

The Parish of Mordington

Although the hamlets of Ross, Cowdrait, Burnmouth and Partanhall are almost conjoined the former is in the Parish of Mordington while the latter three are in Ayton Parish. Mordington had its own churches and its own school and schoolmaster. Because of the close proximity of Ross to Cowdrait, Burnmouth and Partanhall there was inevitably intermarriage with the result that the Burnmouth family historian may find that some of their ancestors had their origins in Ross. It is therefore important while searching for Burnmouth ancestors to look in Berwick, Mordington as well as Berwick, Ayton. The following paragraphs contain information gleaned mainly from the 1851 census records

Mordington was essentially an agricultural parish with the exception of Lamberton Shiels where there were a few fishers, although most of the inhabitants there were farm workers. In the Fishing Village of Ross almost every adult male was a fisherman. Catch-a-penny Farm was in the Parish of Mordington and there are family tree items elsewhere on this web site relating to that farm. Lamberton Pit Houses were occupied by farm labourers in the 1800's and by 1851 fourteen of the cottages were uninhabited. There had been a coal pit at Lamberton but apparently it was a poor seam.

Lamberton Thatched house was a grocer's shop as well as a dwelling house. Ultimately the Old Toll House at Lamberton was occupied by farm workers and the Toll House Keeper lived in a newer building. There were two shepherds, a blacksmith and the farm steward living in Lamberton Farm cottages but in the main they were occupied by agricultural labourers. In the farmhouse, as well as the farmer and his family and house servants, there were sometimes agricultural students not only from other parts of Scotland but from England and Ireland.

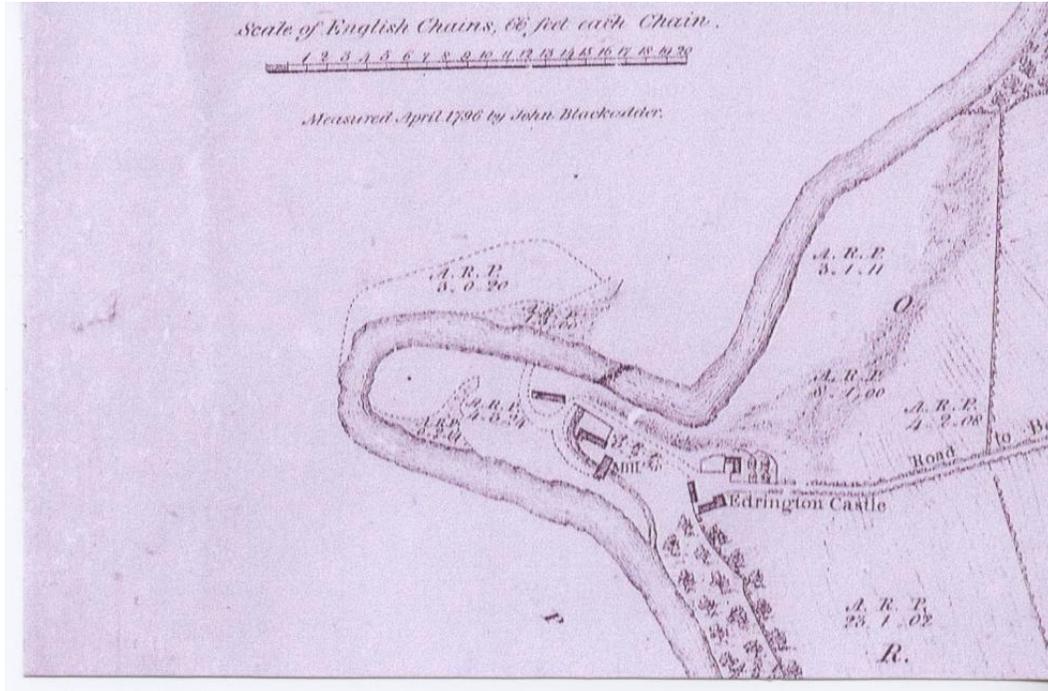
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Mordington House from a painting by Frank W Wood

