

#### IV.

#### BELFIELD, EAST CALDER, THE COUNTRY MANSION OF THE LANTON OLIPHANTS. BY JOSEPH MORRIS, F.S.A. Scot.

In this paper I have used the short form of the word and the local pronunciation. The word Lanton is said to be British or Welsh, and means "Kirktown." "Lantoun" is the spelling in the old register. Afterwards the shorter form is used. Now and again the *g* comes in, and Langton seems a corrupted Scottish form.

This old mansion-house—now a ruin—has hitherto been entirely overlooked by antiquaries, although distant only some 12 miles from Edinburgh. It is situated in the Calder district, about a mile to the west of Midcalder Station on the Caledonian Railway, and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a mile to the north of the line.

For nearly two hundred years the place has been called Belfield, though previously known as Lanton House.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An entry in the Baptismal Register of East Calder of 1st February 1733 shows that the new name Belfield had then been adopted and Lanton disused.

In 1296 Count John de Lanton, along with his brother Alan in Berwickshire, swore fealty to Edward I. of England. John was vicar of Caldercleir—the ancient name of the barony—and after his submission was appointed Chancellor there for Edward. He may have had some say in naming this small estate; and it is suggestive that the church at Lanton in Berwickshire is dedicated to St Cuthbert as well as that in Caldercleir.

For the next three hundred years there is a blank. After that the earliest notice I have been able to find is in a short writ, said to be in the charter chest of the Earl of Morton, from “Jean Lyon, Countess of Angus,” acknowledging that she has in her possession the “reversion of Lanton given by James and Mungo Muir in Lanton, 1588.”

The next date is 1634, when James Douglas of “Stonypath” (Stonyrig?), Dubend, and Lanton, in the Barony of Caldercleir, was served heir to these properties. William Douglas, son of the above, was served heir to half of the town and lands of Lanton in 1646. Patrick Liston, in Calder, is Portioner of Lanton in 1662. The same Patrick Liston, along with his son William of Colzium, took part with the Covenanters. Both were at the battle of Rullion Green, 1666, for which they were declared outlaws and sentenced in absence to be executed and their estates forfeited. They went into hiding and escaped. The sentences were rescinded in 1690. William returned to Colzium, but I can find no further reference to his father.

Charles Oliphant, writer in Edinburgh, purchased “Lanton Law”<sup>1</sup> in the west end of Lanton in 1666.

The ruin of the mansion-house, as it now stands, is only about a third part of the house of sixty years ago. In 1848–9 the greater part of it, and the newest portion, was taken down, as the stones were wanted for cottages for ploughmen and for increasing the outhouse accommodation at East Lanton—the farm, which includes Belfield. It was then a three-storied, roomy, plain, old-fashioned mansion-house. The arched vault

<sup>1</sup> There is a Lanton Law in Berwickshire—a spur of the Lammermoors—near Lanton House.

and the flat over it are, or seem to be, of a much older date, and no doubt belong to the previous building—"the villa of Lanton" of some old writings I have come across, and incorporated by Charles Oliphant into the new building.

One of the things that used to interest visitors was the avenue of large beech trees skirted here and there with holly, showing that they had been enclosed with holly hedges. Owing to age—accelerated by the fumes from Oakbank Oilwork—most of these trees, showing signs of decay, have been cut down within the last five or six years. At the south-east corner of the house are some large yew trees, apparently quite healthy, one of which measures 9 feet 6 inches in circumference at 4 feet from the ground. More than a dozen other yews of a different variety, and much smaller, look unhealthy. There are also some fine sycamores about the place. Dr Simpson, in the *New Statistical Account*, says that at Belfield, though the position is exposed, there were some very fine sycamores; but these had all gone to the saw-mill previous to the death of the late Earl of Morton in the first quarter of the last century. On the east of the house, and at an equal distance to the west, are two small fields, walled in, called the easter and wester orchards, each containing about two acres. Along the walls grew apple, pear, and plum trees, some of which carried fruit sixty years ago. Hardly one now remains.

The whole estate seems to have been walled in; and most of the dykes, with only a turf coping, are still intact, after two hundred years' exposure to the elements. On the south side of the house, some 20 yards off, there is the basin or well of a fountain in dressed stone. To the south of that, some 20 yards distant, is a canal-shaped pond, now filling up. Whether the Oliphants constructed this for ornament, or whether it previously existed as a fish-pond, cannot now be known; the water supply has always been ample.

Somewhere about 1844 my father cut out of a recess over the stair the stucco bust of a gentleman—there were also the fragments of a lady. This bust was accidentally broken and thrown out. The face was a

rugged one, and the mouth and jaw gave one the impression that the original was a strong man. Over the shoulder was a belt or ribbon, with a badge of some sort attached and resting on the breast. From this, and perhaps from the somewhat hard look of the face, in our simplicity we set it down as that of a naval or military man. Mr Thomson suggests that it represented James Oliphant, the second laird, who was in 1713 appointed Under Keeper of the Royal Wardrobe. The badge may have had to do with that office—a very likely suggestion.

Sixty years ago there was over the door of a roofless outhouse a slightly ornamented panel having the initials "C.O." in bold letters, now built in over the window of one of the outhouses at East Lanton. Another "C.O." along with "B.K." turned up in the taking down of that time, and were built into an opening in the part of the house that was to be left for occupation, where they still remain, and have furnished the clue by which the builder and owner of two hundred and forty years ago has been identified.

