are liked there.’³⁴ Once loaded, wines were moved to vaults from storage and some prepared for inland travel. In 1772, for example, the wine destined for John Fern of Lichfield had been moved to the Castle and Falcon in Aldersgate before being loaded on to a wagon.³⁵

³⁰ Ibid., 121.

³¹ Spencer, *Memoirs*, I, 73.

³² James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 11 October 1771, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, letter book.

³³ James Gordon, London to Muilman, Amsterdam, 17 May 1768, *ibid.*

³⁴ Alexander Gordon, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 18 August 1761, *ibid.*, box nine, letters from Madeira.

³⁵ James Gordon, London to John Fern, Lichfield, 9 June 1772, *ibid.*, letter book.

Some people James preferred to avoid, notably the Metholds, who always seemed to have some complaint about the quality of their wines or the price they had been charged. However, he clearly managed to smooth matters over, as they remained repeat customers. Other people he wanted to meet, but found difficult to track down. A key task involved the billing of customers and the recovery of the money. 'It will be [a] troublesome task,' he complained in 1774, 'to disperse & get in again your Bills, 64 in number.'³⁶ As we have seen, many of these customers were spread out across the country, necessitating the despatch of many letters. This was a problem when only vague details of the customer were written on the bill. In 1773, for example, it took letters to Ralph Carr of Newcastle to ascertain that the Carr of Northumberland was actually Thomas Carr of Morpeth, who had to be disabused of the notion that he only had to pay on receipt of his wine.³⁷ Much time was also spent by James and his servants tracking down those who owed money in London. Vague directions didn't help them find Anthony Pelham in 1773: 'it would be less trouble to find out a person in a town twice as Large as Funchal than in one great Street of London without a proper direction.'³⁸ 'I can't find Michael White Esq,' he complained about another customer, 'he did live in Wigmore Street but no such person is there now, my Servt hunted all about without getting any tidings of him, but must make a further inquiry.'³⁹ Some of this, of course, was a function of how long it took wine to reach its destination, but others simply did not want to be found. In 1773 James complained that 'I have not been able to catch Mr Williams, either at home or any where else to present to him Watts bill, he must be an odd genius but will be met with sooner or later.'⁴⁰ Watts was one of the captains that James wanted to keep close, but whose financial dealings caused him exasperation. Two years later he was still on the hunt for the elusive Williams, reporting that 'I can make nothing of your Bill on him, by close watching he's sometimes caught at home but always endeavours to conceal himself, it is merely impossible to be hunting after that fellow.'⁴¹

Such were the frustrations of London life, although residence there gave James an invaluable source of information. It also meant that he could act as a staging point for the Duff brothers on their way out to either Madeira

³⁶ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 1 April 1774, *ibid.*

³⁷ James Gordon, London to Ralph Carr, Newcastle, 23 June 1773; 13 July 1773, *ibid.*

³⁸ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 3 June 1773, *ibid.*

³⁹ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 24 April 1775, *ibid.*

⁴⁰ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 26 January 1773, *ibid.*

⁴¹ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 24 April 1775, *ibid.*

or India. Some of his customers would be instrumental in helping him to get Patrick's dismissal overturned. Before following Patrick back to Bengal, however, it is worth considering the nature of duty in the eighteenth-century East India Company's artillery.

9 Bengal artillery

While Patrick was back in Britain fighting to secure his return, a significant appointment was made that would shape the context he would have to serve in. In 1768 the East India Company appointed Thomas Deane Pearse (?1738–1789) to the command of its Bengal artillery, with the rank of major, and then, soon after his arrival in India, lieutenant colonel. Pearse had trained at the Royal Academy at Woolwich and served in the Royal Artillery on the Continent and in the West Indies. He became known as ‘the father of the Bengal Artillery’ and ended up as Commander in Chief of the entire Bengal army before his death in 1789.¹ His first impressions of his new command were far from favourable, but the reforms he instituted made the artillery the elite corps of the Bengal army.

The artillery in Bengal was formed as a separate corps in 1748. Before that date, the service had been modelled on naval practice, with the bulk of its recruits drawn from naval gunners. Its ranks – master gunner, quarter gunners and the like – mirrored naval practice. By decision of the Court of Directors this was to be replaced with ranks based on practice in the regular army. That minute also indicates how central were the artillery and the mysteries of explosives to military success:

No Foreigner whether in our service or not (except such as hath been admitted into it by the Court of Directors) nor no Indian, black or persons of a mixt breed, nor any Roman Catholic of what nation soever, shall on any pretence be admitted to set foot in the Laboratory, or any of the Military Magazines, either out of curiosity, or to be employed in them, or to come near them, so as to see what is doing or contained

¹ Samuel Parlbby, ‘Memoir of Colonel Thomas Deane Pearse’ *The British Military Repository*, Vol 1 (Calcutta, 1822), 2.

therein, nor shall any such persons have a copy or sight of any accounts or papers relating to any Military stores whatsoever.²

The further injunction that ‘no Roman Catholic nor any Officer or Soldier married to a Roman Catholic should be admitted or permitted to remain in the Company of Artillery’ indicates the centrality of the demonization of the Roman Catholic ‘other’ in the imperial project. Such paranoia drawing on European experience was translated into terms more appropriate to the sub-continent when in 1770 the Court decided that ‘As it is very essential that the natives should be kept as ignorant as possible both of the theory and practice of the artillery branch of the art of war, we esteem it a very pernicious practice to employ the people of the country in working the guns, and therefore direct that in future four European artillery men be constantly attached to the service of the two guns which belong to each battalion of sepoy, and that no native be trusted with any part of this important service, unless necessity should require it.’³

Distrust of Indians becoming aware of the secrets of successful artillery operations was commonplace. In 1779 Pearse sought a degree of relaxation of the strict ban, aware that native rulers had in some cases relatively successful artillery units, often having learned from other European specialists. At Plassey, for example, the artillery faced by Clive ‘was almost entirely manned by Europeans, consisting of Frenchmen, Germans, Portuguese, Armenians and Topassos.’ Pearse was ‘entirely of opinion that it would be better not to teach the Natives the art of Artillery, and so it would to have kept them ignorant of the whole art of war; [sic] but the impossibility of doing either is evident, since the desertion of a few Artillery soldiers, if skilful in their profession, would have been sufficient to render all precaution useless.’⁴ Given this realistic assessment, he argued for the formation of units of native artillery or ‘Golundauze’, specialist units formed from those who had attended to the field guns which accompanied each battalion of sepoy. However, his opinions were set to one side by the commander-in-chief Sir Eyre Coote – in large measure, one suspects, due to Coote’s haughty regular army background. However, this meant that the specialist companies of artillery remained officered and staffed largely by Europeans,

² Broome, *Bengal Army*, 43.

³ Bisheshwar Prasad, *Fort William – India House Correspondence: And other Contemporary Papers Relating Thereto. Vol.6 Public, Select, And Secret, 1770–72* (Delhi, 1960), 35.

⁴ Parlby, *Pearse*, I, 66.

setting them apart from the infantry, which was mostly composed of native troops officered by Europeans.

On arrival, Pearse found that the legacy of maritime origins still pervaded the artillery, hindering its ability to take advantage of developments in military science. As he observed ‘I was astonished at the ignorance of all who composed it. It was a common practice to make any Midshipman, who was discontented with the India ships, an officer of Artillery, from a strange idea, that a knowledge of navigation would perfect an officer of that corps in the knowledge of Artillery. They were almost all of this class; and their ideas consonant to the elegant Military education which they had received. But, thank God, I have got rid of all of them but seven.’⁵ For the officers who remained, laboratory practice became compulsory: ‘I am going to teach the officers what they never saw.’ This requirement for technical training set officers in the artillery apart from their infantry and cavalry equivalents and gave rise to a distinctive system of ranks. The chain of command ran from lieutenant fireworker, through lieutenant and captain-lieutenant to captain, with the overall commander of the artillery being restricted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. Thus the artillery had more ranks to pass through and was limited in the rank to which it could aspire. In 1772 Pearse requested ‘in the name of the whole corps for an abolition of the rank of captain lieutenant which by making the rise to that of captain so very slow was the cause of repeated supercessions by the officers of the infantry.’⁶ The request, however, was refused, as it was argued that once he got to higher rank, an artillery officer’s prospects were better. This constant tension between the artillery and the infantry over rank made artillery officers, such as Patrick Duff, intensely jealous of their status. This applied to Pearse as well. In 1773 he complained to the Commander in Chief, Colonel Champion, that the artillery were being ordered ‘to parade on the left of the Regiment at Roll Calling and in making reports to the Senior Officer of the whole Parade, who belonged to a different Corps.’ Champion agreed ‘that the Artillery, according to the Rules of War, should parade upon the Right’ and issued orders accordingly.⁷ This prickly attention to status also, however, represented Pearse’s efforts to mould his corps into an elite unit. In 1777 he was pleased to write to General Pattinson of the outcome of his efforts to impose discipline, when reporting on the inspection of his troops: ‘I believe I really was happy that day. Not

⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁶ Prasad, *Fort William Correspondence*, 6, 378 (9 March 1772).

⁷ Macpherson, *Soldiering*, 160–1.

one circumstance had I to lessen the pleasure I received from the good performance of my corps, as a Battalion of Infantry, as a Battalion of Artillery with 16 cannons, and as a body of Artillery on service in their batteries: for we went through all these exercises, and equally well.' 'The Saturday following,' he continued, 'General Clavering reviewed us, and what gave me most pleasure was, to hear that he had said in private, he had reviewed most of the King's Regiments, and never saw any perform better.'⁸

The artillery officers, perhaps because of their own estimation of their distinctive skills, had been deeply implicated in the batta mutiny. Pearse's task was to take this sense of worth and turn into a positive *esprit de corps*. His success can be measured by the contribution that the artillery made to military success, since accounts of engagements suggest that proficiency in artillery operations was a key distinguishing feature (together with discipline and logistical expertise) of the success that the East India Company army enjoyed. In the battle of Miranpur in 1774 against the Rohillas Colonel Champion noted the bravery of his opponents (in stark contrast to his contempt for the cowardice of his so-called allies) but that despite making 'repeated attempts to charge, [...] our guns being so much better served than theirs, kept so constant and galling a fire that they could not advance, and when they were closest there was the greatest slaughter.'⁹ This reputation for excellence received its fullest recognition when Pearse was given command of a detachment of the Bengal army sent to rescue the Madras Presidency from the peril in which it found itself from the attacks of Hyder Ali. Pearse commanded six battalions of sepoy and a company of artillery, guiding them on an arduous march in 1780 to rendezvous with Coote's troops. Not that his appointment was without controversy, for infantry officers objected strongly to general command being given to an artillery officer. As Pearse wrote to a correspondent, 'I am much concerned to find that some officers of the Infantry have conceived so ill-grounded a jealousy against my going on my tour of Command ; every other duty I have done with them, ever since I have been in the service; could they suppose I could have submitted to do the drudgery of the service, and not share the honors of it ? surely no one could entertain so mean an opinion of me ; I hope I never gave room for such a supposition.'¹⁰ As he argued, foreshadowing arguments that Patrick

⁸ Parlby, *Pearse*, I, 39.

⁹ Macpherson, *Soldiering*, 198.

¹⁰ Parlby, *Pearse*, I, 170.

Duff was to use, ‘if I am an officer, I must have every right of an officer.’¹¹ This tension between the artillery and the infantry was one matter; overlaying it were tensions between the regular army and the Company’s officers.

On arrival at his rendezvous with Coote, having overcome an arduous march marked by desertion and sickness but arriving with the majority of his force intact, Pearse was dismayed that his troops were dispersed amongst Coote’s. As he complained bitterly to Hastings ‘I have the misfortune to inform you, that from the day on which the detachment joined Sir Eyre Coote, he has totally deprived me of the command, and has refused to let me exercise any authority over those troops, who came with me from Bengal.’¹² Pearse was deeply unimpressed by Coote’s authoritarian style of leadership, refusing to take advice from officers experienced in Indian conditions. He refused to take Pearse’s advice about native artillery; in the heat of battle he offended Munro by telling him that ‘*he was giving advice, when he should be doing his duty.*’¹³ (emphasis in original). As far as Pearse was concerned, Coote nearly brought them to the brink of disaster by his confusion and unwillingness to take advice. As Parlby concluded, ‘To give battle to the enemy seems to have been General Coote’s sole consideration; and a want of co-operation in the principal Officers and the subordinate departments of the Army, which may be attributed partly to the violent jealousies between the King’s and Company’s Officers, but above all to the neglect of all confidential communication with some of the leaders of his divisions, had nearly led to the most fatal consequences.’¹⁴

The perceived arrogance and air of cultural superiority associated with regular army officers was a source of enduring tension. The Scots, especially, were professional soldiers who owed their rise largely to their merits, not to their connections and their ability to purchase standing. This lay behind the persistent animosity between them and the officers of the regular army. In 1787 Patrick wrote to his friend Kenneth Murchison that their mutual friend Bob Stuart had recently been obliged to fight the Honourable major Maitland who he had shot through body as ‘he was so overbearing there was no putting up with his behaviour.’ ‘Some of the Kings Officers,’ he continued, ‘behave as if they thought the Companys weren’t their equals.’¹⁵ This

¹¹ Ibid., 171.

¹² Parlby, *Pearse*, II, 60.

¹³ Ibid., 67.

¹⁴ Ibid., 62.

¹⁵ Patrick Duff, Cawnpore to Kenneth Murchison 15 November 1787, EUL, Murchison papers, MS.2263.

feeling that they had to insist on strict criteria for promotion over the claims of 'interest' was behind Patrick's continuing insistence that the rules of the service as regards precedence were adhered to.

Pearse returned to Bengal with his reputation and that of his troops intact despite Coote. In Williams' estimation 'during the arduous warfare in which they were engaged from that period, down to the cessation of hostilities before Cuddalore, in June, 1783, the Bengal corps, collectively and individually, established for themselves and the army to which they belonged, a proud and lasting reputation.'¹⁶ Pearse became commander in chief of the Bengal forces in 1786, dying three years later. His legacy can be seen in the observation of the incoming Governor General, Marquess Cornwallis (1738–1805), to the Duke of York on his arrival in Bengal in 1786 that 'The East India Company's artillery are very fine but their European infantry ...are in a most wretched state.'¹⁷ Given Cornwallis's training in the Guards this was praise indeed and speaks to the elite status the artillery had come to occupy.

Pearse's march in 1780 indicates some of the problems facing military commanders, problems compounded for the artillery. Both the terrain and the weather were powerful barriers to be overcome. As Pearse put it, he had to march a force of 3,500 men through 'a country that seems made up of the shreds and fragments of a world, in dame Nature's shop, producing nothing but sand and craggy rocks, brackish water, and pestiferous winds.'¹⁸ The conundrum here was often that roads, where they existed, were only passable in hot weather, but that hot weather limited the distance that could be covered. This had a particular impact on European troops not used to the extreme heat. In May 1773 Allan Macpherson, on the march in Bengal, recorded that 'strict orders are issued to prevent the Europeans from going out in the sun from 8 in the morning till 4 in the afternoon.' Native water carriers were hired 'for Watering the ground and Cooling the men's Tents.'¹⁹ Given that the artillery, as we have seen, was a predominantly European force, this posed particular problems for them. In the wet season, marching was almost impossible. In 1778 John Macpherson was on the march from Berhampore to Dinapore when 'the road very bad under water, obliged to go round by the hills.' He decided to use boats to transport his men, but this

¹⁶ John Williams, *Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Bengal Native Infantry* (London, 1817), 199.

¹⁷ Cited in Callahan, *Army Reform*, 71.

¹⁸ Parlby, *Pearse*, I, 237.

¹⁹ Macpherson, *Soldiering*, 124.

was not without danger. In a heavy storm all his boats were destroyed. ‘My Budgerow, [a large boat often used for the conveyance of better-off passengers on the Ganges] with great difficulty, was saved, but the whole of the Detachment lost all the Baggage and Stores of all sorts, which every person in this country is obliged to carry with them wherever they go. I lost everything except my Clothes, which were in the Budgerow.’²⁰

Rivers were often a convenient means of transport in a country where roads were often rough, although the absence of roads was not necessarily a barrier to artillery movements. As Allan Macpherson noted marching to Poolia in 1773 ‘no Road, yet the Country is so fine and open there was no obstruction in the way of the Guns.’²¹ However, in the following year on the march to Budlapore he observed ‘the Country all the way is covered with long Grass and Jungle, and must be bad marching in the rains.’²² These conditions often meant that guns had to be dragged rather than pulled. Not only could roads be hard to come by, but the absence of bridges meant that rivers became a formidable barrier. On his 1774 march, Allan noted a proposed crossing at Mindee Gautt required 100 boats together with platforms for embarking the guns.²³ When they arrived, however, nothing like that number had been obtained. This is a reminder that military operations in India were as much a matter of logistical capacity and skill as of fighting capability.

Logistical capability was especially important as armies marched with long trains of followers, who were engaged in foraging for provisions for themselves and the soldiers they were following. Maintaining supplies and preventing the army from plundering villages on its route were major challenges. As Pearse explained to Hastings, ‘they have to march all this distance through countries, where all is peace, and where they must be restrained from taking wood, potts, &c. &c. without paying, and where provisions are dear.’²⁴ What saved him from widespread desertions was the ability to pay his troops. The need to ensure adequate supplies of food and money were compounded for the artillery by the need for motive power to pull the guns and carry ammunition. The guns were pulled by bullocks, and getting an adequate supply of these and keeping them in good condition was a constant headache. Much later, it would be suggested that horses ought to supply

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 363, 364.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 118.

²² *Ibid.*, 182.

²³ *Ibid.*, 184.

²⁴ Parlby, *Pearse*, I, 206.

this power, modelled on the speed and effectiveness of draught horses in European conditions. Cornwallis reported that he had given horses a trial, having draught horses delivered to Colonel Floyd, only to have the Colonel imploring him three days into their march ‘that unless I sent him a Supply of Bullocks, he must leave the Guns upon the Ground as the Horses which I had delivered to him four days before in the highest Condition were incapable of moving them.’²⁵ The vital necessity of a reliable supply of bullocks is a reminder of the importance of the logistics that lay behind the more visible aspects of military campaigning in India. British success here has been attributed in part to the quality of their officer corps, to the discipline they instilled and the capacity of the British to pay their troops. It also owed much to skills in the mundane matters of securing the right carriage animals, securing their feed and managing them in the best manner. It is here perhaps that his early life on a Speyside farm helped Patrick to develop understanding and knowledge that was later drawn upon in correspondence with Sir John Sinclair. Cattle were widely used as draught animals in the north east before the coming of agricultural improvement. Even when Patrick had returned to Scotland and improvement was in full swing, cattle were still being used for ploughing in his new parish, as the minister reported in his contribution to Sinclair’s *Statistical Accounts*. ‘In ploughing,’ he reported, ‘the farmers sometimes use horse ploughs, and sometimes oxen, according to the nature of the ground.’²⁶

Although he was best known as the instigator of the *Statistical Accounts*, the remarkable series of reports from every parish in Scotland that mobilised the ministers of the Church of Scotland to provide a pioneering account of the country at the end of the eighteenth century, Sinclair was also an indefatigable investigator of the progress of agricultural improvement. It was in this connection that he sought Patrick’s opinion on the feeding of cattle. Patrick was able to respond with not only his experience in India, but also observations from his stopping off at the Cape of Good Hope, suggesting he was always keen to learn about such practicalities. He always, he said ‘preferred well made Oxen for the Guns in preference to heavy ones tho’ much stronger, but generally slow and surly, & who can hardly be made to exert themselves upon any occasion.’ He was able to tell Sinclair that:

²⁵ A. C. Banerjee, *Fort William – India House Correspondence: And Other Contemporary Papers Relating Thereto (Military Series)*. Vol.20 1792–1796 (Delhi, 1969), 250.

²⁶ Ballingall, ‘Forglen’, 533.

I know by experience that if Oxen are hard driven when their Bellys are full, it is very apt to hurt them, and I never permitted the Drivers to feed their Oxen much before a March, or to give them Water while marching in very hot weather; I have known many hundreds of Oxen who were ill fed and hardworked, die in one cold wet night succeeding a Hot Sultry day; they generally lay down and were unable to get on their legs again. This happened on Lord Cornwallis first march against Seringapatam when we had nothing to give our Cattle but roots of Grass and met with exceeding cold rainy weather.²⁷

Pearse records that he obtained 8,000 bullocks for Coote after their rendezvous. These animals were for two purposes: draught and carriage. Draught bullocks were trained for pulling gun carriages, while ammunition and other stores were carried on the back of carriage bullocks. Pearse argued that experience taught that ammunition also ought to be moved on carriages, 'for the draft bullocks we brought with us, are better than when they set out; but all the carriage cattle are nearly disabled from sore backs, yet they can all be put to the traces.'²⁸ The problem lay in obtaining the appropriate types of animal. As Pearse complained:

I expected to have had 6000 carriage cattle from Masulipatam, but we were disappointed for 1450, of the Company's cattle, which were left for want of drivers. The nawab's manager here, cannot furnish many carriage cattle; it will be well, if he can deliver us enough to carry the camp equipage of the reinforcement we are to take from hence, and the stores of the 24-pounders, with pack saddles; nay, I fear it is next to impossible, though enough of draft cattle could be had. But to what end collect draft cattle? they will not carry their own straw; cannot be taught to carry until saddles are provided; and then not in less than a fortnight, even if there were regular drivers to teach them.²⁹

Such problems were compounded by the terrain that guns and supplies had to be moved over. It was frequently necessary for guns to be dragged over terrain where pulling carriages was impossible, and for this reason artillery

²⁷ Copy letter from Patrick Duff to Sir John Sinclair c March 1802, West Sussex Record Office, Petworth House Archives, PHA9336.

²⁸ Parlby, *Pearse*, II, 36.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

companies were accompanied by ‘a large but indefinite number of Lascars.’³⁰ A label more commonly associated with seafarers, lascars were in this context labourers on hand for driving bullocks and dragging guns where conditions required. When Champion crossed the Gurra river in 1774 before engaging the Rohillas, his army ‘with much perseverance, dragged the artillery over a broad and heavy sand to the opposite plains.’³¹

All these factors suggest that a successful artillery officer had a wide range of tasks to fulfil, in which practical ability in organizing logistics had to be added to the more common military tasks of maintaining discipline. Much of the success of the East India Company’s army came in the behind-the-scenes activities of preparation and logistics, activities in which Patrick Duff seemed to excel. First, however, he had to get back to India after blotting his copybook.

³⁰ Broome, *Bengal Artillery*, 585.

³¹ Macpherson, *Soldiering*, 197.

10 Back to India

Bengal Artillery, Captain-Lieutenant Patrick Duff – ‘not to rise higher’.¹

In the wake of the mutiny, the Court of Directors resolved to take a firm line with those who had participated. They minuted their decision in 1767 that ‘no Officer concerned in the said Mutiny or who signed the above-mentioned Letter [to Sir Robert Fletcher] should be permitted to return to India.’² They turned down the appeals of Captain Vernon Duffield and Ensign James Crawford to be restored to their ranks, but found themselves confronted with a problem: they needed to increase the number of officers in Bengal. ‘More Field Officers are wanting,’ the Court noted in 1768, ‘likewise good and experienced Officers below those Ranks.’³ They were particularly concerned ‘to have as many Young Gentlemen well qualified in the Artillery and Engineering branches of Education to be added to the Artillery Corps.’⁴ Thanks to this pressing need and no doubt to the workings of influence behind the scenes, their minutes contain lists of men allowed to return but ‘not to rise higher’. Among those lists is the name of Patrick Duff, restored to the Bengal artillery.

According to the Taylors, he sailed for India again in 1769. Perhaps he was on board one of the fleet of thirteen East Indiamen assembled together with ships heading for the West Indies and the Americas off Dungeness in early January 1769. On board one of their number, the *Plassey*, was the notoriously dissolute William Hickey (1749–1830), whose despairing father had bought him a commission in the Madras army of the East India Company. Not only do his *Memoirs* give us an indication of just what was involved in voyages

¹ Minutes of Court of Directors 24 December 1767, 473. British Library (hereafter BL), London, India Office Records, B/83.

² *Ibid.*, 24 December 1767, 471.

³ C. H. Philips and B. B. Misra, *Fort William – India House Correspondence and Other Contemporary Papers Relating Thereto. Vol.15 Foreign and Secret, 1782–1786* (Delhi, 1963), 96 (16 March 1768).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 94 (16 March 1768).

to India, but one of his travelling companions was Jacob Rider, who was returning to Bengal having been sent home for his part in the mutiny. His was a strange case, as he was connected to Clive through marriage. Clive had obtained him the lucrative position of Paymaster General when he arrived as governor in 1764, 'a situation that in those days would have yielded him an overgrown fortune in a few years.' However, he attached his name to the complaints of the officers, infuriating Clive. 'What can have induced the blockhead to lend his name to such an inflammatory, unjustifiable paper,' Hickey has Clive expostulating, 'with the subject matter of which he could not in any manner be affected. However, let him abide the consequences of such absurd conduct.'⁵ Accordingly Rider was despatched back to England, perhaps in company with Patrick and the others, with orders that he was never to return. However, just as with Patrick, Rider was able to work his connections and so was on the *Plassey* to return to a position as factor, his position before the mutiny.

Hickey's experiences remind us of what an achievement it was for Patrick to complete five return voyages to India, in an age when many did not survive one. After all, Cotton tells us that between 1700 and 1815, 160 East Indiamen were lost by wreck, burning or capture.⁶ Those ships that made it through offered a gruelling experience. Voyages varied enormously in duration depending on weather and the state of the seas. Clive took over a year to reach India on his first voyage, and the *Southampton* took sixteen and a half months to return from Calcutta in 1799.⁷ In the same fleet as Clive on the *Kent* was Henry Watson, son of a Lincolnshire grazier. After making a fortune through trade and his position as Chief Engineer in Bengal, he returned home with a letter of recommendation from Patrick to his brother James, by then in London. Watson's ship left Britain in May 1764 and by December had reached Cape Town. In between, adverse winds had forced it to sail from Tenerife to St Salvador in Brazil. Here 'we staid one month to compleat with water and recover our sick men.'⁸ The Portuguese put a guard on their house and prevented them from travelling to the interior. By January 1765 the *Kent* had caught up with them and they left Cape Town together. At Ceylon Watson was ordered to join Clive on the *Kent* and they proceeded via

⁵ Spencer, *Memoirs*, I, 144.

⁶ Cotton, *East Indiamen*, 126.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 109, 118.

⁸ Henry Watson to his father, 13 December 1764, BL, letters of Henry Watson, MSS. EUR.D.759.

Madras to Bengal, Watson writing from Patna to his father in December the same year to recount his long travels and to note that he had been appointed Quartermaster General. By contrast the *Plassey* arrived off Madras on the 1 May 1769, a fast passage of just under five months. For his passage sharing with two others in two thirds of the great cabin and dining at the captain's table, Hickey was charged fifty guineas.⁹ This was a good deal: 'when George Elers, a young subaltern in the 12th Foot, came out to India in 1796 on board the *Rockingham*,' recorded Cotton, 'he was obliged to share a cabin twelve feet square with ten others, four of them sleeping in slung hammocks and the other seven in standing cots.'¹⁰ However, Hickey's negotiating skills could do nothing about the weather. Passing through rough weather in the Bay of Biscay, with 'a prodigious sea', he was so ill 'that it was actually indifferent to me what became of the ship, and I should I verily believe have heard with composure that she was sinking.' He recovered after the ship put into the Canaries. The quality of food at the captain's table was a welcome surprise, but he missed fresh bread. 'The biscuit,' Hickey recalled, 'was uncommonly bad and flinty, so that it was with difficulty I could penetrate it with my teeth.'¹¹

The rest of the fleet arrived off Madras ten days after the *Plassey*, but Patrick would then have to get to Calcutta to resume his duties. On his arrival in India he found that the Bengal Council had already petitioned the Court that as Patrick 'has ever been esteemed a very good Officer & has been formerly Wounded in your Service We are induced to hope you will remove the Bar to his Preferment & Restore him to that Rank which he otherwise would have acquired.'¹² Accordingly, Patrick found himself confirmed in the rank of captain. By October 1770 a letter of another Patrick Duff, commonly known as 'Petter', son of the Laird of Whitehill, confirmed the presence of captain Patrick Duff, adding he was 'a Brother of that Duff that's Merchant in Madeira he has behav'd to me in the Friendliest manner ever ane Brother Could do to another he was the means of getting me appointed an Ensn & conferred many other great favours upon me too Tedious to Mention.'¹³ At this point Petter was at Mongheer, some 400 miles above Calcutta; by October the following year he was in Alahabad from where he wrote to his

⁹ Spencer, *Memoirs*, I, 117.

¹⁰ Cotton, *East Indiamen*, 70.

¹¹ Spencer, *Memoirs*, I, 141, 150.

¹² Philips and Misra, *Fort William Correspondence*, 15, 452 (13 September 1768).

¹³ Patrick Duff, Mongheer to Andrew Hay of Rannes, 9 October 1770, NRS, Papers of the Hay family of Leith Hall, Aberdeenshire, GD225/box 31/12/19.

father that 'as for my Worthy Friend Captain Duff I cannot Express the friendship he has shown me Were he my Brother I could not Expect more & what an Amiable Good man he is, a Man Respected in this Quarter by Great & Small God knows I have been Singularly obliged to him.'¹⁴

It was presumably in this area that in 1773 Patrick had his famous encounter with the tiger. As Petter Duff noted to his uncle Andrew Hay of Rannes, on the plains of Bengal there was 'great variety of Game in the Cold season our chief amusement is Hunting.'¹⁵ The tiger was of enormous symbolic importance in India. In 1792 Hugh Munro, son of Sir Hector Munro under whom Patrick had served at Buxar, was savaged by a tiger while out hunting on Saugur Island, below Calcutta. A mechanical model of a tiger killing a European, which may have been inspired by this event, was commissioned by the ruler of Mysore, Tipu Sultan. This model contained organ pipes which imitated the cries of the victim and the roar of the tiger.¹⁶ This was just one dramatic example of the importance of the tiger to Tipu, symbolic of his resistance to British incursions and widely used on, for example, the uniforms of his soldiers.¹⁷ One account of Patrick's dramatic encounter has the animal as a panther, another a leopard, but victory over a tiger was far more symbolically redolent, and it was the appellation 'Tiger Duff' that stuck.¹⁸

In one version, supplied by James Imlach in his 1868 *History of Banff*, Patrick was in a camp which was being terrorised by a ferocious tiger. Out on duty with a single soldier he came across the tiger crouching in a thicket. Taking the soldier's musket, he ordered him back to get assistance, while fixing his gaze on the tiger 'trusting to the power that the human eye is said to exert over the brute creation'. This power only lasted for so long until the tiger sprang. Shooting the animal in 'a vital part, Patrick then took the attack on the point of his short sword. When the soldier returned with assistance, they found the two 'locked in each others arms in a deadly embrace, the tiger transfixed in the throat with the sword, and the Captain himself fainting

¹⁴ Patrick Duff, Alahabad to his father 31 October 1771, *ibid.*, GD225/box 31/12/84.

¹⁵ Patrick Duff, Mongheer to Andrew Hay of Rannes, 9 October 1770, *ibid.*, GD225/box 31/12/19.

¹⁶ Anne Buddle, with Pauline Rohatgi, and Iain Gordon Brown, *The Tiger and the Thistle: Tipu Sultan and the Scots in India 1760–1800* (Edinburgh, 1999).

¹⁷ Kate Brittlebank, 'Sakti and Barakat: The Power of Tipu's Tiger. An Examination of the Tiger Emblem of Tipu Sultan of Mysore', *Modern Asian Studies*, 29(2) (1995), 257–69.

¹⁸ Panther: 'Review of Budworth's Ramble to the Lakes', *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, 80 (1810), 141; leopard: Buckle, *Bengal Artillery*, 209.

from loss of blood.¹⁹ Unfortunately, the accuracy of the story is somewhat called into question by the fact that Imlach gets Duff's parentage completely wrong, linking him to the Duffs of Craigston. However, this version of the story continued to circulate in Scotland, and was reproduced as late as 1927 in an edition of *Scottish Notes and Queries*.²⁰ A version which focussed on Patrick's well known physical strength had him managing to throttle his attacker by sheer physical force, a story recounted in an 1861 *History of Caithness*.²¹ In 1880 the anonymous author of a humorous story in a volume of *Adventures around the World*, told of how he mistook the entrance of a tame bear into his quarters in rural Bengal for a tiger. 'I distinctly recollect a story which I had heard at a Calcutta dinner-table, flashing across my memory at that awful moment. It was of an artillery officer called "Tiger Duff" a man of great strength and daring, who, upon one occasion, when attacked by a tiger, had seized the brute by the mouth and throttled him until the animal was choked.'²² It was perhaps this story which provided the source for the assertion in an edition of the correspondence of the Marquis of Cornwallis that Duff was 'said to have squeezed [the tiger] to death.'²³ Although wrong in a number of particulars – Duff having the misfortune to be frequently attributed the wrong parentage – it was then picked up in a scholarly study of eighteenth-century Bengal, where Suresh Ghosh reversed the action, so that Patrick was squeezed to death by the tiger.²⁴

A more lurid version was first provided in the *Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction* in 1828. Here Patrick was back to the rank of lieutenant, but everything else about the story gets increasingly implausible. While dining with other officers, the story begins, Patrick was carried off by a tiger who seized him by the leg. Slinging the hapless lieutenant across his shoulders, the tiger set off at pace into the surrounding bush. Coming across a fortuitously placed piece of wood which had been used as a door wedge, Patrick was able by dint of physical effort to force it into

¹⁹ James Imlach, *History of Banff and Familiar Account of Its Inhabitants and Belongings: To which are Added, Chronicles of the Old Churchyard of Banff* (Banff, 1868), 100.

