

I.

MORE SHETLAND TOMBSTONES.

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Two years ago I described to the Society three Shetland tombstones, which seemed to merit rather fuller discussion than they can hope to receive in the Inventory of Ancient Monuments, now in active preparation by The Royal Commission. Five others, which I have met with since, have on various grounds an equally strong claim to particular notice, and it is with these that I now propose to deal.

I will take first two recumbent slabs, both dating from the last quarter of the sixteenth century and both associated with the roofless twelfth-century church that stands on the southern side of Lunda Wick, a bay in the southern portion of the west coast of Unst. One of them is actually inside the building, the other a little to the east of it. It will be convenient to begin with the latter, which is still quite legible. It measures 6 feet $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 3 feet 8 inches. Beneath the initials, and what must be the coat-of-arms, of the person commemorated are eight lines of lettering. The text was reproduced a number of years ago in a local newspaper, together with a translation by Dr Jakobsen, the well-known Danish philologist, who had recognised the language as Low German¹ but did not make any further comment. Fig. 1 shows that there is no room for difference of opinion about the words. The meaning is in equally fortunate case: "In the year 1585 on the 25th July, being St James's day, the worthy and well-born Hinrick Segelcken the elder, from Germany and a burgess of the town of Bremen, fell asleep here in God the Lord. May God be gracious to him."

The second inscription, now published for the first time, is a good deal more difficult to read, the surface of the stone—which is 5 feet $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long by 2 feet 4 inches wide—being much weather-worn, as well as partly covered with a growth of lichen. From their first visit the staff

¹ The next inscription is also in Low German. Professor Schlapp, who has been good enough to allow me to consult him, finds nothing surprising in the presence of one or two characteristically High German forms. At the end, however, he would have expected the subjunctive *s(e)i*, instead of the indicative *is(t)*.

of the Commission returned with only the four opening words. Later, however, they were able to secure rubbings which brought the whole within measurable distance of decipherment. It was at once obvious that this slab, too, was a memorial to a burgess of Bremen. On the suggestion of Professor Schlapp, an inquiry was addressed to the Staatsarchiv there. It evoked a prompt and most informative reply from the Director, Professor Dr Entholt, whose records must be in

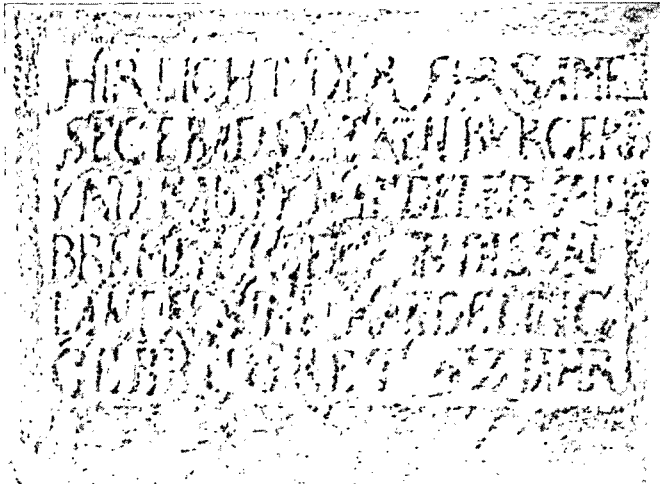
*ANNO 1585 DEN 25 IVLII
 VP S IACOBI IS DE EHRBARE
 VND VORNEHME HINRICK
 SEGELCKENDE OLDER VTH
 DVDESCHLANT VND BORGER
 DER STADT BREMEN ALHIR
 IN GODT DEM HERN ENTSCHL
 APN DEM GODT GAEDICH IS*

Fig. 1. Epitaph of Hinrick Segelcken at Lunda Wick.

wonderful order. Thanks to his assistance, it has been possible to establish the original text almost in its entirety. It is divided between two panels, an upper and a lower, which are separated from each other by a central cartouche.

A study of the rubbing of the upper panel (fig. 2) leaves only one point doubtful: the illegible word in the fourth line may possibly be **DE**. Otherwise everything is reasonably clear. On the lower panel (fig. 3) the first line is obscure, largely because of the lichen. The conjectural restoration in the transcript cannot, however, be very far from the truth. We may be sure that the year of death was mentioned, and comparison with the better preserved inscription (fig. 1) makes it virtually certain that the figures would be preceded by **ANNO**. The grounds for choosing 1573 will be apparent by and by. The rest is

plain sailing. The two panels, of course, run continuously, and the translation is: "Here lies the worthy Segebad Detken, burgess and merchant of Bremen. He carried on his business in this country for



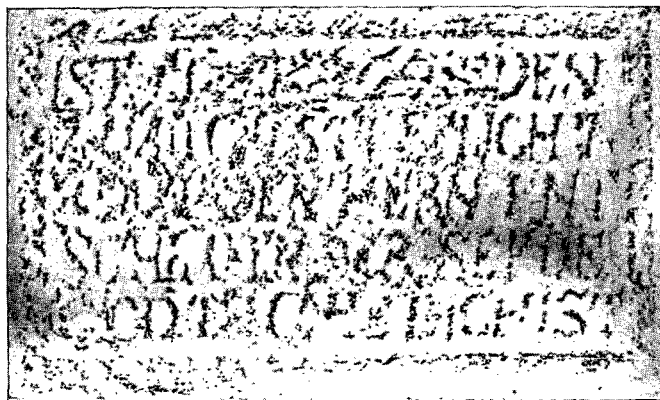
HIR LICHT DER EHRSAME
SEGEBAD DETKEN BVRGER
VND KAUFFHANDELER ZU
BREMAN [HE] HETT IN DISEN
LANDE SINE HANDELING
GEBRUCKET 5Z IAHR

Fig. 2. Epitaph of Segebad Detken at Lunda Wick: Upper half.

52 years, and fell blissfully asleep in our Lord in the year 1573 on the 20th of August. God rest his soul."

