

# The silver knife, fork and spoon given by Prince Charles Edward Stuart to Murdoch Macleod, 3 July 1746

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper presents a descriptive account of the silver knife, fork and spoon which are associated with Prince Charles Edward Stuart and his wanderings in the Western Isles in 1746. It traces the family descent of the pieces and investigates their contemporary documentation.*

## INTRODUCTION

In June 1985 the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland opened an exhibition entitled '*I Am Come Home*': *Treasures of Prince Charles Edward Stuart*. One of the purposes of that exhibition was to investigate a few of the very small number of objects which could be documented as having been associated directly with Prince Charles Edward Stuart (Dalglish & Mehan 1985). The subject of the present paper is a group of items lent to that exhibition which, in the intervening years, has been purchased by the National Museums of Scotland and added to the national collection. They are remarkable for the completeness of the documentation which not only links them with Prince Charles but which also traces the descent of their ownership right down to the present day.

## DESCRIPTION

The items concerned are a silver knife, fork and spoon which fit into a black shagreen-covered case which is in turn contained within a (later) mahogany box, the lid of which is decorated with an engraved silver plaque (illus 1–4).

The knife, which is 223 mm long, has a pointed, curved steel blade with an, as yet, unidentified cutler's mark. The handle is 'cannon' shaped with raised side panels, a domed end and simple knob finial. The junction between the blade is in the form of a stepped ferrule which is stamped with the following marks, all of which relate to Paris:

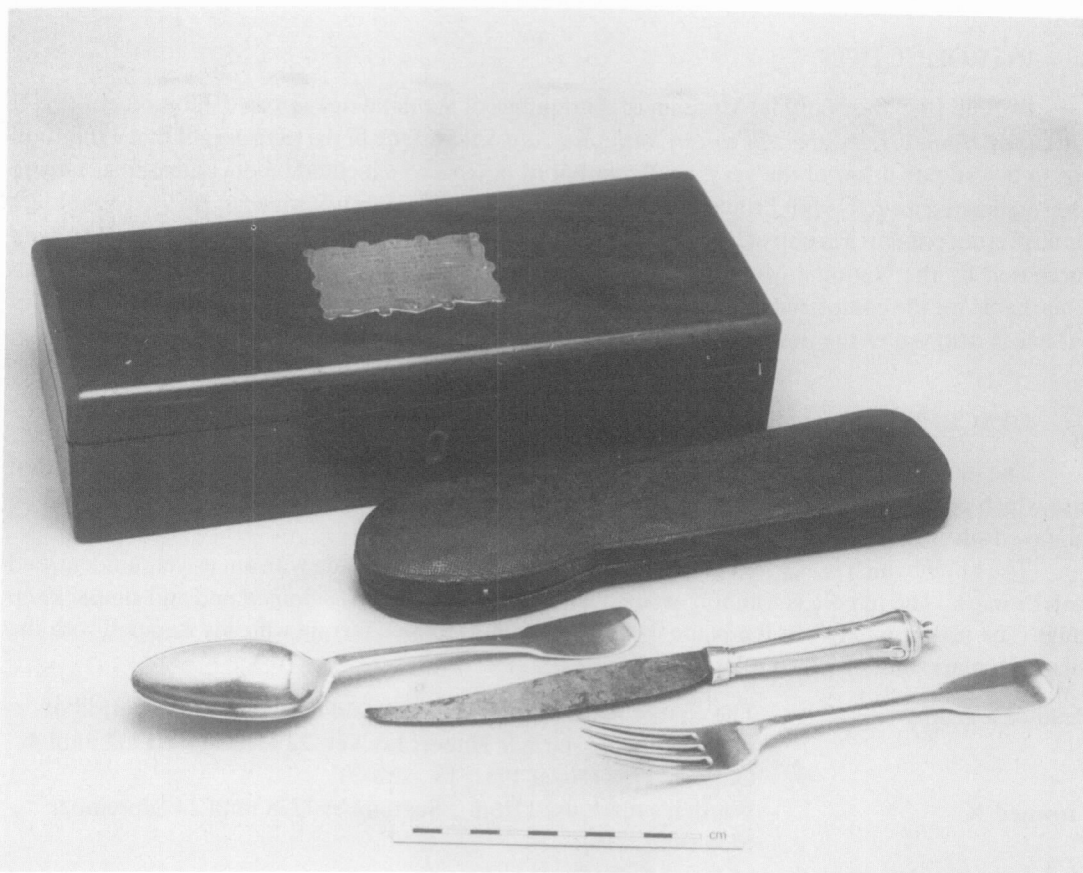
- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Head of a griffin | – The charge mark for old works of gold used during the period of office of the tax-farmer Hubert Louvet, 22 December 1732 until 4 October 1738 (Nocq 1931, IV, 232–3); |
| Crowned X         | – Warden's mark used from 7 September 1738 until 24 September 1738 ( <i>ibid</i> , 216);  |