²⁰ John Bulloch and John Henderson, *Scottish Notes and Queries* (Aberdeen, 1927; third series), volume 5, 220.

²¹ James Tait Calder, *Sketch of the Civil and Traditional History of Caithness* (Glasgow, 1861), 216.

²² Anon, 'My Midnight Visitor', *Adventures around the World* (London, 1880), 244.

²³ Charles Ross, *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis*, (3 vols, London, 1859), II, 63.

²⁴ Suresh Chandra Ghosh, *The Social Condition of the British Community in Bengal: 1757–1800* (Leiden, 1970), 143.

the tiger's mouth. Howling in pain and rage, the tiger was forced to let go of Patrick's leg. This enabled him to grab hold of the tiger's tongue, which he was able to pull out by the root. The tiger was then finished off by a strike to the heart by Patrick's penknife. The accuracy of this story is undermined not only by the implausibility of its details but by its manifestly false assertion that Patrick was killed in action having attained the rank of colonel. Implausibility, however, was no barrier to transmission.²⁵ Thirty-seven years later 'Dr Merry' reproduced the same story word for word in his *Merry Companion for All Readers; Containing a Choice Selection of the Most Humourous Anecdotes, Droll Sayings*.²⁶ In the same year, 1865, the same version appeared in Morton's *Lincolnshire Almanack and Diary*.²⁷ Boldly going even further than mere plagiarism, the story spread from Imperial Britain to the USA. Here the editor of the Cincinnati-published *Golden Hours: A Magazine for Boys and Girls*, not content with straightforward copying, added the extremely improbable prologue in 1875 that 'I did not write the following story, but happened to be on the spot when the transaction took place, and I know the boys will be intensely interested in this account.'²⁸

In such ways the story attained mythical dimensions. However, the Taylers had Patrick's own version in a letter to his father, which they reproduced in full. This placed the events in February 1773, when Patrick and others were out hunting. Separated from the rest of the party, Patrick was only able to wound the springing tiger:

I kept him at bay a considerable time with my fowling piece, on which was fixed a bayonet, as is usual in this country, when we go a-shooting, but at last I was rendered very weak, occasioned by the loss of blood, having received many wounds in my face, arms, and several parts of my body; and none of my companions appearing to my assistance, they having all made off, the animal made a furious effort, by leaping upon me, which threw me down, he immediately got upon me and was ready to tear me in pieces, when I stretched out my hand to the muzzle of my piece and unfixed the bayonet, with which I aimed a blow, so judiciously,

²⁵ John Timbs (ed) *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction*, (London, 1828), 6, 328.

²⁶ Dr Merry [sic], *The Merry Companion for All Readers; Containing a Choice Selection of the Most Humourous Anecdotes, Droll Sayings* [etc.]. (London, 1865), 178–9.

²⁷ John Morton, *Morton's Lincolnshire Almanack and Diary* (Boston, 1865), 91–2.

²⁸ E. Wentworth (ed.), *Golden Hours: A Magazine for Boys and Girls*, (Cincinnati, 1875), 7, 523.

that I pierced his heart. He instantly fell down dead upon me. I believe I may venture to observe that never was any man nearer being devoured by a voracious animal, than I was upon the above occasion. I consider my deliverance as an act of Providence.²⁹

This story is corroborated by an account given by Captain Joseph Budworth. In a somewhat eccentric account of *A Fortnight's Ramble to the Lakes*, he supplied an extensive footnote extolling the virtues of the men of the Bengal Artillery. Having been released from service in the regular army in Gibraltar, he entered the service of the East India Company as a somewhat apprehensive cadet. He was pleased with his friendly reception by the existing officers, not least by the then Colonel Patrick Duff. Joseph joined the Bengal Artillery in 1783, some ten years after the incident with the tiger. He reproduced the account Patrick gave to his father, but added, 'on enquiring who were the people that could have left him, his answer kept pace with his conduct: "They should have fired; but I never will mention their names."³⁰ Budworth returned to Britain with a strong letter of recommendation to James Duff and later met up with Patrick on one of his return visits to Britain. The tenor of Patrick's account and its lasting impact is interestingly confirmed by the recollection of the pioneering conservationist Charles Waterton who wrote that Patrick had visited his school 'with a scar across his cheek which bore witness to the fact that he had been bitten by a Bengal tiger, and 'seeing me stare at his face, he most kindly allowed me to examine the scar.'³¹ Other stories added to the legend. One day, Buckle recounts, Patrick, finding a sentry asleep at his post, removed a six-pounder gun from its carriage and carried it off under his arm 'like a telescope'.³² Both in practice and in story, then, Tiger Duff was an enduring meme in British imperial remembering for over a century. What is perhaps most significant is a passing reference in private correspondence between Major Charles Hurt of the regular army and General James Grant in London. In 1791, in the middle of a campaign

²⁹ Tayler and Tayler, *Duffs*, II, 479.

³⁰ Joseph Budworth, *A Fortnight's Ramble to the Lakes in Westmoreland, Lancashire, and Cumberland* (London, 1810), as cited in 'Review of Budworth's Ramble to the Lakes', *The Gentleman's Magazine: And Historical Chronicle*, 80 (1810), 141.

³¹ Julia Blackburn, *Charles Waterton 1782–1865: Traveller and Conservationist* (London, 1989), 12.

³² Buckle, *Bengal Artillery*, 209.

against Tipu Sultan, he reported the arrival of 'Colonel (known by the name of Tiger) Duff',³³ confirming that the nickname was not a later elaboration.

In January 1774, the Taylers recount, 'for some reason unexplained, he resigned the service and returned to Scotland.' We can hazard a number of reasons. One is that recovery from his ordeal with the tiger was a slow one. Certainly, Allan Macpherson's journal for November 1773 records 'Capt. Duff, who talks of going home on account of the very bad state of his Health.'³⁴ The minutes of the Court of Directors note a letter from Patrick 'representing that he came home for the Recovery of his Health.'³⁵ Although from what we have seen a voyage back to Britain was far from being a leisure cruise, this might have been a plausible reason for return. Patrick arrived back in June, for James reported to Madeira that 'I have now to tell you that Capn Pat Duff from Bengal arrived here the 3 inst, his health obliged him to make a Trip home, but he is now perfectly well & a fine Soldierly looking Fellow, & does not come with an empty Pocket.'³⁶ It might have covered another scheme that was longer in hatching, however, for during his return he married his second cousin Ann, daughter of Provost John Duff of Elgin. It seems improbable that such an attachment took place in the short time following the evidence of Patrick's rehabilitation and success in military service. A final reason, and one which seems to have weighed heavily with Patrick, was the establishment of his right to half pay in recognition of his service in the regular army. In February 1775 James Gordon wrote to James Duff in Madeira that:

Capn P. Duff has been much employed of late to establish his half pay as Liet Fireworker in the Royal Regt of Artillery, since the time he entered into the India Compy's service by permission, he has at last accomplished it & got on the list which he was not before, his half pay of £40 a year in future is confirmed to him, & he expects the arrears of it for 11 years past, this has been the cause of his detention, & an object certainly worth his while, he now must have liberty from his majestys

³³ Major Hart, camp at Lanambaddy about five miles above Serringapatam to General James Grant, London, 25 May 1791, Macpherson-Grant of Ballindalloch papers, NRAS, NRAS771, Bundle 426.

³⁴ Macpherson, *Soldiering*, 162.

³⁵ Court of Directors, 16 June 1774, BL, IOR/B/90, 98.

³⁶ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 7 June 1774, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, letter book.

Master of ordnance to return to the Compy's service in India, which tis hoped will be readily granted.³⁷

In addition, and this was to be a constant theme in Patrick's military career, was a concern with his rank relative to others. In November 1774 the Court of Directors noted that, having granted Patrick leave to return to his position in the artillery, the governor and Council should 'refer his complaint of having been superceded' to a board of field officers which had been constituted to consider all similar claims.³⁸ This reflected that constant concern with seniority and rank that marked the East India Company's officers. It was here that his uncle James was invaluable in his London connections. Following receipt of a memorial addressed to General Robert Barker, James arranged for copies to be sent to a number of influential figures. One was Lord Fife, who procured a letter of recommendation from Sir Thomas Clavering to his brother who was going out to India as Commander in Chief. Through the auspices of Duff of Whitehill, another copy went to Francis Garden of Troup, MP for Aberdeenshire. He in turn raised it with a director of the Company. The problem here was that the case then became entangled with Company politics. 'I would have thrown in a petition to the Court presenting your Grievances,' wrote James, 'but was dissuaded from doing it for the prest, as there may soon be a different Set of Directors, the election coming on in this mo on a new footing by Act of Parliamt & indeed no petitions have been in the least attended to for most past, all parties being entirely taken up about making Interest which can have the upper hand, to keep in or turn out those they are most inclined to; such is now the Struggle, as always has been, for management of matters on this side the water.'³⁹

Letters from India suggests that the pressure had the desired result. After recommendations from Lord Adam Gordon (we may recall his gratitude for the hospitality he received in Madeira), Lord Fife, Colonel Hector Munro and Governor Grant he was elevated in the lists of superiority which put him above Major Tolley of the Artillery, 'who superceded me at the Resignation'. He wrote to Fife in November 1776, thanking him 'for the friendly and polite treatment I experienced you when in Europe.' He went on to report that 'A Board of Field officers sat, soon after my return to this place, to examine

³⁷ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 1 March 1775, *ibid.*

³⁸ Court of Directors, 11 November 1774, BL, IOR/B/90, 256.

³⁹ James Gordon, London to Patrick Duff, Bengal, 1 April 1774, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, letter book.

into my claim to Superior rank; their proceedings are not yet made publick, on account of the General's ill state of health; but I have reason to believe I will have the rank of Major, as soon as he is able to take his seat in Council, which will bring me near the head of the artillery.⁴⁰ This was the culmination of efforts which were probably behind his return to Britain; next we have to follow him back to India, where he was struck by tragedy and made his fortune.

⁴⁰ Tayler and Tayler, *Duffs*, II, 477.

11 The riches of Oudh

In 1774 the threads of our story – India, Madeira, London and the Scottish nobility – start to come together. In December 1774, having made progress in his claims for half pay, Patrick was granted permission by the Court of Directors to take his new bride Ann back to Bengal with him. Although he secured passage on the *Gatton* in January 1775, the process of departing was a long drawn out one, for in February he was requesting leave to take a ‘European Servant named Charles McBain and a Black Servant named Sabina’ with him, followed in the next month by a similar request for ‘a Black Servant with him to Bengal named Dick’.¹ It was here that James Gordon was invaluable in fixing up passages. It appears that Patrick’s brother James had also returned to Britain, for James reports finding him passage on an earlier ship.²

The *Gatton* was chosen because it was to put into Madeira. Here, however, Ann’s poor state of health necessitated a longer stay, and the *Gatton* departed without the Duff household. It was during this enforced stay that the two brothers hatched a scheme to rescue their father from the financial entanglements into which he had fallen. While Patrick’s newly won half pay was to go to pay off his father’s public debts, it was to his debts incurred during his role as estate factor for the Grants of Monymusk that the brothers turned their attention. Sir Archibald Grant of Monymusk was already a customer: in March 1768 he ordered a pipe of madeira. Following this order, James had sought to cement the relationship. ‘Altho’ I have not the honour to be personally known to you,’ he wrote, ‘yet I hope you’ll excuse the liberty I now take, to which I am encouraged by your friendship for my father and

¹ Court of Directors 23 December 1774, 336; 14 February 1775, 428; 15 March 1775, 489, BL IOR/B/90.

² James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 2 January 1775, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, letter book.

his family with which I am sufficiently acquainted.³ The purpose of his letter was to inform Sir Archibald that, having been informed that he was 'very fond of anything curious or uncommon to be found in foreign Country's', two pieces of coral were being sent to him on a ship bound for Dundee via the merchant John Rankin. The two brothers decided to see if they could build on this connection having 'resolved on clearing our Father of all his embarrassments & paying off his debts.' James' problem, he explained, was that he did not have access to ready money in Britain to be able to clear the debt to the estate, his father's 'principal and greatest Creditor'. Accordingly, he proposed to settle the debt by the supply of wine: 'If you wanted wine for yourself you would only have to make my father an allowance in his account to amount of the cost of your wine, if you should prevail on your friends to order anything I would draw bills on them payable to you, in this manner I am ready as soon as you please to account to you for principal and interest of my Father's debt to you.'⁴

The two brothers could thus clear off their father's debts much sooner than if they had to wait for cash. Grant accepted the scheme and a pipe was shipped to him via Barbados and London in August 1776 'of the very first growth & the quality such as I am fully persuaded will give you entire satisfaction'. James promised that he would look out for any 'curiosities' to send back to Scotland. There was, he reported, an Aberdeenshire plant hunter on the island sent 'to examine the botanical productions of our Island, he has been at many parts of it & says he has discovered some new and undescribed plants.' James would see if he could persuade him to part with some, but in the meantime promised 'some pretty pieces of waxwork made by our Nuns.'⁵

Patrick, meanwhile, had long left Madeira thanks to the good offices of his uncle in London in securing him passage. He had arranged a place of the *Earl of Sandwich*, but then the captain refused to put into Madeira. Accordingly, James had been forced to repair to the Jerusalem Coffee House to negotiate with Captain Webb of the *London*. Perhaps sensing his strong bargaining position, Webb demanded '£290 which is a most extravagant Sum for Passage from Mada to India, but I was terrified lest you should happen

³ James Duff, Madeira to Alexander Grant, Monymusk, August 1768, NRS, Grant of Monymusk muniments, Bundle noted Mr Jas Duff of Madeira & his father Mr Duff of Pitsaish GD345/943.

⁴ James Duff, Madeira to Archibald Grant, Monymusk, 8 November 1775, *ibid.*, GD345/943.

⁵ James Duff, Madeira to Alexander Grant, Monymusk, 8 August 1776, *ibid.*, GD345/943.

to be excluded from room in any of the 4 Mada Ships.⁶ The ship arrived at Madras in April 1776 but tragedy struck. Ann died and was buried in the town's St. Mary's Cemetery. As he wrote to his uncle James, 'My last from Madras was giving you the Melancholy account of the death of my wife, I still greatly feel her loss, and I believe no man had ever more reason to regret the death of a wife; for she was possessed of the greatest sweetness of disposition without one single fault which I was able to discover in near two years we liv'd together, most of which time she enjoy'd but an indifferent state of health; as my loss is now irretrievable I shall for the future drop the subject.'⁷ Henceforth his letters give us few hints of the inner emotional life of this soldier of Empire. The rather blunt coda dismissing this phase of his life characterizes his letters, which from now on are to a large extent concerned with the acquisition of money and rank. Rank was, of course, intertwined with material reward, but Patrick seems to have been intensely jealous about his status and how it was perceived.⁸ Of more immediate concern in 1776, however, was the desire to realise a 'competency'. In this he was not alone. As Henry Watson, Duff's later acquaintance, put it from his conversations with Clive, 'we are not going to Bengal to Learn the Languages'.⁹ Patrick's letters do not reflect any great interest in Indian language or culture, beyond what he would need to command his troops. He was rather the expert specialist soldier, seeking to capitalise on his undoubted practical organizational abilities. In this he mirrored Watson, who wrote to his father that his skills would 'in all probability be the means of my acquiring a Fortune in a short time, and it will be very much for my Honour as well as advantage to command the Companys Engineers by His Majestys commission.'¹⁰ For soldiers heading East their prime objective was to raise sufficient funds to return and live in independent style. As Watson put it 'I would by all means have us succeed, I hope we shall all never want money again and that this will be our last shift; I only beg that we may all live as sparingly as possible and I assure you I shall

⁶ Unsigned but James Gordon, London to Patrick Duff, Madeira, 3 November 1775, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle three.

⁷ Patrick Duff, Calcutta to James Gordon, London, 24 November 1776, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle four.

⁸ He was not alone in this; 'contemporary observers,' records Mackillop, 'including South Asians, were also struck by the status conscious nature of the Company's main settlements.' Mackillop, 'Europeans, Britons, and Scots', 31.

⁹ Henry Watson, Cape Town to John Watson, Holbeach, 5 January 1765, BL, letters of Henry Watson, MSS.EUR.D.759.

¹⁰ Ibid.

save all the Money that I can do conveniently and by every opportunity remit what I may be possessed of.¹¹

While in England Patrick had pressed his claim for promotion and obtained a decision from the Court of Directors that his case should be considered by a board of field officers. He had also armed himself with letters of recommendation from Lord Fife, Hector Munro and General James Grant addressed to the Commander in Chief, General Sir John Clavering. Grant's somewhat lukewarm words were that 'He is a man of a fair Character, has served with Reputation in India but having been unfortunately concerned in the Association in 1766 he has been three times disappointed of Preferment by the Promotion of Capts Wm Baillie, Wm Tolby & B. Burnet. If Capt Duff upon inquiry is found to have the military Mien which is represented in his resolution to Sir Robert Barker it is to be hoped Genl Clavering will take him under his Protection & promote him in his Turn.'¹² In the event, his promotion to major was confirmed by the board in late 1776. It was just as well that he was not dependent on Clavering, because the general was soon in conflict with the Governor General, a conflict that was to overshadow the next few years. While Patrick had been in England, Warren Hastings (1732–1818) had arrived in 1773 to head the administration in Bengal and so, effectively, the Company's rule throughout India. Thanks to his subsequent impeachment at the hands of Edmund Burke's flowing rhetoric, Hastings was and remains a divisive figure.¹³ Determined to respect and build on local customs, Hastings was also guilty of following some of their less desirable features in which the line between public duty and private advantage was a blurred one. Patrick was to be a Hastings' man, partly because he benefited from Hastings' well-known predilection for favouring Scots, but partly because he had a keen appreciation of his many good qualities. Patrick had, thanks to his absence, missed out on one of the most controversial aspects of Hastings' administration, the Rohilla war of 1774.

It is not clear at what point Patrick became friends with Allan Macpherson, but he would have been able to learn about the Rohilla campaign from him. Allan had, after the failed mutiny, become aide-de-camp to general Alexander Champion.¹⁴ After the battle of Buxar in 1764, the ruler of Oudh,

¹¹ Henry Watson, Cape Town to John Watson, Holbeach, 23 May 1764, *ibid.*

¹² Recommendation card, nd, NRS, Macpherson-Grant of Ballindalloch, TD2015/51, Bundle 550.

¹³ Geoffrey Carnall, and Colin Nicholson, *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings. Papers from a Bicentenary Commemoration.* (Edinburgh, 1989).

¹⁴ Foster, *Private Empire*, 49–50.

Shuja-ud-Daula, had become a client of the East India Company, with his kingdom forming a useful buffer against the threat of incursion from the powerful Marathas. In 1772 ud-Daula, concerned about incursions by the Marathas, had sought and obtained support from Hastings. The Bengal army, headed by Champion, marched into Oudh where their presence prompted the Marathas to retreat. It was after this, however, that Hastings was persuaded to use his forces in support of a campaign against the Rohillas. Forming a neighbouring territory to Oudh, the Rohillas had hitherto been allies of ud-Daula, but he clearly saw the opportunity to expand his possessions at their expense. The Bengal army had a crushing victory over the Rohillas at Mirranpur Katra on 23 April 1774, but it was the actions of their allies in the aftermath that became a stain on Hastings' reputation. Macpherson and Champion were disgusted by the brutal atrocities carried out on Rohilla prisoners and the now defenceless civilians. Champion resigned his command, to be replaced by Clavering, and headed back to Britain with complaints about Hastings' conduct.

This was the background to Patrick's efforts to make money from his time in India. There were three main ways in which soldiers could meet this aim. There were rewards from military service, chiefly in the share of prize money from the spoils of successful campaigns. It is no wonder that the ensign Petter Duff wrote to his uncle in 1770 that 'We long much for a War at present I am hopeful we shall have one soon.'¹⁵ Buckle gives the scale of prize money for the taking of Bidjegurh by Major Popham in 1781, with sums ranging from 44,956 rupees for majors down to 11,239 rupees for subalterns: considerable sums which were regarded by combatants as their right, however much frowned on by the central administration.¹⁶ A second route was from trade in connection with army service, notably through supply contracts, in which Patrick was much involved. But the most lucrative opportunity was the protection of native rulers who, under the terms of the treaties they struck, were often obliged to pay handsomely for such services. As Petter Duff reported in 1771 'I am just now preparing to go out with a hundred & Eighty Sepoys to meet our General who is on his way We have to go with him to Sauja Dewla's Country to Guard his Person by Which Jaunt I Expect some Rupees.'¹⁷

¹⁵ Patrick Duff, Mongheer to Andrew Hay of Rannes, 9 October 1770, NRS, GD225/box 31/12/19.

¹⁶ Buckle, *Bengal Artillery*, 84.

¹⁷ Patrick Duff, Alahabad to his father, 31 October 1771, NRS, GD225/box 31/12/84.

Oudh, then, became the focus of Patrick's exertions. He complained in 1776 that he had been refused command there on the grounds that, 'I could not be spared, & that there were already too many officers in that service.' What he suspected lay at the basis of this was a struggle for control between Clavering and Hastings: 'the Governor I believe wished to serve me, because he thought my standing in the service, and perhaps what I had suffered in it, entitled me to the command; His proposing me was a sufficient reason for the generals objections, so that without being a member of either party I may very probably be a sufferer by their disputes.'¹⁸ In this he was not alone; his commanding officer, Pearse, wrote in 1775 that 'those who either loved or were loved by Hastings, became immediately the object of C 's hatred and resentment. Hastings had been my friend before C arrived; and I esteemed him too much to do as others had done – that is, turned their backs on their old friends to court their new ones. C , therefore, marked me as one of the Government set, and accordingly he has uniformly done every thing to thwart and hurt me, and every thing I have asked for myself he refused.'¹⁹

But in Patrick's case Hastings, known for surrounding himself with Scots, won out and in the following year Patrick was able to report to his uncle James that 'I have now the Pleasure to acquaint you that I am appointed to that command, with very genteel allowances, which was I to continue there a few years, would enable me to visit my own country in the way I would wish; that is, with an independency; for I do not wish to have a large fortune.' He acknowledged his dependence on Hastings' support 'for it is entirely through his Interest that I have got it'.²⁰ By 1780 he had returned to the Company's service, but with sufficient money, should he be able to remit it, to both clear his debts to his uncles and to consider returning to Scotland. As he notes in a letter to his uncle James in 1779, 'I have not long ago sent Money sufficient to pay my debts to you & the Gentlemen of Madeira, and to assist my Father & younger brothers.'²¹ 'I formerly commanded the Nabobs Artillery,' he reported, 'now I am appointed to command the Artillery in the Field; which includes all those serving out of the Provinces. This is just what I wished for, and what I will be glad to keep while I remain in this Country, & I hope

¹⁸ Patrick Duff, Calcutta to unknown recipient (presumed James Gordon, London), undated but c. 1776, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle four.

¹⁹ Parlby, *Memoir of Pearse*, 35.

²⁰ Patrick Duff, Calcutta, to James Gordon, London, 18 August 1777, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle four.

²¹ Patrick Duff, Furrackbad, to James Gordon, London, 8 January 1779, *ibid.*

when the war is at an end, to be able to pay you a visit, without a Necessity of returning again to India.²²

There is little evidence in Patrick's letters of the exotic world of Lucknow so memorably evoked in William Dalrymple's account of the *White Mughals*. (Patrick does recount that the resident there, Harper, 'with Visible reluctance [...] Introduced me to the Nabob' in 1786, but that he did not expect anything to arise from his visit. Harper, he felt 'looks upon any introductions from the Governor as Incroachments on his appointment and I am convinced he is much more attentive to his own Interest, than he is to that of the person who placed him in his present station & to whom he owes so much', an interesting indication of the way in which many Company servants came to regard their appointments as private fiefdoms).²³ Lucknow was, in Dalrymple's words, 'indisputably the largest, most prosperous and most civilised pre-colonial city in northern India. The city's courtly Urdu diction and elaborate codes of etiquette were renowned as the most subtle and refined in Hindustan; its dancers admired as the most accomplished; its cuisine famous as the most flamboyantly baroque.'²⁴

It was while serving in Oudh that Patrick struck up a lasting friendship with the Scottish doctor Kenneth Murchison (1751–1796) who benefitted from the opportunities available at the court.²⁵ Murchison was born in 1751 (and so nine years younger than Patrick), the son of Alexander Murchison, tacksman of Auchtertyre, Lochalsh, Ross-shire. Murchison's family was not wealthy and had seen difficult times. Like Patrick and the Macphersons, there were Jacobite connections: Murchison's grandfather was killed at the battle of Sheriffmuir in 1715 and the close association of the Murchisons with the attainted Clan Mackenzie did nothing to help their fortunes. However, Murchison was able to translate the patronage of the Mackenzies into the study of medicine at Glasgow and Edinburgh universities and then took the diploma of the Royal College of Surgeons in London. This diploma was converted in 1772 into service aboard the East Indiaman *Fox*, bound for

²² Patrick Duff, Cawnpore to James Duff, London, 14 September 1780, *ibid*.

²³ Patrick Duff, Cawnpore to Allan Macpherson, Fort William 3 June 1786, NRAS, Macpherson of Blairgowrie, NRAS2614, bundle 442; on the fiefdoms of Indian administrators, E. M. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, c.1800–1947* (Cambridge, 2001), 21.

²⁴ William Dalrymple, *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth Century India* (London, 2002), 265.

²⁵ The details of Murchison, and full references, are to be found in Eric Grant and Alistair Mutch, 'Indian Wealth and Agricultural Improvement in Northern Scotland', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 35(1) (2015), 25–44.

Calcutta. By 1775 he was seeking, unsuccessfully, to be appointed as assistant surgeon in the service of the East India Company. However, in the following year he was appointed, thanks to the intervention of Sir Elijah Impey, Chief Justice of Bengal, to the position of surgeon to the officers in the service of the Nawab of Oudh, and in 1778, again with the help of Sir Elijah Impey, he was 'appointed as surgeon to the Residency at Lucknow, and a military, or consulting surgeon to the vizier'. It is likely that it was here that he met Patrick Duff and formed a lifelong friendship. He was also during this time appointed by Warren Hastings to be assistant surgeon on the Bengal establishment of the East India Company, being then appointed a full surgeon on 24 July 1780.

During his time in Lucknow Murchison was involved in a parallel career-threatening incident to that which Duff experienced in the 1766 mutiny. Murchison and the other gentlemen of Lucknow had been invited to dinner in the afternoon of 1 January 1779 at the house of Mr Nathaniel Middleton, the East India Company's resident in Lucknow. An altercation developed between a Mr Crofts and Murchison, with Crofts calling Murchison a scoundrel and Murchison responding by punching Crofts and knocking him to the ground. On the following day Crofts challenged Murchison to a duel. Hickey tells us that Crofts felt that he had to proceed with the duel, 'not from any resentment towards Dr. Murchison, as he exceedingly lamented any thing should have occurred to bring them thus hostilely to the field', but because he was still smarting from an episode in London, in which he had engaged another to fight a challenger.²⁶ Eager to restore his honour, he insisted on proceeding. Despite the efforts of Middleton and some of the other British gentlemen to cool things down the duel went ahead, the outcome of which was that Murchison shot Crofts dead. Sympathy was all on Murchison's side, but he was clearly very troubled about the possible consequences and its effect on his career. Murchison wanted a court-martial to clear his name, but because he was not technically employed by the East India Company army and the shooting occurred outside a military camp and within the jurisdiction of the Nawab, the East India Company washed its hands of the matter, while it appears that the Nawab completely ignored the shooting.

Murchison left Oudh in 1782 and began repatriating considerable sums of money, enabling him to purchase the estate of Tarradale in Ross-shire from his Mackenzie uncle in 1788. Patrick continued to correspond with

²⁶ Spencer, *Memoirs*, I, 291.

him, both from India and from Banffshire on his eventual return. In 1787, for example, he wrote from Cawnpore to let Murchison know that ‘Every person who is able talks of going home, but from the accounts here from England poor Indians are in great disgrace, & I am told they suppose a man who has once been in India must be a Rogue & a Scoundrel; the treatment Hastings has met with and what I see in all the Publick papers show very clearly the bad opinion they have of us poor unfortunate Indians.’²⁷ That was after Patrick had returned to duty in Bengal with the Company’s artillery. It was here that his talent for organization and logistics seems to have come to the fore. In 1783 he was responsible for laying out what would become the Company’s arsenal at Dum Dum, outside Calcutta.²⁸ (A name to become infamous in connection with an expanding bullet developed there in the late nineteenth century). In 1787, Dalrymple records, Mir Alam, the private secretary to the leading official in Hyderabad and on an official visit, was particularly impressed by the organization of the arsenals at Calcutta. ‘Three hundred thousand rifles hung up in good order and easy to collect,’ he recorded, ‘ammunitions factories hard at work, and two to three thousand cannons in place with five to six more in reserve and ready for use.’²⁹ Patrick had a road widened and an avenue of trees planted. It was here that a number of experiments were carried out with a view to improving the performance of the guns. Duff’s contribution was the design of a new carriage for the six pounder guns which were the mainstay of field operations. His position as Commissary General of Ordnance was linked to these activities, as well as affording the opportunity to manage lucrative contracts. We will see further confirmation of this practical ability in the 1792 campaign.

Patrick took command of the Bengal artillery in 1780 when Pearse took his detachment to reinforce Coote. His promotion to lieutenant colonel also meant he might be able to do more to help his younger brothers William (?1744–1807) and John (?1746–1828), who were both serving officers in the Company’s infantry. Patrick had encouraged William to follow him to India in 1774, but he struggled to find him a posting. James Gordon had looked after him in London, finding him ‘a stout but extremely raw awkward boy, tho’ I doubt not but time & being a little in the world will brush him up.’³⁰

²⁷ Patrick Duff, Cawnpore to Kenneth Murchison, Tarradale, 15 November 1787, Edinburgh University Library (hereafter EUL), personal papers of and relating to Kenneth Murchison, MS.2263/20.

²⁸ Buckle, *Bengal Artillery*, 49.

²⁹ Dalrymple, *White Mughals*, 163.

³⁰ James Gordon, London, to Captain Patrick Duff, Bengal via Madeira and Captain

His father, he told Patrick, ought to reimburse him for the costs of his passage, which he had obtained for him via Madeira at a cost of £60. Although William had missed the ships bound for Bengal, James had thought it best to send him on to Madeira in the hope of catching up with them. Even if he had to remain in Madeira that would, thought James, answer better than remaining in London where ‘a Bachelor & by my many avocations in business from looking after him, can’t have that constant eye over a young man that is necessary in this great City full of dissipation & debauchery.’³¹

Quite when William arrived in India is not clear, but Patrick struggled to find him an opening, appealing to his uncle to use his endeavours to find a cadetship in Britain. Finally, William was appointed as a cadet in Madras in 1777, being promoted lieutenant in the following year and distinguishing himself in service against the Mahratas under Goddard. He spent some time in Bombay, where he fell ill and was sent to recover in Bengal in 1783. This gave Patrick the chance to look for opportunities to get William a staff appointment and he worked his connections with Allan Macpherson.³² Patrick had considerable respect for his brother, but perhaps identified aspects of his character that prevented him rising in the service:

William is as good a Character, both as a Man & an Officer as any I ever knew; I like him in every respect and have not only the feelings of a Brother for him, but I have more than I can well express, still we do not always agree as we ought, this has never made the smallest alteration after the Argument is over; his way of thinking and mine are different and we have had many disputes, in not one of which did he ever give up the point, tho’, in my Opinion, sometimes wrong; he has a great deal of friendship in his disposition, & no man is better liked by his Acquaintances, but he is I think obstinate & his Idea of Independency makes him sometimes, in my Opinion, act wrong, altho’ he never did anything but from the best principles, which are unshaken & not to be warped by Interest or any improper Motive.³³

Fowler, 8 January 1774, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, letter book.

³¹ James Gordon, London, to Patrick Duff, Bengal via Madeira and William Duff, 1 April 1774, *ibid.*, James Gordon, London, to Patrick Duff, Bengal via Madeira and William Duff, 1 April 1774, *ibid.*

³² Patrick Duff, Lucknow to Allan Macpherson, Fort William, 13 May 1786, NRAS, Macpherson of Blairgowrie, NRAS2614, bundle 442.

³³ Patrick Duff, Fort William to ?James Duff, London, 16 March 1784, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle two.

That stubborn adherence to a position perhaps did not help William's case in a world in which working a network of connections was a key part of achieving rank, for William's promotion to captain did not take place till 1796. His brother John had a similar wait, which perhaps illustrates the growing over-provision of candidates for officer positions lured by the promise of Indian riches.

It was perhaps that promise which turned John away from his projected career as a carpenter. In 1774 James Gordon had reported to Patrick, following a visit to the north, that 'your Bror John ... is a sightly well look'd young man, and well behav'd, he is Apprentice to the best House Carpenter in the North, & I hope will do well there or in some of our W. India Colonies'.³⁴ However, John seems to have rebelled against such a destiny, for by 1779 Patrick was writing to his uncle that 'I am at a loss what to say about John, if you think he will not do in the way his friends chose to bring him up he can do no better I think than come to India as a cadet'.³⁵ Thus by June 1779, James had yet another Duff boy to look after in London. 'God grant the poor Lad success,' he wrote to his brother Alexander at Letterfourie, 'he is very sober, well inclined, & I believe quite frugal, but I hope I shall never have any more such jobs on my hands'.³⁶ John arrived as an ensign in Bengal in 1780, regretting that he had not arrived earlier. He was made lieutenant in the following year, but his letters convey a sense of impatience about not getting quicker rewards – and not getting more support from Patrick. As the latter observed in 1785, 'John has no right to complain, he has not been so long in the service as to give him any great Claims on it, and during the whole time he has been on full Batta; I have made some attempts lately to serve him without success'.³⁷

John had been serving under John Macpherson whose command was continually on the move. 'To this,' he reported to his uncle James in 1781, 'if no other, I attribute the advantage of learning the Language – Which I now

³⁴ James Gordon, London, to Captain Patrick Duff, Bengal via Madeira and Captain Fowler, 8 January 1774, *ibid.*, letter book.