It is natural to ask how it came about that citizens of Bremen should have their last resting-place in that lonely spot on the most remote of the British Isles. For answer we have to transport ourselves back into a Shetland that was very different from the Shetland of our own time. Linguistically, economically, and commercially it was more closely associated with the Continent than with the kingdom to which

it owed political allegiance. Little more than a generation or two had passed since it ceased to be a Danish possession. We lack, it is true, a strictly contemporary picture. Nevertheless, we are by no means without the necessary material for reconstructing the island world in which these old worthies lived and moved and had their being. It



IST [ANNO 1573] DEN
 ZO AUGUSTI SELIGHT
 IN UNSEN HERN ENT
 SCHLAPEN DER SEELE
 GODT GNEDIGH IST

Fig. 3. Epitaph of Segebad Detken at Lunda Wick: Lower half.

was a world whose vernacular was a Scandinavian tongue and whose foreign trade was mainly with the Hanseatic towns.

The earliest detailed account we possess is that of a certain Captain John Smith, who was sent to Shetland—or, as he persistently spells it, Shotland—by the fourth Earl of Pembroke in 1633, in order to investigate the conditions under which the fishing industry was carried on. His mission covered a period of twelve months. What happened to his report we do not know; his patron's preoccupation with the ferment that culminated in the Civil War may have led to its being pigeonholed. But in 1661, nearly thirty years afterwards, he published

The Trade and Fishing of Great Britain displayed; with a Description of the Islands of Orkney and Shetland, a compilation based upon the journal he had kept. In 1670 this was reprinted as one chapter of a volume entitled *England's Improvement Reviv'd*, a second edition of which appeared in 1673. A lengthy extract from it is included in *Macfarlane's Geographical Collections*, as edited for the Scottish History Society.¹ Unfortunately the extract is not a "true" one. Macfarlane, or whoever was responsible for making it, has taken great liberties with the original, abridging and altering it at will. In quoting Smith, therefore, it will be well to ignore Macfarlane, and to refer to the edition of 1670, which is probably the most easily accessible.

The next conspicuous landmark is Sir Robert Sibbald's *Description of the Isles of Orkney and Zetland*, which was published in 1711² and which brings together, not without some repetition, a mass of information drawn from various sources. The author had access to Smith's book, which he quotes, and he also cites a long passage from a now lost Latin treatise by Robert Maule, a younger contemporary of George Buchanan.³ His chief debt, however, is to "the Descriptions of the particular Isles, such as they were sent to me by Bishop *M'Kenzie's* orders, by Mr *Theodore Umphry*, Mr *Heugh Leigh* and Mr *James Key*, the most intelligent Ministers there."⁴ These are often reproduced *verbatim* without more specific acknowledgment.⁵ Doubtless Sibbald would also learn something through conversation with acquaintances, such as "my worthie friend *John Bruce of Simbister*."⁶ At all events it seems hardly likely that an intelligent minister can have been his authority for the statement that "sometimes they catch with their Nets and Hooks *Tritons*, they call them *Shoupiltins*, and Mermaids,

¹ Vol. iii. pp. 60 ff.

² It was reprinted at Edinburgh in 1845 by Thomas G. Stevenson, whom the heading of the Orkney section has misled into attributing the authorship of the whole to Robert Monteith of Egilshay.

³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 19 f. For Maule see *Macfarlane's Genealogical Collections* (S.H.S.), vol. ii. p. 151, where it is stated that the MS. had been lent to Sibbald, and that most of it was destroyed by a fire at his house in 1684.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 9 f.

⁵ This can be seen by comparison with the originals which are preserved among Sibbald's papers in the National Library of Scotland. A transcript of these, made by the late Mr Bruce of Sumburgh, was printed for private circulation by his widow in 1908, under the title of *Description of ye Country of Zetland*. Mr Bruce's "date about 1680" is near enough for all practical purposes. Leigh was minister of Bressay, and Kay (or Key) minister of Dunrossness. Mr Theodore Umphr(a)y figures simply as "M. T. V." Nor is there any clue to the identity of John Marr, who signs the first of the papers in the collection. This is the only one of the series mentioned by Sir Arthur Mitchell, who attributes it (*Proceedings*, vol. xxxv. (1900-1), p. 490) to Leigh on the strength of the sentence with which it concludes.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 4. The "Gentleman that stayed some time there" (p. 6) was his own cousin, David Sibbald, as is clear from *Macfarlane's Geographical Collections* (S.H.S.), vol. iii. p. 65.

but these are rare and but seldome seen.”¹ There is nothing to suggest that he ever visited the islands himself. Nevertheless, Tritons and Mermaids apart, we may accept his sketch as a faithful enough reflexion of seventeenth-century Shetland, and from the seventeenth century we can work our way back to the sixteenth.

About 1680, then, the forces that were so soon to lead to the extinction of the Norn dialect were actively at work. So far, however, they had made surprisingly little progress. The language of the more out-of-the-way districts was wholly Scandinavian. Even in Dunrossness everyone was bilingual, although it was only in the upper part of the parish, about Sandwick, that people still used Norn for the purposes of every day intercourse. We may infer that the folk with whom our two Bremen burgesses did business more than a hundred years earlier, knew little or no English. There is another point of interest. After referring to the bilingualism of his parishioners, Kay adds that “by reason of their Commerce with the *Hollander*, they promptly speak *Low-Dutch*.”² The nature of this commerce he explains elsewhere, when he mentions the annual influx of Dutch fishermen “to whom the people from all Quarters, resort with Stockings, woven Gloves, Garters, Feathers &c., which they exchange with the *Hollanders* for Tobacco, Brandie, Shoes, Boots, Money, &c.”³ Presently he adds that it is rapidly declining, and that Shetland is being “impoverished, yet not so much by the decay of Fishes, as by the exorbitant exactions of the Customers that come to this Countrey: whereby they have banished the *Dutch* and *Hollanders* from this place, without whose commerce it can hardly subsist.”⁴

Kay is, of course, using “customers” in its now obsolete sense of custom-house officers. It is instructive to compare his attitude with that of Captain Smith. When the latter visited the scene in 1633, the Dutchmen were doing a roaring trade, and their numbers were almost incredibly large. He saw with his own eyes 1500 of their herring “busses”—vessels of 80 tons burden—at work not far from Unst, and they were accompanied by 400 “dogger-boats”—a smaller type of craft, whose quarry was cod and ling—as well as by 20 “wafters,” which carried thirty guns apiece and acted as convoys.⁵ Inquiry would probably show that this enormous development of the fishing industry coincided with the period of expansion that was inaugurated by the formation of the Dutch East India Company in 1602. Smith did not

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 22 f.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁵ *England's Improvement* (ed. 1670), p. 257. In the extract from this, as reprinted in *Macfarlane's Geographical Collections* (S.H.S.), vol. iii. p. 64, “wafters” appears as “wasters.”

