



A BAPTISM FROM STONEHAVEN JAIL

At the time of the persecutions 1746-50 when these parties were brought to punishment who had not taken the oath of allegiance etc to the King, hence called non-jurors and who continued to pray for the Prince (Bonnie Prince Charlie) and not for HM King George which by act of Parliament was declared penal. The Episcopal Chapel of Muchalls, which stood to the West of Muchalls Castle, was by order of the Duke of Cumberland raised to the ground. The minister Mr Troup was obliged to resort to places where he could find accommodation in to preach to his followers. One Saturday night he sent word around the villages of Skateraw and the Seatoun of Muchalls that he would on the following morning conduct a service at a place called Goudie. This is a large rock situated a little to the North of the Seatoun of Muchalls; the men from Skateraw (now Newtonhill) came round in their boats. The service had scarcely commenced when the watchman who had been placed on top of the cliff to give warning of danger came and told Mr Troup that Cumberland's redcoats were coming. Someone having informed the redcoats that a service was to be held at that place. The seatoun villagers hurriedly made tracks for their houses while the Skateraw men went home in their boats.

In 1748-49 Mr Troup minister of the Episcopal Chapel of Muchalls, (now St Ternan) Alexander Greig, Stonehaven, and John Petrie Drumlithie were jailed in the Tolbooth of Stonehaven for conducting services which were contrary to the laws forbidding worship with more than 4 people present. Even though they were jailed they still ministered to their flocks. The fisherfolk from Skateraw and other villages bringing their children to be baptised through the bars of the jail window

George Washington Brownlow captured this scene in his painting "A baptism from a Stonehaven jail" The original of which belongs to the Bishop of Brechin.

Mr Troup is at the jail window baptising a child brought by their parents from Skateraw or one of the other villages. Brownlow used local people as his models in the painting. Masson, Christie and Lees all can be identified. Today the descendants of these models take great pride that their ancestors are in the painting.

Copies of this painting can be obtained from George Masson of St Ternan's Muchalls.
At a cost of £7.50 for A4: £10.00 for A3: £50 for A1 plus postage
For more details contact George on 01224 733583. Or Email: george.masson@lineone.net



GEORGE WASHINGTON BROWNLOW "BAPTISM FROM STONEHAVEN JAIL" (TOLBOOTH)

The artist models are believed to be the following. Holding the basket containing the child for the baptism was Robert Masson son of James Masson and Janet Masson born in Sketraw and baptised on the 14th July 1794 (They may have been members of William Walker's congregation). Robert was confirmed on the 19th August 1816. He married Jean Masson on 30th October 1824 and after her death he married Isobel Masson on 20th Nov 1836. Robert died at 15 Sketraw on the 4th November 1874 and was buried in Cowie Churchyard.

The woman holding the basket was Isobel, Robert's daughter to his second wife who was born in Sketraw on the 10th November 1842 and baptised on the 13th November 1842. She was confirmed on the 8th June 1856 and died of consumption on 24th February 1865 at 15 Sketraw and buried in Cowie Churchyard.

Behind Masson stood Andrew Christie holding the book son of Andrew Christie and Mary McLeod who was born in Stranathro on the 23rd June 1832 and baptised on 1st July 1832. He was confirmed on the 3rd Sunday after Easter 1844 and was married to Janet Masson on 2nd November 1861. He was lost at sea during the storm of 21st April 1880 along with three of his brothers and his son Andrew.

The woman in the "mutch" and red shawl was Robert Masson's second wife Isobella (Isobel?) Masson, she was born in Cowie about 1811 and died on the 20th March 1893 and was buried in Cowie Kirkyard.

The little girl on the corner was Jane Christie (Became Mrs Lees) known after the manner of the times as Jane "Jo" and further described as "Souter Wullie's wife's sister. The boy with the broad bonnet was William Masson, father of William Masson, who was formally a cabinetmaker in Beachgate, Stonehaven, and latterly resided in Aberdeen. The woman next to Mrs Robert Masson can be identified only as "Cowie Kirsty", while the minister in the picture was a Mr Skinner, a clergyman on holiday from Essex.

The girl in the tartan shawl is Ann Christie daughter of Robert Christie and Janet Masson who was born in Sketraw on 15th June 1854 and baptised on the 1st July 1854. She was confirmed on the 25th May 1869 at Muchalls. She married William Lees from Sketraw on the 13th April 1874 and later moved to Stonehaven with her family. She died at 1 Albert Lane Stonehaven on 26th February 1930 and was buried at Cowie. According to her, she and the more distant figure were merely intended by the artist to be passing spectators of the scene and Mr Brownlow afterwards gave her the shawl as a gift.

Some confusion arises over the identity of the woman bending over a newly baptised child. According to one source it was Isabella mentioned above, while another holds that it was her sister Elisabeth Masson. Much of this information was given many years ago by another daughter of Robert and Mrs Masson, Mrs Alexander Christie, mother of the late Mr James Christie, Castle Street Stonehaven, and was corroborated by Mrs Lees mentioned above.