³⁵ Patrick Duff, Furrackabad, to James Gordon, London, 8 January 1779, *ibid.*, Tiger box, bundle four.

³⁶ James Gordon, London, to Alexander Gordon, Letterfourie, 4 June 1779, *ibid.*, box 9, bundle with sasines.

³⁷ Patrick Duff, Gardens 4 miles below Calcutta to James Duff, London, 6 August 1785, *ibid.*, Tiger box, bundle two.

speak wt ease and very fluently'.³⁸ In the same year we find him featuring in Macpherson's Journal, which records the despatch of Lieutenant John Duff in charge of two companies of sepoy to march overnight to take prisoner villagers who had plundered cattle from the army's followers.³⁹ This ceaseless activity was perhaps behind his complaint to his uncle that 'I am now in the upper part of the Country, a Lieutenant, by the common rise of this Service, where Commissions are not bought, but have not yett been lucky enough to have a Staff Appointment, not being in the Artillery, which is the best line, & where Patrick has several posts in his disposal. However, I make the best of it and only regret that I did not set out sooner.'⁴⁰ Patrick's efforts on his behalf secured the position of Quartermaster under Colonel Knudsen in 1786, but John's dissatisfaction continued. John's attentions now turned to his brother James, back in London from Madeira. He begged James to use any influence he had with Henry Dundas, by 1788 in control of the distribution of positions in India: 'for all the present Government may comparatively be called an independent Government,' John wrote, 'yet it would be false to say that it pays no attention to recommendations, the Contrary is notorious and will be so, as long as the world stands, the same principles of interest and reciprocal expected Obligation will always Subsist – So if you can procure the recommendation mentioned from Mr Dundas, I will esteem it a very real favour.'⁴¹ Dundas (1742–1811) was a Scottish lawyer who rose to the position of 'manager' of Scottish affairs for the British government.⁴² In return for his manipulation of the electorate to secure a bloc of loyal Scottish MPs, he became a member of the cabinet in 1791. In 1784, he had become the leading member of the Board of Control established by Pitt to regulate affairs in India. This gave him sweeping powers of patronage, which he used to bolster his control of Scottish representation in Parliament through manipulation of its notoriously corrupt electoral system.⁴³

For all these efforts, it was not until 1797 that John was to reach the position of captain. By the late 1770s, however, all three Duff brothers were

³⁸ John Duff Lucknow, to James Gordon, London, 29 October 1781, *ibid.*, box ten, London letters.

³⁹ Macpherson, *Soldiering*, 403 (12 October 1781).

⁴⁰ John Duff, camp near Cawnpore to James Gordon, London, 5 November 1784, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle six.

⁴¹ John Duff, Fort William to James Duff, London, 4 January 1788, *ibid.*

⁴² Michael Fry, *The Dundas Despotism* (Edinburgh, 1992).

⁴³ Andrew MacKillop, 'Fashioning a 'British' Empire: Sir Archibald Campbell of Inverneil and Madras, 1785–9' in Steve Murdoch and Andrew Mackillop (eds), *Military Governors and Imperial Frontiers c. 1600–1800* (Leiden, 2003), 223, 226.

central parts of the officer corps of the East India Company. Patrick was pleased to write to his uncle James in 1785 that his brothers 'are both good Officers and very much esteemed by all their acquaintances.'⁴⁴ Patrick was now financially secure; with this, his thoughts turned to returning home. However, before considering this we need to retrace our steps a little and consider what was happening in Madeira, for it would affect Patrick's activities.

⁴⁴ Patrick Duff, Fort William to James Gordon, London, 10 August 1785, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box ten, miscellaneous letters.

12 Turning from west to east

We saw that when James Gordon returned to London in 1760 it was in the hope of an eventual return to Scotland. With James Duff and then his brother Robert trained and trustworthy managers in Madeira and Alexander Gordon back in London, James wanted to escape from the London in which he had never felt entirely comfortable and restore the family fortunes at Letterfourie. The house that he had inherited from his father was inadequate in ‘furniture, Liquors, Comestibles & Lodging, in short every kind of accommodation, & is a very bad house.’¹ When Alexander returned from Madeira in 1769 James was able to return to Banffshire for a brief visit. It was during this time one suspects that he made up his mind to spend some of the money he had made in Madeira on commissioning a grand new house from the architect Robert Adam (1728–1792).

Robert Adam’s father, William, had been engaged for a number of major building projects in the north east, most notably Duff House for Lord Braco on the outskirts of Banff. Although this was not completed as designed, what was built is dramatic. It is a four storey central block with a Corinthian portico. Its verticality is emphasised by corner towers. It maybe that this overwhelming verticality would have been offset if the planned wings had been built, but this very Scottish sense of verticality was mirrored in Robert’s design for Letterfourie. In contrast to Duff House, however, the power of Letterfourie is not in its Baroque exuberance but in its elegant understatement. It consists of a tall central cube flanked by single storey service wings. For Matthew Woodworth its height flouts Georgian preoccupations with regular proportion: as he observes, ‘the Gordon patrons seem to have clung to the tower house ideal.’² It is interesting to note Andrew Wight’s observation

¹ James Gordon, London to James & Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 7 June 1766, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, letter book.

² David Walker, and Matthew Woodworth, *Aberdeenshire: North and Moray* (New

when he visited Letterfourie in the 1780s to examine its agricultural improvements: ‘The house,’ he reported, ‘which is lately built, is commodious, and yet of a singular construction, partaking of his own character [that is the Gordon brother who received him], according to his own description.’³ One clear example of this distinctiveness was the insertion of a chapel in one of the wings, distinguished by its arched windows. Although discreetly placed, this is testament to the Gordon brothers’ staunch adherence to the faith of their fathers. Whether the overall design of Letterfourie is of a piece with James’s conservatism is an open question; what is not in doubt is that he spared little expense in creating a new focus for the revived fortunes of his estate. The house features doors and window frames of Spanish mahogany and a superb drawing room decorated with hand-painted Chinese wallpaper. James’s access to contacts and knowledge of shipping must have helped here.

His project, however, seems to have been largely hijacked by his brother. In January 1772 Alexander reported from Letterfourie that the old house was beginning to be dismantled for stones for the new house and timber had arrived. Not only was he superintending building work, but he was also embarking on schemes of agricultural improvement involving the ploughing of moorland. Alexander clearly enjoyed the occupations of a landed gentleman more than those of a wine merchant. He was happy, he wrote, ‘that my Concerns cannot suffer by my absence, while they are under your management & directed by your economy I cannot but be easie.’⁴ This was clearly a source of some exasperation for James, who was unable to take anything other than short breaks in Scotland as he wrestled with business concerns in London. You can feel his impatience with his brother when he wrote with a business update in 1779 that, ‘I hardly believe you would spare time from roaming in the fields, to read them with attention.’⁵ One of these pressing matters was the disruption to the Madeira wine trade occasioned by the American War of Independence.

Premonitions of this disruption came in the report of James in 1768 that ‘we are all in Confusion & uproar here about Mr Wilks & Liberty, & the

Haven, CT, 2015), 444.

³ Andrew Wight, *Present State of Husbandry in Scotland*, (4 vols, Edinburgh, 1784), IV, 71.

⁴ Alexander Gordon, Letterfourie, to James Gordon, London, 15 January 1772, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box two, papers relating to Cairnbanno.

⁵ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon, Letterfourie, 12 October 1779, *ibid.*, box nine, bundle with sasines.

N. Americans, a perfect Anarchy almost over the Kingdom.⁶ Although as we have seen the prime business of the house was with wealthy individuals in Britain and Scottish planters in the West Indies, they still did some business in the American colonies that was threatened by the swelling agitation for independence. In 1774 James noted that the resolution of the General Congress at Philadelphia for non-importation of British goods specifically mentioned madeira. 'Be cautious not to say anything to your treacherous American Brethren,' James advised his nephew in 1775, 'or any connected with them about what you may be advised of political matters, they would be glad to write to the prejudice of whoever are not of the same sentiments with themselves & represent them as enemys to America.'⁷ When hostilities did break out, James Duff was sanguine about their impact on business. Although he recognised the potential for disruption to the island's trade, his opinion, expressed to Sir Archibald Grant, was that 'the Trade of Great Britain is in so flourishing a way that hardly any inconvenience is felt from the interruption of commerce with America.'⁸ However, events in practice were not to bear such a rosy hue.

Despite the disappointment of one of his orders being short because of leakage, the Duke of Gordon did return to his namesakes for a further butt of old madeira in January 1774. This was selected and put by to mature for two years until it was despatched on the *Eliza* bound for Dundee via Jamaica. Unfortunately, the *Eliza* was wrecked on her way into port in Jamaica. However, the Duke's pipe was salvaged and transferred to the *Adventure* bound for Leith and Dundee. It was here, though, that the American troubles interceded, for the *Adventure* was seized by American privateers and taken into New England. 'The Dukes wine had lain by for him upwards of two years,' wrote James Gordon to the estate factor, 'must have been excellent stuff, & I highly regret that the Rebel Rascals of America should have got it, for which there is now no help.' He had also had a cask of 'the finest rich sweet Malmsie as a present to the Duchess' included in the order, as well as 'some preserved Citron for her Grace.' He had insured the cargo, but regretted 'that those Villanous pirates should have deprived her of it.'⁹

⁶ James Gordon, London to James & Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 8 June 1768, *ibid.*, letter book.

⁷ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 31 January 1775, *ibid.*

⁸ James Duff, Madeira to Archibald Grant, Monymusk, 8 August 1776, NRS, Grant of Monymusk, GD345/943.

⁹ James Gordon, London, to James Ross, Gordon Castle, 22 July 1777, NRS, Duke of Gordon muniments, GD44/43/ 185/20.

It was events such as this that turned attention to the market for madeira in India, something which Patrick was well placed to help with as he climbed the ranks.

Hard drinking was a feature of the culture of Europeans serving in India. Kenneth Murchison and Charles Croftes had been so drunk on the evening that led up to their duel that they could not remember the cause of their disagreement.¹⁰ Their seconds were in no position to help, for they had been in the same condition. Madeira was one of the drinks of choice. In 1769 the Council requested that London did not ‘send out any more Vidonia Wine as it is not of so wholesome a quality as Madeira & no Body.’¹¹ The trade was dominated in the early eighteenth century by the merchant Charles Chambers, who accounted for thirty-four per cent of the island’s wine exports in 1727.¹² In 1756, for example, the *Warwick* was to ship three hundred pipes of madeira supplied by Chambers, Hiccox and Chambers to India, to be shared between the Madras and Bengal presidencies.¹³ The firm were major owners of stock in the East India Company, thus reinforcing their preferential status as suppliers, despite complaints about leakage and short measure.¹⁴ In 1755 the Council in Bengal had reported that ‘We think proper to acquaint Your Honours that the Madeira wine sent us this year by the St George has proved but very indifferent, all of it in general being poor and weak bodied, by which means several of the pipes in fining have turned quite sour.’¹⁵

Madeira was originally to be offered for public sale after satisfying the demands of civil servants and military officers. That is, it was intended as part of the commercial operations of the Company. In 1764, however, the Bengal Council complained that ‘we must further remark to your honors that the quantity is very inadequate to the wants of your servants alone, exclusive of the inhabitants of the settlement, as will appear by the distribution entered on our Consultation of the 5th of November. the number of servants both on your civil and military lists is now so much increased that there

¹⁰ Spencer, *Memoirs*, I, 291.

¹¹ Narendra Krishna Sinha, *Fort William – India House Correspondence: And Other Contemporary Papers Relating Thereto (Public Series). Vol.5 1767–69* (Delhi, 1949), 526 (2 February 1769).

¹² Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, 136.

¹³ K. K. Datta, *Fort William – India House Correspondence: And Other Contemporary Papers Relating Thereto (Public Series). Vol.1 1748–56* (Delhi, 1958), 178 (29 December 1756).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 135 (11 February 1756).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 881 (1 March 1775).

will always be wanted for their use only at least three hundred pipes, we hope therefore that you will enlarge the export of this article as far as you possibly can.¹⁶ As a consequence, in 1766 the Court ruled that they could dispense ‘with your putting up any of the Madeira or vidonia wines consigned to your Presidency to publick sale; and we leave it to you, to divide the same among our civil and military servants, in such proportions, as shall appear to you most equitable according to their several ranks and stations; and we direct that they be charged at the full prime cost with an advance of thirty per cent thereon.’¹⁷

Complaints about short supply continued. In 1785, the Council in Bengal represented to the Court ‘the distress to which this settlement has been reduced by being obliged to use very bad wine’ occasioned by London refusing to permit any ships from calling at Madeira in the previous season.¹⁸ This had dramatically inflated the price of madeira. In response, the Court directed five ships to call at Madeira in 1785 to load four hundred pipes of wine for the use of the presidencies of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. The high demand for madeira in India and the prices it could command made it a tempting target for the island’s wine merchants, but they had to find ways round the determination of the Company to preserve the bulk of the trade for themselves. Captains and other ship’s officers were permitted to carry cargoes on their own account, but the Company sought to restrict this privilege. In 1772, for example, they laid down that all ships were to be searched on arrival in India and ‘if a larger quantity than five pipes shall be found unregistered in the manifest of any ship’s private trade which shall not have been ordered by us to take in wine at Madeira, the same must be confiscated for the Company’s use.’¹⁹ A particular target was the temptation to re-export madeira back to Britain. In 1770 the Court noted that Captain Purvis had brought back madeira on the *Valentine* for sale in Britain, ‘thereby frustrating the intentions of furnishing our settlements therewith at a reasonable rate’.²⁰ Captains were strictly forbidden from carrying back quantities other than what was necessary for consumption on return voyages. That Indian madeira

¹⁶ C. S. Srinivasachari, *Fort William – India House Correspondence: And Other Contemporary Papers Relating Thereto (Public Series). Vol. 4 1764–66* (Delhi, 1962), 270 (26 November 1764).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 205 (21 November 1766).

¹⁸ B. A. Saletore, *Fort William – India House Correspondence: And Other Contemporary Papers Relating Thereto (Public Series). Vol.9 1782–85* (Delhi, 1959), 540 (22 February 1785).

¹⁹ Prasad, *Fort William Correspondence*, 6, 158 (25 March 1772).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1 (17 January 1770).

was a desirable commodity, thanks to the maturing properties of both heat and motion on two long voyages, is testified to by Henry Mackenzie's specific reference to it as a luxury associated with returning nabobs.²¹ Further confirmation can be found in the letters of George Hurt at Madras to General James Grant in London. In 1790 he wrote to Grant that he had secured from the rich merchant Mr Latour 'some of his own old Madeira,' a pipe of which was on its way to London on the Houghton. 'Don't be afraid,' Hurt continued, 'of wanting good madeira while I am in India.'²²

For those merchants who could not participate the results were frustrating, as it increased the price of wine. As Henry Smith reported from the island in 1774, 'The news of 6 ships for India calling here is a disagreeable one & we think the most unlucky thing that could happen to the trade of the Island nor will those who may do more of the nosiness reap much advantage from it, it has raised a Bustle & has made the Port: quite mad, they go to great lengths in buying up.'²³ The India trade was valuable, however, in that it was an outlet for the poorer quality wines, which would improve on the long journey to India through the heat and motion of the ships. Two barriers presented themselves to any attempt by the Gordons to break into this trade. One was that the official trade of the Company was reserved by those who held stock, and so influence, at India House. Thus in 1785, 180 pipes were to be obtained from Ahmuty, 326 pipes from Messrs Allen and Company, and six intended for Canton from Messrs Scott, Pringle & Co. As James Gordon explained in 1766, 'the Ruling men of the Board of Directors making a point when they give them that voyage, that they shall do their Business with the House whose Principals here serve their Interest most, by holding a great deal of India Stock, which they split to make Votes at the Genl Yearly Election, in order to keep at the Board such as bring Grist to their Mill for the sake of their Votes.'²⁴

The other was that ships' captains were generally obliged by their owners to deal only with the merchants selected by the owners. As Cotton reminds us, the officers of East Indiamen, down to the fourth mate and including the

²¹ Henry Mackenzie, *The Lounger*, 145(17), 151 (28 May 1785).

²² George Hurt, Madras to James Grant, London, 23 August 1790, NRAS, Macpherson-Grant of Ballindalloch, NRAS771, Bundle 386; emphasis in original.

²³ Henry Smith, Madeira to James Gordon, London, 21 January 1774, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box ten, letters 1770.

²⁴ James Gordon, London to James & Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 10 May 1766, *ibid.*, letter book.

surgeon and purser, were generally 'all gentlemen by education and family.'²⁵ They thus often had the wherewithal to load considerable quantities; in 1778, Hickey tells us, Chisholme, commander of the *Gatton*, unloaded 150 pipes of madeira at Calcutta.²⁶ The restrictions placed on captains by their owners meant that James often struggled to gain orders from them. Occasional successes were scored; in 1767 he secured an order from Captain Mills of the *Kent* for 50 pipes. This led to complementary orders from the first, second and third mates, the purser and the surgeon. Even the surgeon's mate took a pipe, with total orders amounting to some 90 pipes.²⁷ But this was a rare success and James colourfully expostulated in 1772, 'I could not go a greater length in bringing to those India Folks than I did, except for I had kist their A__se.'²⁸ As a strategy, that was less effective than purchasing stock.

'Neither my Bro or myself are proprietors,' lamented James to James Duff in 1772, 'but wish both we & you too were, if money could be spared.'²⁹ The situation changed at some time after this, for in 1784 Patrick Duff was writing to his brother from India that 'by the late Act I understand the Court of Directors have lost all their influence and I suppose the proprietors also will lose some of theirs; I am nevertheless glad to find that you have become one, every person I think who has friends in India should take every measure to assist them.'³⁰ This, of course, was with the advancement of Patrick's claims to rank in mind, but stock ownership could open the way to access to officially sanctioned wine shipments. In 1790 the stock ledgers of the Company recorded a holding of £1,295 in the name of Gordon, Duff & Co of Madeira. This purchased some influence, but it paled next to the £60,952 held by Scott, Pringle and Cheap, the £8,476 of Allen, Arrujo & Co and the £7,760 of Arthur Ahmuty & Co. In turn, these were dwarfed by the £122,663 of stock held by Chambers, Hiccox and Chambers.³¹ Charles Chambers was a director of the East India Company from 1755 and his son Charles followed in his footsteps. 'Six Indiamen are appointed for Mada,'

²⁵ Cotton, *East Indiamen*, 24.

²⁶ Cited in Cotton, *East Indiamen*, 35.

²⁷ James Gordon, London to James & Alexander Gordon, Madeira, 4 December 1767, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, letter book.

²⁸ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 30 November 1772, *ibid.*

²⁹ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 29 August 1772, *ibid.*

³⁰ Patrick Duff, Camp Dum Dum to James Duff, London, 10 December 1784, *ibid.*, Tiger box, bundle three.

³¹ East India Company and India Office General Ledgers, 1789–1793, Ledger Q Jul 1789–Jun 1793, BL, IOR/L/AG/1/1/26/f.156(7).

reported James in 1772, 'all but one to Chambers [the other] it is supposed will go to Ferguson & Murdoch, the Chairman having made their doing business with them a Condition of giving the voyage to every one of the Captns of whom Mills is one.' 'Ferguson,' he continued, 'hurt himself much in purse by party work in the India way, & now his party want to make it up to him.'³²

Against such forces James Gordon could only score limited success, making the best of it in 1774 with the rueful observation that 'I am firmly of opinion the India business this year has given more show than profit, & that there is no reason to regret not being partakers in it, as very possibly time may demonstrate.'³³ This did not prevent him continuing to try, however, and this is where Patrick, once firmly established in India, was of considerable value. In 1783 Patrick ordered wine to the value of a thousand pounds to be divided amongst his friends. 'Great care ought to be taken of the pipes,' he cautioned, 'the Casks which is in general sent from Madeira is extremely bad, many people lose whole pipes by it, & the Leakage is always very considerable. I think a trifling expence in giving good Casks ought not to be considered. If this scheme answers, & the wine proves good, I dare say you will have orders every Year for considerable quantities, and it may become a matter of some consequence a few years hence.'³⁴ This was of high quality, better, in Patrick's estimation, than that which was supplied by the Company and 'could I depend upon remittances, I could dispose of any Quantity of Wine, but that is not the case, and I am not a Man of Business.'³⁵ As he noted in 1785 when, as we have seen, the Council were complaining of shortages, 'I have a good deal of Interest in the Army, I could get almost any quantity of wine taken off your Agents hands and as far as I can judge Madeira will sell right for two years to come, you will be able to be a pretty good judge of this by the quantity which may be sent from the Island; at present we have very little in the Settlement & and what we have is of an inferior quality.'³⁶

The agent he suggested was a Scottish merchant in Calcutta, Alexander Colvin. For commission of two and a half per cent Colvin would dispose of the wine and acquire Bengal piece goods for the return voyage. Patrick would

³² James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 29 August 1772, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, letter book.

³³ James Gordon, London to Alexander Gordon & Co, Madeira, 1 April 1774, *ibid.*

³⁴ Patrick Duff, Fort William to James Duff, London, 16 March 1784, *ibid.*, Tiger box, bundle two.

³⁵ Patrick Duff, Fort William to James Duff, London, 16 March 1784, *ibid.*

³⁶ Patrick Duff, Fort William to James Duff, London, 20 December 1785, *ibid.*, Tiger box, bundle one.

be able to undertake quality assurance, in particular affirming the quality of casks and the degree of any claimed leakage. In October 1785 he examined the wine after it had been landed and declared that 'it is allowed to be the best that ever was in this Country, and I am certain it is really so, and I am in great hopes it may be the means of introducing your House to more of the India business'.³⁷ He encouraged his brothers in Madeira to focus on quality, rather than shifting inferior wines to India. In 1786 he recommended that wines be sent out in the proportions of one fifth 'particular' (that is, the best quality, aged wines), two fifths London quality and three fifths best madeira or New York wines. As he noted:

An observation has been made, & not without good reason, as it has often happened, that when Wine merchants first send out wine to this Country, it has been very good, but that in a little time it has fallen off; I could not deny that it had been the case but I ventured to answer that with respect to your House it would never be so; that I knew your Principles, and would engage that such a thing could not happen. I tasted all the different sorts of wines, & upon my honor, I think that the West India wine is equal, if not superior, to the generality of wine brought out here for us by the India ships; and what you call Madeira wine, superior to what is sent out for the Company which has always been the best, & sold for most money. The Casks is a great article, & their goodness ought to be particularly attended to. I am not afraid that anything you do or trust to Robert will be wrong, it is proper however that you should know all these matters.³⁸

He continued to solicit other customers, in 1787 reporting of one venture that 'your wine bears the best character of any that has been sent to India, & if this plan succeeds it will be confirming that character'.³⁹ All this suggests that Patrick was now well established and at home in India. His aim was still to return, but the years from 1775 to 1788 were when he began to ascend the ranks of the military. This was not without its struggles, struggles which contributed to the voluminous correspondence of the early 1780s.

³⁷ Patrick Duff, Fort William to James Duff, London, 20 October 1785, *ibid.*, Tiger box, bundle two

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Patrick Duff, Cawnpore to James Duff, London, 12 August 1787, *ibid.*, Tiger box, bundle three.

13 The importance of rank

In January 1786, Patrick, now lieutenant colonel, set off on a tour of inspection. His task was to check that artillery units were ready for the field; to put them through their paces while ensuring that stores were up to date. He proceeded first to the fortress at Chunargarh and arrived at Cawnpore around the 24th of January. One morning the commanding officer, colonel Blair, was ill and unable to take muster. Patrick, as next senior officer, had inspected the cavalry, the artillery and the European infantry. He was about to take muster of the sepoys when lieutenant colonel Blane arrived and objected, declaring that Patrick 'had no Command there, and that he would not sign the Muster rolls'.¹ The two came to an agreement so as not to lose face before the troops and Patrick completed the muster, but not without both men referring the matter to Blair. As far as Patrick was concerned, there was a matter of principle involved. He was aware that his task was to inspect rather than command, and was not seeking anything further, but Blane's objections had wider implications. Blane's interpretation was that Patrick could never command: on the march 'even a Captain would command me; A Circumstance which I can answer shall never take place.' As Patrick wrote to his 'dear friend' Allan Macpherson, now Quartermaster General back at Fort William, 'I would rather lose the command, nay the Service than agree to anything of the sort.'² Blair agreed with Patrick's interpretation and agreed to lay it before the commander in chief. The incident crystallised some of the concerns with rank that were a constant feature of Patrick's correspondence. Cawnpore was just one of several disputes over rank. Cawnpore also added to Patrick's desire to return to Scotland. As he wrote to Allan Macpherson, they had a friendship which 'has lasted many years without interruption & that we have

¹ Patrick Duff to Colonel Blair, commanding at Cawnpore, 31 January 1786, NRAS, Macpherson of Blairgowrie, NRAS2614, bundle 442/223.

² Patrick Duff to Allan Macpherson, Fort William, 4 February 1786, *ibid.*, bundle 442/228.

a prospect of continuing it some years longer in our own Country, where I hope we shall talk with satisfaction over old stories with our friends and relations round us; This I hope is not far distant for you must be able soon to go home; & I only remain here two years with the allowances I expect I will be perfectly satisfied & follow you.³

In the previous year, Patrick's brother William wrote to his uncle James Gordon from his posting at Fort William that:

I have just heard that my Brother is applying for the Command of the Garrison of Chunnah; it has always been a Lieut Colonel's command, and the present Commander has almost had his tour. My brother is the Oldest of his rank of any on the Establishment, next to Lieut Colonel Achmuty whose turn it will be to be relieved in November from the station and Garrison of Chunnah: the only objection that can possibly be made to this taking place is our Brother's being an Artillery officer, in which line command have not hitherto gone, but I think as his interest is better than that of any who will no doubt oppose its taking place, that he will carry his point, especially as it is not known that he means to make use of it to effect this business, nor that a relief will take place the ensuing Season. I heartily wish that he may succeed, as the command is one of the very best in the Service and a sure fortune in a short time.⁴

William's letter alludes to a number of features of military service at this time: the importance of seniority and turn-taking; the tensions between the infantry and the artillery over rank; and the expectation of financial gain from particular postings.

The fortress at, variously, Chunnah, Chunar or Chunargarh, sat on an imposing rock high above the Ganges. John Macpherson had been badly wounded in the assault on it that followed Buxar in 1765; since that date it had been controlled by the Company. When he visited in 1772 Allan Macpherson recorded that 'the Breaches made in the years 64 and 65 are still unrepaired, but the Hill is so very steep and high that it appears no difficult matter to Guard them, and the works of the Fort very strong. From the Heat of the Rocks the Evenings are immensely Hot in the Fort.'⁵ That it was,

³ Ibid.

⁴ William Duff Fort William to James Gordon, 30 July 1785, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle six.

⁵ Macpherson, *Soldiering in India*, 90 (5 May 1772).

despite this, a prized posting is revealed by letters to Allan from commanding officers there. In 1785 Colonel Achmuty, nearing the end of his tour of duty at the fort, wrote to Macpherson asking him to use his good offices with Hastings to get the Rajah of Benares to pay the agreed sum of 1,400 rupees a month. His predecessor, Colonel Blair, had managed to secure this amount, but only after an intervention from Hastings. Now the Rajah was delaying payment despite having received a new order from Hastings, leaving Achmuty facing arrears of 32,600 rupees. Even more important was the revenue from the Gauts, tolls, one assumes, for using particular passes in the locality. 'The Gauts bring in much more [than his monthly allowance]' complained Achmuty, '& where it goes God knows.'⁶ Achmuty was successful in the end, but his successor, Colonel Mackenzie, was faced with the same challenges, having to ask Macpherson to put pressure on the Rajah. The latter held out for joint administration of the Gauts, but this was rejected.⁷ The whole saga suggests how lucrative particular postings could be, with sources of revenue which had nothing to do with military operations.

Patrick's hopes for command at Chunargarh were unsuccessful. He had been promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel in 1783 and had commanded the Bengal artillery while Pearse was absent on his campaign with Coote outside Madras. When Pearse returned, Patrick lost all his allowances as a commanding officer and his activities as commissary of military stores had been much reduced. He had 'a large Stock of timber, iron, &c which I have on hand for conveying on the Company's business under my Charge' which he was anxious to dispose of. His successor in the post, captain Charles Deare, was 'a good worthy man, and will take all my materials, tools, & c., off my hands at what they cost me. I might perhaps, as many have done before me, had I chose it, have sold the appointment but I scorn such an idea; and you shall never have I hope occasion to blush for any action of mine; for I would rather want money & die in the Country, than get rich and go home with cash acquired in any dishonourable way.'⁸ Once again, the mixture of military position and private trade is clear. Earlier, he complained that Hastings 'took the making up the Garrison Carriages from me & gave it to Mr Pourney

⁶ Colonel Achmuty, Chunar to Allan Macpherson, Fort William, 15 November 1785, NRAS, Macpherson of Blairgowrie, NRAS2614, bundle 442/209.

⁷ Colonel Mackenzie, Chunar to Allan Macpherson, Fort William, 3 January, 19 January 1786, *ibid.*, bundle 442/259, 263.

⁸ Patrick Duff, Bengal to James Duff, London, 15 September 1785, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle two.

whose wife was very intimate with Mrs Hastings.⁹ This upset him so much that he did not go near Hastings for two years, except on duty. So he had reasons for wishing the lucrative command of Chunargarh, and for being aggrieved at being denied it.

In September 1785 he was informed by the Commander in Chief, General Sloper, that command at Chunargarh was to go to Mackenzie, the reason being that command of a garrison could only go to a full colonel. At the time, lieutenant colonel was the highest rank in the artillery and, Sloper argued, artillery officers could never command a mixed force. While ‘paying me many Compliments on my Character as an Officer, and praising the Corps I have for four years past commanded,’ Patrick wrote to his brother James, Sloper gave, ‘the most extraordinary reason that can be given for preventing an Officer from getting in his turn a beneficial Command, that he belongs to the Artillery.’ What also exasperated Patrick, going as it did against all the assumptions that Company officers operated under, was Sloper’s assertion that ‘I could claim nothing as a right, which is a Doctrine new & very little understood in this service; for it has always been understood that length of service or seniority gave just rights to Commands, except such reasons could be given as were sufficient to prevent it.’¹⁰ This sparked a letter writing campaign on Patrick’s behalf, recruiting not only his brother and uncle but also his old commander Sir Hector Munro. He sought to have Munro use his influence with Cornwallis, who was known to be heading out for India to assume the Governorship of Bengal. He also sought an opinion from Sir Philip Deare, brother of his friend Captain Deare, about practice in the regular army. Deare reinforced his claims, writing that ‘you are perfectly in order in insisting on your tour as field officer of the day; Artillery officers & Engineers have it in the King’s Service. General Phillips was the first that kicked up an effectual dust at Gibraltar about it; carried his point both there and at home and it is now perfectly understood in every part of the King’s Army.’¹¹

However, Sloper insisted on maintaining his position, sending Patrick to command the artillery at Cawnpore. This was one of his last acts, for Patrick was delighted when he was recalled. ‘I am nevertheless much gratified by

⁹ Patrick Duff, Camp Dum Dum to James Duff, London, 10 December 1784, *ibid.*, bundle three.

¹⁰ Patrick Duff, Bengal to James Duff, London, 15 September 1785, *ibid.*, bundle two.

¹¹ Patrick Duff, Fort William to General Sloper, Fort William, enclosing extract from letter from Philip Deare, 25 October 1786, *ibid.*

his being treated with so little ceremony;’ he wrote to James Duff, ‘he was without doubt the worst and most unprincipled of any that has ever been in India, for he was guided by nothing but Self Interest, and did not mind what means were used, if he could only effect that point.’¹² Pearse agreed with him in no uncertain terms:

In the things that are removed they [the people] saw meanness, rapacity, timidity, injustice, tyranny, weakness, ignorance, fickleness; millions squandered on minions, annas extorted from their opponents and sent to the public treasury in procession to pay off the public debt; the public robbed to gratify private secretaries, the complainants threatened with destruction if they did not withdraw their complaints, despondency in the countenances of the injured, insolence and malignity in those of their oppressors – these things were J. Macpherson and Robert Sloper.¹³

One consequence of Sloper’s removal was that Pearse was appointed overall commander of forces at the Bengal Presidency. This brought howls of protest from infantry officers, outraged that they were superseded by an artilleryman. Colonel William Blair, surreptitiously encouraged by Allan Macpherson, objected that such command had always been given to infantry colonels, given that the highest rank in the artillery was that of lieutenant colonel. In his memorial to the Governor General he specifically quoted Sloper’s opinion ‘given in the case of Lieut Colonel Duff, not long ago, when he urged his pretensions to the Command at ChunarGur.’¹⁴ Pearse was, however, confirmed, but this brought in its train another problem. The appointment seemed to imply the recall of Patrick to the Presidency, something he and others complained about. Thomas Blair wrote to Allan Macpherson from Cawnpore to observe ‘what has Colonel Duff done that so lately came up from Calcutta to command the Artillery in the field, that he is recalled to the Presidency and another Officer sent up, has he lost his character as an officer or done any improper acts to induce Government to disgrace him I hope he has not I never heard of any such.’¹⁵ Once again, the jealous preservation of

¹² Patrick Duff, Cawnpore to James Duff, London, 2 March 1787, *ibid.*, bundle three.