like it at all. After his return he was informed that "the composition of the *Hollanders* . . . was an Annual Rent of 100000 *l.* and 100000 *l.* in hand; and never having been paid or brought into the Exchequer, as *I* could hear of, there is in Arrearages above 2500000 *l.* an acceptable Sum, and which would come very happily for the present occasions of His Majesty." ¹ But that represents only a part of his policy. Here is the rest:—

"If God would please to put it into the heart of our Gracious King and his Subjects to set out such a Fleet of Busses, as before mentioned, for the Fishing-Trade, being in our own Seas, and that the *Hollanders* and all Strangers may be discharged from fishing in those Seas; and the *Hamburgers*, *Breamers*, and *Lubeckers*, and all Strangers, from trading to the Islands of *Orkney* and *Shotland*, and that onely the Subjects of the three Kingdoms may have the Trading and Fishing, it would make our King one of the greatest Monarchs in the World, for Riches and Glory, and the three Kingdoms the happiest people in Christendom, and there would not be one wanting Bread, but the hearts of the Subjects would be lifted up with Praise to God and our King." ²

The appeal would seem to have fallen upon deaf ears, for in 1750, when another report was published,³ the position as regards the fisheries was very much the same. "About this Time [St John's Day], the *Dutch* to the Number of ten or eleven Hundred Bushes have wet their Nets upon the Coast, which they are obliged to do against the Eleventh of *June*, by an express Act of the States-General of the United Provinces." ⁴ Then follows a description of the rush of the inhabitants to the beach with their woollen and other goods. The profit which the *Dutch* make on their catches is reckoned "upon a moderate Computation" at "a Million Sterling annually." The anonymous author, who is supposed to have been a Dr John Campbell, disapproves of these proceedings as strongly as Smith had done. Indeed, his final appeal is even more impassioned:—

"I would therefore beseech you, that you would bestir yourselves like Men, and like *Britons* (for now or never is the Time) in the behalf of your Country, and wrest your Rights and Properties out of the Paws of the Ravishers; let neither Purses, flattering fawning Speeches, nor fair Promises, betray you into a Baseness which in the End, if not speedily, or timely prevented, must and will prove a great loss to *Britain*." ⁵

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 257.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 258.

³ *Account of the White-Herring-Fishery in Scotland, carried on in the Island of Zetland by the Dutch, . . . and a Description of the Island, by a Gentleman who resided Five Years on the Island.*

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

But, if the Dutch remained, "the *Hamburgers*, *Breamers*, and *Lubeckers*" had vanished. Campbell nowhere alludes to them. Instead, he tells us that such trade as there was with Hamburg and the other Hanse towns was carried on by Shetlanders and in Shetland bottoms.¹ Smith had known that the Hanseatic League was doomed, for towards the end of his book he held it up to his countrymen as a dreadful example of what might happen to them, if they allowed their commerce to decay: "[Its towns] have undergone the same necessity that others, once famous Cities of Marts, have done, and have utterly lost all their Power and Strength at Sea."² Still, the individual Hanse merchants retained a hold on Shetland long after those words were written. They can hardly have disappeared until the eighteenth century had begun, since they were familiar enough to Sibbald's correspondents. In his *Description* we encounter them in various places, generally hailing from Hamburg, but occasionally from Bremen.³ We also get a glimpse of the competition from Britain that ultimately drove them from the field. Kay tells us that "the *Dundees Vessel*" lay in Grutness Voe and that "the *Dundee Merchants* have their Booths" on shore hard by.⁴ These words enable us to visualise the normal arrangement.⁵

Each individual trader or trading firm had a "factory" or booth, where there was ample room for the storage of goods and probably for the curing of fish. This was always near a beach, off which there was safe anchorage, and thither came every summer from the home port a vessel laden with such necessities and luxuries as the islands themselves did not produce—hooks and lines, herring-nets, spirits, strong beer, biscuits, cereals of various kinds, fruit, coarse cloth and linen, and the like. On its return voyage it carried back salted fish, fish-oil, butter, ponies, cows, sheep, skins of seal and otter, woollen stockings, and so on.⁶ As it was in Sibbald's day, so it must have been for generations previously. Hitherto the earliest known allusion to Hanse traders in Shetland has been a sentence in George Buchanan's *History of Scotland*, which speaks of a Bremen merchant who is said to live in Yell and to supply the inhabitants with such foreign commodities as they require.⁷

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

² *England's Improvement*, p. 261.

³ *E.g.* pp. 15, 18, 33, 34 f., and 38.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁵ Elsewhere (*op. cit.*, p. 15) Kay mentions "a Gentleman's House called *Bigtoun* and a *Dutch Booth* built by *Bigtoun* for the use of an *Hamburgh Merchant*, who lyes there in the Summer time and makes Merchant Fishes." So, too, he tells us (p. 18) that the Pool of Virkie (now much silted up) "is called the *Dutch pool*, because the *Dutch* and *Hamburgh Merchants* were used to lye there, and make Merchant Fishes."

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁷ *Rerum Scotticarum Historia*, Bk. I, cap. 50, a reference which I owe to Dr Mackay Mackenzie. The anonymous author of *Certaine Matters concerning the Realme of Scotland . . . As they were Anno Domini 1597* (London, 1603) seems to be merely echoing Buchanan, and so probably is Maule, as cited by Sibbald (*Description*, p. 34).

That was in 1582. One of the tombstones at Lunda Wick takes us fully sixty years further back at a single bound. If this long digression has served its purpose, we should now be able to look at the inscriptions on these with more understanding eyes.

The records in the Staatsarchiv show that in the latter part of the sixteenth century there were two burgesses of Bremen who bore the name of Hinrick Segel(c)ken. One of these was admitted in 1565 and the other in 1581. It is obviously the former who was buried at Lunda Wick, for the slab calls him "the elder." That is all we are ever likely to know about him. Segebad(e) Detken is a much less shadowy figure. Here is the evidence from the Bremen archives:

1. His name was placed upon the roll of burgesses in 1514—the year after Flodden. According to a note attached to the genealogical table of the Bremen family of Deetjen (originally Detken), he lived to a very advanced age.
2. In 1562–3 Segebade Detken and Partners were defendants in an action raised by Johann Runge and Partners, merchants engaged in the Shetland trade, whose complaint was that obstacles were being put in the way of their visiting the harbour of Baltasound in Unst in the ordinary course of business. In their answers the defendants stated that they had been using the said harbour for about forty years.
3. In the copy of a letter from the Foud of Shetland, Olaf Sinclair ("Oloff Synckeler"), dated 18th August 1565, a shipmaster, Segebade Detken, and his ship are referred to in connection with the harbour of "Borwage" under date April, 1562.
4. In 1572 the name of a Segebade Detken appears in the Bremen burgess-roll as that of a *fidejussor* or surety. Although the Christian name of Segebade is not uncommon in the Detken family, Professor Entholt believes that the *fidejussor* of 1572 is the burgess of 1514.