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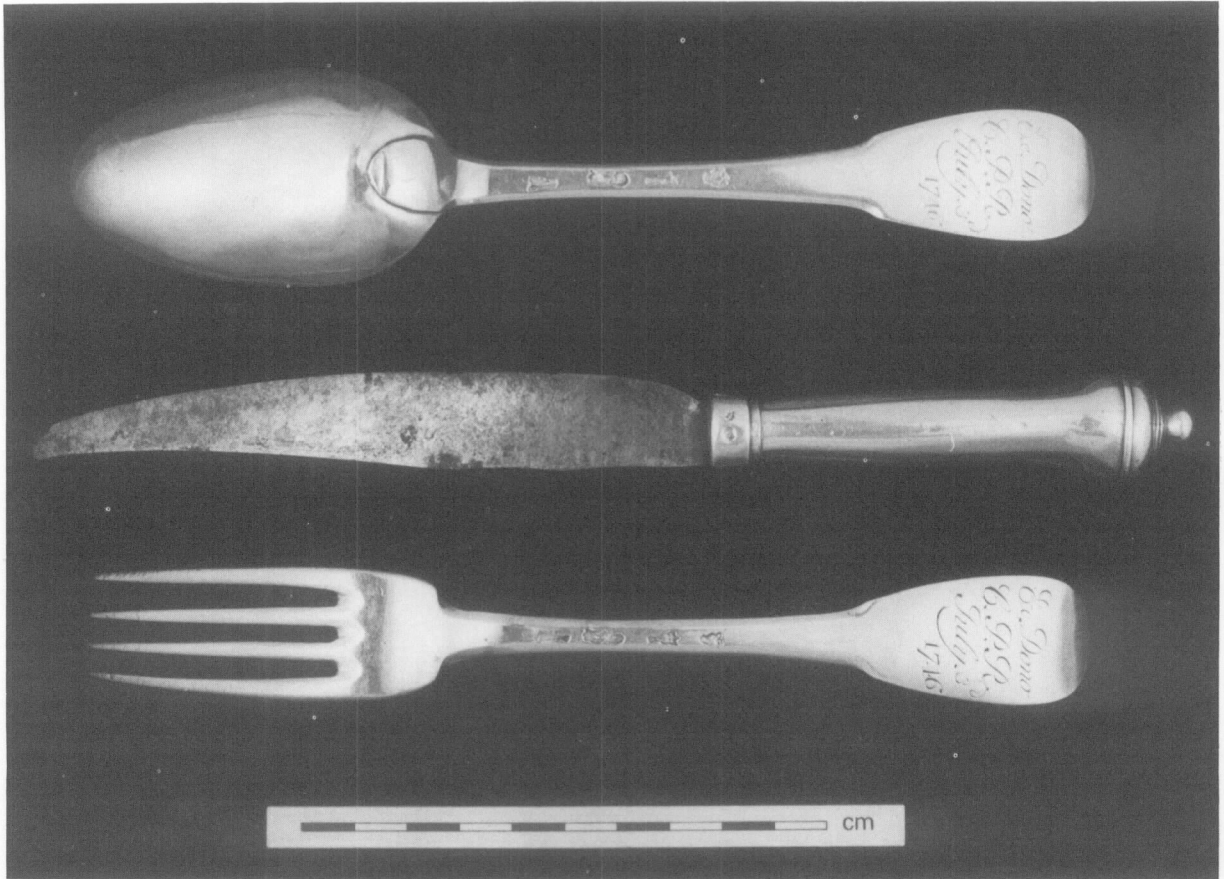
- Head of a dog – Discharge mark for small work used during period of the tax-farmer Hubert Louvet (see above) (*ibid*, 233);
- Lizard – Countermark for gold and silver used during the period of office of the tax-farmer Louis Robin, 4 October 1738 until 13 October 1744 (*ibid*, 233–4).