¹³ Cited in A. Aspinall, *Cornwallis in Bengal* (Manchester, 1931), 21.

¹⁴ Memorial to Governor General and Council from William Blair, Cawnpore, 23 June 1786, NRAS, Macpherson of Blairgowrie, NRAS2614, bundle 442/364.

¹⁵ Thomas Blair, Cawnpore to Allan Macpherson, Fort William, 23 June 1786, *ibid.*, bundle 442/412.

status was uppermost in the minds of officers, anxious that perceived slights might become precedents that would affect their own positions in the future.

During these events, Patrick claimed that the Governor General, John Macpherson (?1745–1821), and the Council member John Stables, had persuaded him not to resign. John Macpherson (no relation of the Macpherson brothers who were Patrick's friends) had been appointed to the Bengal Council in 1781. Here he was often in opposition to Warren Hastings, and he replaced him as Governor General when Hastings returned to Britain in 1786. Hastings was recalled to face his famous impeachment at the hands of Edmund Burke and others. It is worth at this point turning back the clock a little. We may remember that Patrick felt that his appointment to the Nawab's artillery was put in jeopardy by the animosity between Clavering and Hastings. For several years, between 1774 and 1776, Clavering, Monson and Philip Francis led opposition to Hastings, using their combined votes in Council to overrule him at every opportunity. The death of Monson in 1776 saw Clavering attempt an unsuccessful coup against Hastings in the following year, something which was felt to have led to his death soon afterwards. This left Hastings in a powerful position, but one subject to the continuing machinations of Philip Francis. In 1780 Hastings' strictures against Francis' private conduct, which included an affair with the young wife of a Calcutta merchant, led to a duel between the two men. Hastings' second in the affair was Thomas Pearse.¹⁶ Both men were completely unversed in the conduct of a duel, but Hastings managed to wound Francis, after which Francis returned to Britain to continue his ultimately unsuccessful campaign to have Hastings impeached.

Hastings aroused strong feelings and loyalties amongst military men. Pearse was a staunch supporter and was a frank correspondent during his expedition to rescue Madras. His view after Clavering's defeat was that 'the whole settlement adored Mr. Hastings, and as perfectly detested Clavering ; the whole Army were of the same way of thinking.'¹⁷ In 1784 Patrick tended to agree with this assessment, writing to his brother that 'he is a man of the first abilities, generous, liberal & friendly, and is better able to put this Country on a good footing again than any other Man.'¹⁸ After he was recalled he gave a more extensive assessment that bears reproduction in full:

¹⁶ Parlbly, *Memoir of Pearse*, 168.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁸ Patrick Duff, Camp Dum Dum to James Duff, London, 10 December 1784, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle three.

He is certainly a very clever fellow and I think a good Governor General; take his good qualities against his bad ones, and I think the former will have much the advantage. What man in his situation for so many years could always do right or escape censure? Whatever he has done to disappoint any person is remembered and is talked of with all the other matters that the disappointed person can think of, while thousands of good & generous actions are forgot or never mentioned; his best friends will not pretend to say he was impartial, but he was much & more so in my opinion than most men would have been in his situation, and that he was liberal and has done many good and generous actions I know which he has never had any credit for with the public, and in the present prosecution it is all they can scrape up which has been done wrong in India for many years which is brought against him, whether he had any hand in the transactions or not seems to be out of the question, for as it appears to me, his prosecutors want to make it out that if any wrong or bad was done in India by black man or white, the fault was Mr Hastings, and he only was to blame.

I am convinced that had he not been married, he would have had fewer Enemies and there would have been less to say against him, but let it turn out as it will, he must always be a good man in the opinion of thousands; I don't think myself prejudiced in his favor, for tho' I once thought myself much obliged to him, the latter part of his conduct did that away, and I felt myself more hurt by his behavior than if he had never obliged me at all, I gave you a full acct of his transaction before, and I am convinced I owe the whole to the influence of his wife, which made him break his word with me, much I believe against his inclinations, but so it was; and as there is no resisting the power of women upon some Occasions, I ought I think to forgive him, and I believe I do so, but I believe I am like the Highland man, who altho' he forgives, never forgets.¹⁹

After Hastings was absolved of the charges laid before him, Patrick would write to him with his congratulations. 'May you be rewarded for having done so much for your country,' he wrote 'and may you be recompensed for having suffered, so unjustly, for these 7 years past.'²⁰ In this he shared the view

¹⁹ Patrick Duff, Cawnpore to James Duff, London, 22 June 1787, *ibid.*

²⁰ Taylers, *Book of Duffs*, II, 480 (30 April 1795).

of many military officers, especially those of Scottish origin, whom Hastings had awarded with positions. Even at this late stage (this was in 1795) Patrick was still alluding to his concerns with rank, even though Hastings was now in no position to help him.

Patrick was not so impressed with Hastings' successor, John Macpherson, although he was delighted that the threat of Lord McCartney coming from Madras to Bengal had been removed. As he wrote to Allan Macpherson, McCartney 'would be the worst thorn we ever had in our sides & we have had several'.²¹ John Macpherson was a namesake but not related to his friends Allan and John. The Macpherson brothers were disappointed when John Macpherson was recalled in favour of Cornwallis, seeing opportunities for patronage disappearing. It crystallised Allan Macpherson's decision to head for home, and he left on the *Berrington* with the former Governor.²² Patrick was not opposed to John Macpherson, but his assessment was that 'Mr Macpherson is undoubtedly a sensible man, but he wants that firmness & decision which is necessary to make him respected as a Governor General, and to put him upon a footing with such people as he had to deal with; moderation, coolness and to carry his points by Management, was what he attempted, and that will not at all times answer in any Country & perhaps seldomer in this than in any other.'²³

Also heading back to Britain in 1787 was John Stables, a Council member of whom Patrick had a far lower opinion. In public Stables appeared to endorse Patrick's claims, but Patrick suspected this was dissembling on his part. When Patrick threatened to resign and return to Britain to press his case after being denied the command at Chunargarh, Stables endorsed a letter with 'I do not mean to flatter but I shall feel the greatest distress for the [...] service if you leave it, for I do not believe a better man or a more Gallant officer exists in the Kings or Companys Service. [...] Tho an old infantry officer myself, I well know how much we depend on the Artillery Corps in all Actions in this Country.'²⁴ However, Patrick in letters to Allan Macpherson doubted the sincerity of such declarations. 'I have never been able to find

²¹ Patrick Duff, Cawnpore to Allan Macpherson, Fort William, 29 June 1786, NRAS, Macpherson of Blairgowrie, NRAS2614, bundle 442/254.

²² Foster, *Private Empire*, 85.

²³ Patrick Duff, Cawnpore to James Duff, London, 2 March 1787, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle three,

²⁴ Patrick Duff to Court of Directors, London, 2 November 1785, endorsed by John Stables 25 October 1785, *ibid.*, bundle one.

out,' he said 'when he had been of the least service to me.'²⁵ His suspicions of Stables' duplicity grew warmer over time. 'As to my affectionate friend,' he declared in August 1786, 'he may go to hell for aught I care he shall also know in what light I hold his promises of friendship and support', thus revealing some of the realities behind the accepted polite forms of address.²⁶ Patrick was still open enough to the main chance, however, to send Stables back with a letter of recommendation to his brother James, in the hope that he might be a good customer for madeira.

Patrick was altogether more enthusiastic about the arrival of Cornwallis. His enthusiasm was shared by his commanding officer, Pearse, who wrote to his friend Hastings that 'he, like yourself dignifies the chair and fills each heart with gladness; he has raised us again out of the mire of meanness and baseness into which Macpherson and Sloper had plunged the English name.'²⁷ Patrick saw opportunity to convince Cornwallis of the need to have the rank of colonel in the artillery, so furthering his claims for general command. As we have seen, Cornwallis was impressed by what he saw of the artillery, and this favourable impression extended to Patrick as one of its leading officers. However, his response to the entreaty that this outstanding performance should be met by a change in rank was that this was impossible, as it would go against all the established rules and was a matter for decision in London, not Calcutta. As the Council, endorsing his decisions, recorded:

The Supercessions in rank already experienced by Lieutenant Colonel Duff, and to which he continues to be exposed, place him in a very mortifying situation, and his character and Services to the Company (which have been long and meritorious) entitle him to every reasonable Indulgence. The Practice of the service which has separated the Promotions of the Artillery from those of the Infantry and the rules of the Military Establishment, which have circumscribed the rank of the former, restrained the Governor General from proposing any immediate or specific relief for Lieutenant Colonel Duff, Altho we deem his Case extremely deserving of your Indulgent consideration.²⁸

²⁵ Patrick Duff, Cawnpore to Allan Macpherson, Fort William, 14 March 1786, NRAS, Macpherson of Blairgowrie, NRAS2614, bundle 442/237.

²⁶ Patrick Duff, Cawnpore to Allan Macpherson, Fort William, 11 August 1786, *ibid.*, bundle 442/243.

²⁷ Cited in Aspinall, *Cornwallis in Bengal*, 165.

²⁸ Bishewar Prasad, *Fort William – India House Correspondence: And Other Contemporary Papers Relating Thereto (Military Series). Vol.19 1787–1791*, 266 (6 March 1788).

All Cornwallis would do, given these considerations, was to express his opinion to the Court that ‘the Command of the Brigade of Artillery being a Charge of peculiar Importance and responsibility, his Lordship conceived that every reasonable Encouragement both in rank and Allowance should be given to incite the Commanding Officer to discharge with Zeal the Duties that should be expected from him.’²⁹

This confirmed Patrick’s decision to return home. As we will see, there were other reasons for undertaking yet another long voyage to Europe, but pressing his case for rank was a central one. This was recognised by the Council in Bengal, who in their letter to the Court in December 1788 gave a list of officers proceeding to Europe. ‘Among these,’ they noted, ‘and without meaning to derogate from the Merits of the other Gentlemen, we think ourselves required to point out to your particular Notice, the Abilities, Character & Services of Lieutenant Colonel Duff of the artillery. We have already bestowed upon him a very favourable Testimony of our esteem in our Advices of the 6th March 1788 by the Rodney, and we sincerely hope that so respectable an Officer will have Your ready permission to return to the Service, if he should desire it.’³⁰ We will see that this public estimation of Patrick’s service and abilities was matched by private recommendations, but we can also get a sense of his domestic life in India before his departure. While his letters might be dominated by matters of rank and standing, they do give us some insight into the other aspects of his life.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 294 (22 December 1788).

14 ‘Don’t you show this part of the Letter to Mrs Duff.’

We have seen that Patrick was not one inclined to discussion of his emotional state in his letters. After the tragic death of Ann at Madras in 1775 he had resolved to have nothing more to do with marriage. In 1785 he responded to rumours that he was planning to marry the daughter of a former grieve at Ballindalloch with the declaration that he had ‘no more intention of marrying than I have of blowing my brains out.’¹ Some European women did venture out to India in search of a husband; Patrick’s friend, Allan Macpherson, Quartermaster General of Bengal, met his wife Eliza in 1782 in this fashion.² However, this was a rare success and it was more common for Europeans to have relationships with native women. Some of these relationships could be stable and long lasting. Patrick’s commanding officer for many years, colonel Thomas Deane Pearse, had a fifteen-year relationship with Punna, who he recognised as his wife in his will.³

More often, these women fade from view and we only know of the relationships because of the children who resulted. This was the case with Patrick. In 1782 the baptism of David Urquhart Duff at Calcutta was recorded, followed in the next year by Kenneth John Duff. We can only assume their mother died in childbirth, as Patrick’s letters tell us nothing about her. What we do know is that Kenneth was at his friend captain Deare’s house from being nine days old: ‘he likes Deare better than he does me, & I believe Deare likes him as well as I do.’⁴ This was when Kenneth was three; his brother

¹ Patrick Duff, Fort William to James Duff, London, 15 July 1785, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle two.

² Foster, *Private Empire*, 37

³ Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge, 2006), 107. For further discussion, see Christopher Hawes, *Poor Relations: The Making of a Eurasian Community in British India, 1773–1833* (London, 1996); Deborah Cohen, *Family Secrets: Shame and Privacy in Modern Britain* (New York, 2013).

⁴ Patrick Duff, Fort William to James Duff, London, 15 July 1785, AULSC, Gordon

Davey had already been sent back to England in the previous year. As Patrick wrote to his uncle James, 'you was so good to take some notice of a little black boy I sent home to his care. These things you know well some times happen, however I have been lucky enough to have only this and one other boy who I will also send home this year, for as they have come I mean to do them justice by giving them a good education & putting them out properly into the world with a couple of thousand pounds each when I die or before if they have occasion for it.'⁵

True to his word, he sent his second son back in the following year with an accompanying explanation to his brother James which is worth replicating in full, for it shows a mixture of tenderness and concern:

little Johnny (for he generally goes by that name) is really a very fine fellow; he is much fairer than Davie, with fine fair hair, a great deal of spirits and good humour. I shall feel the want of him very much as he laughs & plays the whole day; he speaks enough to make himself understood and tho' he is rather too young, I wish him to go home that he may have as little of the notions of this country as possible, and because I think going home so early will make him stronger & of a better Complexion than if he was kept here some years longer. I have not words to express what I felt and what I still feel for the attention Mrs Duff paid Davie and I know she will receive this little Fellow with the same kindness; it is not however my intention to trouble her or you long with the care of such Brats; I must therefore request that you will put them out to School, or dispose otherwise of them as you judge best for their good. I told you before, & I repeat it again that it is my intention should I live, to give them the best education England can afford and to set them out in a proper manner into the world, for tho' they have the misfortune to be illegitimate and of a half cast they are not to blame; the fault is all my own and for that reason I think myself doubly bound to provide for them, and I am as fond of them as if they were of a good cast & had been born according to the rules of Law and Gospel.⁶

of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle two.

⁵ Patrick Duff, Fort William to James Gordon, Letterfourie, 10 August 1785, *ibid.*, box ten, bundle of miscellaneous letters.

⁶ Patrick Duff, Fort William to James Duff, London, 15 September 1785, *ibid.*, Tiger box, bundle two.

Patrick also had some care for the woman who looked after his children, organizing for his brother James to have pictures of the boys painted and sent out to India. ‘They are intended for the woman who took care of them after their Mother’s death,’ he wrote, ‘and who used them in the kindest manner, and who tho’ black possesses a heart that would do no discredit to a white lady.’ ‘These things,’ he continued, ‘will be more acceptable than money.’⁷ While in England the two boys appear to have been educated in Lewisham as James Duff reported seeing them fetched from there to meet him in 1788.⁸ In between, Davey, at least, had been sent to Scotland to meet his relatives there, much to Patrick’s apprehension. ‘I know such as he did not meet with much encouragement there sometime ago’ he fretted, ‘the people in that part are certainly more enlarged in their ideas than they were in my younger day.’⁹ In the same year, 1787, Patrick was forced to report in the letter that he asked his brother to conceal from his wife that ‘I believe I have got another of the same sort, tho’ not so fair as either of the others, I have given him the name of William, you won’t see him until I come myself; he is a fine stout good humoured fellow of only eleven months old. I did not intend to have any more of these, but what is to be done, a man more than a woman is not at all times master of his passions.’¹⁰ Patrick was far from unusual in these relations with native women as he adapted to the enduring nature of his stay in India. Deborah Cohen has pointed to the remarkable attachment of British residents in India to their natural children, if not to their mothers.¹¹ They were prepared to invest considerable resources in protecting the interests of their children, often sending them back for a British education. However, such commitments only went so far, especially when the fathers themselves returned to face the very different demands and expectations of a society based on norms of social status and, increasingly, racial ‘purity’. Patrick intended to follow his children, but acquiring the necessary ‘competence’ required perseverance. During what turned out to be an extended stay, Patrick sought to make himself comfortable, something made easier as he ascended the ranks.

By 1785 he had a country house some four miles outside Calcutta ‘with a very good Garden which amuses me and my friends now and then’ as

⁷ Patrick Duff, Cawnpore to James Duff, London, 22 June 1787, *ibid.*, bundle three.

⁸ John Duff, Fort William to James Duff, London 4 January 1788, endorsed by James to his brother Robert, *ibid.*, bundle six.

⁹ Patrick Duff, Cawnpore to James Duff, London, 2 March 1787, *ibid.*, bundle three.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Cohen, *Family Secrets*, 28.

well as 'a Bungolo or Straw and Matt house at the Practice ground near Dum Dum.'¹² It seems from passing comments elsewhere that he made sure that these were comfortable bases, given that in planning for his return to Scotland he expressed a desire for his house to be well-stocked 'as I have never been without it.'¹³ Collingham points out that those from modest backgrounds could afford to live in greater luxury in India than they might have ever expected back home, surrounding themselves with numbers of servants that only the very wealthy might expect.¹⁴ Whether his requirements as a single man were as great as his married friend Allan Macpherson, whose house at Calcutta had 107 servants, is unlikely, but one can imagine that he had a considerable number.¹⁵ As he confessed on leaving India:

I might its true have been a much richer man than I am but to make up for that I have always had the use of whatever I got, which I always thought and am still of the same opinion, every man ought to have as he goes along through life, for if a man cannot enjoy what he has it is of no use to him: how many men have I known that almost starved themselves to get money and were guilty of a thousand mean things, yet never lived to have any use of what they took so much pains to get. But all this is so much nonsense and so I shall end my sermon.¹⁶

Given the remittances Patrick was able to make, we should take the claim about his riches with a pinch of salt, although it would appear that while he lived comfortably in India, that his pleasures were not extravagant. He had an extensive plot of land at Dum Dum which he planted with trees, shrubs and flowers. 'These I look upon as so many children,' he wrote to his brother James, '& I am pleased with paying them some attention.' He was anxious to obtain new seed, particularly of vegetables. As he recalled, 'I had some Tomato seed from the Se[r]v[an]t at Batchlors Hall Madeira, they throve here remarkably well but I think are now degenerating, they were the first of the sort ever seen in this Country, and I wish to have some more.'¹⁷

¹² Patrick Duff, Fort William to James Duff, London, 15 June 1785, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle two.

¹³ Patrick Duff, Fort William to James Duff, London, 16 March 1784, *ibid.*

¹⁴ Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, 18–21.

¹⁵ Macpherson, *Soldiering*, 357.

¹⁶ Patrick Duff, Cawnpore to James Duff, London, 15 February 1788, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle two.

¹⁷ Patrick Duff, Fort William to James Duff, London, 15 July 1785, *ibid.*

Gardening formed his main leisure activity now that illness prevented him from indulging in hunting. Of course, he was often on the move, and not just with military inspections. In the summer of 1785 he had recently returned from a two month stay in Beshampore ‘during the very hot weather.’¹⁸ Being appointed to the field after his failed bid at Chunargarh meant that he would have to give up his country house, as he would hardly ever be there. These settled occupations were a reflection of the time he had devoted to organizing matters at the presidency, but gain in both rank and finances meant a less sedentary lifestyle.

One gets the impression that Patrick was a man of action whose leisure activities were of a practical bent. In September 1785 he requested of his brother James that ‘I wish to have the best military books sent me, also books of fortification & Artillery which may be most in repute.’¹⁹ This stood in contrast with his friend Allan Macpherson, who had William Robertson’s *History of Scotland*, David Hume’s *History of England* and Voltaire’s *Works* on his shelves.²⁰ Allan also had an extensive knowledge of Persian, the language of literature and diplomacy, and a collection of Persian texts. One suspects that Patrick had enough of the local language to communicate with his men, leaving languages to his brother John. With clear pride he recommended him to Allan Macpherson as ‘not a forward man, quite the Contrary; but you will find him a very Sensible well informed man, he is one of the best French scholars in India, he is as much a master of it, as he is of English; he is also a Persian Scholar, with all this he has what I much want, great industry and attention to Business.’²¹ Although Patrick was a man of practical action, and although his letters are dominated by very practical concerns of rank and money, he could write extensive letters in which, at times, he could clearly articulate the reason why he was so bothered by service in India: the thought of returning home. It is worth reproducing in full a remarkable passage in a letter to his brother James of March 1784. This was sparked by a letter from home that ‘brought all the ideas into my mind & made me ruminate on subject of how I would wish to live when I go home.’ He apologised to James ‘for all this nonsense,’ but clearly this was a subject which exercised him strongly. Here is what he had to say:

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Patrick Duff, Fort William to James Duff, London, 15 September 1785, *ibid.*

²⁰ Foster, *Private Empire*, 13.

²¹ Patrick Duff to Allan Macpherson, Fort William, 4 February 1786, NRAS, Macpherson of Blairgowrie, NRAS2614, bundle 442/228.

I have been thinking ever since about buying Land, and if a Man can get a snug spot, with about four per cent for his money, I think it is by much the safest & best way he can lay out his money. [...] You'll say I want too much and that all these things cannot be had; indeed I don't expect it, but as I was on the topick I mentioned them. I abhor a place entirely without wood and water, and would not like to live where I could not see both. To be in the fields in fine weather, to fish, shoot & hunt; with some Books, and now and then the Company of any friends, are the only pleasures which I can hope to enjoy. I never mean to have any hand in Politicks, nor to gain anything by farming, for after all the Bustle I have lived in all my life, if I get only home, I mean to enjoy myself as much as possible; so I have no idea of being so happy as when in the Country, in the way I mention, with, at same time, having it in my power to go into town in the Winter, or even as far as Edinburgh or London for four months in the Year, without finding it incommode me in the money way, I must also (if I mean to be as I would wish) have a Carriage with four good horses and a couple of saddle horses for myself, & two others for my Servants; all the horses but those I ride shall work in the Cart, plow & harrow. My farm shall be no larger than will produce Grain and Hay for the horses & a few Cows, with Corn & C sufficient for my Family, which shall not be very large; with this Farm I shall find (at least I think so) full Amusement for my leisure hours, and at the same time not be obliged to attend to it but when I am inclined to do so for pleasure. I must have a neat warm house with a few rooms to lodge my friends when they come to see me. All these things cannot be obtained without a good deal of Cash, but I shall prepare for that, & I shall be at no Expence except in the articles mentioned above. I neither game nor shall I have any inclination to spend my Money on Women or Dress. A good house & plenty of everything I must have, as I have never been without it, perhaps I have rather been extravagant that way but it is what I like & I fancy would find it rather hard upon me to be obliged to alter it from Necessity.²²

Some of these desires were to be tempered in practice. His eventual estate would contain an extensive home farm and his position in the county would

²² Patrick Duff, Fort William to James Duff, London, 16 March 1784, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle two.

tempt him into politics. His retirement was to be considerably more active than he envisaged; given his orientation to action this should have come as no surprise to him. This desire to return home triggered a search by his friends for a suitable estate, a search that remained ongoing during all the disputes over rank that characterised the 1780s. By the time Patrick eventually returned in 1788 it was in part to take up his new estate at Carnousie. However, before that could be done he had both to find a suitable place and to find ways to remit sufficient funds to purchase it.

15 Remittances

Making money in India was one matter; getting it home was quite another. As Patrick explained to his uncle James in 1779, ‘the Company Bills is the only safe method & for two years past they have given no bills to any military man under the rank of a Colonel.’¹ Patrick laboured under the additional disadvantage of being based at Furrackbad, which meant he was far from Calcutta where he might obtain bills drawn on private individuals. In any case, he distrusted these, having had difficulty with getting payment on the private bills he had brought home in 1774. Trust was key here; in 1785 he was able to get a bill drawn on Philip Deare in London for £2,000 payable in six months. Philip was the brother of Patrick’s friend George Deare. Having recently named George as executor on his will, Patrick was able to say with confidence, ‘I have not a doubt [it] will prove good.’² By now, of course, Patrick was a lieutenant colonel and more able to use the Company’s facilities to make remittances.

Whether Patrick made use of other methods is not clear, but his friends Murchison and Macpherson certainly did. One way of getting money home was to buy diamonds which could be taken back by trusted couriers and realised for sterling in London. In August 1777 Allan Macpherson wrote to his London agents Mayne and Graham that he had sent a ‘bulse’ or small purse of rough diamonds that he had purchased for 12,000 rupees. This yielded a net sum of £896, under the conversion rate for the purchase of a bill but secure.³ Kenneth Murchison sent three packages of diamonds that he had bought for 50,000 rupees which he optimistically calculated had a sterling value of £5,242.⁴ Another form of getting money back was to obtain

¹ Patrick Duff, Furrackbad to James Gordon, London, 8 January 1779, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle four.

² Patrick Duff, Fort William to James Duff, London, 29 October 1785, *ibid.*, bundle two.

³ Macpherson, *Soldiering*, 316.

⁴ Grant and Mutch, ‘Indian Wealth’, 38.

gold coins which could be realised from the value of their metallic content. Knowing that the Reverend William Smith was travelling back to Europe on the warship *Salisbury*, Allan Macpherson took the chance of sending back with him two bags of gold coins, pagodas and zukeens, which he hoped would sell for about a thousand pounds.⁵

Because his gold was travelling back on a warship, Allan took the chance of not insuring it. This was a further level of risk that those seeking to remit money undertook, as whatever form their remittances took they all had to travel by sea with all its attendant dangers. Murchison lost 20,000 rupees on a ship shortly after it left the river Hoogly on its voyage from Calcutta.⁶ In 1780, Patrick was worried about reports that a ship belonging to a Mr Moore of Bengal had been seized by pirates to Moore's ruination and the loss of all who had cargoes in his vessel. He was sending five thousand pounds via China but had been too late to get insurance. He could only hope that nothing would befall the ship. 'McClory is a good man,' he wrote '& if his ship is not taken or lost, the money will go safe; but in Either of these cases, I lose the whole.' He appears to have sent money by a different route, as he mentions money in the hands of others which he was 'convinced perfectly safe.' That was, 'provided the French, or some other Enemy, of which we at present seem to have a great number, does not take this country from us, and of that I do not at present see any Great likelihood.'⁷

Above these levels of risk was the reliance on trust. A cautionary tale was provided by the experience of Allan Macpherson. His cousin was James Macpherson, better known as 'Ossian' from his production of a set of poems which he claimed were collected by word of mouth from ancient Gaelic sources. The poems were a publishing sensation, being an integral part of the cult of the romantic and widely translated across Europe. Napoleon was said to be a great admirer and Macpherson would be buried amongst other literary giants in Westminster Abbey. However, there were those, such as Dr Johnson, who fairly quickly began to doubt Macpherson's claims. His ambivalent relationship to his sources matched what many saw as his duplicitous nature. He became the London agent for the Nawab of Arcot and entered Parliament in 1780, using his position to further his Indian connections. This was the man Allan trusted with the bulk of his

⁵ Macpherson, *Soldiering*, 318.

⁶ Grant and Mutch, 'Indian Wealth', 38.

⁷ Patrick Duff, camp near Cawnpore to James Gordon, London, 14 September 1780, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle four.

remittances from India, but this was to prove a dreadful miscalculation. First Allan invested in cargoes from China via the firm of Turnbull and Macintyre, only for him to learn much later that the firm was bankrupt, losing him seven thousand pounds. He was then induced by James to join a scheme to facilitate remittances from India, only to find that his erstwhile partner Sir Samuel Hannay was not the rich man everybody thought he was. His death leaving heavy debts put a further financial burden on Allan, a burden that was relieved by the granting of a bond from James which the latter assured Allan would never be enforced. James Macpherson, meanwhile, acquired several estates in Scotland. Allan was under the impression that James would, in his will, reimburse him for all his assistance. Allan was to be sadly disappointed, receiving a paltry sum and never managing to realise but a fraction of his Indian wealth. His financial arrangements were opaque to say the least, and the historian of the branch of Macpherson family represented by Allan, Stephen Foster, had to struggle to make sense of them, but what the whole sorry tale indicates is how much trust those in India needed to be able to place in those back home.⁸

Here Patrick was extremely fortunate in having not only his uncles but also his brother looking after his interests. They would prove to be scrupulously honest in handling Patrick's financial affairs. The level of concern is expressed in a letter from James Duff to Alexander Gordon in 1785:

it is a matter of great importance to my Brother to have part of his Fortune realized, and an Object at a Distance from London that will give him employment & keep him a good deal there, for that if he has no such avocation, he may be oftener and longer here than will suit a person who has never been very attentive to his expences, & where besides he will be in the way of being preyed upon by expensive East Indians who are here with intention of going out again, & may endeavour to borrow money of him, their only chance for repaying which is their success upon their getting back to India, which tho' they may be honest and mean well, is too slender a Security for the property of a man, who has spent so many of his best years, & gone through so much fatigue and danger to acquire it.⁹

⁸ Foster, *Private Empire*, 86–101; see also Cohen, *Family Secrets*, 17.

⁹ James Duff, London to Alexander Gordon, Letterfourie, 28 February 1785, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle five.

That reference to ‘East Indians’ raises yet another layer of risk, a rather more intangible one. This was the risk to reputation of being classed as a ‘nabob’. The political and social climate in the 1780s was hostile to those returning to Britain from India with large fortunes. Starting with Clive, some high profile examples of the use of Indian fortunes, gained through dubious means, to acquire political position were seen to be undermining the foundations of British political life. The nabobs were thought to have been corrupted by Indian luxury and to be the bearers of Asiatic despotism.¹⁰ Overblown as such claims might have been, they represented a real threat to those returning, threats of the legal action that Warren Hastings had to face, threats which caused Allan and his wife to briefly escape to France. In 1783 Joseph Price published *The Saddle Put on the Right Horse*, a robust response to such claims.¹¹ While Price accepted that the label of nabob might with justice to be applied to a few, this was to ignore the much larger group who, he argued, ‘being content with a moderate, honestly acquired fortune, have returned to their native country, and generally to their native place, whether England, Scotland, Wales, or Ireland, to spend amongst their friends the remainder of their days.’¹² That description fits Patrick well. As he had written to James, he had no intention of using his fortune to gain political influence. As we recall him writing, ‘I never mean to have any hand in Politicks, nor to gain anything by farming, for after all the Bustle I have lived in all my life, if I get only home, I mean to enjoy myself as much as possible.’¹³

Patrick started his remittances, however, not with the intention of securing a country estate, but in order to put matters straight with his uncle and then to clear his father’s financial position. In 1776, after confirmation of his rank as captain, he sent James Gordon a bill for £320, which he hoped would cover the money laid out for his passage. ‘I would much rather lose a few pounds,’ he declared, ‘than give you reason to think me neglectful in repaying money, which was generously advanced to me in time of need, a thing I would be sorry to have laid to my charge.’¹⁴ Two years later, following

¹⁰ On the ‘nabob controversy’ see Tillman Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge, 2010).

¹¹ Joseph Price, *The Saddle Put on the Right Horse; Or, an Enquiry into the Reason Why Certain Persons have been Denominated Nabobs* (London, 1783).

¹² *Ibid.*, 22.

¹³ Patrick Duff, Fort William to James Duff, London, 16 March 1784, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle two.

¹⁴ Patrick Duff, Calcutta, to James Gordon, London, 24 November 1776, *ibid.*, bundle four.

his service in Oudh, he had cleared his debts incurred both in London and Madeira and was seeking to help his father and younger brothers. His father was to have his half pay and he gave power of attorney to his uncle and brother to handle his financial affairs in Britain. Referring to his father, he wrote in 1780 that ‘from what I understand the Old Gentleman is not by any means a good Manager’. Given that, he appealed to his uncle on his visits north to see ‘that the old people want nothing to make them Easy and happy in their decline of life.’¹⁵ It was about this time, having secured his rank as lieutenant colonel, and having, presumably, made substantial sums from his time in Oudh, as well as looking forward to the gains associated with his post as commissary general, that Patrick began to turn his mind to the purchase of a Scottish estate. It was clear that he could now set his sights on something rather grander than a farm.

The initial target, and one which was to be pursued for a number of years, was the estate of Durn, on the outskirts of Portsoy on the Banffshire coast. This belonged to William Dunbar, maternal uncle of James and Alexander Gordon. Like Alexander, William Dunbar had been ‘out’ in the 45, a member of Lord Pitligo’s Horse.¹⁶ We have already noted that William Dunbar stayed with James Gordon in London for six months on his way to manage estates in Grenada, but this appears not to have been a success. Certainly, by 1780 James Duff had become aware that the estate was likely to come up for sale. It is here that we can introduce a character who will feature quite prominently in our story from now on, Earl Fife. James Duff, second Earl Fife from 1763, was the dominant political figure in Banffshire, based on his extensive landholdings. These had been acquired by his father who, as a descendant of a successful merchant, had ready access to money at a time when many landowners had little. It was the first earl who had commissioned the magnificent Duff House although, thanks to a dispute over costs with the architect, William Adam, he never lived there. His son was the focus of much opposition amongst other landowners in the county thanks to, according to one commentator, ‘too great an ambition of ruling the Elections and other political disputes in those Counties where his estates principally lay. And I believe this disgusted a great many who had no connection with, or dependence upon his Family, and lookt upon themselves as his equals in every respect but that of Fortune, and that this was the main spring of that

¹⁵ Patrick Duff, Calcutta, to James Gordon, London, 14 September 1780, *ibid.*

¹⁶ Taylers, *Jacobites*, 148.

opposition which he sometimes encountered, and of that implacable envy and detractions which on some occasions attempted to run him down.¹⁷

However, Fife's connections in the county led to James Duff sounding him out about Durn as a suitable place for Patrick to buy. He was, though, bitterly disappointed at Fife's response. Fife, thought James, 'seldom does anything without selfishness'. The gain for Fife, in this case, was two Parliamentary votes held by Keith Dunbar. This was a matter of some importance in the tiny and notoriously corrupt Scottish electorate. However, what particularly exasperated James was that the shared Duff surname counted for nothing. As he noted bitterly to Patrick, 'were he indeed an honest fellow as it might be an introduction to an acquaintance might naturally lead to a friendship, the contrary however being strongly alleged his name with me, instead of being a Bond of friendship is a motive of dislike.'¹⁸ His resolution was to steer clear of Fife and rely on advice from Letterfourie. The pursuit of Durn took several years. Patrick was happy enough to trust the judgment of his relations, although he was concerned that the price for the estate might be rather high. 'I have so much confidence in you,' he told his brother in 1784, 'that I leave the disposal of my Money to your own Judgement & discretion.'¹⁹ James Duff continued to press the merits of Durn, the more so because in 1784 its likely inheritor, James Dunbar, was a prisoner for debt in London's notorious Fleet prison. The estate consisted of good agricultural land with well-paid rents. The house was ruinous, but contained much material for building a new one. As well as being close to the harbour at Portsoy, the estate lay eight miles from the county town of Banff which, James commented, 'is a pleasant agreeable place in which there is a very good Society, especially in Winter'. A particular selling point was its location close 'to Country Gentlemen whom you could visit & be visited by', of whom James provided an extensive list. However, with all these attractive features came a word of warning: 'you should not engage in so capital a purchase without a moral certainty that your remittances will answer, as a failure in them might straiten you very much, as has been the case with some Gentlemen returned from India.'²⁰

¹⁷ Baird, *Genealogical Memoirs*, 76.