The one difficulty that emerges is as to the word "Borwage," which seems clearly corrupt. It can hardly represent Baltasound. Burra-firth in the north of Unst is rather more possible. Or, again, there may perhaps be lurking under it some old name for Lunda Wick, where a homestead not far from the church is called Burragarth to this day. Leaving the question of the harbour open, we may glance for a moment at the dates. Segebade Detken's epitaph tells us that when he died he had been in business in Shetland for fifty-two years (fig. 2). The documents prove that in 1562 about forty of these had elapsed. In

view of the purpose for which it is cited, the figure of forty is hardly likely to be a serious understatement. We may therefore conclude that Detken survived the lodging of answers in the law-plea by twelve years, which again would give 1574 for the date upon his tombstone. That would be consistent with his appearance as a *fidejussor* in 1572. On the other hand, such traces as are visible on the rubbing would agree rather better with 1573, and the seeming contradiction would disappear if we were to suppose that he had brought his forty-first season to a close in 1562, before the action was raised. There is nothing in the German idiom ("*an die 40 Jahre*") to forbid such an easy solution.

In any event Detken must have begun business in Shetland about 1522. It is worth remarking that he had already been a burgess of Bremen for eight years. Unst can scarcely have been his first venture. Had he lost a market elsewhere? It is tempting to think that he had, if we remember that by 1522 the Hanse towns were beginning to feel the force of the blow inflicted on them by the Portuguese discovery of the sea-route to India. One result of this may well have been to stimulate the effort to exploit those markets on which the discovery could have no effect. However that may be, it was probably in the sixteenth century that Hanse trading with the Shetlands reached its zenith. The seventeenth witnessed its steady decline in the face of competition from Holland and the mainland of Great Britain. Before the middle of the eighteenth "the *Hamburgers, Breemers and Lubeckers*" had abandoned the voes and wicks for ever.

The discussion of the Lunda Wick inscriptions has incidentally led to a mention of the annual invasion of Shetland by Dutch fishing-boats—precursors of the Dutch trawlers which still make Lerwick harbour their headquarters season after season. The third tombstone on my list recalls another and a quite different link between the Netherlands and the northern archipelago. During the first half of the seventeenth century, Holland, free at last—*de facto*, if not *de jure*—from the shackles of the medieval Empire, successfully challenged the commercial supremacy of Spain and Portugal, and herself came to hold a large part of "the gorgeous East in fee." Her active agents were the servants of the Dutch East India Company, which has been aptly described as "a great military organisation, a mighty *imperium in imperio*, a powerful instrument of the Netherlands in their struggle with Spain."¹ Every year an argosy, laden with rich merchandise, made its way round the Cape of Good Hope to Europe. If it had tried to reach Dutch waters by passing

¹ *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. iv. p. 738.

through the Straits of Dover, it would have run a grave risk of being waylaid by the Spaniards off Dunkirk. Consequently, except perhaps during the years of truce (1609–19), it was wont to follow the more arduous but safer route round the North of Scotland. Even after the Spanish danger had been eliminated by the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the same policy seems to have been adhered to; for, when the breach with the Commonwealth came in 1652, Cromwell's first step was to send Blake north towards the Shetlands with sixty sail, his instructions including an order "to take and seize upon the Dutch East India fleet homeward bound."

Lerwick appears to have been a regular port of call and, sometimes at least, the returning vessels were met there by an escort of men-of-war. This we may infer from an incident recounted by the Rev. Hugh Leigh in one of the communications which he sent to Sibbald. Speaking of Bressay Sound, he wrote:—"Here in *Anno* 1640, in the Summer time, ten *Spanish* Men of War (under Name of *Dunkirkers*) surprised four *Hollands* Men of Warr, waiting for the *East Indian* fleet, two whereof were sunk, at the West Shore of the Sound, one fled hence about eight or ten Miles North-westward, where running on Shore, her own Captain caused blow her up, and the fourth was taken and carried."¹

Bearing all this in mind, let us see what the tombstone has to say. It is a recumbent slab within the walls of the ruined church of St Mary, at Culbinsburgh, in the island of Bressay. The dimensions are 6 feet 5 inches by 2 feet 3½ inches. On the lower portion is a coat-of-arms, which will be described in the Inventory. On the upper portion is an inscription, consisting of eight lines of exceptionally well-cut lettering (fig. 4).² The language is Dutch, and very straightforward Dutch at that, there being nothing to give the veriest tyro pause except in the penultimate line. There the Y after **AVGVST** can only be the I of the Latin genitive, despite the intervening dot, which must be a mistake on the part of the stonecutter, comparable to the colon between **D** and **E** at the end of the first line. The word **ADY** is at first sight much more puzzling. There is, however, no doubt that (as one would expect from the context) it means "on the."³ The use of Latin to indicate the

¹ Sibbald's *Description*, p. 30.

² The drawing has been made by Mr C. S. T. Calder from a rubbing kindly sent me by Mr Thomas Mainland, Bressay, to whom I am further indebted for directing my attention to the correspondence quoted below.

³ Professor Geyl of the University of London, whom I have to thank for the explanation, adds that the word occurs often in the papers of the Dutch East India Company. Through Professor Barger, I learn from Mr R. Bylsma, Keeper of the National Archives at the Hague, that it is usually written *adie* and that, though common among seventeenth-century navigators, it is otherwise unknown. Both Professor Geyl and Mr Bylsma suggest that it is borrowed from one of the Romance languages.

month as well as the year had its parallel in the Low German inscriptions at Lunda Wick. The translation runs:—"Here lies buried the brave Commander Claes Jansen Bruyn of Durgerdam, died in the service of the Dutch East India Company on the 27th of August in the year 1636."