The fork is 194 mm long, has four tines and a fiddle-pattern stem with an upturned, shaped end. The underside of the stem bears the following Parisian marks:

- Crowned A with two palms – Charge mark for works of silver used during the period of office of the tax farmer Louis Robin, 4 October 1738 until 13 October 1744 (*ibid*, 233);
- Crowned Y – Warden’s mark used from 24 September 1738 until 30 September 1739 (*ibid*, 216);
- Head of an Ox – Discharge mark for large works of silver used during the period of office of the tax-farmer Louis Robin (see above) (*ibid*, 233);
- Unclear mark, apparently including three pellets and two letters, one possibly an ‘E’ – Unidentified marker’s mark.



ILLUS 1 Knife, fork and spoon, with shagreen case and mahogany box (*National Museums of Scotland*)



ILLUS 2 Knife, fork and spoon showing position of marks and engraving (*National Museums of Scotland*)

The spoon is 198 mm long, has an egg-shaped bowl, a simple double drop junction and a fiddle-pattern stem matching that of the fork. The marks on the underside of the stem are the same as those on the fork.

The marks on all three pieces are what one would normally expect on wares made and marked in Paris during this period, although the griffin's head on the knife seems to have been struck in error, instead of the 'crowned A' of the tax-farmer Louvet, used for silver. Taken together these marks reveal that the knife was presented, in a rough state, for weighing and assaying some time between 7 September 1737 and 24 September 1738 and was completed by 4 October 1738, although almost certainly not sold until later. The fork and spoon were presented for weighing and assaying some time between 24 September 1738 and 30 September 1739 and were completed after 4 October 1738 but before 13 October 1744. It is reasonable to suggest that all three pieces were ready for sale before the end of 1739 or early in 1740 (Godfrey Evans, Royal Museum of Scotland, pers comm).

All three items have been engraved, at a slightly later date to their manufacture, with the inscription 'Ex dono / C. P. R. / July. 3<sup>d</sup> / 1746' in a mid 18th-century flowing script (illus 3). On the fork and spoon this appears on the underside of the ends while the knife is inscribed on one of the raised side panels.

The cutlery is contained in a simple 'keyhole'-shaped wooden case, covered in black shagreen,