¹⁸ Copy of a letter James Duff, London to the Earl of Fife 16 January 1780, endorsed by James to Patrick Duff, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle five.

¹⁹ Patrick Duff, camp Dum Dum to James Duff, London, 15 March 1784, *ibid.*, bundle two.

²⁰ James Duff, London to Patrick Duff, Bengal, 3 October 1784, *ibid.*

These features attracted Patrick, although he, too, was concerned about remitting the purchase price safely. By 1785 the estate had still not been advertised for sale, but James Duff reported to his uncle Alexander that he had had numerous letters from William Dunbar hinting that William Forbes the coppersmith (whose wife we saw would die on Madeira) was a likely purchaser. What happened next is not clear, but the estate stayed in Dunbar hands. Other estates came under consideration: in 1785, one at Knockando (where it will be recalled, his father and grandfather had been factors) which Patrick thought a 'good snugg pretty place'; in 1786 an estate suggested by Alexander Gordon at Invergordon.²¹ However, by this time his attention seems to have been drawn to the estate of Carnousie near Turriff. It may have helped that his father had moved to the improved farm of Newtown of Auchintoul on the Auchintoul estate close to the newly laid-out planned village of Aberchirder by 1781. Carnousie lay about five miles from Aberchirder and this may have been a factor. Certainly by 1787 a survey had been commissioned. In 1789, having sailed home, Patrick wrote to Earl Fife from Letterfourie that:

The situation of Haymount [as Carnousie had been renamed], the neighbourhood, etc., are highly agreeable to me, and I would much rather set down near my friends than at a distance ; for these reasons I should be glad to purchase it at a reasonable price ; but your Lordship knows I am no judge of these matters, and that I must therefore consult my friends before I come to any agreement in a thing of such moment and as your Lordship has been so good to offer your advice and assistance permit me to ask what you think I ought to give, for altho' I want an estate and particularly in this country, I would not give more for one than my friends thought prudent and reasonable. I know there is an idea that people from India will give more than any person else, but I assure your Lordship this is not the case with me, as I am determined to be guided by the advice of my friends in cases of this kind where I am no judge myself.²²

As we have seen, he sailed for home determined to sort out his claims for

²¹ Patrick Duff, Gardens 4 miles below Calcutta to James Duff, London, 6 August 1785, *ibid.*, Tiger box, bundle two; Patrick Duff Fort William to James Duff, London, 1 June 1786, bundle one.

²² Taylors, *Book of Duffs*, II, 478–9.

rank but also to take possession of his new estate. In order to do this, he needed to collect all his outstanding cash, something which was not easy as 'I have lately lent some considerable sums, which for a man going to Europe is not very prudent.'²³ Much earlier Kenneth Murchison had experienced similar problems. Before he took ship in 1784 he drafted a set of instructions to his attorneys in India to tidy up his affairs in India and collect debts due to him. As of December 1784, Murchison had a balance of 18,838 rupees in his account in Calcutta, reducing to 687 rupees by March 1786 and although money continued to follow him after he returned to Britain, some of his debtors in India never repaid him.²⁴ Patrick had lent twelve thousand rupees to his brother-in-law, Robert Duff, a supernumerary army officer, to 'enable him to take a share in an Indigo work, of which he has the management and which it is thought will turn out to advantage.'²⁵ He would continue in this work until called back to serve on full pay or giving up military life completely. However, Patrick collected sufficient money to be able to afford the purchase price of Carnousie. At an annual rental of some £736 and assuming the conventional multiplier of twenty-five years, this would have amounted to around twenty-two thousand pounds.²⁶ He now returned home to take up, albeit briefly, the role of landed gentleman on an estate which was already undergoing the process of agricultural improvement. The initial works of creating new holdings in order to facilitate new agricultural practices required access to considerable capital reserves, employment to which Patrick's Indian wealth was well suited.

²³ Patrick Duff, Cawnpore to James Duff, London, 15 February 1788, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle two.

²⁴ Grant and Mutch, 'Indian Wealth', 39.

²⁵ Patrick Duff, Cawnpore to James Duff, London, 15 February 1788, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle two.

²⁶ Report and value of the Estate of Carnousie by John Home, Land surveyor, Pluscarden Abbey, 12 March 1787 (hereafter 'survey'), *ibid.*, box nine.

16 'An Object of Paradise'

While our impression of the rural north of Scotland in the eighteenth century, gained from the writing of people such as Archibald Grant, consists of patches of poorly cultivated land amongst great tracts of barren moor, this is a misleading one. For John Home, the surveyor of the estate of Carnousie in 1787, its location on the banks of the Deveron made it a desirable location. Thanks to the rich soil, the well-wooded banks and the abundant fishing, for centuries, he averred, 'the former proprietors have Always rendered in their View, this Spot an Object of Paradise.'¹ The estate of Carnousie, located six miles from the market town of Turriff, was just one of a number of country estates that dotted the banks of the Deveron on its course through the parish of Forglen on its way to the sea at Banff. As surveyed by Home, it amounted to 2,156 acres, stretching from the Deveron north to meet the Mountblairy estate to which it briefly belonged and west towards the parish boundary with Marnoch and the small estates of Cluny and Knockorth, to which it would later be joined.

At its heart was the tower house built by Walter Ogilvie in 1577. Described by the architectural historian Charles McKean as 'a neat example of a small, late Marian chateau', this is a classic Z-plan tower house.² Drawing on French architectural models, it features a central tower house, with two towers, one round, the other square, at opposing corners. Its defensive features, like gun loops at the foot of the towers, were more symbolic than practical, testifying to the ancient lineage of the occupiers.³ Walter's grandson, having 'contracted barbarous debts' was forced to dispose of the estate, which came into the hands of George Gordon of Edinglassie in 1683.⁴ His descendant,

¹ Survey, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box nine.

² Charles McKean, *The Scottish Chateau: The Country House of Renaissance Scotland* (Stroud, 2004), plate 11.

³ Walker and Woodworth, *Aberdeenshire: North*, 322–4

⁴ Historical Abbreviate of the progress of Writes of the estates of Carnousie and Knockarth (hereafter Historical Abbreviate), NRS Papers of the Abercromby

Arthur Gordon, commissioned the architect William Adam to design and build an extension in the 1730s. Adam, designer of the magnificent Duff House, produced something altogether more domestic in scale at Carnousie. The wing, since demolished, had no great architectural pretensions, but it provided accommodation more suitable for an eighteenth century country gentlemen. New windows were let into the great hall in the main tower block to afford more light. The new wing seems to have been well appointed inside. In 1736 Adam billed for ‘a white and veined marble Chimney’ and ‘a purple marble table’ which were cased up and despatched from Leith. He also supplied ‘a marble cutter setting up said Chimney’, whose labour took nine and a half days. He then returned for a further five days, ‘squaring the hearth and 11 pavements for other Chimneys’.⁵

Arthur Gordon traded in grain supplying the Inverness merchant John Steuart in 1725 with a load of meal out of Portsoy destined for the Western Isles.⁶ He was up to date with the latest farming practices, buying a copy of Jethro Tull’s *Horse Husbandry* from his Edinburgh bookseller in 1733. As well as works on bookkeeping and estate management, his tastes were wider, including volumes of Pope’s *Letters* and historical works. His bookseller tried to persuade him to take up Bayle’s *Dictionary*, a classic forerunner of Enlightenment thought. More intriguingly, he purchased a volume of the *Independent Whig*, a paper featuring trenchant attacks on political corruption that has been viewed as a forerunner of republican ideas.⁷ With this background, it is no wonder that his friends and neighbours were surprised that he was ‘out’ in the ‘45. As we have seen, his adherence to the Jacobite cause was lukewarm and his participation put down to his desperate financial situation. However, despite his failed attempt to win pardon for his part in the rising, he was exiled to France, where he died in debt in 1753. The house he left behind escaped the fate of many Jacobite dwellings thanks to the intervention of James Duff, then Lord Braco, later Earl Fife, who wrote to Ludovick Grant in March 1746, ‘You’l doe me a great favour if you’l apply to

Family of Forglen and Birkenbog, papers and accounts relative to Carnousie 1790–1825, GD185/37/3.

⁵ William Adam Architect in Edinburgh 2 August 1737, NRS, Gordon of Carnousie, RH15/1/18/6 bundle of accounts 1736.

⁶ William Mackay, *The Letter-book of Baillie John Steuart of Inverness, 1715–1752* (Edinburgh, 1915), 221 (27 April 1725).

⁷ Alexander Symmer, bookseller, Edinburgh, account 18 February 1734 to 27 May 1736; letter 2 May 1735; account 1 August 1734; account 25 July 1733, NRS, Gordon of Carnousie, RH15/1/18/6 bundle of accounts 1736.

the General for a protection for Carnousie's House, who was verie friendly to me before he enter'd into this unhappie rebellion.⁸

The house and estate were judicially sequestrated to pay off the creditors. The Earl of Findlater and George Hay of Mountblairry hatched a scheme whereby Findlater would buy the estate, which would in turn be bought by Hay. George Hay was another Banffshire Jacobite, although one who was able to return and pick up where he had left off. This owed much to his connection through marriage to Braco, for his wife was Braco's sister, Janet Duff. She had married, much to the family's disapproval, Sir William Gordon of Park after escaping from the family house through a window and eloping. She was eighteen; he was thirty-three. William fought at Culloden and hid from the Duke of Cumberland's troops before escaping to France. Here he met up with George Hay, who had escaped before Culloden. William died in 1751 and his widow married George Hay.⁹ Her brother's influence might explain why George was able to return to reclaim the family estate at Mountblairry and add Carnousie to it. Braco did not have a high opinion of George Hay, who was good at spending money, but not so good at managing it. In 1756 George appealed to his brother in law 'that I find my Affairs at Present so unresolved and perplexed that Without your Lordp Assistance, it Will be difficult for me to extricate myself & bring my affairs to a Right bearing as it is to my misfortune not to have been bred to Business & I have had but very little experience.'¹⁰ Braco must have helped out with what would seem in the circumstances an ill-advised purchase, but he remained unimpressed by the Hays. As he complained to William Rose, his 'man of business', 'the estate won't be improved nor the family educated and provided for from the Turriff Hunt and idle servants, Post Chaises etc. etc. ... now when every article of life is more extravagant unnecessary luxuries should be loped off in order to make necessarys durable, and the less People uses Chaises the better both for their pocket and health.'¹¹

Fife might have put up with this conduct in order to secure Hay's voting rights (indeed, that might have been why he helped with the purchase). In any event, George Hay seemed to have no clear plan of what to do with his new house, for it lay empty until 1765. In that year we see the first sign of change

⁸ Tayler and Tayler, *Jacobites*, 205.

⁹ Tayler and Tayler, *Jacobites*, 304–8.

¹⁰ George Hay, Rothimay, to Lord Braco, 8 November 1756, AULSC, Duff papers, MS3175/1003.

¹¹ Dorothy Johnston, 'The Duff Genealogical Papers of Alistair and Henrietta Tayler', *Northern Scotland*, 7 (1986), 65.

with the house being renamed 'Mount Hay'. This did not stick, because by 1771 the house was known as 'Haymount' which stuck, at least as far as the Hay family was concerned, until Patrick Duff's purchase.¹² This was both an attempt to put the family name of the landscape and symbolic of the Anglicisation of the Scottish elite in 'North Britain'. Other landowners followed a similar pattern. In 1776 James Duff wrote to Sir Archibald Grant of Monymusk from Madeira that, 'My brother Robert who had the honour of dining with you at the inauguration of your new Town of Archiestown' sent his regards from the island.¹³ Archiestown, on the outlying Knockando estate that John Duff had been factor for, was one of many planned estate villages in the north east, designed to stimulate trade and manufactures. Their naming was frequently a means of placing the family name on the land (Dufftown and Macduff were other, larger, examples). In selecting these names, the ancient Scots names were obviously regarded as too crude and old fashioned. Not that such efforts met with complete success. Although when appointed as a church elder in 1785 Charles Smith was noted as the tenant of Newton of Haymount, rather than Carnousie, a legal paper of the following year still referred to George Gellie as tenant of Oldtown of Carnousie.¹⁴ From 1771 the house was occupied by a variety of family members – Lady Mountblair in 1772, John Hay in 1778 and, from 1785, Captain Andrew Hay.¹⁵ It is with Andrew Hay (1762–1814), captain in the regular army, that 'improvement' seems to have taken off at Carnousie.

In order to understand this process, and Home's survey, it helps to understand something of the nature of pre-improvement Scottish agriculture. We have already met what one of the early improvers, Sir Archibald Grant, thought of his inheritance at Monymusk. The landscape of north east Scotland, well into the last quarter of the eighteenth century, often consisted of islands of cultivation amidst untilled land.¹⁶ These islands consisted

¹² Window tax returns, Forglen, <http://www.scotlandsplaces.gov.uk/>, E326/1/17/158 1765; E326/1/17/200 1771–72.

¹³ James Duff, Madeira to Archibald Grant, Monymusk, 8 August 1776, NRS, Grant of Monymusk, GD345/943.

¹⁴ Forglen session minutes, 8 January 1785, NRS, Forglen, 1759–1791 CH2/869/4; Historical Abbreviate, NRS, Papers and accounts relative to Carnousie 1790–1825, GD185/37/3.

¹⁵ Window tax returns, Forglen, <http://www.scotlandsplaces.gov.uk/>, E326/1/17/205 1772–3; E326/1/18/24 1778–9; E326/1/18/75 1785–6.

¹⁶ T. C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People 1560–1830* (London, 1969); Christopher Whatley, *Scottish Society 1707–1830: Beyond Jacobitism, Towards Industrialisation* (Manchester, 2000).

of 'fermtouns', clusters of holdings. Often, as in the case of John Duff at Pitschish, they were let to one main tenant who then sublet smaller holdings. At the margins of such settlements were the cottars, landless labourers who survived on seasonal work. The cultivated land was divided into two. Around the settlement was the better quality land known as infield. The limited amount of manure available was applied to these lands which were continuously cropped. The poor quality outfield was cropped until exhausted and then allowed to rest. Beyond the outfield was moorland, sometimes used for pasturing cattle but often most valuable as a source of peat for fuel. This system was extremely vulnerable to the shocks of bad weather and subsistence crises occurred at regular intervals throughout the century. The last and one of the most severe in the north east came with the wet weather of 1782 and the failure of the harvest.¹⁷

Alexander Gordon at Letterfourie was a direct witness to the misery caused. In September 1782 he reported 'a most luxuriant appearance of an Oat Crop on the ground a great deal of which can never ripen or fill without miraculously fine weather.'¹⁸ Although he was able to get his entire crop in, albeit in poor condition, by the end of November, little had been harvested on the higher ground inland. 'The poorer sort are almost all starving,' he told James, 'I need not except even the farmers. No meal of any kind is now to be bought from Spey to Cullen and little, if any, anywhere else that I can hear of.'¹⁹ This led to James seeking sources of grain from the contacts in Poland that he had used to supply the Madeira trade. Alexander asked James to charter a vessel of sixty tons to supply their tenants with both food for survival and, crucially, seed against the next sowing.²⁰ Such crises made agricultural improvement of vital importance and Alexander Gordon was a pioneer in the north east. The process of agricultural improvement, involving the creation of separate farms with enclosed fields enabling systems of crop rotation and the introduction of new crops such as turnips, which in turn enabled the improvement of livestock, started in Scotland in the Lothians around Edinburgh, stimulated by the letting of farms to English tenants from centres of advanced husbandry. In turn, pioneers of improvement,

¹⁷ George Skene Keith, *General View of the Agriculture of Aberdeenshire* (Aberdeen, 1811), 178, 209.

¹⁸ Alexander Gordon, Letterfourie to James Gordon, London, 22 September 1782, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box two, papers relating to Cairnbanno.

¹⁹ Alexander Gordon, Letterfourie to James Gordon, London, 9 October 1782, *ibid.*

²⁰ Alexander Gordon, Letterfourie to James Gordon, London, 3 November 1782, *ibid.*

such as Archibald Grant, sought to lure tenants from the Lothians to farm his newly enclosed land and provide role models for his existing tenantry. This process was slow to spread in the north east, although it was beginning to take off in the last quarter of the century, by which time it also became a fashionable pursuit amongst country gentlemen.

Alexander had the luxury of funds derived from the Madeira trade to invest in improvements. By 1772 he was already imposing new written agreements on his brother's tenants, specifying the practices they could and could not engage in. They were, for example, to have a certain portion of ground under turnips. They were not to pare grass sward as a substitute for manure (a common practice) nor were they to use peats as a building material. They were instructed that 'no melioration or allowance for building will be Granted but to such as build with Stone & Lime or with Stone & mortar Pinsnecked with Lime, & Erect and have on their fire House a Chimney head, with at least one Window in the same two feet high and Eighteen Inches Wide with a Glassed Sash or Casement.' They were to cause any enclosures to be fenced with stone dykes or a quickset hedge, the latter of which the landowner would provide. Any breach of these conditions would incur a fine of four pounds Scots for the first transgression, six pounds Scots and forfeiture of the lease for the second.²¹ However, part of what Alexander offered in return was access to the newly improved land that he was creating from the surrounding moors. The snow was preventing 'all kind of work in the farming way particularly that necessary operation of Plowing of which we have a great deal in view' he reported in 1772, 'not in the intown way of wch we have but little but of Muires, ... where there is a great deal as you'll observe from the Survey thereof, a good deal of it being very valuable.'²² The progress he had made by 1784 can be found in the reports of Andrew Wight on the *Present State of Husbandry in Scotland*. These reports, based on a series of journeys throughout Scotland from 1778 to 1784, filled a growing demand for examples of improvement.

Wight's trips through Aberdeenshire into Banffshire and along the coast towards Inverness appeared in 1784, although an exact date of his visit to Letterfourie is not given. Neither is it entirely clear who the 'Mr Gordon' he spoke to was, but the evidence of the letters suggest this must have been Alexander. He received Wight by saying 'that I was welcome to see all the

²¹ Regulations to be observed by the Tenants of Letterfourie Corriedown & Walkerdale under the Penalties & Forfeitures hereafter mentioned, *ibid*.

²² Alexander Gordon, Letterfourie to James Gordon, London, 15 January 1772, *ibid*.

operations at his wild outlandish place; but that as he himself was a sort of an original, so were his improvements; and that probably I might not like either.' Wight, however, was impressed by what had been done with the moorland. This was topped by a thin soil, under which was a layer of gravel bound with clay, impervious to water. Breaking through this to turn up the more fertile subsoil required 'a very strong plough, drawn by six oxen and two or four horses, to pierce through the hard bound gravel, and to bring up the virgin soil below.' The stones brought up were carried off and the land, limed and harrowed, allowed to lie fallow for a year. It then bore crops before being put down to grass, Wight declaring that 'I have not seen better pasturage in the north of Scotland, except at Cullen.' By these means a moor of four hundred acres was turned into a sheep walk. Alexander, reported Wight, had a well-set up set of farm buildings, including a wright's shop. 'He has,' he continued, 'from Mr Crichton in Edinburgh, farm-instruments of the most approved kind; particularly some of the harrows recommended in the *Gentleman Farmer*.²³ Alexander did not only improve Letterfourie; in 1774 he bought the small Cairnbanno estate in Aberdeenshire for £4,800 from Doctor Alexander Hay of London. Like Letterfourie, much of the land was poor quality moorland. The tenants were in the practice of spreading water on land which had been down to grass for three years, after which they took several grain crops. In many cases tenants were only able to pay their rents 'by their family industry at working the Manufactory stockings, one woman will knit & Spin a pair in a week for 1/6.' Alexander's enthusiasm for improving such unpromising land was fuelled by his access to ready money from the wine trade. It also, as Patrick was to stay at Letterfourie before moving into Carnousie, provided a role model for his nephew.²⁴

The survey of Carnousie in 1787 seems to suggest that improvement was well under way before he purchased the estate. One index of this was the possible disappearance of a settlement near the house of Carnousie, although evidence for this is partial. In January 1760, the minister of Forglen parish church announced his intention to 'catchchise people in Mains and Cottown of Carnousie'. This test of religious knowledge suggests a concentration of inhabitants near the house. By February 1778 the minister was 'to visit families in South and North Bogton, Old town and Newton of

²³ Wight, *Present State*, IV, 70–3.

²⁴ Private memorandum about Asleed and Cairnbanno belonging to Mr Gordon 18 February 1775, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box two, papers relating to Cairnbanno.

Carnousie' with no mention of the Mains.²⁵ It might be that the cottages in Bogton were a replacement for those near the house, although the survey does refer to 'White hill park, Houses & yards included'. This eight-acre field lay close to the house – whether the houses were inhabited or by now ruinous is not clear.²⁶ Another clearer index was the creation of enclosed farm holdings, held by a single tenant with a house and buildings convenient for their holdings. 'The Improvements recently made upon the Mains and the Farm of Oldtown,' Home observed, 'may serve to demonstrate what may be done upon the Other farms.' George Gellie in Oldtown seems to have been the model of an 'improved' tenant, representing Hay at church meetings and being trusted with a Parliamentary vote. In turn, he was provided with a gracious Georgian house at the heart of his 447 acres, by far the biggest holding on the estate.²⁷ The Mains, or home farm, extended to 331 acres. The crucial difference was that the Mains consisted of high quality arable land and pasture, with no outfield at all. By contrast, Oldtown had seventy acres of outfield still in need of improved cultivation and nearly half its acreage in pasture, with 139 acres described as moor. Newtown might, as its name suggests, with 124 acres containing no outfield have been another enclosed farm, but the 367 acres of Bogenhilt farm, only sixty-two acres of which was good arable, suggests an unimproved fermtoun. 259 acres were described as 'grassy pasture along the burn improveable moor ground south east from the corn land'. Of the 2,085 acres that Home surveyed, just over half, 1,064, were classified as pasture, which covered both quality pasture land and moor. Only 285 were outfield, indicating that the process of improvement was under way, but there was clearly much to do. Home's conclusion was that 'the Many Natural Advantages have been Overlook'd by Tenants ignorant, Indolent, & poor, And tho' Lime could be laid down at Eight pence pr Boll little of it has been used.'²⁸

Such a conclusion was perhaps typical of the rather condescending judgment passed on those whose descendants would prove to be such industrious improvers of the land.²⁹ As well as the force of tradition, the size of holdings and the resources available to tenants would limit their possibilities. As we

²⁵ Minutes of Forglen session, 20 January 1760; 8 February 1778, NRS, CH2/869/4 Forglen, 1759–1791.

²⁶ Survey, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box nine.

²⁷ Walker and Woodworth, *Aberdeenshire: North*, 324.

²⁸ Survey, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box nine.

²⁹ Ian Carter, *Farm Life in Northeast Scotland 1840–1914: The Poor Man's Country* (Edinburgh, 1979).

have seen, some of the larger holdings may be misleading as they are likely to have been fermtouns containing significant areas of moor. Of the thirty-five separate holdings that Home identified, twelve were under ten acres in size, with a further eight under twenty acres. Unfortunately, the accompanying map is lost, but there was a cluster of crofts at North Bogton. James Webster, for example, had a thirteen-acre croft with just two acres of good arable land. The rest, 'thin soil & east aspect' was split between five acres of outfield and six acres of moor. Even a bigger holding, like Alexander Gray's sixty acres, was described as a 'croft'. With twenty-three acres of its outfield described as 'improveable good soil' and the balance as poor or mossy, and the rest of the holding being largely moor, this suggests holdings being let on improving leases.³⁰

The potential for agricultural improvement, and so higher rents, was not, however, the only attraction of Carnousie to a potential purchaser. Home drew attention to other features that met some of the criteria Patrick had set out in his Indian reveries. 'The Mansion house', Home reported, 'has a fine, Airy Situation, is very commodious and most partly Modern.' It contained twenty 'Fire rooms' and elegant and spacious dining and drawing rooms. As well as established fruit trees in the garden, the whole policies were well wooded. 116 acres of firwood were 'partly full grown and thriving, and these from the nature of the soil, are of an excellent quality' and there was extensive natural woodland beside the Deveron. As well as the economic potential of these woods, they gave shelter and dignity to the grounds of the house, and, concluded Home, 'ages would not establish Infant policies to the present Maturitie'. There was plenty of peat for fuel in the moss and a slate quarry. Two mills operated on the estate to which not only were the tenants thirled, or bound to take their grain for milling, but a neighbouring landowner was similarly bound. Above all, there was the location of the estate near the Deveron, 'the River beautifully Situate as already Described goes along the estate for a Mile and upwards embanked with Natural wood, & fine walks, and a Command of Salmon fishing'.³¹ Patrick included fishing as one of his desired amenities, day dreaming in Bengal that, 'I would like above all things to have a place of my own where I could retire to and amuse myself in the fields; I know little of farming tho' fond of that amusement, but above all things I would like to have a good Garden with fruit trees

³⁰ Survey AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box nine.

³¹ *Ibid.*

&c and if possible not far from a stream where I could divert myself in fine weather with fishing.³² Carnousie met all these criteria, especially with regards to fishing. In 1703 George Gordon had brought a case before the Court of Session against a landowner on the far bank of the Deveron, John Ramsey of Laithers. In it he asserted his right to cast nets for salmon on either side of the river. In its usual tortuous process, judgment in Gordon's favour was awarded in 1711, reserving a right of Laithers to a single rod.³³ Andrew Hay had offered the estate to a number of local landowners, but Earl Fife, Sir George Abercromby of Forglen and Alexander Dirom of Muiresk all declined. Accordingly, it was probably through William Rose, who managed the business of a number of those overseas on military duty, that James Duff and James Gordon came to be aware of Carnousie and its attractions for Patrick.

Although the estate fitted his requirements well, it was during the purchase process added to by the acquisition of the adjoining small estates of Cluny and Knockorth. Cluny had been part of the Carnousie estate until sold by Gordon to the minister of Marnoch. Its tenants remained thirled to the mill at Carnousie. 'The lands are improvable and not high rented', Patrick was advised, 'but there are many people upon the ground and severe upon the mosses.' The existence of extensive moss at Carnousie would address the latter concern. The Knockorth lands had different attributes, Patrick receiving advice that 'the Lands of Knockarth is valuable tho' not in popular estimation but on inspection it will be found a property not the least esteem worthy, and desire this to be remembered. The lands of Knockorth has the best of Stone quarries and stand so in the highest estimation in the Country When houses are building application is generally made for the benefit Mr Innes of Muiryfold did so Kinnairdy did it also – and the demand for the London pavement put it once in high repute and may yet answer great objects.'³⁴ Given the building projects that were to be embarked on this was a valuable addition and both estates were purchased to bring the whole estate up to around three thousand acres.

Farm buildings were a central part of the improvement project, both as a practical necessity for changed practices such as higher stocking levels and

³² Patrick Duff, Fort William to James Duff, London, 16 March 1784, *ibid.*, Tiger box, bundle two.

³³ Historical Abbreviate, NRS Papers of the Abercromby Family of Forglen and Birkenbog, papers and accounts relative to Carnousie 1790–1825, GD185/37/3.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

as a symbol of the commitment to the ideology of improvement. Home farm buildings in particular were architectural declarations of the wealth of their owners as well as acting as role models for the surrounding tenantry.³⁵ At Letterfourie the farm buildings, although not with the elegance of the house, are distinguished by a two storey central block with a bellcote rising from its gable. Over an arched central window is an armorial panel. From the surviving remains, the rest of the buildings were single storey and arranged as an open square, with access through gaps in the corners of the square.³⁶ This was an early form of the improved home farm; the next stage was to join up the buildings to form a courtyard entered through an arched pend in one wing. A move towards this can be seen at Mountblairy, where the earliest buildings, dating from around 1791, are arranged in a U-shape (the open side being completed much later). Entrance is through a segmented arched pend (that is, a flattened rather than round arch, allowing more room on the floor above but without the same architectural distinction). The entrance forms a small tower with, again, a bellcote crowning one of the gables. Interestingly, just as at Letterfourie, this bellcote, and the architectural detailing of the tower, faces inwards.

The farm buildings at Carnousie represent a development of these features. They form a complete courtyard, entered by arched pends at both north and south. The main entrance features heavily undercut and finely worked masonry blocks, in stark contrast to the rubble construction of the rest of the buildings. A round arch is topped by a serlian window, that is, a central arched window with smaller rectangular windows on each side. The pediment features the space for a clock and the whole is topped by a bellcote. This was dated 1797, which suggests that the gatehouse was the work of Patrick Duff.³⁷ It is interesting here that the architectural features are facing outwards and are designed to be seen from the mansion house. Whether the conception of the whole court was that of Patrick Duff is open to doubt. Home's survey notes 'The Offices Suitable and have lately been repaired at considerable expence.' 'Offices' are generally taken to refer to estate buildings and Home further in his narrative refers to 'the expence laid out in office

³⁵ John Martin Robinson, *Georgian Model Farms: A Study of Decorative and Model Farm Buildings in the Age of Improvement, 1700–1846* (Oxford, 1983); Miles Glendinning and Susanna Wade Martins, *Buildings of the Land: Scotland's Farms 1750–2000* (Edinburgh, 2008).

³⁶ Alexander Fenton and Bruce Walker, *The Rural Architecture of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1981), 186.

³⁷ H. Gordon Slade, 'Carnousie-Banffshire', *Archaeological Journal*, 136 (1979), 229–39.

houses & upon the farm & inclosures together with the woods with taste laid down'.³⁸ These do suggest that at the very least a start had been made on the court of buildings, but that Patrick was able to use his wealth to give them a touch of real architectural distinction. Inside the courtyard is evidence of further architectural quality. There is a range of cart openings with finely worked masonry arches. There are five of these, the northernmost of which is taller than the rest, suggesting a place for a laird's coach. On the smaller estates of the north east, farm buildings and stables were often combined (unlike on the bigger nearby estate of Forglen, where a separate stable block lies close to the house, with the home farm buildings situated some distance away).³⁹

There is a clear suggestion that Patrick was able to take his Indian wealth and enhance a project of improvement well under way. The account given by the minister of Forglen in his contribution to the *Statistical Account of Scotland*, compiled soon after Patrick bought the estate, recorded that 'the Colonel is presently enclosing his Mains'. The minister was particularly taken by the quality of the walling undertaken. The masons only used the stones available to them on the surface, he commented, but from these 'they make the most beautiful work of stone fence I ever saw'.⁴⁰ The fortune that made such work possible, like those of other returning 'nabobs', raised contradictory responses. A negative response was focused on the luxury, with its associated implications of moral degeneracy, that Indian wealth was said to give rise to. One very pertinent example of such a critique was to be found in the pages of Henry Mackenzie's periodical, *The Lounger*. Mackenzie (1745–1831), author of *The Man of Feeling*, was an extremely popular writer, credited with a major contribution to fostering the culture of 'sensibility'. His critique of luxury, however, took the guise of a letter from 'John Homespun', a down to earth farmer who was dismayed by the impact of new wealth on traditional virtues. In his May 1785 letter he bemoaned the adverse impact of his neighbour's son, recently returned with an Indian fortune. He and his wife appear at church bedecked in their finery and bring along their father, looking most uncomfortable in his satin attire. But worst of all for John Homespun is the way the heads of his wife and daughters are turned topsy-turvy by dinner

³⁸ Survey, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box nine.

³⁹ On the development of home farm steadings in the north east, Alistair Mutch, 'Agriculture and Empire: General Patrick 'Tiger' Duff and the Shaping of North-east Scotland', *Review of Scottish Culture*, 22 (2010), 85–98.

⁴⁰ Ballingall, 'Forglen', 535.

table tales of 'Nabobs, Rajahs, and Rajah- Pouts, elephants, palanquins, and processions; so stuck full of gold, diamonds, pearls, and precious stones, with episodes of dancing girls'. The effect is make them all dissatisfied with a way of life that they had, up till then, been content with:

The effect of all this on my family you will easily guess. Not only does it rob me of my money, but them of their happiness. Everything that used to be thought comfortable or convenient formerly, is now intolerable and disgusting. Everything we now put on, or eat, or drink, is immediately brought into comparison with the dress, provisions, and liquors at Mushroom Hall for so they have new-christened my neighbour's farmhouse. My girls home-made gowns, of which they were lately so proud, have been, thrown by with contempt since they saw Mrs. Mushroom's muslins from Bengal; our barn-door fowls, we used to say, were so fat and well-tasted, we now make awkward attempts, by garlic and pepper, to turn into the form of Curries and Peelaws, and the old October we were wont to brag all our neighbours with, none of the family but myself will condescend to taste, since they drank Mr. Mushroom's India Madeira.⁴¹

That coupling of India and madeira makes this complaint of particular relevance to Patrick, although he was marching on the dusty plains of Bengal when it was written.