In the spring of 1922 the stone formed the subject of several letters addressed to the *Shetland News*. An anonymous correspondent, "G," printed the text in full, and the suggestion was advanced that Bruyn might have been captain of one of the Dutch men-of-war destroyed off

HIER·LEYT·BEGRAVEN:D·E
 MANHAFTEN·COMMANDEVR
 CLAESIANS·BRVYN·VAN
 DVRGERDAM:GESTORVEN
 IN DIENST:VANDE NEEDE
 LANTSE·OOSTINDISE COM
 PANGIE·ADY·27·AVGVST·Y
 A^o1636

Fig. 4. Epitaph of Commander Claes Jansen Bruyn at Culbinsburgh.

Bressay in the action described by Leigh.¹ Mr T. Mainland, who supplied a translation, pointed out that the suggestion must be rejected, since the action was not fought until Bruyn had been four years in his grave. A few weeks later the true story was told by Mr Stuart Bruce of Symbister, who had obtained it from Holland. Claes Jansen Bruyn was commander of the *Amboina*, a straggler from the East India fleet, which had failed to keep tryst with the main body at the Cape of Good Hope, and had had a solitary and most trying voyage to the Shetlands. Before she reached Bressay, a number of her crew had fallen victims to disease and her captain was dangerously ill. He died three days after his vessel had cast anchor in the Sound. There may have been those in Lerwick who saw the hand of Nemesis in her misfortunes. The

¹ See *supra*, p. 37.

name she bore was that of the island where, thirteen years previously, twelve English colonists had been most cruelly done to death by the Dutch governor on an unfounded suspicion of conspiracy. The "massacre at Amboina," as it was popularly called, created an immense sensation at the time, and so deeply did the memory of it rankle that more than thirty years later, when England made peace with Holland after the first Dutch War, Cromwell insisted on the payment of an indemnity of £300,000 to the descendants of the victims.

That, however, is by the way. The main thing is Mr Bruce's story. No apology is needed for reproducing his letter of 22nd March from the file of the *Shetland News*:—

"When 'G' kindly gave us the inscription on the tombstone, many people wished to know who CLAES JANSEN BRUYN was, and how he came to be buried at Cullingsbrough; so I wrote at once to my friend Heer de Balbian Verster, an eminent nautical antiquary in Amsterdam, and I have now received some details from him, which will, I think, satisfy our curiosity.

"The first trace of Bruyn is in the log of the Dutch warship *Het Casteel Batavia*, where he is mentioned as commanding a squadron off Mozambique to endeavour to effect the capture of a fleet of Portuguese 'caraquas' (carracks). The log is for the year 1635, and two of the Dutch ships (one being that of Bruyn) were to join up at Table Bay with the 'Return-Fleet' from the East Indies, in 1636. Heer de Balbian Verster says that the 'Return-Fleet' left Batavia on 5th January 1636, under the command of Governor-General Hendrick Brouwer, who had resigned his post and was going home to Holland. At the Cape of Good Hope the fleet was joined by the ship *Frederik Hendrik*, she having come straight from Surat to the Cape, but Bruyn's ship, which should have come with the *Frederik Hendrik*, did not make her appearance, and, after waiting at the Cape for more than three weeks, the fleet sailed without Bruyn and his ship the *Amboina*, all the vessels arriving safely in Holland on 31st July 1636.

"With regard to the *Amboina* we learn that she left Surat on 9th February 1636, and after a very protracted passage reached the Cape of Good Hope on 6th May, a long time even in these days. She found that the 'Return-Ships' had gone home, and she sailed from Table Bay on 9th May, her crew being then 'healthy and peaceable folk'!

"Now commenced the misfortunes of the *Amboina*. Head winds and gales buffeted her, and sickness seized upon her crew. It was not until 24th August that she made Bressay Sound, 29 of her crew having died on the passage from the Cape, and so many were ill that but '20 healthy men remained, who, not being able to govern the said ship, have, with great good fortune, reached the said harbour.'

"The Commander, Claes Jansen Bruyn, worn out by illness and the trials of that 'long, difficult, and perilous voyage,' died aboard the *Amboina* on 27th August 1636, three days after the ship reached the

shelter of Bressay Sound, and was, as we know, buried in Bressay. This raises the question: Why was he not buried in Lerwick? Perhaps there was no graveyard at that time, or, if Bruyn was a Roman Catholic, the Kirkyard of Cullingsbrough may have been the nearest consecrated ground.

"The *Amboina* lay in Bressay Sound for many weeks to restore the health of the enfeebled crew, and she at length reached Texel, with her valuable cargo of Persian silk, on the 16th October.

"The tombstone calls Bruyn 'of Durgerdam.' This was then a small village on the *Zuider-Zee*, not far from Amsterdam."

Although the two remaining tombstones have less romantic associations, they nevertheless present some points of special interest. Unlike the three already described, they are not recumbent slabs but mural tablets, being built into the outer face of the wall of the ruined chapel of Reafirth at Mid Yell. Appearances suggest a doubt as to whether this has always been their position. But, until we know more about the history of the chapel, that must remain uncertain.

The first of them is a handsome stone (fig. 5), measuring 4 feet 5 inches by 2 feet 10 inches. The heraldic bearings and initials at the top still stand out clearly, and may be left to speak for themselves. The difficulty of reading the weather-worn Latin inscription is aggravated by the number of ligatures and also by the fact that, in order to avoid overcrowding, some of the letters have been made only half the height of those that precede and follow them. With patience, however, practically everything becomes plain. The only letter that has a peculiar form is Q, which always resembles a retrograde P. The text, then, is as follows:—

HEIC . IN . SEPULTURA . PATRUM . SUB
 SPE . BEATÆ . RESURRECTIONIS . REQUIES
 CVNT . OSSA . CINERESQVE . INSIGNIS . ILLIVS . VIRI
 GILBERTI . NEVELLI . D . DE . WINDHOUS
 ET . SKOUSBURGH . NECNON . IPSIVS . CON
 JUGIS . PIENTISSIMÆ . KATHARINÆ . UPHRE
 DÆ . M . GUILIEMI . UPHREDI . QUONDAM . DE
 BRESSAY . PASTORIS . FILIÆ . LEGITTIMÆ
 OBIIT . ENIM . ILLE . 310 . DIE . APRILIS . ANNO
 1694 . ÆTATIS . AVTEM . 71 . ILLA . VERO . 310
 DIE . MARTII . 1691 . ET . ÆTATIS . SUÆ . 67
 IN . QUORUM . GRATIAM . HOC . MONU
 MENTVM . CONDIDIT . EORVM . NATV . MAXI
 [FIL] GUILIELMVS . NEVELLVS . A . M

Corrigenda.