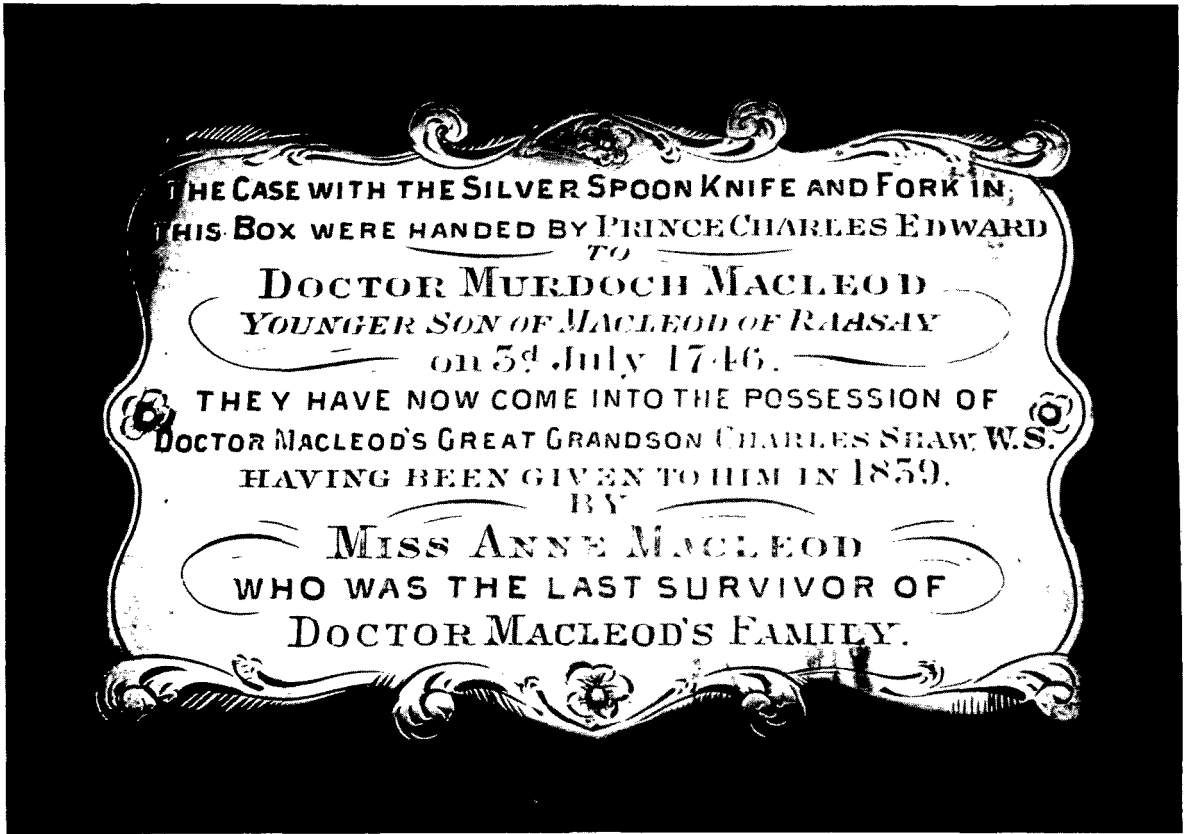


ILLUS 3 Engraving on spoon end (*National Museums of Scotland*)

whose inside is lined with dark green velvet and silk. This is now well worn and the two brass hinges are broken, separating the lid from the base. In turn, the cutlery and shagreen case are now kept within a (later) lidded rectangular mahogany box, lined with dark red velvet and mounted with a shaped silver plaque engraved with the following inscription (illus 4):

‘THE CASE WITH THE SILVER SPOON KNIFE AND FORK IN / THIS BOX WERE  
HANDLED BY PRINCE CHARLES EDWARD / TO / DOCTOR MURDOCH  
MACLEOD / YOUNGER SON OF MACLEOD OF RAASAY / ON 3<sup>d</sup> JULY  
1746. / THEY HAVE NOW COME INTO THE POSSESSION OF / DOCTOR  
MACLEOD’S GREAT GRANDSON CHARLES SHAW, W.S. / HAVING BEEN  
GIVEN TO HIM IN 1839. / BY / MISS ANNE MACLEOD / WHO WAS THE LAST  
SURVIVOR OF / DOCTOR MACLEOD’S FAMILY.’

The shagreen case measures 246 mm long with a maximum width of 61 mm and a maximum height (closed) of 34 mm; the same dimensions of the mahogany case are 288 mm by 112 mm by 74 mm.