There was, however, a more positive response to the influx of new money. In 1774 General James Grant's Edinburgh lawyer wrote to him in connection with a campaign to win support for the Scottish linen industry that 'I beg you will send us Nabobs or Commissarys to Buy our Lands or Enable us by agriculture & Loans to improve it.'⁴² This was recognition that many parts of Scotland were unable to generate the required funds from internal resources. As George McGilvary has pointed out, Indian money or, in the case of Letterfourie, Madeiran money, could bridge the gap.⁴³ Patrick's friend, Keith Murchison, acquired the 1800 Tarradale estate in 1788. The lands of Tarradale were still largely unenclosed being worked on the traditional

⁴¹ Mackenzie, *Lounger*, 150.

⁴² NRS, Macpherson-Grant of Ballindalloch, bundle 550, 5, John Mackenzie, Edinburgh to Sir James Grant, London, 5 March 1774.

⁴³ George McGilvary, *East India Patronage and the British State: The Scottish Elite and Politics in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2008).

Scottish run-rig system 'but capable of great improvement' and the annual rent from the farms and crofts net of all public burdens was only £200 a year.⁴⁴ Although the sales particulars described the tenantry as 'disposed to industry' the reality was that they had great difficulty paying their rents without distilling whisky as a source of cash, and even then the rents frequently went unpaid. Having acquired his Highland estate (although its location on the shores of the Beaulie Firth meant that a large part of the land was low lying and fertile) Murchison set about improving his land and his position in society with gusto. He immediately commissioned David Aitken, one of the foremost land surveyors in Scotland at that time, to prepare a detailed survey and map of the lands of Tarradale. This showed a traditional agricultural landscape with much unenclosed runrig strips but also a landscape beginning to be transformed, with fertile carselands reclaimed along the shore of the Beaulie Firth and new improvements or intakes of hitherto uncultivated land in the more upland areas. He had double stone march dykes built between Tarradale and neighbouring estates, although complaining about the cost of doing so. He organised the planting of shelter belts of trees as well as planting many ornamental trees and shrubs in and around the policies of Tarradale House itself, the sandstone mansion that was the caput of the estate. His gardener, Murdoch Stewart, left a detailed account of this planting, observing that 'the finest of the shrubs from Pearth (ie Perth) are planted in the place which was lavelled betwixt the house and the spring wall'. He also refers to planting 'wallnut trees that was in the nursery – the new belt which is from the said clump till it joins the planting park are planted with horse-chestnut, service, balm of Gilead, spruce and silver fir.' Stewart also refers to larch, oak and horse chestnut having been planted along the roadside and at the gates, and further afield were other plantings of oak, larch and spruce. Stewart the gardener planted 60 pounds weight of Scots fir seed, suggesting that trees were being planted by the thousand. Murchison had an orchard planted with fruit trees from Perth but owing to a dry spring, no fruit set in the first year and the newly planted hedges made little growth. Murchison also had a steading, completed in 1793, as a major symbol of his expenditure, with a surviving octagonal doocot topping the entrance pend. Both Murchison and Duff might be seen as following the fashion for agricultural improvement, but they had more capital than many others to pursue it. Such was the environment that Patrick would encounter on his return from India.

⁴⁴ The following account is based on Grant and Mutch, 'Indian Wealth', 40–1.

17 A brief sojourn and a triumphant return

In early 1789 Patrick returned to Britain bearing with him a letter from Cornwallis to General James Grant, MP. In it he wrote, 'Lt Col Duff, a good old Officer, & a very honest fellow & a neighbour of yours at Ballindalloch will deliver this letter to you. His looks do no discredit to the Bengal climate & I think he will give you a good account of your friends in this Country. I refer you to him for all particulars, & if you get him into Sackville Street about five o'clock, you may perhaps prevail upon him to stay long enough to answer all your questions.'¹ This ringing endorsement from a figure at the centre of the British military and social elite shows how far Patrick had come since he last left British shores. Patrick's precise movements are not clear, but one assumes he spent some time with his brother James and his family at 15 Finsbury Square. James had returned from Madeira to take up the London end of the wine trade at some point in 1784. This residential development, centred on a central green space, had been laid out in 1777. Perhaps the Duff family witnessed the first hot air ascent from it by Vincenzo Lunardi in 1784. James also seems to have had business premises in Salisbury Street, off the Strand, where a smart street of houses had been laid out by the architect James Paine in 1783. It was from here that Patrick followed up his claim to rank that had brought him back to Britain, a claim that bore fruit in April 1789 when the Court of Directors agreed to promote him to colonel, to rank from April 1786.² Having achieved this success, Patrick travelled to Scotland.

Here he found both his uncles. His uncle James did not leave for Scotland until 1787. Perhaps he was waiting for Alexander to vacate the house, which he did by means of a journey to America, returning via Montserrat in July 1787.³ Both Gordon brothers were present at the laying of a foundation

¹ Marquess Cornwallis, Calcutta to General James Grant, London, 22 December 1788, NRAS, Macpherson-Grant of Ballindalloch, NRAS771, Bundle 393, 8.

² Prasad, *Fort William Correspondence*, 19, 101 (8 April 1789).

³ Alexander Gordon from Montserrat to James Duff, London, 28 July 1787, AULSC,

stone for a new catholic church at Preshome in 1787, the first such to be built in Scotland since the Reformation. We encountered the catholic chapel at Preshome before, when it was burned by government soldiers on their return from Culloden. The local faithful continued to meet in a house until, in 1765, a chapel was built in a deep ravine to hide it from view. By 1780 the building was starting to decay and by 1787 had become positively dangerous. A fundraising campaign was launched to provide a brand new chapel at Preshome, which lies in an open country location just three miles from Letterfourie. Accordingly, given their family traditions, the Gordon brothers played a leading role in managing the fundraising efforts. As one commentator later observed 'how much these churches and the Catholics of the district have been assisted by the Lairds of Letterfourie will probably, according to the wish of the benefactors, ever remain unknown.'⁴ An anonymous manuscript account suggests that Letterfourie contributed over one hundred pounds, nearly ten per cent of the £1,027 that was raised for the work.⁵

Another change was that Patrick's father was now farming at Newtown of Auchintoul, just a few miles west of Carnousie. His mother, Mary Gordon, had died at Auchintoul in April 1782.⁶ Quite when they had moved from Pitchaish is unclear, but it may have had something to do with the brothers' efforts to clear up their father's financial affairs. The farm was an improved holding sitting between the policies of the mansion house of Auchintoul and the village of Aberchirder. The latter was an early instance of a planned village, laid out on a grid plan by Alexander Gordon of Auchintoul in 1764.⁷ Another Mary Gordon, daughter of the second Laird of Auchintoul, was the second wife of John Gordon, the fourth laird of Letterfourie, so there was a distant family connection. By 1769 the estate was in the hands of Miss Catherine Gordon, who succeeded her brother in 1768, and James Gordon was writing that 'I see Miss Gordon of Auchintoul is said to want some money at next term, & believe it will be right to let her have all you can muster of mine now & at that time, as I suppose her to be a safe hand, which

Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, Tiger box, bundle five.

⁴ Odo Blundell, *Ancient Catholic Homes of Scotland* (London, 1907), 38.

⁵ A short but distinct and faithful account of the building of the Roman Catholic chapel at Preshome, founded the year 1788 and finished 1790, AULSC, MS3017/14/6.

⁶ William Anderson, 'The Autobiographical Notes of Bishop John Geddes,' *Innes Review*, 8 (1967), 46.

⁷ Douglas Lockhart, 'Lotted lands and planned villages in north-east Scotland', *Agricultural History Review*, 49 (2001), 17–40.

you best know, & in that case you'll please to call in what can be got for her.⁸ This connection might have eased the move of the Duff family into their new farm. From it, John Duff was a regular correspondent on farming matters with Earl Fife.

From Letterfourie Patrick concluded the negotiations for the purchase of Carnousie, Cluny and Knockorth. Like many new householders he determined on a programme of redecoration and change. William Rose's mother in law, Mrs Robinson, had been staying in the house. She hoped for an extension, but Alexander Gordon had to inform her that 'masons carpenters and plaisterers are all to be employed inside and outside of the house during summer.'⁹ That Alexander communicated this rather than Patrick was because Patrick had departed for London on his way to India again. Having achieved both the promotion he felt was his due and the purchase of an estate, he was anxious to return to take up command. He was, however, worried about the conditions under which he was to return. In February 1790 he petitioned the Court of Directors that he be 'appointed Commandant before I leave England, which will prevent any possibility of my being a Supernumerary on my Arrival.' He was worried that regulations about officers returning after a number of years would prevent him from assuming command. Had he 'known of any impediment to resuming my proper Station in the Service immediately on my Return,' he assured the Court, 'I would have submitted to any inconvenience in my private Concerns rather than have quitted it for a day'. Somewhat disingenuously he continued by asserting that 'I have been long in their service, from which I never was before absent but Once, when I was obliged much against my inclination to come to Europe for the recovery of my Health, which was greatly impaired by a severe wound received in the Service, and that having recovered my health on this Passage home, I returned to my Duty by the Ships of the next season.'¹⁰ This rather glossed over his enforced absence after the 1766 mutiny.

Matters here were complicated by Duff's winning the principle that the head of the artillery should be a full colonel. Part of the complication was that in Duff's absence command of the artillery devolved on lieutenant colonel George Deare, who was six years below Duff in standing. This

⁸ James Gordon, London to unnamed recipient, 31 August 1769, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box nine, bundle with sasines.

⁹ Alexander Gordon, Letterfourie, to William Rose 21 April 1790, AULSC, Duff papers, MS3175/2226.

¹⁰ Prasad, *Fort William Correspondence*, 19, 115 (22 February 1790).

drew a memorial from his brother, Philip Deare, pleading that in considering Patrick's claims that 'you will resist so much thereof as may affect the Interest of Colonel George Deare, as an Individual, or wound his feelings as a Soldier'.¹¹ As well as such claims, the Court had to take into account Cornwallis's concerns about the impact of promoting a relatively junior officer on opinions among infantry officers of longer standing. The upshot was that these ticklish questions of rank were to be left to Cornwallis to sort out. In the meantime, Patrick had other matters to attend to. He had given his authority to his uncle Alexander and others to 'to get all proper titles made up necessary for completing vesting me in the feudal rights of the Lands & Estate of Carnousie and Knockorth and others lately purchased by me from Captain Andrew Hay of Mountblairy.'¹² Meanwhile he took advantage of his stay in London waiting for a ship to get his portrait painted by George Romney (1734–1802). Romney was a fantastically productive and popular portrait painter, completing over two thousand portraits. 'Many merchants and professional men and their families', suggests David Cross, 'were inclined to Romney's simplicity of design and lack of ostentatious classical reference.'¹³ In addition, he was cheaper than the main alternative, Joshua Reynolds. Fortunately for us, Romney kept detailed records of his sittings, enabling us to know that Patrick sat for his portrait on six occasions at the studio at Cecil Street off the Strand (so not far from his brother's Salisbury Street premises). Starting on 25 March 1790 he attended morning sessions starting at nine each day, with the final session being on 8 April.¹⁴ This produced a head and shoulders portrait in which Patrick is in uniform with his sword under his right arm. Unfortunately the portrait was sold at auction and is now in private hands which cannot be identified but in the print that was made from the painting he looks out with what appears to be a hollow in the cheek under his right eye. The portrait cost thirty guineas, paid for by Patrick, and it was sent for safe keeping to James at Finsbury Square.¹⁵

While Patrick was sailing for India, two significant figures in his life died within weeks of each other. On 17 April 1790 he wrote to Earl Fife from Dover, where he was waiting for the *William Pitt* to sail, regretting that he

¹¹ Ibid., 117 (24 February 1790).

¹² Registration commission and factory Colonel Duff to Alexander Gordon Esq 1790, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box ten, letters 1790.

¹³ David Cross, *A Striking Likeness: The Life of George Romney* (Aldershot, 2000), 81.

¹⁴ Humphry Ward, and W Roberts, *Romney a Biographical and Critical Essay with a Catalogue Raisonné of His Works*, (2 vols, London, 1904), I, 121.

¹⁵ Ward and Roberts, *Romney*, II, 47.

was not able to call on him in London. ‘The accounts of my Father’s death,’ he explained, ‘which arrived on Thursday made me unfit and unwilling to see any of my friends, for altho’ I was in a great measure prepared for the event it put me very much out of sorts.’¹⁶ This was followed by the death of James Gordon at Letterfourie on 30 April, just weeks before the opening of the chapel at Preshome that he had done so much to support. Meanwhile, as he sailed down the Channel, momentous events were happening on the French side that would have a considerable impact on the British in India. The storming of the Bastille in July 1789 inaugurated what became known as the French Revolution. Initially welcomed in Britain as heralding the start of constitutional government, concern soon grew amongst the British ruling class about the dangerously radical spirit that developed. In India, the language of liberty was adopted by the energetic and expansionist ruler of the south territory of Mysore, Tipu Sultan (1750–1799). French support for his father, Hyder Ali (1720–1782), had been a way for the French to, however unsuccessfully, challenge British pre-eminence in India. In 1789 Tipu attacked the ally of the East India Company the Maharajah of Travancore. The Maharajah appealed to Cornwallis for support and British forces engaged Tipu’s. Initially successful, they then lost ground. So by the time the *William Pitt* arrived at Calcutta in August 1790, there was considerable concern about the military position.

As Patrick complained to his friend Kenneth Murchison, he found on his arrival that George Deare had been promoted into the position he felt he should occupy. Cornwallis, he wrote, ‘was determined to support a Regulation which he had recommended, although he saw and confessed the unparalleled hardship and injustice which was done to Elliot & me, for no other reason (as he told me himself) but that he must act consistently.’¹⁷ An artillery battalion from Bengal had been sent to reinforce the Madras forces in February 1790; it was while commanding in support of colonel Floyd that lieutenant colonel Charles Deare was killed in an engagement with Tipu’s forces at Sattimungulum in September of the same year. Patrick therefore claimed his right to command the battalion and expressed his willingness to go to Madras, ‘but I was told without any ceremony, that I could not go as I was a Colonel & consequently would supercede Liet Colonels Stewart & Floyd,

¹⁶ Tayler and Tayler, *Duffs*, II, 474 (17 April 1790).

¹⁷ Patrick Duff, Calcutta to Kenneth Murchison, 18 November 1790, EUL, Murchison papers, MS.2263.

a very cruel reason in my Opinion.¹⁸ The tensions between the Company's officers and those in the regular army surface again in Patrick's complaint to Murchison that 'It will be good for the Company if these Kings Officers prove by their conduct that they merit such an extraordinary preference; this war may perhaps show whether they do or not; if people will only open their eyes they have some examples already before them. I do not think that these Kings Generals manage much better in India than a Company Colonel might probably be able to do but no matter we shall see how Matters will end.'¹⁹

Cornwallis's view was that he was bound by existing regulations until he was given explicit directions from London. Colonel Ross expressed his sympathy with Patrick and reported to him that 'I mentioned the substance of your Letter last night to his Lordship, and he said it was like yourself, and perfectly suited to your Character, to be above showing any ill humour at your disappointment, & that he will not only continue his Sanction, but that he is extremely anxious, that you should remain in your present Station of Commanding Officer of Artillery of this Army, as he is persuaded that your Services will be extremely useful in bringing this War to an honourable termination.'²⁰ Patrick sought to bring his connections to bear on decision makers in London, seeking to get both Hector Munro, his former commanding officer, and the Duchess of Gordon to use their influence with Henry Dundas. Patrick's letter to Munro of November 1790, which Munro forwarded to Dundas in April 1791, indicates the tremendous delay in trying to exercise claims of right through formal means. Munro by now knew that matters had changed and that Patrick had been sent to the coast in December 1790. 'I am glad that he goes with Ld Cornwallis to the Coast, he told Dundas, 'for a better practical Mind never was in India.'²¹ What had transpired was that, while still pursuing his claim for rank, Patrick had written as follows to Cornwallis: 'I beg permission to offer my Services. I am ambitious to have the honor of serving under your Lordship, and I flatter myself that my Experience in my profession may be useful. I annex no terms and only request to have the honor of being employed under you until the pleasure of the court of Directors is known respecting my claims.'²²

¹⁸ Patrick Duff, Calcutta to Hector Munro, 10 November 1790, NLS, Melville Papers, MSS 1073.

¹⁹ Patrick Duff, Calcutta to Kenneth Murchison, 18 November 1790, EUL, Murchison papers, MS.2263.

²⁰ Col Ross to Col Duff 29 September 1791, NLS, Melville Papers, MSS 1073.

²¹ Hector Munro to Henry Dundas 26 April 1791, *ibid.*

²² Patrick Duff, Calcutta to Cornwallis, 13 November 1790, *ibid.*

Cornwallis replied that 'having a very high opinion of your Zeal for the public good and of your ability as an Officer of Artillery, I shall with great pleasure propose to the Board that the offer of your Services on the Coast of Coromandel shall be accepted; and I am persuaded that I shall be able to employ you there in a manner that will promote the Interests of the Company.'²³ The task facing Cornwallis was the tricky one of adjusting relative rank. As he reported to the Court in January 1791, 'to fix the precise place, after the Lapse of twenty Eight Years, during which Period the Idea of relative Rank between Officers composing the Infantry, Artillery, and Engineers was constantly disregarded, and considering the different circumstances under which Officers were admitted into the company's service, was not easy to be effected with accuracy.'²⁴ However, in December it had been decided that Patrick would rank above colonel Christopher Knudsen and below colonel Arthur Achmuty, both infantry officers. This would enable him to command mixed detachments and on 14 December 1790 an order was issued confirming his overall command of the Bengal artillery.

Patrick's assessment of the military situation was that the problem lay not with the fighting abilities of the combined forces but with logistics: 'how his army is to be supplied with Cattle, Grain, &c,' he wrote to Hector Munro, 'is at this time difficult to say; Bengal has already been pretty well drained, & from Madras nothing of that sort can reasonably be expected.'²⁵ This proved to be an astute observation. The artillery played a central part in the successful siege and storming of the fortress at Bangalore in March 1791, the general orders recording 'the judicious arrangements made by Colonel Duff, in the artillery department, his exertions and those of the other officers and soldiers of that corps in general, in the service of the batteries, are entitled to his lordship's perfect approbation.'²⁶ Following this, the army set off for Tipu's capital at Seringapatam. Major George Hart reported progress in extensive letters to General James Grant back in London. They had departed from Bangalore in April, he wrote, 'leaving Colonel Duff of the Bengal Artillery, with the 76th Regiment, our heavy Park and stores, two Bengal and one Coast Battalions of Sepoys, our Sick, wounded, etc, etc'.²⁷ Here is

²³ Cornwallis, Fort William to Patrick Duff, 16 November 1790, *ibid.*

²⁴ Prasad, *Fort William Correspondence*, 19, 438 (31 January 1791).

²⁵ Patrick Duff, Calcutta to Hector Munro, 10 November 1790, NLS, Melville Papers MSS 1073.

²⁶ Buckle, *Bengal Artillery*, 139.

²⁷ George Hurt, Camp near Murgum-maley, to James Grant, London, 13 April 1791, NRAS, Macpherson-Grant, NRAS771, bundle 426, 1.

the evidence that Patrick was now able to take general command. The army, which he would later join, left with the rather limited set of guns at their disposal. They had a shortage of shot for their heavy eighteen pounder cannon, so they were only able to take fifteen guns, under Patrick's command. The main problem the army faced was Tipu's scorched earth policy, which deprived the army of provisions other than those which they could carry with them. By eleven days into their march:

The camp-servants and followers, without which an Indian army cannot exist, were employed busily – but rather unsuccessfully, in digging and searching for Grain, their wants even then increasing much. Our cattle were still falling off in great numbers also; for the grass-cutters and Bullock drivers totally employed in endeavouring to procure sustenance for themselves and many of them for numerous families even at the risk of their lives, were obliged to neglect the Cattle – in this country where nothing can in the dry months be procured but the roots of grass, that must be dug up with considerable labour! The Army however, – tho' much fatigued in so constantly assisting the weak cattle with the dragropes, which were seldom out of the men's hands, continued in the greatest spirits.²⁸

Despite this, they arrived outside Seringapatam and moved into position to attack. Tipu's forces retreated into the fort 'and Colonel Duff arriving with our Camp Equipage and baggage etc (but! With shocking worn out cattle! Not 'till very late).²⁹ However, much to the shock of those who were not party to the decision, a series of explosions marked the destruction of the heavy guns. The lack of provisions had proved fatal and the retreat back to Bangalore was ordered.

After the return to Bangalore, Hart noted 'Colonel (known by the name of Tiger) Duff, who was appointed to the command of that Fort for the purpose chiefly of getting our artillery and Stores in proper order, and prepared for the arduous siege of the Enemy's Capital: upon the capture of which, perhaps, all must ultimately depend.'³⁰ Much better preparations were now put in place to have sufficient provisions in place, aided by the decision

²⁸ George Hurt, camp at Lanambaddy about five miles above Seringapatam, to James Grant, London, 25 May 1791, *ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

of the Mahrattas to join in the campaign against Tipu. Patrick was able to put together a siege train of twenty heavy guns. Whereas the heavy guns in the first campaign, reported Major Alexander Dirom (son of Patrick's new neighbour at Muireisk outside Turriff), had slowed down the march, thanks to Patrick's innovations 'this unwieldy department moved with nearly as much ease as any other part of the army.'³¹ This was put down to his yoking bullocks four rather than two abreast and attaching the chain they pulled to the heaviest part of the gun. Buckle records of these preparations that 'during the operations above detailed, convoys of stores and ordnance had been arriving, and every care taken to put the materiel of the army on the best possible footing; everything was collected in Bangalore, and the train under Colonel Duff arrived there on the 12th January, 1792, in high order; "the draught cattle were in such high order" (to quote from a letter of that period), "that they literally came in with the heavy guns on a gallop."³² On the sixth of February Cornwallis arrived before Seringapatam and resolved to attack overnight: 'The army marched at 7 o'clock in the evening, in three divisions, for this purpose, leaving their artillery in camp, protected by the cavalry, quarter, and rear-guards, under the command of Colonel Duff.'³³ The threat of attack prompted Tipu to sue for peace.

Part of the terms of the peace were that Tipu surrender his sons as hostages in surety for adhering to the terms of the treaty, particularly the payment of large sums in reparation. This event prompted two painters to produce rather romantic views of this event, showing a fatherly Cornwallis taking the two boys into his care.³⁴ In Robert Home's picture, Patrick Duff appears on the right of a phalanx of officers who flank the picture – and so occupying the position on the right wing of the army that Deane had argued for. He stands tall in his blue uniform with its scarlet facings, next to the red-coated

³¹ Alexander Dirom, *A Narrative of the Campaign in India Which Terminated the War with Tippoo Sultan in 1792* (London, 1793), 112.

³² Buckle, *Bengal Artillery*, 146.

³³ *Ibid.*, 147.

³⁴ Robert Home, General Lord Cornwallis receiving Tipoo Sultan's sons as hostages, c. 1793, National Army Museum, London; Arthur Devis, 'Lord Cornwallis receiving the two sons of Tippoo Sahib as Hostages, 1803, Lord Biddulph, Ledbury Park, Herefordshire. Sydney Paviere, *The Devis Family of Painters* (Leigh on Sea, 1950), 124, reports that 'sketches for the portraits of such British Officers as were at that time in India, having been finished, the Artist returned to England, where, meeting with a considerable number of Gentlemen who were also present on that singular occasion, he was induced to undertake a New Picture on the same subject on a more extensive scale, and introduce a variety of portraits of Celebrated Persons who had been with Lord Cornwallis during that Campaign'

infantry officers. Robert Home was actually present at Seringapatam, unlike Arthur Devis whose picture featured a long line of those who had participated and was more of a marketing ploy than an attempt at historical representation. Thanks to a key we can see that Patrick is placed in the second row close to, and towering above, Cornwallis. Both pictures place Patrick as a member of the central corps of officers in the campaign. Soon after the events depicted in these pictures, Patrick was headed back for Europe again, leaving on the *Button* Indiaman. Once again, concern with rank would seem to be at the root of this prompt departure. However, there were other battles to be fought at home.

18 Fighting the parchment lairds

Patrick's first task on reaching London was to request a meeting with Henry Dundas. The latter's position gave him sweeping powers of patronage in India, hence Patrick's anxiety to meet him, as part of the continuing quest to get the rank Patrick felt was his due. He had hoped, Patrick said, to wait until Cornwallis had arrived back in England, 'as from the flattering acknowledgements his Lordship was pleased to bestow on my Services during the late war, I am persuaded he would be happy, to forward with his influence, any means that could be devised, for granting me relief, in what I have not been able to hinder myself from considering a real hardship.'¹ However, he had heard nothing by February 1793. By this time, war had been declared with France and Patrick informed the Court of Directors of his willingness to return to serve in India once more. However, he seems to have had little success. During Patrick's absence from India, Cornwallis had proposed a series of reforms proposed to reorganise the Company's army. He sought to integrate the European elements of the company and regular armies. This would bring in full colonels and general officers, plus improved pay – but would attack the principle of strict seniority. Petitions were sent in from Bengal in February and March of 1793. As Callahan notes, 'the two services felt an "aversion" for each other. British officers had "interest" at home, while "we are not, generally speaking, men of interest, else we should not have preferred a service in which seniority gives command.'" This is one of the clearest statements ever made by a group of Indian Army officers about their motivations and reveals the basis of their stubborn determination to maintain their service, and its peculiarities, intact.² Patrick's individual claim thus became tangled up with a far weightier affair in the minds of Pitt and Dundas. It is interesting to note that 'the Bengal Artillery sent a separate

¹ Patrick Duff, Salisbury Street to Henry Dundas, 23 February 1793, NLS, Melville Papers, MSS 1073.

² Callahan, *Army Reform*, 134.

petition of its own. It is the first indication of the aloofness of the gunners, the elite of the Company's European units, from the rest of the Bengal army.³ Perhaps Patrick's agitations, which had seen artillery officers being promoted to full colonel, had some lasting influence here. These events in Bengal and London were an important backdrop to the years that followed, but Patrick first made his way back to his Scottish estate.

Aged fifty-one, he arrived in Scotland a wealthy man, possessed of an impressive estate and a glowing military reputation. Although there are suggestions that his health had been impaired in India, he must still, at six foot four inches and tanned by the Bengal sun, have been an imposing figure. Which of these factors attracted Dorothea Hay (1766–1803), the twenty-eight-year-old sister of Andrew Hay of Mountblair, is not clear, nor is whether this was a purely dynastic match, born out of Patrick's desire for heirs to his estate. Certainly a careful marriage contract was drawn up in January 1794 with the 'special advice and consent of Captain Andrew Hay of Mountblairie her brother.' This guaranteed her a life rent of the lands of Knockorth and Cluny in the event of Patrick's death, together with 'that tenement of burrow bigged land with the houses yards parts and pertinences of the same belonging to him & lying in the sea town of Banff' and an annuity of £200.⁴ The couple's first child, Margaret, was born in March 1795. The year was also the start of yet another battle for Patrick, a battle that started with the declaration of a Parliamentary by-election for the county of Banff.

In order to understand the nature of this battle, we have to understand both the corrupt nature of the eighteenth-century Scottish electoral system and how it played out in the specific context of a Banffshire dominated politically and economically by Earl Fife in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁵ He served as Member of Parliament for the county between 1754 and 1784 before his place was taken by his illegitimate son James. Fife continued as the member for Elginshire until 1790, when his persistent lobbying for a British peerage was granted and he moved to the Lords. A man used to getting his own way, he fell out with his son over his support for the opposition in the dispute over the Regency and forced him to give way to Sir James Ferguson of Pitfour. This caused some disquiet to otherwise

³ Ibid., 130.

⁴ Copy of marriage contract with Dorothea Hay 2 January 1794, registered 26 June 1804, AULSC, Duff MS, 2226/63/13–24 – relating to Duff Carnousie.

⁵ R. G. Thorne, *The House of Commons 1790–1820 Vol III Members A–F* (London, 1986), 520–2.

loyal supporters such as Andrew Hay of Rannes, but in 1790 when Ferguson moved to Aberdeenshire, Fife managed to get Sir James Grant, husband of his niece, returned. However, the disquiet about his manipulation of the vote increased and was to boil over when Grant later resigned his position.

Fife was able to maintain his control because of the notoriously limited and corrupt nature of the eighteenth century Scottish franchise.⁶ Indeed, Fife was one of the first to object at a meeting in Edinburgh in 1775 to efforts to reform the franchise, arguing that they infringed on the rights of property. In response Henry Dundas retorted ‘that the printing and making known the bill, could only be opposed by those who were afraid of the sentiments of the gentlemen of the country, and who had changed the constitutional method of gaining votes by hospitality and good offices, into the modern mode of creating fictitious votes without any real property; a practice the noble Lord who spoke before him was well acquainted with.’⁷ What Dundas was referring to was the practice of granting temporary possession of lands for the sole purpose of acquiring parliamentary votes, which would be at the control of the real possessor of the land. By careful legal manipulation, lawyers could create ‘parchment lairds’ who would hold voting rights but no rights to the rewards of land ownership. Letters from the Edinburgh lawyer John Mackenzie to his client James Grant of Ballindalloch show this process at work, as well as the enduring tension between the Dukes of Gordon and Fife. In January 1774 Mackenzie wrote to Grant to ask ‘in case you are disposed to Indulge the whole Number of parchment lairds proposed in the memorandum which my Last Cover’d, you will give me the Names of the persons you propose as Liferenters of the Superioritys as I have no Inspiration to know them.’⁸ Mackenzie was well aware of what he was doing, as well as the profits accruing to Edinburgh lawyers from their sleights of hand. ‘These voting Charters,’ he noted wryly, ‘will Confound half the Land rights in Scotland so that the next Generation of writers may travel in Gilded Chariots.’⁹ He had been involved in drawing up ‘the necessary preliminary

⁶ William Ferguson, *Scotland 1689 to the Present* (Edinburgh, 1994).

⁷ John Dwyer and Alexander Murdoch, ‘Paradigms and Politics: Manners, Morals and the Rise of Henry Dundas, 1770–1784’, in John Dwyer, Roger Mason and Alexander Murdoch (eds), *New Perspectives on the Politics and Culture of Early Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1982), 237.

⁸ John Mackenzie, Edinburgh to James Grant, London 19 January 1774, NRAS, Macpherson–Grant, NRAS771, Bundle 550/17.

⁹ John Mackenzie, Edinburgh to James Grant, London 31 January 1774, *ibid.*, Bundle 550/16.

Deeds for gratifying the Duke of Gordon & his Privy Council's Zeal to humble Earl Fife in Banff Shyre.¹⁰ The complexity of such arrangements and the high stakes at play drew legal challenges: 'The Duke of Gordon and his Grants and the Earl Fife have been the Generous Supporters of our Court of Session this winter.'¹¹ These practices had already been at work at Carnousie. Andrew Hay 'in order to influence his political Interest in the County' transferred part of Carnousie to William Rose in *dominium utile* in September 1786, regaining the feu a month later. Thereafter 'property thus separate from the Superiority Captain Hay Dispones to and in favour of George Gellie in Oldtown of Carnousie in life rent during all the days of his lifetime.' We have already seen that Gellie held the largest improved holding on the estate and was trusted to act under Hay's direction. 'Captain Hay stands on the roll upon the other parts of the barony', it was reported at the time of purchase, 'which remains property & superiority united. And the benefit of the known Charter will accrue to Colonel Duff the purchaser and save him considerable expense.'¹²

Two pieces of legislation in 1714 and 1734 sought to curb such practices, but with little success.¹³ They enabled a test to be put to freeholders claiming a vote at the annual Michelmas meeting which established the electoral roll based on their swearing an 'oath of trust and possession' that confirmed their true and independent basis for the franchise.¹⁴ However, there was little provision for enforcement. This meant that the already narrow franchise could easily be manipulated by larger landowners with superiorities that could be granted to those who would vote the right way. Periodic challenges were made to the make-up of electoral rolls and the Banffshire roll was reduced from 108 electors in 1790 to thirty-nine in 1794. As the leading landowner in the county, Fife was an important part of established governance structures, but his relationships with Dundas were prickly.¹⁵ Fife's main objective above all was to preserve his independence of action, but Dundas

¹⁰ John Mackenzie, Edinburgh to James Grant, London 25 February 1774, *ibid.*, Bundle 550/7.

¹¹ John Mackenzie, Edinburgh to James Grant, London 5 March 1774, *ibid.*, Bundle 550/5.

¹² Historical Abbreviate, NRS Papers of the Abercromby Family of Forglen and Birkenbog, GD185/37/3.

¹³ The following account draws largely on Alistair Mutch, 'A Contested Eighteenth Century Election: Banffshire 1795', *Northern Scotland*, 2 (2011), 22–35.

¹⁴ William Ferguson, 'The Electoral System in the Scottish Counties before 1832', *Stair Society Miscellany* 2 (1984) 261–94.