Page 40. A fresh comparison with the original shows (a) that in line 2 of the inscription the second ligature is **UR** and that **NI** is ligatured, (b) that in line 3 **QVE** is contracted, and (c) that in line 10 **TE** is ligatured.

Page 44. A similar comparison shows that in line 9 of the inscription the last word is **VERO**. The word "everlasting" should therefore be omitted from the translation.

Page 47, line 3. *For* "Mrs Neven's" *read* "Barbara's". At that time wives did not assume their husbands' surnames.

[*To face p. 40.*]

Corrigendum.

Page 427. Table at foot of page. *For* Iron *read* Silicon, and *for* Silenium *read* Iron.

The lady's age is a little doubtful: the second digit may be a 9, not a 7. The figures at the end obviously indicate the year in which the

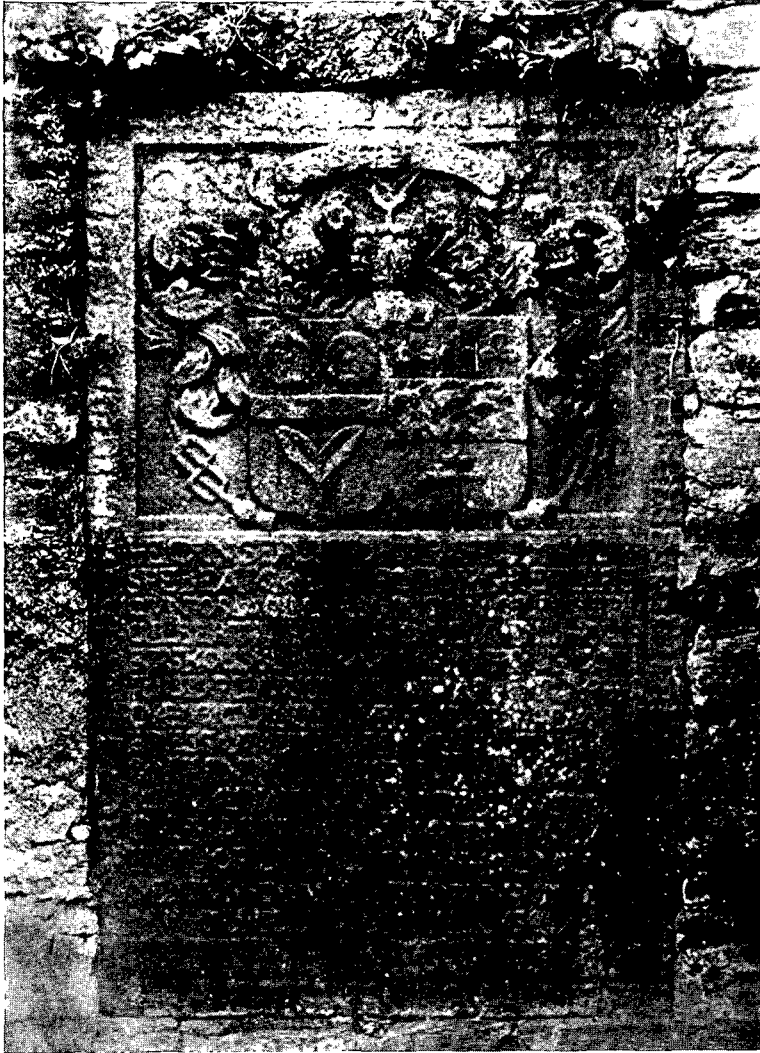


Fig. 5. Tombstone of Gilbert and Katharine Neven at Reafirth.

stone was erected. Whether there were any letters in front of them, is uncertain. The translation of the rest runs: "Here in the tomb of his fathers, in the hope of a blessed resurrection, lie the bones and ashes

of that eminent man, Gilbert Neven, laird of Windhouse and Scousburgh, also those of his most devoted wife, Katharine Umphrey, lawful daughter of Mr William Umphrey, once minister of Bressay. He died on the 3rd day of April in the year 1694, the seventy-first of his age, she on the 3rd of March 1691, the sixty-seventh of her age. This monument was erected in their honour by their eldest son, William Neven, M.A.”

It will be observed that not only the Christian names but the surnames of the four persons mentioned are Latinised, that of the lady being given a feminine termination. Although two of the Sinclair tombstones now at Jarlshof supply a parallel, the officials of the Historical Department at the Register House, who have allowed me to draw freely upon their experience, confirm my own impression that such a practice is unusual in Scotland.¹ In this case there is the further anomaly that Neven becomes Nevellus. In the records the name is spelt in all sorts of ways, but no variation introducing the letter “l” has been noted.² Misled by the false analogy of Colvin and Colville, Melvin and Melville, which are certainly interchangeable, the author of the inscription has apparently sought to establish a connection with Neville, the Latinised form of which is, however, Nevilla. And there are some grounds for thinking that the man who erected the monument also composed the epitaph. In it he is described as a Master of Arts, which indicates that he was proud of his learning and did not wish posterity to forget it.

The description provided a clue to his history which it seemed worth while following up. After Dr Douglas Simpson and Mr F. C. Nicholson had made fruitless search at Aberdeen and Edinburgh respectively, Mr G. H. Bushnell, University Librarian at St Andrews, was able to tell me that a Gulielmus Neven had taken his Master’s degree at St Salvator’s College on 25th July 1676. That this was the future laird of Windhouse is virtually certain. It may seem surprising that with such a career before him he should have been sent to college. But his maternal grandfather had been minister of Bressay, and it may be that his mother dreamed that her son would follow in his footsteps. If so, the dream was soon dispelled. On 25th April 1678, the lad had a disposition of 40 merks land in Windhouse from his father, which means

¹ At the same time it is by no means unknown outside of Shetland. See, for example, Hay Fleming’s *St Andrews Cathedral Museum*, p. 75 (No. 6), p. 79 (No. 9), and p. 87 (No. 15). It is worth pointing out that all of these were probably in the churchyard before William Neven matriculated at St Andrews, of which (as we shall learn presently) he was a graduate.