Mordington House was built on the site of an old Pele tower which may have been incorporated into the new building. Black Agnes of Dunbar, Robert the Bruce's daughter, lived in the Pele tower at one time. She was buried there. Cromwell and his men camped there for a couple of nights in 1650. In the early 1800's the butler, cook, housemaids and the dairy maid lived in the house. The Land Steward, gardener and gamekeeper lived in Mordington cottages. In Mordington Mains farmhouse besides the farmer and his family there was a house servant. The Farm Steward, a shepherd and about a dozen laborers were in Mordington Mains Cottages. Then there was a row of cottages known as the Starch Houses. They were occupied by a master tailor, journeyman tailor, a carter, a gardener and a dressmaker. There were also a number of joiners. Irregular marriages were conducted at Mordington Toll House as well as at Lamberton. The schoolhouse was built about 1840 and next to it was the schoolroom. In the little village of The Clappers, consisting of six or seven houses, there was a blacksmith's shop, a mason, a joiner's shop and a shoemaker.

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This 1796 Plan of Edrington Estate shows the Castle and the Mill.

Edrington House: The indoor staff included a footman, a coachman, a cook and a chambermaid. The farmer at Edrington Mains employed about half a dozen labourers and in the 1851 census his mother's occupation is listed as stay maker. There were two mills Lambs Mill and Edrington Mill. The miller at Lambs flour mill also ran a small farm. The mill carter's address is rather intriguingly, Edrington Castle. This is probably because the Castle was a ruin and the stones had been plundered and rebuilt to provide houses for farm workers. In 1795 the Castle was described as a ruin in the Old Statistical Accounts of Scotland.

There were three churches in Mordington in quick succession. One of the owners of Mordington house objected to the church and churchyard being in the grounds of his house so in 1757 a new church and manse were erected but this church was shoddily built and had to be replaced in 1861. From 1843 there was a Free Church near Mordington Mains. At Lambertton only the ruins of the old the Kirk remained.

The Fishing Village of Ross

1841

The 1841 census tells us little about the inhabitants of the houses in Ross except for their names, ages, and occupations and whether they were born in Scotland and in the county of Berwickshire. The '41 census took place on the night of the 6th of June. The enumerator left a schedule with every household before the night of the census and collected the completed papers the next day. He checked them and copied the details into his enumeration book. The ages of people over 15 were rounded down to the nearest 5. The enumerators were given the option of whether to do this or not but the rule was applied to the Ross census thus making the year of birth inaccurate in most cases. Ten households were recorded in Ross.

- The first family listed in the 1841 census is that of John Spouse, son of William Spouse and Mary Martin. He was born in 1790 so for once the age on the census return was correct. John was a fisherman. He married Alison Anderson at Coldingham on 1st February 1816. At the time of the census they had four children, Elizabeth, William and James, who were both fishermen and Mary who was 13. Alison, John's wife, died before 1851 but a record of her death has not been found.
- Next door to John were his brother Robert Spouse and his wife Mary Robertson. Mary was born in Ednam in Roxburghshire which prompted the enumerator to write 'No' in the column where he denoted whether the person was born in the county where they were living. William and Mary had two children William who was a fisherman and Elizabeth who was 11.

- William Aitchison and Helen Martin are the third couple listed in the census. They have no children but were only married in October 1840. They had a young male servant, George Cribbes from Eyemouth who was later lost in the 1881 disaster.
- Next door to them were Alexander and Margaret Anderson, who were 60 and 50 respectively. Nothing is known about them except that Alexander was a fisherman and they were both born in Berwickshire and had no children living at home.
- More is known about the next household however. The first person listed is Alison Craig, maiden name Craik, widow of John Craig. She was living with her widowed daughter Isabella Collin widow of Joseph Collin. In the house also was young Joseph Collin aged 12. This Collin family is the only family of that name in Ross or indeed the hamlets of Cowdrait, Burnmouth or Partanhall in 1841. It is more than likely they originated in Eyemouth. Alison Craig's daughter Ellen was married to William Spouse [of whom more later] and another daughter Margaret married John Spouse, the first entry on the census, after his first wife Alison Anderson died.
- How many of the families in this little row of houses were related to each other in one way or another is illustrated in the next census entry, that of Alexander Spouse. He was the brother of John and Robert Spouse living but a few doors away. Like his brothers Alexander was a fisherman. He and his wife Mary Wilson had three children, George and William of school age and baby Margaret age 3, in the house at the time of the census. The couple had two older daughters Mary and Agnes. Mary was a female servant to a family in Burnmouth and shows up in the census there but Agnes the oldest daughter is nowhere to be found.