¹⁵ Fry, *Dundas Despotism*.

was concerned not to allow him complete dominance in the north east.¹⁶ Accordingly, Dundas engineered a rather unwilling alliance between Fife and the Duke of Gordon in 1787. The test of this came in 1793, when Fife, having become reconciled to his son James, sought to press his claims to be returned again for Banffshire at the next poll, but Dundas wanted him to support William Grant of Beldornie. Dundas complained that he and Pitt 'have both an accurate recollection of all the professions your lordship made to us at the time you solicited a British peerage, and we find it difficult to reconcile them with the reception you have given to the first opportunity you have had of manifesting the sincerity of them.'¹⁷

Why Patrick sought to challenge Fife is not clear. We have already seen that on a number of occasions he expressed his thanks to Fife for the latter's use of his influence on Patrick's behalf. Patrick had also sought his advice about the purchase of Carnousie. However, we have already noted his brother's estimation of Fife's self-interested and grasping nature. It might be that he was influenced by his new brother-in-law's politics. In addition, petitions about the new arrangements for the Indian army were being presented to the House of Commons. It may be that Patrick saw election as a means to further both his own claims to rank as well as the broader interests of his fellow Indian officers. Perhaps, too, he felt slighted by Dundas's failure to take up his case. Initially, however, Patrick seemed to be an ally rather than an opponent of the Fife cause. In 1793 an analysis of voting intentions sent to Pitt contains his name under the heading of 'Lord Fife's Friends' (alongside the name of Lieutenant James Fyfe) whilst Andrew Hay is noted under the heading 'Association to oppose Mr William Grant'.¹⁸ At this stage, therefore, he does not seem to have posed a threat to Fife. In Rose's eyes rather the reverse was true. In August of the same year he wrote to Fife that 'Col. Duff would be a Man more to my wishes and I think you could make him firm by preliminary to Mr Pitt, tho indifferent to Mr Dundas.'¹⁹ He continued with the optimistic forecast that 'we may prophesise a Downfall to Ministry, that Mr D is to continue with his power is impossible and a change of his Northern Department I think is unavoidable.' His closing if cryptic flourish was that 'Col Duff I hear is tired of _____ and if he would take his

¹⁶ This account is drawn from Thorne.

¹⁷ Thorne, *House of Commons*, 520.

¹⁸ List for 'Sir James Duff suppose him a Candidate' 1793, AULSC, Duff papers, MS 3175/408/1.

¹⁹ William Rose to Fife, Mountcoffer, 28 August 1793, *ibid.*

Money that place would be _____ and his house and Farm _____. Your Lordship indulging this might make him pleased with the Country, and give joy to those who esteem him [blanks in original].²⁰ However, matters seemed to have changed when Fife wrote to Dundas in 1794 asserting his loyalty to the Government and his intention to support Grant.²¹ This seemed to fling Patrick into the arms of the Banffshire Association.

The Association was designed to counter the influence of Fife by grouping together the 'independent' freeholders of the county in a voting bloc. Of course, by the very act of association in order to dent the independence of Fife they had to sacrifice a portion of their own, a contradiction made much of in subsequent proceedings. Electing Sir George Abercromby of Birkenbogs as their convenor, the group declared:

We engage and promise, at the ensuing general election, or the first Vacancy for this County, to adhere to one another, and All to give our votes for the same person to represent the County in Parliament; And in case we shall not at first be unanimous, the Minority shall give up, and follow the Majority of the Association. And if any person upon the Roll of freeholders, who is not a Member of this Association, should stand a Candidate at the Election, it is expressly understood and declared, that the Minority (if there be one) are bound not to give their votes for such Candidate²²

They further agreed to attend meetings and vote as a block in challenges to the electoral qualifications. In particular, they agreed to use the oath of trust and possession as a key weapon in establishing title. The group initially included David McDowall Grant of Arndilly as well as Andrew Hay of Mountblairy, John Innes of Edingight, William Leslie of Dunlugas and Peter Garden of Troup. It was this group that Patrick joined and which selected Abercromby as their initial candidate. Abercromby later decided not to press his candidature and McDowall Grant came forward in his place. However, Patrick was also pressing his candidature and when Fife appeared to cast his weight behind McDowall Grant, the latter broke ranks with the association, giving rise to the contested election of 1795.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Fife to Dundas 20 March 1794, *ibid*, MS 3175/408/2.

²² Defence information, minutes October 1796, NRS, High Court of Justiciary, Books of Adjournal, JC3/48.

The election process saw a meeting in which every step was contested. On entering the meeting in Banff on 24 July 1795 Patrick alleged that several who were attending ‘were not real and Independent freeholders, but a part of those Nominal and fictitious voters who had some years before been Obtruded on the County, for the purpose of increasing the political Interest of a Noble Lord who possesses an extensive Estate in that district.’²³ The majority of those attending elected McDowall Grant as preses (chair) with a casting vote.²⁴ Patrick promptly objected to the title of lieutenant James Fyfe of Edinglassie and required that he take the oath of trust and possession immediately. However, Alexander Duff of Echt, a Grant supporter, argued that they should move to purging the roll and this was carried. There then followed a round of challenge and counter-challenge, resulting in some of those who had voted for the chair having their names expunged from the roll. One of those who took the oath and so preserved his vote was lieutenant Fyfe. The vote was then taken with Grant securing nine votes, Patrick seven. Patrick was on his feet immediately with the minutes recording: ‘And Colonel Duff stated, that he considered himself duly elected Preses [presumably because Grant’s election to the position was on the basis of voters whose claims had subsequently been invalidated], therefore entitled to the casting vote and declared that in the event of there proving to be an equality of voices, he took the casting vote to himself. And Colonel Duff likewise Protests that the Majority of legal votes on the Roll has been given in his favour, that he is therefore duly elected and ought to be returned.’²⁵ The meeting, unsurprisingly, disagreed with him and declared Grant returned. They then proceeded to ratify a revised electoral roll with thirty-six names on it. Whether the low turnout in this election was because some feared the challenge of Patrick and the Association, choosing to avoid confrontation, or because it was widely known that a general election would soon be in the offing is not clear.

However, Patrick was not prepared to let the result lie. The conventional way of challenging an electoral result was to present a petition to Parliament, but Patrick argued that a dissolution was so close that such a course of action was not worth pursuing. Instead, with the support of the Association and the ‘concordance’ of the Lord Advocate, Robert Dundas, he brought a private criminal prosecution against Fyfe of Edinglassie for perjury, on the grounds

²³ Minutes May 1796, prosecution information, *ibid.*

²⁴ High Court of Justiciary Proceedings 1796, NRS, JC26/285.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

that he the said James Fyfe did swear and Subscribe wilfully and falsely, and well knowing that the foresaid lands of Turtory, for which he claimed a right to vote, as aforesaid, were not actually in his possession and did not really and truly belong to him, and were not his own proper Estate, and that his Title to the said lands and estate was Nominal and fictitious, created or reserved in him in Order to enable him to Vote for a Member to serve in Parliament.²⁶

Why did Patrick select Fyfe? Fyfe was a lieutenant in the army but was reduced to half pay following the end of the American War of Independence. With six children he needed another source of income and was appointed as factor over Lord Fife's lands in Balvenie. Patrick may have been well aware of his highly dubious conduct in his dealings in 1791 with the mason Alexander Williamson. Williamson had made money in Jamaica and had returned to his home parish of Glass. Here he was befriended by Fyfe, who persuaded him that the will he had drawn up in Jamaica was worthless and removed it 'on pretence of getting it transcribed on stamp paper in the same terms as the said former Settlement stood and of getting it transcribed by a Writer without all which he said it was good for nothing and he has ever since suppressed kept up or destroyed the aforesaid prior Settlement.'²⁷ In its place he substituted a new will, drawn up, it was alleged, at his own house and presented to Williamson when he was in no condition to agree to it. By its terms Fyfe's son received a legacy and Fyfe was the executor, under terms which meant that he stood to gain substantially.

When Williamson died at his sister Margaret's house in Haugh of Edinglassie, Fyfe turned up demanding entry to inspect the contents of Williamson's chest and to remove papers. Margaret angrily refused to allow him in, so Fyfe appealed to the Sheriff of Banff. The Procurator Fiscal, Archibald Young, arranged for a troop of soldiers to accompany Fyfe back to the house, where they found that Margaret had removed the papers and refused to disclose where they were. Fyfe returned to the Sheriff and obtained an order for the imprisonment of her husband James until the papers were released. James was lodged in the Tolbooth at Banff for 145 days. In the meantime, Fyfe had sold off Alexander's lease and threatened Margaret with the loss of her own tenancy because she was failing to work it properly. Margaret, though, managed to obtain legal advice of her own and the new

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ State of the process of reduction at the instance of Margaret Williamson and James Gordon her Husband against Lieut James Fyfe and Archd Young, 6 June 1793, NRS, Court of Session, Fyfe and Young, CS232/W/13/1.

will was reduced. With her husband released she sought damages for false imprisonment and it is through this case against both Fyfe and Young, which went to the Court of Session in Edinburgh and then on appeal to the House of Lords that we can trace the detail of the whole sorry story.

Fyfe sought to take the high ground. The charges were, he argued, 'of a very serious nature indeed, quite derogatory from every principle of honour & honesty that should actuate a Gentleman'. He sought to blacken the character of Margaret 'a Woman of Violent Disposition' and James Gordon 'a person who was not respected in the Country and whose most public Exhibition had been in the pillory of the County Town, having been tried for Resett of Theft, Sentenced to Punishment and having acquiesced in that Sentence'.²⁸ He also suggested that they had done well out of Alexander's generosity, much better than they had any right to expect. The Court, however, was not impressed and they found against both Fyfe and Young. Fyfe then appealed against the level of costs awarded against him, as well as appealing against the decision to the House of Lords. He was unsuccessful in his appeal, although managing to get the costs reduced. With this shady reputation, it may well be that Patrick thought that he might cave in under the pressure of legal action.

Much of the extensive information presented to the High Court of Justiciary in order to consider whether to proceed to trial against Fyfe for perjury (around one hundred pages on each side) was concerned with the grounds on which a private prosecution could be brought. For Patrick, it was argued that the Lord Advocate took no action in allegations of false oaths because of fear of being seen to be politically partial and so a private prosecution was the only means of holding offenders to account. This line of argument reveals the weakness in the legislation in providing no clear grounds for enforcement. Much of the defence's case was taken up with legal arguments about the validity of the grounds for a private prosecution and in particular with the status of the Association. Their strategy also seemed to rest on delaying proceedings for as long as possible, with Fife in particular pleading a variety of pressing circumstances preventing his examination.²⁹ However, the judges decided that there was a case to answer so as to 'Allow the Pannel a proof of all facts and circumstances that May tend to exculpate

²⁸ Petition of Lieutenant James Fyfe in Mains of Edinglassie, 19 December 1793, *ibid.*

²⁹ George Stewart at Banff to Lord Fife, 5 Nov 1795; evidence of Fife at Duff House 9 November 1795, AULSC Duff MS 3175/268.

him or alleviate his guilt' and the case was eventually heard in June 1797.³⁰ In the meantime Patrick had been ordered back to India in 1796 and had to ask the court for permission to proceed in his absence. His advocates called eight witnesses, including William Rose and Fife. The evidence they gave orally was not recorded, but a passage in the information laid by the defence suggests why the outcome of the trial was a decision by the jury of 'not proven'. This argued with regard to the oath that 'it is therefore a secret understanding, an affection of the Mind; and when a man swears that he considers himself not to be a nominal and fictitious voter, he takes an oath of opinion.'³¹ The oath, therefore, was worthless and any action which rested on it was doomed to failure. However, whilst the formal result might have gone against Patrick, an examination of the evidence produced does seem to vindicate his claims, or at least arouse considerable suspicions about the claims of Fyfe.

In 1786 Fyfe received a liferent of a feudal superiority over some lands in Turtory and was enrolled as a freeholder at the Michaelmass 1787 meeting in Banff. However, in his absence, his name was struck out in 1792 on the grounds that he was not a real and independent freeholder. He appealed to the Court of Session, with his expenses being paid by Fife, and was reinstated. He did not receive any of the duties to which he was entitled to until the day before the 1795 poll, when he received nine years' duties from one of Fife's factors. The prosecution case was that all these transactions were purely fictitious and pointed to the evidence gained, after a considerable delay, from Fife's account books to support their case.³² These extracts do seem to indicate that all the expenses of making up the claim and maintaining it were met by Fife. The lieutenant was singularly unable to shed any light on these transactions, seeming to be unable in his disposition given at Keith in December 1795 to the Sheriff Substitute to remember any significant details. He could not, for example, recall how much or how he had paid for his title and had no receipt for the transaction. He thought that he must have paid for the appeal to the Court of Session, although he had no recollection of how this might have been done.³³ What he was able to produce was a letter from himself to William Rose in November 1786 which noted, 'that Lord Fife had directed

³⁰ Minutes May 1796, prosecution information NRS, High Court of Justiciary, Books of Adjournal, JC3/48.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Fife from Edinburgh to Stewart Souter and Alex Stronach, 7 Dec 1795; Stronach to Souter 13 Jan 1796, AULSC, Duff MS 3175/268.

³³ Disposition of Fyfe, at Keith 4 December 1795 to Peter Cameron, NRS, High Court of Justiciary Proceedings 1796, JC26/285.

you to expedite the proper titles for establishing a qualification in my person as a Freeholder in this County. As I am certain neither his Lordship nor you would desire me to do anything that was not legal I shall therefore accept of the qualification upon the terms you write of.³⁴ A further letter from Fife to Rose in May the following year was produced which declared, ‘I therefore desire you will table with any friends that I have disposed qualifications to, and that I desire they will bind themselves by their Word of honour during their life, or until a Wadset is redeemed by the regular course of law, that they will Never give back the Vote to Me nor My heirs.³⁵ These letters do seem to be establishing a degree of cover, for the telling part of Fyfe’s admission was:

That he does not recollect how often he has Voted as a Freeholder at an Election, but remembers once voted for Pitfour – and on this occasion he thinks he gave his vote to Pitfour at the request of Mr Rose, but thinks he received a letter from Pitfour himself soliciting his Vote. That he voted at last Election in Banffshire for W. MacDowall Grant and was requested to do so by W. Rose and that Lord Fife also mentioned to him, that he was rather Interested for Mr MacDowall Grant and if the Declarant was not Engaged it would be agreeable to give Mr MacDowall Grant his support.³⁶

Given the way in which all his expenses had been met, his dependence on Fife for his livelihood (although he was removed as factor in 1795) and the evasive nature of his evidence, there does seem to be grounds for suspicion, something compounded by what Dundas felt about Fife’s skill in manipulating the franchise.

Such suspicion was not sufficient, however, to obtain a conviction. Patrick was perhaps to some extent unfortunate in his timing. It was not long since the courts at Edinburgh had been the venue for the infamous sedition trials and this was much played upon by Fyfe’s defence team.³⁷ In their initial information they argued that:

³⁴ Fyfe to Rose 14 November 1786, *ibid.*

³⁵ Fife to Rose 2 May 1787, emphasis in original, NRS, High Court of Justiciary, Books of Adjournal, JC3/48.

³⁶ Disposition of Fyfe, at Keith 4 December 1795 to Peter Cameron, NRS, High Court of Justiciary Proceedings 1796, JC26/285.

³⁷ Michael Davies, ‘Prosecution and Radical Discourse during the 1790s: The Case of the Scottish Sedition Trials’, *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 33 (2005), 148–58.

We all know, that within these few years past, a general spirit of reform arose, and such has been its horrible effects in some countries, and its pernicious tendency in our own, that it is devoutly to be wished it may never again exhibit its sonorous enchantment. Even the wisest and best men were not free from its contagion, and exceeded in order to do what they thought was good. A violent outcry arose against qualifications by way of liferent and wadset, and numbers of people thought they could not do enough to abolish them.³⁸

This rhetoric did not seem to disturb the judges who ruled that there was a case to answer, but it may have found its way into the courtroom proceedings. What is striking, however, is that Patrick persisted and that in doing so he forced Fife into the witness box. Given his father's close connections and the patronage which it appears that Fife exercised on his behalf Patrick's determined campaign was a considerable about turn. Part of Patrick's willingness to undertake legal action might be attributed to his forthright character but another part might represent a shift in the balance of local politics, with newly wealthy smaller landowners, especially those with status from their military exploits, being more willing to challenge the exercise of power by men like Fife. As Dwyer and Murdoch point out, such willingness had its roots in the 1770s when, 'the opposition of many small and substantial landowners to the practice of nominal voting grew fierce'.³⁹ The ironic twist in the Banffshire case was that it took the wealth of India (and perhaps a certain stubbornness born out of military service there) to crystallise the general resentment.

Although Patrick was unsuccessful in his legal battle, it is interesting to speculate that his actions may have provided Walter Scott with some of his material for *Guy Mannering*. Scott's novel, set in south-west Scotland, has a corrupt election as one of its plot devices. The contestants, wrote Scott, 'advanced, upon the day of the contest, at the head of nine as good men of parchment as ever took the oath of trust and possession'.⁴⁰ Scott was active as an advocate in Edinburgh in the years 1792 to 1797 and, given his interest in Indian affairs and their impact on Scotland, can hardly have been unaware

³⁸ Information for defence, NRS, High Court of Justiciary, Books of Adjournal, JC3/48.

³⁹ Dwyer and Murdoch, 'Paradigms and politics', 235.

⁴⁰ Walter Scott, *Guy Mannering* (London, 2003 [1815]) 32.

of the trial of lieutenant Fyfe and its implications.⁴¹ However, his novel was not published until 1815 and was hardly of concern to Patrick, by 1796 back in India for the fifth and final time.

⁴¹ Iain Gordon Brown, 'Griffins, Nabobs and a Seasoning of Curry Powder. Walter Scott and the Indian Theme in Life and Literature.' in Anne Buddle with Pauline Rohatgi and Iain Gordon Brown, *The Tiger and the Thistle*; Edgar Johnson, *Sir Walter Scott: The Great Unknown*, (2 vols, New York, 1970), I, 71–9.

19 Disaster strikes

February 1796 saw the birth of Patrick and Dorothea's second child, Mary. In March of the following year, a son and heir was born named Patrick after his father. It is instructive that all three children were baptised in the Episcopalian church in Turriff, rather than in the local presbyterian parish church of Forglen.¹ Patrick continued to play his expected role in local affairs by supporting the poor of the parish through the kirk session. In May 1795 he attended a meeting of the session where the minutes record, 'Colonel Duff got this day of the money in the box £30 ster for which he has lodged his promissory note.'² However, the sponsors at the baptism of his children bear testimony to his rise in social standing. For Margaret these were Mrs Hay and Mrs Gordon of Badenscorth, her grand aunt; for Mary, Miss Maria Grace Hay her Godmother and aunt and Miss Harriet Hay her aunt; but for Patrick the Rt Hon Lord Banff, Major Hay of Mountblairy and Miss Maria Hay proxy for Lady Isabella Sinclair. Episcopalianism, now recovered from its association with Jacobitism, was recast as the polite religion of the land-owning class, a class ever more integrated with the dominant Anglicanism of their English counterparts.

Meanwhile, Patrick had been keeping an eye on unfolding events in India, where the war with France was having worrying implications. In 1794 the Court of Directors of the Company resolved to raise three regiments to counter the threat. Patrick immediately offered his services, but later that year the minutes of the Court record that 'the Memorial of Mr James Duff on behalf of his brother Colonel Patrick Duff of the Bengal Artillery praying the Court to reconsider their late Resolution excluding Officers of the Cavalry, Artillery and Corps of Engineers from being eligible for recommendations

¹ Family of Col Patrick Duff of Carnousie, NRS, Papers of the Abercromby Family of Forglen and Birkenbog, Papers and accounts relative to Carnousie 1790–1825, GD185/37/3.

² Forglen session minutes, 13 May 1795, NRS CH2/869/5 Forglen 1791–1849.

to serve in the three Regiments now to be raised, was read, and ordered to lie on the Table.³ Patrick was continuing to press his claims for rank against the backdrop of the agitation by the officers of the Bengal army. Perhaps because of the prospect of the election in 1795, however, he did not press these as hard as before. In February of that year the Court of Directors resolved that 'Colonel Patrick Duff of the Bengal Artillery not having been in Europe more than two Years his request for leave to remain in England till next Season for the further recovery of his health be complied with.'⁴

Meanwhile, in Bengal the Company's army was in some turmoil. In 1794 officers petitioned the new Governor General Sir John Shore. The historian of the reform movement, Raymond Callahan, notes the difficulties in gathering evidence to prove the rumours about a conspiracy amongst officers to repeat the mutiny of 1766, but in October 1795 meetings of officers were banned amidst fears that committees had been set up with 'obligations of mutual Support and secrecy'.⁵ From Dinapore came a petition protesting that 'the Commission upon the Revenues, the emoluments arising from the management of the Bazars, and Double full Batta when employed upon Foreign Detachments were, with uninterrupted rise from the lowest to the highest graduation of Rank by general Succession, the strong and only inducements which decided our election of the East India Company's Service.'⁶ Callahan notes that Dinapore was commanded by Colonel John Forbes, another veteran of the 1766 mutiny who, like Patrick Duff and John Macpherson, had first travelled to India with the 89th Foot. That the feared mutiny collapsed owed much, argues Callahan, to the loyalty of the artillery. 'It is interesting to speculate,' he points out, 'on the reasons behind the loyalty of the gunners. The Company's artillery units were an elite corps; even British officers admitted their quality. This may have had an important effect. Personal factors, now lost to us, may, however, have counted for as much, or more.'⁷ Is it too much to think that the success of Patrick Duff in gaining rank and fighting so hard and so effectively, for the principle of equal treatment for artillery officers was one of those personal factors? By 1798, Callahan concludes, 'promotion by regimental seniority was ordered, but with modifications. The Company's officers had won almost across the

³ Court of Directors minutes, 862, 10 December 1794, BL India Office Records, B/120.

⁴ Court of Directors minutes, 1084, 26 February 1795, *ibid.*

⁵ Callahan, *Reform*, 170.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 177.

board: they were still a separate service, and most of their allowances were intact, as was the seniority system. They had, in addition, gained furloughs, passage money, and pensions; there were more officers with the individual units, and they could now hope to become generals.⁸ That final provision, whose principle had been accepted earlier, was why Patrick could set sail in April 1796 for his fifth and final voyage to India, now as major-general in command of the entire Bengal artillery.

His final tour of duty did not last long. He took command at the Presidency, with Deare returning to the field. However, in December 1797 he returned home for the last time, although his subsequent dealings with the Court of Directors suggest that health problems lay behind his reluctant return. In 1799 he asked if he could have more time to determine whether he might return to India, but the Court refused, pushing him to a decision to retire. In June 1799 he submitted his resignation ‘signifying at the same time that he is ready to return to India should his health be re-established or his Services called for.’ He was permitted to retire on the full pay of a colonel – £456 a year – thus benefitting from the army reforms.⁹ Back in Scotland, he and Dorothea had a further two children. George was born in 1799 with his sponsors at baptism being Sir George Abercromby, Captain George Hay, his uncle and Miss Harriet Hay. This was again at the Episcopal church in Turriff, but the next child, Adam, was born in Edinburgh in 1801, where his baptism sponsors were Lord Adam Gordon and George Stewart Esq of Tanachie.¹⁰ The Duffs owned a pair of houses in the Canongate, one which they occupied, with its neighbour being used by Dorothea’s mother Margaret Hay. A note in the Forglen kirk minutes for December 1802 against a donation of five pounds, ‘given by General Duff as a gratuity to the Poor, because he does not reside in the Parish’, suggests residence in Edinburgh was a permanent arrangement.¹¹

When he returned to Scotland Patrick found that his uncle Alexander Gordon of Letterfourie had died in January 1797. Alexander had spent a good deal of his efforts since succeeding his brother at Letterfourie in establishing his claims to the dormant baronetcy of Gordonstoun. Alexander was

⁸ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁹ Court of Directors minutes, 135, 15 May 1799; 169, 22 May 1799; 241, 18 June 1799; 368, 24 July 1799, BL India Office Records, B/129.

¹⁰ Family of Col Patrick Duff of Carnousie, NRS, papers of the Abercromby Family of Forglen and Birkenbog, Papers and accounts relative to Carnousie 1790–1825, GD185/37/3.

¹¹ Forglen session minutes, 5 December 1802, Forglen 1791–1849, NRS CH2/869/5.

succeeded by his son James, who maintained the family's staunch commitment to Catholicism, despite the best efforts of his Protestant mother, Helen Russell.¹² Meanwhile, Patrick became involved in the Volunteer movement, bodies of men recruited in the face of a possible French invasion. He visited Caithness, for example, in 1801, to inspect progress.¹³ He also continued his propensity to take legal action, objecting in 1797 to the costs which lieutenant Fyfe was claiming following the failed prosecution for electoral fraud. He also contested the valuation that Home had put on the estate in his 1787 survey. One would expect that he imagined a quiet life moving between his houses in Banff and Edinburgh and his country estate. However, this was not to be, as in late 1801 he learned to his dismay that his brother James had been declared bankrupt.

Not only did James's debts include a bill of four thousand pounds owed to Patrick but what was far worse was that both men had been named as trustees for the children of Captain Alexander Robertson, who had died in India. When Patrick arrived back in India he had endorsed a bill of £11,960 to James, in order that James could convert it to cash. Under the terms of the will this was to be used to buy East India Company or Government stocks.¹⁴ However, James used at least £5,896 for his own purposes, with, it was later alleged, Patrick's knowledge and assent. Patrick took a different view, believing he stood to lose a total of thirteen thousand pounds. Whether there would be any dividend he thought unlikely, but he felt obliged to clear the debt, although hoping that this would not mean that he had to sell the estate. As to the cause of James's financial problems, these were that 'he has been extremely imprudent'. He had become involved in ship insurance 'in hopes of retrieving his losses at Lloyd's Coffee House he has run risques no wise man would do, and instead of getting better, it was, as the saying is, the longer the worse.'¹⁵ Patrick was also worried about the knock-on effects on the Madeira business.

¹² James Gordon, Letterfourie to Duke of Gordon, 22 February 1797, NRS, Gordon Muniments, GD44/43/326/7; James Gordon, Letterfourie to his Tutors, 22 February 1797, /9. James eventually succeeded to the baronetcy in 1806.

¹³ Calder, *Caithness*, 216.

¹⁴ Discharge by Sir Charles Cockrell and other executors and trustees of Captain Alexander Robertson of East India Company, 8 March 1817, NRS, papers of the Abercromby Family of Forglen and Birkenbog, papers and accounts relative to Carnousie 1790–1825, GD185/37/3.

¹⁵ General Patrick Duff, to his brother-in-law, James Scott Hay, 'In his Majesty's Service,' Ceylon, dated from London, February 7, 1802, Tayler and Tayler, *Book of Duff's*, II, 488.

Those involved in that trade also shared Patrick's dim view of his brother's behaviour, attributing it to moral failings on James's behalf. It was, Hancock reports one Madeira merchant as saying, 'solely owing to his extensive and very imprudent engagements as an insurer, which is a vile gambling trade.'¹⁶ However, other sources paint a more complicated picture. For James himself, the problems came with trying to maintain the appropriate social standing in the capital. 'My business,' he explained to the coppersmith William Forbes of Callendar House, 'required my keeping up a genteel appearance with little prospect of being able to leave a provision for my Children.' Because of this he was persuaded to engage in underwriting and at first enjoyed success. This 'induced me to continue & animated me to undertake greater risks'. Setbacks then made him seek assistance from friends 'which I now bitterly regret, as they will suffer deeply'. He does not mention here using money gained in his position of trust, which was never intended for such a risky business. 'For a long while,' he explained, 'this appeared to have produced the full effect intended, but from a train of unexpected losses, particularly a dreadful sweep by the Enemy on the Coast of Africa, great part of it however in consequence of engagements long before entered into, the hopes of myself and friends were blasted.'¹⁷

His travails then drew in the Madeira house, which had to make it clear that their obligations were different from those of James. In particular, James Gordon, the new heir at Letterfourie, was pressing for settlement of money owing to both James and Alexander Gordon under the terms of agreements before the death of both. Letters to Robert Duff, who was now in London and took over James's house in Finsbury Square, reveal some further pressures on James. After Alexander retired to Scotland leaving the business in the hands of James Duff and his partners, Robert asserted, 'from Mr Gordon's very adventurous & speculative disposition, the property of the House was at that period, scatter'd & dispersed over the World.' They had therefore had to spend considerable efforts to reorganise the business on more sustainable lines, enabling them to pay off James Gordon's claims and make headway with Alexander's, despite the stagnation in trade caused by the aftermath of the American war. They would have made more progress, Robert argued, 'had not that Gentleman contrast to the Spirit of the agreement enter'd into, rigidly pressed for & insisted on heavy payments at the

¹⁶ Cited in Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, 161.

¹⁷ James Duff, London to William Forbes, Callendar 19 January 1801, FA, Forbes of Callendar, A727.737/ 5.

most inconvenient Seasons, by which the House was cramped in many beneficial operations, that would have put it so much at ease that no claim of this nature would have existed, nor would Jas Duff have had any temptation for entering into the hazardous business that has proved so unfortunate to him & to the House.¹⁸ We have seen throughout that Alexander was more interested in country life and the claims of titles than with business life. While Patrick owed a great deal to his uncle James, he may have had good reason to regret the involvement of his uncle Alexander.

Whatever his feelings, the worry must have cast an enormous shadow over his later years. He was not to endure the worry long, for he and Dorothea died within days of each other in February 1803 in Edinburgh. Patrick was sixty-one, Dorothea only thirty-eight. 'The fate of the General and my sister has been most melancholy,' wrote Andrew Hay to William Rose, 'and has thrown us all into the greatest distress.' 'The General has suffered severely by his Brother,' he continued, 'whose conduct has been very bad indeed.'¹⁹ Patrick and Dorothea were buried in the Hay family plot in Greyfriars churchyard in Edinburgh. The 'Men belonging to the Grey Friars burying ground' were paid £2 4s 'for watching the General & Mrs Duff's Graves 2 nights & for entertainment to them.'²⁰ Their graves were otherwise unmarked, say the Taylers, because the money for further protection meant that funds for a stone were not available.²¹ This seems a little implausible given that Patrick still left a considerable estate. However, their last resting place is now marked by a wall tablet to a later Andrew Hay.

Although Patrick suffered a profound shock from his brother's bankruptcy, making him doubt if he would be able to hand on his estate and provide for his other children, his assets on death were not insignificant. The estate was passed on in trust overseen by Andrew Hay and George Abercromby to Patrick, his eldest son from his second marriage, who was only six on the death of his parents. Their sons George and Adam were left £2,000 each, the daughters Margaret and Maria each £1,725. An inventory indicates assets of at least £18,538, excluding a debt owed by James Duff of £5,941. The Canongate house in Edinburgh was sold to the philosopher Dugald Stewart for £646. Patrick had, following in family tradition, owned

¹⁸ Robert Duff, London to Thomas Gordon, Edinburgh, 28 July 1802, AULSC, Gordon of Letterfourie, MS Acc 426, box ten, letters 1790.

¹⁹ Andrew Hay 8 Nottingham St, London to William Rose, 19 July 1803, AULSC, Duff MS, 2226/63.

²⁰ Inventory of deceased, 13 July 1803, *ibid.*

²¹ Tayler and Tayler, *Book of Duff's*, II, 479.

a sixteenth share in the East Indiaman *Woodford*. Its value was not estimated, but a healthy second dividend from its fifth voyage of £455 14s 9d was received from Sir Robert Rostow. The furniture in the house of Carnousie and the stocking on the farm was sold, as these would be tenanted during the minority of the children.²² These were the children from Patrick's Scottish marriage; his Indian children had been provided for, but they were to take no part in the transmission of his estate. In this Patrick conformed to the pattern of many returners from India.

The Madeira wine business survived the shock of James Duff's financial collapse and continued until 1859. James remained as a partner; when Henry Ogilvie retired from the business in 1806, James and Robert Duff, together with James Gordon, were named as continuing partners.²³ James Gordon would appear to have been the brother of Jane Gordon of Cairnfield, James Duff's first wife. James and his second wife, Anne, were obliged to move from Finsbury Square after his bankruptcy, although his brother Robert kept it in the family on his own return from Madeira. Anne wrote to her confidante William Forbes that their new house in Albion Street near Blackfriars Bridge was 'near the river the house a comfortable small place but very dirty'. She regretted in particular 'the loss of a carriage yet my acquaintance are very kind to offer & take me out in theirs, but I cannot find pleasure in a large acquaintance, & begin to think with the wise man it is all vanity & veneration of spirit yet people are flattering mind to me, perhaps their pity, what I have never thought a desirable thing.' She earnestly wished that 'Mr D_ will never have any thing to do with Loyds if he has it will frighten me very much.'²⁴

James Duff died at Banff in 1812, where a commemorative headstone sits in the old churchyard next to that of his nephew Patrick Duff. His brother, Robert, had died unmarried in 1807. He had named James Duff and 'my Brother James Gordon of the island of Madeira' as his executors of a will which gave the residuary effects to James Gordon Duff and Jane Duff, his brother's children. Interestingly, he left legacies of £500 to 'James Gordon and Ann Gordon the natural children of my partner James Gordon of the island of Madeira'. He also left similar amounts to 'John Duff and William Duff the natural Children of my late brother General Patrick Duff'.²⁵ The

²² Inventory of deceased 13 July 1803, AULSC, Duff MS, 2226/63.

²³ *London Gazette*, 31 January 1806, 759.

²⁴ Anna Duff, London to William Forbes, Callendar 24 May 1802, FA, Forbes of Callendar, 727.750/1.

²⁵ Will of Robert Duff, TNA, Prob 11/1497.

place of the Duff brothers in the Madeira business was taken by James's son James Gordon Duff. In 1859 the *London Gazette* carried the notice that 'Notice is hereby given, that the Partnership of us the undersigned, James Gordon Duff and James Bean, carrying on business as Merchants, in Leadenhall Street, London, under the firm of J. G. Duff and Co., and in Madeira, under the firm of Gordon Duff and Co., is this day dissolved, by mutual consent.'²⁶ Thus ended the involvement of the Gordons and Duffs in a business that had endured for well over a hundred years.