² The founder of the Windhouse family, who was what Sibbald would have described as an “Incommer,” appears as “Niniane Neving” in a document of c. 1622: see *Proceedings*, vol. xxv. (1890–91), pp. 54 ff.

that he then settled down as heir-apparent. Eleven years later, four or five years before he actually succeeded, he married.¹

This brings us to the companion tombstone (fig. 6). It is rather smaller than the other and of a different shape, being 4 feet broad by 2 feet 9 inches high. The upper corners, too, are bevelled and enough



Fig. 6. Tombstone of Barbara Neven at Reafirth.

of the moulding remains to show that this was not an accidental feature. Unfortunately, the tablet has been broken from top to bottom, either before it was placed where it now is or in the process of building it in. Moreover, one side of it is partly concealed by a modern headstone, which has been set up so close to the wall as to make the taking of a comprehensive photograph impossible. The design is worth dwelling upon, not indeed for its artistic beauty but for its exceptionally elaborate character. It is a rather ambitious representation of the spirit of the departed being received at the gate of Heaven.

¹ On 22nd October 1689. For these dates and facts see *Zelland Family Histories*, 2nd ed., p. 209.

Above, on either side of a central crown is a cherub, emerging from a background of clouds. From the mouth of each cherub there issues a scroll bearing an incised inscription. The scroll on the left stops short on reaching the object indicated by the legend which it bears: **ECCE CORONA** ("Behold, a crown"). The other, which winds beneath it, proclaims **BEATI QUI IN DOMINO MORIUNTUR** ("Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord"), the letters being so cut that they have to be read from right to left, an indication of the quarter from which the voice is supposed to be coming. A third scroll, which passes upwards beneath the second in the direction of the crown, displays the words **VENI DOMINE VENI AMEN** ("Come, Lord, come. Amen"), also in retrograde lettering. This last scroll proceeds from the lips of a female figure, recumbent on a bier, with hands raised in the attitude of prayer. Between the scroll and the recumbent figure is a shield charged: A sword and key saltire-wise between three cross-crosslets. Above the shield, again, are the initials **B K** for Barbara Kennedy and, at a different angle, **W N** for William Neven. The whole of the rest of the available space is filled with lettering, the individual letters being frequently ligatured and occasionally half-size.

The main part of the epitaph begins as a description of the scene that the sculptor has depicted:

SIC
MIGRAT
BARBARA . KEN
NEDA . INCLYTI . V . JOAN
NIS . KENEDI . B . DE . KERMYKS

PRÆFECTIQ . ABERDONENSIS . FÆLIA
LEGITTIMA . CUJUS . HEIC . SUB . CIPPO
RECONDVTVR . OSSA . OBIIT . ENIM
3TIO . DIE . DECRIS . ANN : 1694 . IN . EJUS . AET
MEMORIAM . HUNC . LAPIDEM . POSUIT
ILLIUS . CONJUX . MÆRENS . MAGR
GUILLIELMUS
NEVELLUS . D . DE
WINDHOUSE

"The passing of Barbara Kennedy, who was the lawful daughter of a man of mark, John Kennedy, Baron of Kermucks and Constable of Aberdeen, and whose mortal remains lie buried here. She died on the 3d day of December 1694. This stone was set up to her everlasting memory by her sorrowing husband, Mr William Neven, laird of Windhouse."

The surnames are again Latinised, and Neven once more appears as Nevellus. This epitaph and the one on the tomb of Gilbert Neven and his wife are clearly from the same hand, and there can be little doubt as to that being the hand of the dutiful son, who was also the sorrowing husband. Note that William describes himself as laird of Windhouse, whereas Gilbert has the title of laird of Windhouse and Scousburgh. Thereby hangs a tale. The father seems to have got into pecuniary difficulties some years before his death, for in 1687 he wad-setted Scousburgh, which is in the parish of Dunrossness, to his fellow-laird, Stewart of Bigton.¹ The transaction was the subject of intermittent litigation for nearly a hundred years, and a judgment of the Court of Session, pronounced in 1783, suggests that William might safely have continued to call himself "of Scousburgh," even although he had lost control of the lands. Indeed, the title was actually used by his nephew Gilbert, who died in 1743, and was subsequently claimed by Gilbert's daughter.²

Another phrase appearing on the stone demands a longer explanation. The lady's father is designated *Præfectus Aberdonensis*. This has usually, and not unnaturally, been interpreted as meaning that he had been Provost of Aberdeen.³ At the outset of my inquiry, however, Dr Douglas Simpson, to whom I had applied for information about him, pointed out that the dignity was not a municipal one, but a hereditary office belonging to the proprietors of Ellon Castle. I am indebted to Mr Innes of Learney, Carrick Pursuivant, for an illuminating note upon the subject:—

"Kennedy of Kermucks was Constable of Aberdeen, an office feudally annexed to the lands of Kermucks, subsequently conjoined with Ellon Castle, to which the office of Constable of Aberdeen now belongs as a part and pertinent. These Constabularies involved keeping order on public occasions, and at the annual Fair and in 1562, on the visit of Mary Queen of Scots, Kennedy of Kermucks was summoned to perform the duties of his office (T. Mair, *Parish of Ellon*, p. 37). All heritable Constabularies were abolished by the Heritable Jurisdictions Act, 1747, but the Dunstaffnage case (*Argyll v. Campbell*, 1912, S.C. p. 458) showed that the underlying duties and office of keeping a Royal Castle were not struck at by the Heritable Jurisdictions Act, so that the proprietor of Ellon Castle is still Heritable Keeper of the Castle of Aberdeen which is an earth motte underneath Castlehill Barracks. The office still exists, being feudally annexed to Ellon Castle, and no occasion has ever arisen for it to fall into desuetude, because, owing to Castlehill Barracks having been built on the top, His Majesty has

¹ *Zelland Family Histories*, 2nd ed., p. 209.

² See *Proceedings*, vol. xxv. (1890-91), p. 61.

³ E.g. *Zelland Family Histories*, 2nd ed., p. 209. *Aliquando bonus dormitat Homerus!*

been in actual possession, and there has accordingly been no occasion for the Keeper to perform any duties. The office of Constable and Keeper of Aberdeen Castle carries with it an official coat of arms: Argent, a sword and key in saltire Gules, on an inescutcheon of the arms of whoever happens to be proprietor of Ellon for the time being."