The names of the relations of the various artist models and their dates of birth etc were supplied by Bob Mathewson of St Ternan's Scottish Episcopal Church Muchall

EXPLANATION OF THE BAPTISM AT THE TOLBOOTH JAIL STONEHAVEN

THIS PAINTING HANGS IN FORBESCOURT, THE HOME OF THE BISHOP OF BRECHIN. IT WAS PAINTED BY GEORGE WASHINGTON BROWNLOW, IN 1865, WHEN HE WAS AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS POWERS.

THE REV. ^{MR TROUP} ALEXANDER GREIG IS SHOWN AT THE WINDOW OF THE TOLBOOTH OF STONEHAVEN, WEARING THE BLACK GOWN AND WHITE BANDS THEN CUSTOMARY AMONG EPISCOPAL CLERGY IN SCOTLAND, ALTHOUGH WHETHER HE WOULD HAVE BEEN WEARING THEM IN PRISON IS PERHAPS OPEN TO DOUBT. HE IS PORTRAYED IN THE ACT OF BAPTISING AN INFANT, HELD ALOFT IN THE KIND OF BASKET CALLED A "SKULL", THE NORMAL USE OF WHICH IS TO STOW A BAITED LINE FOR FISHING. THE TALL MAN WHO IS THE MODEL FOR THE FATHER WAS A FISHERMAN FROM SKETRAW (NEWTONHILL) NAMED ROBERT MASSON, AND THE YOUNG WOMAN POSING AS HIS MOTHER WAS HIS DAUGHTER. HER SKIRT IS PINNED UP AT THE FRONT IN THE OLD FISHER FASHION, AND HEAD SQUARES ARE BY NO MEANS NEW, AS A GLANCE AT THE TWO WOMEN IN THE RIGHT BACKGROUND WILL SHOW. A BOY IN A "BRAID BLUE BONNET" THE ORDINARY WEAR OF THE 18th CENTURY PEASANTS, STANDS BESIDE A YOUNG GIRL ON THE LEFT SIDE, HOLDING A FISHING ROD. IN THE MIDDLE DISTANCE IS SEEN A WOMAN WEARING A HIGH WHITE MUTCH. SHE HAS JUST WADED THE RIVER-MOUTH WITH HER CREEL ON HER BACK CONTAINING HER INFANT WHOM SHE IS BRINGING TO RECEIVE THE GRACE OF REGENERATION.

THE ARTIST HAS PLACED IN THE FOREGROUND A SMALL "MURLAN" BASKET WITH HADDOCKS, THE BLACK MARKS MADE, ACCORDING TO FISHER BELIEF, BY ST. PETER'S FINGER AND THUMB WHEN HE FOUND THE TRIBUTE MONEY IN THE MOUTH OF THE FISH. (MATTHEW 17v27) BEING CLEARLY VISIBLE. ANOTHER "SKULL" CONTAINING COD, IS ALSO SHOWN WITH FISH ALSO IN THE OTHER CREEL. IN THE DISTANT BACKGROUND ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE BAY IS FAINTLY SEEN THE RUINED CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF STORMS (1276) IN WHOSE SHADE JOHN TROUP HAS SLEPT FOR MANY A YEAR.

WHO WERE THE ARTISTS MODELS?

HOLDING THE BASKET, CONTAINING THE CHILD FOR BAPTISM, WERE ROBERT MASSON AND HIS DAUGHTER ISABELLA. BEHIND MASSON STOOD ANDREW CHSISTIE, WHO WAS DROWNSD AT SEA SHORTLY AFTER THE PAINTING OF THE PICTURE. THE WOMAN IN THE "MUTCH" WAS ROBERT HASSON' S^WIFE WHO, ACCORDING TO ONE ACCOUNT, DIED IN 1893 AND WAS BURIED IN COWIE CHURCHYARD, THE LITTLE OIRL IS THE CORNER WAS JANE CHRISTIE, KNOWN AFTER THE MANNER OF THE TIMES AS JANE"JO" AND FURTHER DESCRIBED AS "SOUTER WILLIE'S WIFE'S SISTER".

THE BOY WITH THS "BRAID BLUE BONNET" WAS WILLIAM MASSON, FATHER OF MR WILLIAM MASSON, WHO WAS FORMELY A CABINET! MAKER IS BEACHGATE, STONEHAVEN.

THE WOMAN NEXT TO MRS MASSON CAN BE IDENTIFIED ONLY AS "COWIE KIRSTY". THE PERSON POSING AS MR TROUP THE MINISTER WHO CARRIED OUT THE BAPTISM WAS A MR SKINNER, A CLERGYMAN ON HOLIDAY FROM ESSEX,

THE GIRL IN THE TARTAN SHAWL WAS A MRS. LEES (NEE ANNE CHRISTIE), WHO LIVED IN ALBERT LANE, AND SHE WAS GIVEN THE SHAWL AS A GIFT BY THE ARTIST.

SOME CONFUSION ARISES OVER THE IDENTITY OF THE WOMAN BENDING OVER A NEWLY BAPTISED GHILD. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE IT WAS ISABELLA MASSON, MENTIONED ABOVE WHILE AHOTHER SOURCE STATES THAT IT WAS HER SISTER , ELIZABETH MASSON.