- Another mystery emerged when the details of next family on the census was researched. Brother and sister, Robert and Janet Martin, living with their widowed mother Alison Anderson are listed next. Robert was a fisherman. His father Alexander had died 23 April 1835 but in 1843 it came to light that Alexander had been named in the will of Adam Willis and Mary Martin. This rather complicated document resulted in an Inventory of Alexander's personal effects being drawn up in November 1843, 8 years after his death. Alexander had been left a legacy of £70 by Adam Willis and Mary Martin. However the money was not to be paid out until six months after the death of the longest lived of that couple. Therefore six months after Mary's death the money was paid to Alexander's heirs as the will had stipulated. Probably because of legal fees the amount had shrunk to £50. That sum was to be divided by 6 which meant the beneficiaries received just over £8 each. Robert and Janet got their share of their father's legacy. This testament has left a record of where Alexander's children were in November 1843 which would not otherwise have been known. Peter Martin appeared for all the siblings. His brother William Martin was a fisher in Burnmouth, Robert, as we know, was a fisher in Ross, Agnes was married to Thomas Anderson, a fisher in Burnmouth, Janet, as we know also, was living in Ross and Mary was living in London!
- Back to the 1841 census to discover that Robert and Janet Martin's brother, William, lived next door to him. The 1843 testament declares William was a fisher in Burnmouth at that time but that may be incorrect. William's wife Catherine Dunn was born in Duns or Dunse as it was originally spelt. There was also an Elizabeth Dunn in the house. She was Catherine's daughter but her father was John Murray, who was a carpenter. Elizabeth was born in England in 1826. Later Elizabeth took the name of her step father and was

married as Elizabeth Martin. There is no record of Catherine ever marrying John Murray, Elizabeth's father. William Martin and Catherine Dunn were married on 4th October 1834 at Lamberton Toll. There is a note in the parish register saying 'see session record' which probably means they were hauled over the coals for their 'irregular marriage.'

- The fourth Spouse brother in the Ross census of 1841 was William, the first born son of William and Mary Martin, and his wife Helen Craig. William had a twin sister, Janet. They were christened twice, once at Coldingham on 3rd February by Mr. Smith the Minister at Mordington. Their father is described as a fisher at Coldingham. The entry just says their names were William and Janet. When the twins were christened again two days later at Mordington, William Spouse and Mary Martin are described as weavers in Coldingham. This is probably true although William probably augmented his income by fishing. This entry is not quite so dignified. William and Mary had 'Two children baptized, one of them named William and the other Janet.' It is not clear why the Mordington Minister was at Coldingham but it was quite common for children to be christened twice, in the parishes of their paternal and maternal grandparents. There is no trace of Janet other than that of her baptism but William shows up in the '41 census aged 55 as was his wife Helen Craig. Helen was the sister of Isabella Craig, Joseph Collin's widow who lived three doors away. William and Helen, or Ellen as she was known, had no children.
- The last household listed is that of Elizabeth Martin maiden name Wilson who was born in Coldingham in 1785. She had 5 children but only two remained in the house in 1841, William and Alison. Helen, the oldest daughter, had married William Aitchison and was living at the other end of Ross village. Isabella, Elizabeth's second daughter, born 1813, had married James Dixon who was 13 years her senior, James

was a grocer and they lived at Lamberton Thatch house. Elizabeth's youngest daughter, Mary who was 18 was working as a servant to a family in Burnmouth. There was a Catherine Martin in the house who is the same age as William but we can only assume that she was William's wife. Nothing is known about this couple or what happened to them in later life. Such is the scarcity of information in the 1841 census that if a person does not appear in the 1851 headcount it sometimes proves impossible to trace them.

Name	Age	Occupation	Born in Scotland in the County of residence
John Spouse	45	Fisherman	Yes
Alison ditto	50		Yes
Elizabeth ditto	20		Yes
William ditto	20	Fisherman	Yes
James ditto	15	Fisherman	Yes
Mary ditto	13		Yes
<p>An example of the information contained in the 1841 census. The census form itself was set out slightly differently.</p>			