Hearing of Mr Hardy B. M'Call's history of the neighbouring parish of Midcalder, I had a look into that work, and found in his notes on Patrick Kinloch of Alderston a number of interesting particulars: that his wife, Agnes Scott, was a daughter of Lawrence Scott of Bavelaw and Harper Rig, better known in later times as the Scotts of Malleny, and that Barbara, one of the daughters of Kinloch of Alderston, married an Edinburgh lawyer named Charles Oliphant. I at once coupled these two names with the initials at Belfield, and felt pretty sure that they meant the same individuals. It only remained to find the proof. After some delay, I stated my case to an old friend and keen antiquarian, the Rev. James Primrose of Glasgow, who advised writing Mr M'Call and seeing the Rev. Mr Anderson of the Register Office, Edinburgh. In his reply Mr M'Call said he thought the initials and the parties named were the same; that I should consult the parish Register of Baptisms. I did so, and found that James Oliphant of Lanton and his spouse Elizabeth Pennicook had four children baptized in East Calder Church between 1706 and 1712; that one of them was named Charles; that these

baptisms were witnessed by some of the then local gentry, such as James Lord Torphichen, Andrew Houston of Calder Hall, Sir Alexander Dalmahoy of that ilk, Sir Alexander Muirhead of Linhouse, and Hugh Burton of Selms. I called on the Rev. Mr Anderson at the Register House, who informed me that Charles Oliphant and Barbara Kinloch were married in 1662, and that the property was sold to Lord Morton in 1734.

I was subsequently introduced by Mr Anderson to Dr Maitland Thomson, who a few days thereafter sent a bundle of notes on the Oliphants of Lanton. What follows are selections from these notes.

William Oliphant of Drimmie, Chamberlain to the Earl of Dunfermline, great-grandson of Laurance, third Lord Oliphant, married Grissel, daughter of William Echline of Pitadro (near Inverkeithing, now a part of the Fordel estate), and had several children. The eldest, John, was a writer in Edinburgh. He left an only daughter, Jean, who married John Adair, the well-known map-maker. Charles was one of the younger sons. He also was a writer in Edinburgh. On 10th July 1662 he married Barbara, daughter of Patrick Kinloch of Aulderston,<sup>1</sup> an advocate. They had a charter of "the West End of Lanton," called "Lanton Law," 28th December 1666, and he was thereafter styled "of Lanton." On the 11th June 1674 he (Charles Oliphant) was charged before the Privy Council with attending conventicles. He confessed to attending one for curiosity, and was discharged. About 1672 his arms were recorded in the Lyon Register as those of a descendant of a third son of a Lord Oliphant. He was appointed one of the Clerks of Session conjointly with his eldest son James, 16th June 1691, and admitted to the office 3rd November thereafter. He was buried in the Greyfriars, 11th December 1693.

Of his family (and he had fourteen), Mr Thomson's notes on four of them will be interesting:—

Elizabeth, fourth child, married, 14th July 1695, David Gregory of Kinairdie, Professor of Mathematics, Edinburgh, and afterwards of

<sup>1</sup> Alderston is in Midcalder parish, about half-way between that village and Livingston.

Astronomy at Oxford. His eldest son was Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, and Master of Sherborne.

Charles, fifth child, was a doctor, and M.P. for Ayr from 1710 to 1719, in which latter year he died. By his wife, Mary, daughter of Sir John Young of Leny, he had at least two sons and three daughters, none of whom left any issue. The eldest daughter, Mary, married in 1731 James, seventh Earl of Strathmore, and died six months after her marriage.

Barbara, seventh child, married, 14th September 1638, James Gregory, brother of David above mentioned. He was Professor successively of Natural Philosophy at St Andrews and of Mathematics at Edinburgh. She died 1714, aged 44 years, and was buried in the Greyfriars.

William, tenth child, was in 1710 Collector of Excise at Linlithgow. His wife was Margaret Dallas. In 1748 Francis, tenth and last Lord Oliphant, having died without issue, this William, being the nearest known male heir of the house, voted as Lord Oliphant at a Peers' Election in 1750, but did not assume the title, to which he had no right, the succession being regulated by a new patent granted in 1633, by which there was no remainder beyond heirs male of the body of the sixth Lord Oliphant. He (William) died in 1751.

James, the eldest son, was infeft as his father's heir on precept of clare constat dated 24th August 1698. He was an advocate, admitted 6th December 1687. Married about 1702 Elizabeth, elder daughter and co-heir of Dr Alexander Pennicook of Romano. This Dr Pennicook was the author of *The Description of Tweeddale*. Chambers says that Newhall was given to her in dowry—an unfortunate act of generosity, for Oliphant, who is said to have been considerably involved in debt, sold Newhall the following year to Sir David Forbes. He was buried in the Greyfriars.

Alexander, James's son, was served heir to his father in 1738. Married Catherine, youngest daughter of John Inglis of Auchindinny. In 1729 he was Town Clerk of Kelso. Later on a writer in Edinburgh. He was buried in the Greyfriars, 1742. His widow died in 1778.