The last sentence can be illustrated from the tombstone, where the three cross-crosslets on the shield are for Kennedy, the sword and key in saltire for the hereditary office. At the first glance the expression "Baron of Kermucks" may seem odd to those unfamiliar with the mysteries of feudal terminology. It will cease to do so, if they remember the Baron of Bradwardine, a parallel most aptly cited to me by Mr Innes. On the other hand, in this case it ought in strictness to have been preceded by *olim*. The connection of the Kennedy family with Kermucks was finally and formally severed in 1669, when Barbara was an infant in arms. On 4th August of that year Sir John Forbes of Watertown obtained under the Great Seal a charter of several lands, including Ellon Castle and Kermucks, "together with the heritable office of constabulary of Aberdeen," and the charter was confirmed by Act of Parliament in the following December. The documents state that, as a preliminary, two "John Kennedies"—a father and his son-and-heir—had resigned their rights.¹

The senior of these was John Kennedy of Kermucks, the Covenanting laird who flits in and out of the pages of Spalding's *Trubles of Aberdeen*. At that time he was a douce Presbyterian elder. But in 1652 he killed his neighbour, Thomas Forbes of Watertown, in a brawl arising out of some trumpery dispute about the digging of a ditch.² Arrested in Edinburgh, he escaped from prison. As neither he nor his son (who had taken an active part in the *melée*) appeared at the diet fixed for their trial, both were outlawed. He sought refuge on the lonely island of Stroma in the Pentland Firth, a wadset of which was ultimately granted to him by the Earl of Caithness.³ Meanwhile he had removed his family from Aberdeenshire. His estates in the county had not been confiscated, and he had sold them to John Moir, who in 1659 disposed of them to John Forbes, son of the murdered laird and recipient of the charter of 1669. That charter records the resignation of Moir and his heir as well as of the two Kennedys. Until it was

¹ *Acts of Scots Parliament*, vol. vii. p. 593. Cf. [Joseph Robertson] *Book of Bon Accord* (1839), pp. 374 f., where the relevant extract is printed.

² See "The Slaughter of Watertown" in T. Mair's *Narratives and Extracts from the Records of the Presbytery of Ellon* (1894).

³ His tomb is still a conspicuous object there. See *Royal Comm. Inventory of Monuments, etc., in Caithness*, No. 50.

confirmed, there may have been some room for doubt as to who was Hereditary Constable of Aberdeen. Thereafter there could be none.¹

But who was Mrs Neven's father? The tombstone shows that she was born in 1669. As the Covenanter was married in 1625, it is *prima facie* more likely that she was his granddaughter than that she was his daughter. If so, her father must have been John Kennedy the younger, and her mother his second wife, a Miss Mowat, whom he married in 1663.² There is, however, a serious difficulty. In the light of the facts narrated above, it seems most unlikely that anyone would have called the younger Kennedy "Baron of Kermucks and Constable of Aberdeen" or have used the coat-of-arms of the Constabulary in connection with his name.³ The alternative is to suppose that his father, then an old man, married for a second time in 1667 or 1668, and that a daughter Barbara was born in 1669. Unfortunately there is no means of testing the soundness of this hypothesis, as after 1666 there is a long gap in the registers of Canisbay, within which parish Stroma lies. But, if it could be verified, everything would be in order. Barbara probably came into the world before the charter was granted, certainly before it was confirmed. And at the worst one could always fall back on the time-honoured maxim of "Aince a baillie, aye a baillie."

Having set forth the dilemma, I must content myself with bringing the *data* furnished by the tombstone to the notice of the family historians. It will be for them to make their choice. But there are still two portions of the inscription to be mentioned. The first can be dismissed without comment. It is enclosed within a plain framework, immediately below the word WINDHOUSE, and reads:—

CRESCIT · POST ·
FVNERA · VIRTUS

which might be freely rendered "Death is swallowed up in victory." The other, similarly enclosed, is to the right of it, partly under MÆRENS

¹ There is an interesting sketch of "The Kennedys of Kermuck and Stroma" by John Mowat in *Scottish Notes and Queries*, 3rd series, vol. v. p. 109 ff. A more recent and detailed account has been published in the *Proceedings of the Orkney Antiquarian Society* (vol. x. pp. 17 ff., and vol. xi. pp. 19 ff.) by Mr John Mooney, Kirkwall, whom I have to thank for valuable help, most willingly given.

² I owe my knowledge of this marriage to Mr John Laughton, Corstorphine, a descendant of the Kennedy family, who refers me to Beaton's *Registers of Canisbay*, 1652-66 (Scottish Record Society), p. 17. It seems to have escaped even the vigilant eye of Mr Mooney, who mentions only a marriage to Margaret Burnett (c. 1656) and one to Jean McKenzie (1678).

³ At the same time Mr Laughton tells me that he has in his possession a document, witnessed at Kirkwall in 1678, in which the younger Kennedy is described as "Constable and Burgess of Aberdeen."

MAGR and partly under the bier on which the dying lady rests. It runs:—

VIGINTI · VIRGO · PER · ANOS · POSTEA · QUINOS
MARITO · NUPTA · FILIUMQ · PEPERAT · UNUM
FILIAS · VERO · DUAS · SVPERSTITE · ELIZABETHA
FILIA · DISCESIT · ÆTATIS · VIGESIMO · SEXTO

“A maiden for twenty years, she was afterwards married to her husband for five, and bore one son and two daughters. She died in the twenty-sixth year of her age, survived by her daughter Elizabeth.”

If this quatrain was written by William Neven, as we may believe it to have been, the versification hardly redounds to his credit. The stonecutter was probably responsible for PEPERAT and DISCESIT, blunders due to the omission of letters.¹ But it is obvious that the lines are intended for hexameters, and they fairly bristle with false quantities. It would be unfair to draw any inference as to the standard exacted for a degree at St Andrews in the seventeenth century. Nearly twenty years had elapsed since the laureation of Gulielmus Neven, and we do not need to look far for what the cynic might regard as still more convincing evidence of amnesia. Barbara Kennedy of “everlasting memory” died at the beginning of December 1694. By the following October the widower had found himself another bride.²

¹ That is, on the assumption that the original draft had PEPERERAT. But it is possible that it may have had PEPERIT.

² *Zetland Family Histories*, 2nd ed., p. 209.