Robert's will also left annuities to his sisters Ann and Margaret, still living in Banff. By the time of John Duff's will in 1813, only Margaret was still alive, but she had been joined in Banff by his niece Jane Duff. John had returned to Britain as a lieutenant-colonel; intriguingly he stipulated in his will that his executrix 'shall be at the expense of painting every year ... the Iron Railing surrounding the Tomb of my Daughter Mary who is buried in the Church yard of Dawlish in Devonshire'.²⁷ There is no evidence that John was ever married, so was this a child he brought back from India? Mary married well, to James Gibson Esq of London in the church of St Martins in the Field. Sadly, only thirteen months into her marriage her poor health led her to Dawlish, where having 'continued suffering much in mind and body for upwards of 6 months' she died at the age of twenty-five.²⁸ When her father left India, presumably with his daughter, he had left behind his brother William who, having achieved the rank of lieutenant-colonel, died in the assault on the fort of Kamonah in 1807.²⁹ John Duff himself died in 1828, having left a gift of £30 to 'to my reputed nephew Mr John Duff the reputed son of my deceased Brother General Patrick Duff', noting that John 'has lately sailed from London to Jamaica'.³⁰ What became of John is not clear, nor what happened to David and Kenneth, but the third of Patrick's children in India, William, became an indigo planter. He appears to have prospered and to have left a large family whose descendants may have continued as planters.³¹ Such care of Patrick's Indian children by his extended family suggests that they were willing to stretch their familial obligations, even in the

²⁶ *London Gazette*, 1859, 3021, 5 July 1859.

²⁷ Will of John Duff TNA, Prob 11/1748.

²⁸ From the memorial inscription at St Gregory's church, Dawlish, 22 May 1809, courtesy of David Allanach of Dawlish Local History Society.

²⁹ Stubbs, *Bengal Artillery*, 306.

³⁰ Will of John Duff, TNA, Prob 11/1748.

³¹ I owe this information to Colin Fisher.

face of growing disapproval within British society to the offspring of liaisons in India.

Patrick's son sold the Carnousie estate shortly before his death in 1828 and so there was no founding of an enduring dynasty to commemorate success in India. However, it should not diminish the considerable journey that Patrick engaged in to rise from relatively humble beginnings to the heights of general command and the possession of an estate which gave him entrée to the ranks of the landowning classes. In many ways his long-lasting memorial was and remains the imposing gatehouse on the farm buildings at Carnousie, testament to the impact of the wealth of India and Madeira on Scotland.

20 Scotland and Empire

The activities of Tiger Duff and his extended family form a complement to the existing accounts of Scots in India, men such as Archibald Campbell of Inverneil, Hector Munro of Novar, Kenneth Murchison of Tarradale, and Allan Macpherson of Blairgowrie.¹ The details given in the preceding chapters have in many ways just confirmed what we already know through the lives of these individuals. They were above all else sojourners, anxious to return as soon as they had achieved a satisfactory ‘competency’ to return to Scotland, where they sought to parlay Indian wealth into country estates.² The intention to return fuelled their almost obsessive focus on rank and status, because these in turn gave access to the wealth that India promised. While they were in India they drank heavily and frequently consorted with native women. Such women were looked after while in India but kept separate from life at home. By contrast, the offspring of such unions were often cherished and sent back to Britain for an education. If, however, marriage resulted on the return from India then the limits of concern were reached, with Indian children being excluded from succession to estates. Where the account presented here is different is that the extended family network of the Duffs and Gordons that has been described spanned the empire of conquest and the empire of commerce. Unlike a man like Archibald Campbell who, as governor of Madras, looked down upon merchants and the servants of the East India Company as ‘little more than glorified peddlers’, the Duffs and Gordons had a mutually beneficial inter-relationship between military activity and trade.³ Examining this inter-relationship has, in particular, brought

¹ MacKillop, ‘Archibald Campbell’; MacKillop, ‘Hector Munro’; Grant and Mutch, ‘Indian Wealth’; Foster, *Private Empire*.

² Andrew Mackillop, ‘Europeans, Britons, and Scots: Scottish Sojourning Networks and Identities in Asia, c.1700–1815’ in Angela McCarthy (ed), *Global Clan, A, Scottish Migrant Networks and Identities Since the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2006), 19–47.

³ MacKillop, ‘Archibald Campbell’, 215.

out the role of Madeira as both an important node of empire and the source of a product that lubricated that empire.

A focus on the ways Scots interacted with the opportunities presented by empire is at the heart of the ‘four nations’ approach to imperial history.⁴ Traditional approaches to the history of the British empire saw it as a unitary affair, in which differences between the four nations making up Britain in the eighteenth century – England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland – were elided, often with the conflation of ‘Britain’ with ‘England’. Such a unitary focus obscured different contributions to the imperial project from the four nations, differences which in turn might make more complex the shared enterprise that was the construction of the British state. So John Mackenzie has argued for a distinctive Scottish contribution to questions of imperial governance.⁵ In turn, ideas about how to manage relationships with people at different stages of economic and social development were strongly coloured by the stadial theories of the evolution of social life emanating from the Scottish Enlightenment.⁶ Likewise, Andrew Mackillop has pointed to the connections between how Scots acted in India and the political culture of Scotland, characterised as the latter was by electoral corruption and strong bonds of patronage.⁷ In what follows, I consider what the story of the extended Duff/Gordon family network tells us about the contribution of Scots to the building of empire, the reciprocal impacts of empire on Scotland and the implications for our views of the construction of Britain as both state and identity. However, a word of caution is needed. As Mackillop argues, speaking of the distinctiveness of the Scottish contribution, ‘the key lies in analyzing this distinctiveness without excessively prioritizing its existence.’⁸ For example, I have stressed Patrick’s practical abilities as manifested in his skills of managing the complex logistics entailed in military operations in India. It is tempting to see such skills as distinctively Scottish, but this would be to ignore the practical abilities of English officers such as Deane of the artillery and Watson of the engineers. It is not the individual features that are important but their place in a broader constellation which

⁴ John MacKenzie, ‘Irish, Scottish, Welsh and English Worlds? A Four-Nation Approach to the History of the British Empire’, *History Compass* 6 (2008), 1244–63.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1249.

⁶ Karen O’Brien, ‘Empire, History and Emigration: From Enlightenment to Liberalism’ in Catherine Hall and Keith McClelland (eds), *Race, Nation and Empire: Making Histories, 1750 to the Present* (Manchester, 2010), 15–35.

⁷ MacKillop, ‘Archibald Campbell’, 222–3.

⁸ MacKillop, ‘Europeans, Britons and Scots’, 39.

can point to subtle differences between the nations making up Britain, differences often submerged in the broader imperial project but which were both distinctive and enduring.

One such feature which emerges through an examination of the development of the madeira wine business of the House of Gordon is Scottish involvement in Baltic shipping and trade networks. Scottish merchants were not the only foreign merchants operating in Madeira, but they achieved a prominent role in the eighteenth century. In part this rested on the nature of the madeira wine trade. Madeira wine was a premium brand exported in bulk and requiring access to reliable shipping. However, madeira wine merchants could not rest on just the export of wine for income; they also had to import supplies, not just to provide necessities, such as staves and iron for wine barrels, but also to provide another source of income. Thus the Gordons sourced herring from Sweden, corn from Latvia and Poland and textiles from Germany. They also used a mercantile network to facilitate financial transactions in Amsterdam and Lisbon. They were able to build on a long history of Scottish trade and shipping with the Netherlands and into the Baltic. This history meant they could not only call on the shipping expertise of shipowners like John Rankin of Dundee, but also on a network of Scottish merchants in ports such as Gothenburg and Danzig. The low level of economic development of Scotland in the seventeenth century, especially as contrasted to her wealthier southern neighbour, had necessitated the migration of merchants to such ports. Added to this were the religious and military conflicts which reinforced emigré communities in cities such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam, where Scots built their own institutional infrastructure. Access to this network of merchants under the sheltering wing of the British navy following the Union of 1707 put Scottish merchants on Madeira in a strong position.

What is particularly interesting about Madeira is the way in which it provided a niche for Roman Catholic Scots. This was not just a question of those, like Alexander Gordon and Francis Newton, who fled Scotland due to their attachment to the Jacobite cause and found their way to Madeira. James Gordon had travelled to Madeira far earlier and it is likely that his connection to the island's wine trade came through connections made in the Catholic networks that existed in London. Madeira and Portugal were strongly Roman Catholic countries where religious belief was often prioritised over commercial considerations, meaning that the development of a native merchant class was hampered. In addition, faced with a powerful neighbour in the shape of

Spain which had territorial ambitions to control the whole Iberian Peninsula, Portugal had an uneasy relationship of dependence on British naval power. Such dependence provided opportunities which were especially attractive to Roman Catholic British merchants. Their commerce could be safeguarded by the might of the British navy, protecting both their supply routes into the island from the north and their export routes across the Atlantic to Britain via America and the West Indies. British shipping found Madeira a convenient stopping off point given the nature of prevailing winds and a good source of valuable cargoes. The British navy also regarded it as a strategic hub for the repair and provisioning of ships. Over time, a thriving trade also developed in wine for India, as the island was also a convenient way station on the long voyage east. Within this sheltering umbrella merchants with Roman Catholic faith were particularly well placed to settle into island life, given the strong prejudice against Protestants that continued throughout the eighteenth century.

That British merchants like the Gordons were able to prosper in a country which was regarded by British Protestants as the heartland of the superstition associated with the Catholic 'other' may cause some reflection about the nature of the 'shared Protestantism' that has been argued to lay at the heart of the creation of Britain.⁹ What is initially intriguing about the extended Duff/Gordon network is that it combined commitments to Roman Catholicism and Presbyterianism. James and Alexander Gordon remained firmly committed to the faith of their ancestors, demonstrating their faith in material fashion in their significant contributions to the rebuilding at the chapel at Preshome. Although by the late eighteenth century adherence to Roman Catholicism did not incur the penalties laboured under by earlier believers, it was still a marginal activity in Scotland. By contrast, the Duff family were firmly in the lines of the established Church of Scotland. Patrick's grandfather had been an elder, as was his uncle by marriage James Ogilvie. Patrick's father held no position in the church, but was established enough to have his own pew in the local church. What is noticeable, however, in all the letters from both sides of the family is that there is no sign of religious concerns or commitments. Amongst the many others topics considered there is no attention to religious issues, in stark contrast to, for example, the English nonconformist merchant John Shaw studied by Andrew Popp.¹⁰

⁹ Colley, *Britons*.

¹⁰ Andrew Popp, *Entrepreneurial Families: Business, Marriage and Life in the Early Nineteenth Century* (London, 2012).

The letters between John and his wife Elizabeth are full of religious detail, which is tightly interwoven with, and in no sense compartmentalised from, commercial matters. The Duffs and Gordons seem to have been pragmatic in not raising religious differences, but rather accommodating those differences to the contexts in which they were operating. In particular, Patrick's nominal support for the established Church of Scotland migrated into an Episcopalianism more consistent with an increasingly anglicized upper class.

What this reminds us of is the variation that lay under the label of 'shared protestantism'. While it was certainly the case that the need to defend the Protestant Succession was a powerful motivating force behind the Union of Scotland and England in 1707, differences soon emerged. In particular, High Church Tories sought, successfully, to reintroduce lay patronage into the Church of Scotland, a policy which fostered decades of resentment and conflict in Scotland. The dominant strain of protestantism in England was Anglicanism, but J. C. D. Clark has reminded us that both traditional histories which conflate England and Britain and more recent arguments that Britain was bound together by shared protestantism tend to elide differences in protestant traditions, both within England and between Scotland and England.¹¹ It is possible to see such differences play out in India and the differential experience of Scots and English officers of the East India Company. Both groups came to resent the pretensions of regular army officers, attached as they were, in Mackenzie's words, to a 'sense of effortless cultural and imperial superiority'.¹² Mackenzie characterizes this as an English attitude, but it is perhaps more accurate to attach it to a particular upper class fraction of the English. Through their control of the purchase of commissions in the regular army, they were able to crowd out the middling sorts of both England and Scotland. These men of considerable practical talents were largely only able to pursue a professional military career in the Company's forces, giving them a lasting jealousy about rank and status. However, the difference between English and Scottish officers were two-fold. One was that there were many more opportunities available to the middling sort in England, particularly amongst the ranks of nonconformists, to pursue commercial careers at home. The second was that English officers lacked the symbolic and associational resources of the Scots to be able to resist the cultural hegemony of the upper class English regular army officers.

¹¹ J. C. D. Clark, 'Protestantism, nationalism and national identity, 1660–1832', *Historical Journal*, 43 (2000), 249–76.

¹² Mackenzie, 'Irish, Scottish, Welsh and English Worlds', 1255.

In turn, we can relate the differences between an Anglican English elite and other protestant traditions to subtle differences in practices of governance and accountability that operated to condition different capabilities. Such differences are revealed by an examination of local practices of church governance.¹³ Although the Church of England operated with a hierarchical structure, headed by the reigning monarch with authority flowing downwards through bishops, in practice local incumbents enjoyed considerable autonomy in how they ran religious affairs in their parish. In turn, lay involvement in the running of the parish was subject to considerable variation, heavily conditioned by custom and tradition. The nominal pattern, although one subject to considerable variation, was of two churchwardens, one selected by the incumbent, one by 'the people' (in practice the more prosperous inhabitants) to serve annual terms of office. During their term of office, the wardens were responsible for church discipline and for the raising of income to meet the financial needs of the church. Expenditure was generally to meet the material needs of the church fabric, but it often blurred into the relief of poverty and want. Wardens were to account for their actions at the end of their term of office, but this was generally done orally at a social function with limited accounting records being kept. Such records were subject only to local scrutiny, in meetings which were often unrecorded in formal documents. Frequently, the wardens were owed money at the end of their term of office. Local governance in the Church of England, therefore, was characterised by what has been termed 'personal accountability', in which trust resided in the personal character of the office holder. Especially as symbolised in the powerful cultural notion of the 'gentleman', this fostered an emphasis on character which meshed powerfully with the cultural mores of the upper class elite who dominated the regular army.

By contrast, local governance practices in the Church of Scotland can be characterised as 'systemic accountability', in which accountability was the property of a particular role in a carefully thought out structure. At the local level, church governance was in the hands of the minister as chair or moderator and a number of elders. These men (always men in the eighteenth century) were ordained for life and were collectively responsible for church discipline and the relief of the sick, old and indigent. Their decisions were carefully recorded in registers of discipline, with their minutes

¹³ Alistair Mutch, *Religion and National Identity: Governing the Church of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 2015), on which the following account is based.

being cross-referred to records of accounting transactions. Accounts were reviewed at least once a year, the corporate form of the session meaning that positive balances were generally accumulated. These balances were often invested to yield revenue with the enduring form of the session giving rise in some cases to the budgeting and forecasting of future income and expenditure. The records generated were subject to review by the local presbytery, a body comprising a number of parishes and made up of both clerical and lay representatives. In turn, their decisions were subject to the policies laid down by the annual General Assembly. In this way a large number of the 'middling sort' were exposed to practices of systematic record keeping and accounting for actions. This degree of lay involvement in local governance was only found to a much more restricted extent in English nonconformity. Until the rise of Wesleyan Methodism towards the end of the eighteenth century they lacked national organizational structures. So, while similar practices might have been enacted at the local level, they lacked the embeddedness in a national structure which characterised Scotland.

The consequences of such practices of local accountability in Scotland, practices which became by the eighteenth century taken-for-granted ways of organizing, were much wider than the still limited number of direct participants. The consequences for education were of importance in making available resources that Scots could take into both military and commercial activities. The provision of basic education at local level as manifest in the ambition to have a school in every parish was a key feature of the presbyterian tradition in Scotland. The aim of such a target was the fostering of the ability to read the scriptures amongst the mass of the population, coupled with the provision of a route for a minority to be recruited into the ministry. It was not the aim to provide literacy to facilitate military and commercial activity, but that was an unanticipated consequence. Although there have been arguments about the degree to which literacy and numeracy penetrated Scottish society, for our purposes the important finding is that of widespread literacy amongst the 'middling sort', precisely those who featured so disproportionately in the officer corps of the East India Company. The ability to make a case in writing was a key capability in striving for rank and status, one amply demonstrated in Patrick's extensive correspondence. 'Everything is done in this country by letters,' reported Major George Hurt.¹⁴ Those who struggled

¹⁴ George Hurt, Camp near Bangalore to James Grant, London, 14 September 1791, NRAS, Macpherson-Grant of Ballindalloch, NRAS771, bundle 426.

with writing were keenly aware of the disadvantage this placed them at. ‘You know I am no pen & in the main I hate writing,’ complained William Elliott to Allan Macpherson in 1783, ‘which I believe has been of great disservice to me.’¹⁵ We don’t know the details of Patrick’s education, but we can surmise that it consisted of basic grounding in his parish school, topped up, perhaps, by time in an academy in either Edinburgh or London. The latter would be facilitated by his uncle James, although he was sceptical of the value of some of what might be learned in London. Patrick’s brothers, too, seem to have benefitted from Scottish educational traditions. Certainly Patrick was able to articulate his claims for rank in extensive and densely argued memorials. Allied to a stubborn and persistent nature, officials at India House, London, or Fort William, Calcutta, must have groaned when a new one landed on their desks. This focus on writing was mirrored by the focus in the Scottish legal tradition on the written word. It is surely significant that solicitors were known as Writers to the Signet. As James Boswell observed: ‘Ours is a court of papers. We are never seriously engaged but when we write. We may be compared to the Highlanders in 1745. Our pleading is like their firing their musketry, which did little execution. We do not fall heartily to work till we take to our pens, as they do their broadswords.’¹⁶ There was a general facility with the written word which Devine sees manifested in a Scottish ‘propensity to publish’. We know, for example, about Patrick’s role in the Seringapatam campaign from the book written about the campaign on the long voyage back to Britain by his neighbour Major Alexander Dirom of Muireisk near Turriff.¹⁷ Perhaps what is distinctive about the Scottish experience of empire is not always the nature of that experience but the willingness of Scots to commit it to paper.

A further consequence of the focus on education, coupled with the attention to recording financial transactions in local church affairs, was the development of a particular facility with number. In part the attention to the need for detailed accounting in mercantile affairs owed much to the practical training that merchants received in the ports of the Netherlands. As the provision of secondary education in Scotland improved in the eighteenth century, training in the writing of accounts for commercial purposes began

¹⁵ W. Elliott Camp near Cuddapore to Allan Macpherson, Fort William, 21 July 1783, NRAS, Macpherson of Blairgowrie, NRAS2614, bundle 442.

¹⁶ D. Parratt, *The Development and Use of Written Pleadings in Scots Civil Procedure* (Edinburgh, 2006), ix. See also David M. Walker, *A Legal History of Scotland* (7 vols, Edinburgh, 1988–2004), V, *The Eighteenth Century* (1998), 384.

¹⁷ Dirom, *Narrative*.

to appear in the curricula of burgh schools. At Ayr, for example, bookkeeping was introduced in 1716. When the school became the first of a new breed of academy, the first rector, John Mair, had already written the accounting book that became the market-leading text on both sides of the Atlantic in the mid-eighteenth century. He was joined by other Scottish authors, suggesting a distinctive capability in accounting techniques.¹⁸ In practical terms, facility with number and literacy were demonstrated in the widespread employment of Scottish bookkeepers on Caribbean plantations.¹⁹ Allied to this was the willingness of the Scottish universities, prompted by the reforms of William Carstairs at Edinburgh, to undertake vocational education in subjects such as medicine and agriculture. It was at Edinburgh, for example, that Kenneth Murchison undertook the training that led him to become a surgeon in India. Such opportunities for higher vocational education were not available to the same degree in England. Not only was the university system there restricted to the two universities of Oxford and Cambridge, but their curriculum was dominated by the classics in order to educate a gentlemanly elite. Again, the focus was on character as much as on intellectual and practical ability. Nonconformists, of course, were excluded from these two institutions. They either made their way north of the border or attended the Dissenting Academies, which modelled much of their curricula on Scottish practice. The focus on system and detailed recording that characterised much of Scottish approaches to education appears to have crossed the denominational boundary in the case of James Gordon. He was disparaging of Madeiran attempts at accounting and his whole career was marked by an obsessive focus on detailed information. Here, it would appear, the Scottish dimension trumped religious divides.

It was, then, a combination of factors which shaped the distinctive contribution of Scots to the empire. Several of these factors, such as patterns of trade and shipping and educational and legal systems, had deep historical roots. Under the label of 'shared protestantism' lay significant differences. Such differences between English and Scottish officers and merchants might be elided to a degree in the shared enterprise of building empires of commerce and conquest, but Scots were able to draw on a sense of identity built

¹⁸ Alistair Mutch, 'Religion and accounting texts in eighteenth century Scotland: organizational practices and a culture of accountability', *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal* 29 (2016), 926–46.

¹⁹ Douglas Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World 1750–1820* (Manchester, 2005).

on distinctive practices of thought and action which could contest the sense of cultural superiority presented by the hegemonic English upper class. Of course, there were tendencies engendered by the very success of Scots in accumulating wealth from their imperial endeavours which might see them seek to join this English-dominated British elite. Such tendencies were more obvious towards the end of the century, manifest in the move of men like Patrick Duff from the presbyterianism of his fathers to the newly rehabilitated Episcopalianism, a denomination moving ever closer to the Church of England. The move towards incorporation into a British elite was clearly symbolised by the memorial to Patrick's brother-in-law, Andrew Hay of Mountblairy. He fell in the campaign leading up to Waterloo and was the first military man to be honoured with a memorial in St Paul's cathedral in London, the pantheon of British imperial heroes. One impact of empire on Scotland, then, was to provide opportunities to participate in broader British activities.

However, the greatest impact was to be seen in the wave of agricultural improvement which swept the country in the late eighteenth century. Although there had been the stirrings of agricultural improvement in Scotland in the early eighteenth century, following the lead of pioneers such as Archibald Grant at Monymusk, the problem was the internal generation of the necessary funds from a poor and underdeveloped country. Patrick's example is support for McGilvary's contention that 'capital, issuing in the main from India, was indeed the major factor that brought the country to life.'²⁰ Obviously India was not the only source, but the capital generated through the nexus of trade and empire was clearly important, as seen in the case of the Gordons of Letterfourie. Their fortunes were generated through the export of Madeira not just to the aristocratic families of Britain but also to the colonies in North America and the West Indies. When these markets became compromised then they joined other Madeira houses in looking to India and the seemingly insatiable demands of Britons serving there for their products. From the 1770s much of this money was ploughed (literally) into the conversion of their familial estate from moorland into fertile pasture. Capital went into not only these land reclamation efforts, but also into the enclosure of the land to form self-contained farms and the provision of buildings on the home farm. These were not solely, or even mainly, functional; they also provided a visible symbol of commitment to the process

²⁰ McGilvary, *East India Patronage*, 185.

of agricultural improvement. On estates such as Letterfourie and Carnousie, their functions as agricultural headquarters were combined with the accommodation of transport for the laird.

After this initial outlay, new tenants were subject to leases which controlled tightly how the land could be used. In return for the security of, typically, nineteen year leases, tenants were obliged to farm in particular ways. On the Carnousie estate, the surveys indicate the rise of a common practice of letting small holdings on improving leases. Containing large areas of improvable land, these were let on easy initial terms provided that a specified proportion of land was taken into cultivation every year. Thus began the second wave of improvement, in which heroic labours were undertaken to clear the land of boulders and whins, to drain and enclose it, and so to produce the fertile landscape which characterised the landscape from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. It is the achievements of this class of small tenant farmers that is celebrated in the works of William Alexander and Lewis Grassie Gibbon, and is explored in the work of Ian Carter.²¹ However, it is possible that this focus on the second wave of tenant-led improvement underplays the importance of the reorganisation of holdings involved in the landlord-led processes of the later eighteenth century. This was facilitated by the injection of large sums of money from the profits of empire, which not only increased rent rolls and agricultural profitability, but also cemented the place of men such as Duff in the ranks of the landowning class.

Mackenzie has argued that a full understanding of empire involves dealing with its 'material remains'. He goes on to name a range of cultural impacts: 'architecture, town planning, statuary, monuments, institutions of various sorts, clubs, Christian churches and missions, schools, universities, sports grounds and the sports themselves, entertainment forms, theatres, bandstands, music, the English language and its variants, clothing and the presentation of the body, interior design, concepts of gentility, and much else'.²² Here we could include in the 'much else', wine, specifically madeira wine. The eighteenth century was characterised, from the evidence of people like William Hickey, by extraordinary levels of drunkenness amongst men of the upper classes. The drinks that fuelled that drunkenness are therefore

²¹ William Alexander, *Johnny Gibb of Gushetneuk* (Turriff, 1979 [1871]); Lewis Grassie Gibbon, *Sunset Song* (London, 1973 [1932]); Ian Carter, *Farm Life in Northeast Scotland 1840–1914: The Poor Man's Country* (Edinburgh, 1979).

²² John MacKenzie, 'The British Empire: Ramshackle or Rampaging? A Historiographical Reflection', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 43 (2015), 114.

significant and the examination of the role of madeira in the empire that has been revealed by the focus on the Scottish experience has wider ramifications. The evidence from the House of Gordon, coupled with other sources, suggests a divergence in consumption patterns in the centre and its imperial peripheries. In Britain, madeira was a luxury brand, featuring in aristocratic cellars but taking second place first to claret and then to port. It was the product from mainland Portugal that became the key cultural signifier of upper class taste, although madeira retained an important secondary role. This was in part due to different shipping patterns. There was a direct shipping route between mainland Portugal and British ports, whereas Madeira was poorly served by direct ships. Rather, the wine of the island travelled to Britain via the West Indies and North America, making for long delivery times and a more expensive product. Because of these different shipping considerations, the position of port and madeira was reversed in colonial settings. In Kingston, Jamaica, in 1775, Hickey records that ‘the wines were madeira, hock, and port, little of the latter being drunk.’²³ Most of the business conducted by Gordon, Duff before the American War of Independence was with the West Indies, where their wine found a ready market with the Scots planters who flocked there to populate new possessions. When this trade was disrupted by American privateers, their attention switched to the Indian market, facilitated by Patrick’s contacts. Wine from Madeira had flowed to India long before this date, where it had become a prized commodity. Hickey, in Calcutta in 1783, ‘always took special care to be supplied with the best French wines and the oldest madeira that could be purchased.’²⁴ Not only did madeira become a key factor in making Indian sojourns bearable, but it also flowed, despite the East India Company’s efforts to stop it, back into Britain where it became a particularly prized marker of status. On one of Hickey’s returns to England his host, Major Walter Bourke, promised that ‘I will treat you to a bottle of such madeira as is rarely to be met with. I have myself had it a dozen years, it having been imported by Mr Verelst when Governor of Bengal.’²⁵ In the event, Hickey was to be sadly disappointed, but is surely instructive that a key signifier of the corrupting power of imperial luxury in Mackenzie’s critique was Mr Mushroom’s ‘Indian Madeira’.

Of course, involvement in the madeira trade was not restricted to those of Scottish descent. What has been presented here has only been a partial

²³ Spencer, *Memoirs*, II, 21.

²⁴ Spencer, *Memoirs*, III, 202.

²⁵ Spencer, *Memoirs*, II, 348.

view of the role of Madeira as a key geographical node and madeira as a prized commodity in the construction of empire and so a British identity. However, attention to the Scottish dimension has brought out aspects of empire otherwise rather neglected. The story of Tiger Duff and his extended family not only provides a fascinating story in its own right, but it enriches our understanding of the contribution of Scots to the making of Britain in the eighteenth century.

A note on sources

This project began not with the aim of writing a life and career, but with a simpler objective: to understand why the farm buildings on my uncle's farm of Mains of Carnousie were so grand. Once I had established that they dated from 1797 and were connected with the ownership of the estate by general Patrick Duff, I was able to turn to the bible of any seeker after the Duffs of the north east, the two volumes of the *Book of the Duffs* written by Alistair and Henrietta Tayler. Drawing extensively on the papers of William Rose this gave a fascinating account. That might have been enough, but I decided on one of my visits to the north east to just see if there was more material in the archives at Aberdeen University. Leafing through the papers of the Earls of Fife I was initially mystified and then excited by the references to Patrick Duff that cropped up in connection with the Parliamentary by-election of 1795. It was only then that I realised that this whole episode, with its rich detail on the corrupt electoral practices of the late eighteenth century, was entirely missing from the Taylers' account. This was perhaps because it did not show one of their distant ancestors, Earl Fife himself, in particularly good light. This then made me realise that there was more to the story of Patrick Duff and Carnousie than I had realised.

I continued to mine the available papers, which led me to the papers of the High Court of Justiciary and the Court of Session in the National Records of Scotland. Thanks to the Scottish legal practice of written pleadings, this provided me with an overwhelming level of detail which enabled me to reconstruct the events of 1795 for publication. At the same time, I became aware, in part thanks to the work of David Hancock on the Madeira wine trade, of the archives of the Gordons of Letterfourie. These were then in private hands, but thanks to the efforts of the National Record of Archives of Scotland they were eventually deposited at Aberdeen. The papers were in a decidedly mixed condition and were uncatalogued. To repeat my thanks from the acknowledgments, I was privileged to be able to consult them. They

represent a fabulous treasure trove of evidence, but one with little rhyme or reason. Gems such as the survey of Carnousie lay check by jowl with obscure family papers which, I confess, I have yet to understand.

As a trading family, I found that the Gordons left traces in many places. One of the strangest was in the London Postal Museum, where a collection valued more for its postal addresses than its contents could only be examined under secure conditions. Of particular value was the collection of letters at the Falkirk Archive. This proves the immense value of catalogues being available through the internet and the merits of finding aids such as the catalogue of the Scottish Archive Network. Another great help, as Emma Rothschild has noted, is the ability to track down people through the web resources created by family historians. But people also remain a fantastic source. At a meeting of the Scottish Economic and Social History Society in Glasgow I was delighted to meet Eric Grant, who told me about his investigations into Kenneth Murchison, a friend and correspondent of Patrick, providing yet another source of evidence.

I have sought to combine all these sources with published work to produce this account. I have had to assimilate a wide range of material on countries such as Portugal and India with which I was not familiar. I trust that I have not done too much violence to their complexities in my attempts to draw out some key features and that I might have provided some new evidence for those whose primary concern is with those countries.

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University of Aberdeen Library and Special Collections

MS3051/1/8/4 Papers of J M Bulloch relating to Gordons of Letterfourie

MS Acc 426 (uncatalogued): Gordon of Letterfourie papers

Letter book 1766–1774; Tiger box; miscellaneous papers, boxes two, nine and ten

MS3175 Papers of Duff House/Earls of Fife

MS 3175/175 Letters to Lord Fife and William Rose from Messrs. Drummonds & Co., Bankers, 1780–1784

MS 3175/268 Action of Colonel Patrick Duff of Carnoustie [sic] against Lieutenant James Fife, 1795–1797

MS 3175/285 Letters to Lord Fife and Stewart Souter and associated documents, 1797–1802

MS 3175/408 Correspondence of Lord Fife, 1783–1794

MS 3175/431 Correspondence of Lord Fife, 1788–1795

MS 3175/1003 Correspondence: Lords Braco, Fife and William Rose, 1720–1793

MS2226 Tayler Genealogical Collection/papers of the Duff family of Duff House, and William Rose of Montcoffer, their factor

2226/63/13–24 – relating to Duff Carnousie

2226/171–178 – Letterfourie, Mountblairy and Rose

MS3017/14/6 A short but distinct and faithful account of the building of the Roman Catholic chapel at Preshome, founded the year 1788 and finished 1790

Falkirk Archives

A727 Forbes of Callendar papers

A727.484 letters, 30 Dec 1792–21 Nov 1793

A727.522 letters 1 January 1794–29 April 1794

A727.566 shipment of Madeira, 13 June 1795–28 December 1795

A727.634 letters January 1798–November 1798

A727.692 letters January 1800–December 1800

A727.737 letters January 1802–April 1802

727.750 letters May 1802–December 1802

A727.1004 letters January 1812–December 1812

A727.1007 Announcements of death

National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh

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CH2/6/2 minutes of Presbytery of Aberlour, 1709–1736

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CH2/869/5 minutes of Forglen kirk session 1791–1849

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GD44/43 Correspondence 1689–1864

GD44/52/113/1 1758–1766, GD44/52/113/4 1767–1772: London wine books

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GD345/943, Bundle noted Mr Jas Duff of Madeira & his father Mr Duff of Pitchaish

GD185 Papers of the Abercromby Family of Forglen and Birkenbog

GD185/37/3 Papers and accounts relative to Carnousie 1790–1825

GD225 Papers of the Hay family of Leith Hall, Aberdeenshire

Box 31/12 Letters of Patrick ‘Petter’ Duff

RH15/1 Gordon of Carnousie

RH15/1/18/6 bundle of accounts 1736

JC High Court of Justiciary

JC3/48 Books of Adjournal – Series D

JC26/285 High Court of Justiciary processes main series 1796

CS232 Court of Session

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MSS 1073, Melville Papers

Edinburgh University Library

MS.2263, Personal papers of and relating to Kenneth Murchison

National Register of Archives of Scotland

NRAS2614, Macpherson of Blairgowrie archives, Newton Castle, Blairgowrie

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NRAS771, Macpherson–Grant family of Ballindalloch

NRAS771/Bundle 386 letters from George Hart, 1790–1791

NRAS771/Bundle 393 Miscellaneous papers, 1777–1830 (including 22nd December 1788. Introducing Lieutenant–Colonel Duff returning to London from Bengal.)

NRAS771/Bundle 426 Miscellaneous correspondence from Major George Hart, 1791

NRAS771/Bundle 550 Miscellaneous correspondence to James Grant from John Mackenzie of Delvine, Clerk to the Signet, 1771–1774 (including recommendation to General Clavering for Captain–Lieutenant Patrick Duff, H.E.I.C.S.)

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PROB 11/840 will of William Halloran, 13 September 1758

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PROB 11/1748 will of John Duff, 16 September 1813

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