ILLUS 4 Silver plaque on mahogany box (*National Museums of Scotland*)

## HISTORY, PROVENANCE AND DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Stylistically these pieces of cutlery are typical, good quality, examples of French flatware of the period. What is untypical and what makes them of particular interest to students of the Jacobite period, however, is their documented association with Prince Charles Edward Stuart and the events during his 'wanderings' after the battle of Culloden. The evidence for this comes from a variety of sources, including contemporary accounts, documented family history and the internal evidence of the engraved inscriptions. It will be most useful, however, to begin by tracing their ownership backwards from the present (table 1).

The Museum acquired them in the spring of 1987 from Mr G A D Chalmer, who had inherited the cutlery and cases from his mother, the late Mrs Katherine Douglas Gordon Shaw. She was the daughter of Duncan Shaw, a partner in the Inverness solicitor's firm, Anderson and Shaw, and late County Clerk of Inverness-shire. They were in the possession of his widow, Elizabeth Gordon of St Aubyns, Inverness in 1934 (Cameron, *Inverness Courier* 1934). He in turn had inherited from his father, Charles Shaw, WS, sheriff substitute at Lochmaddy. Sheriff Shaw died in Inverness in September 1885 and his obituary in the *Inverness Courier* (12 September 1885) states that

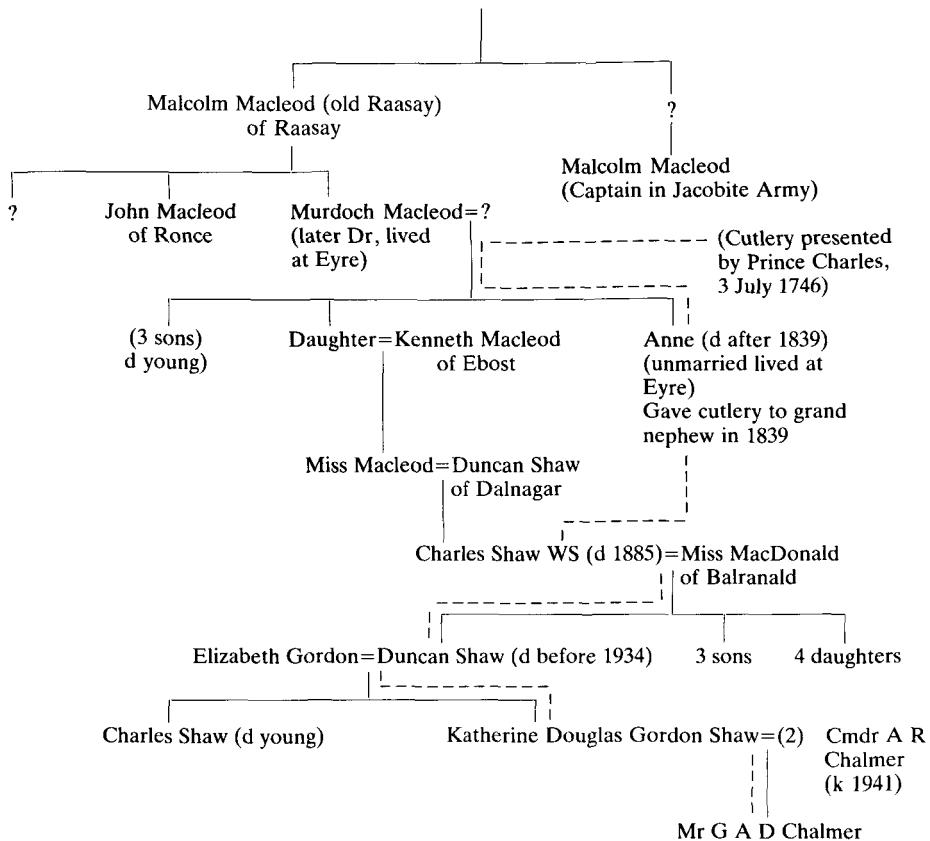
'Mr Shaw was descended from the Macleods of Raasay through Dr Murdoch Macleod, the companion of Prince Charles, who made arrangements for his escape from Skye. . . . the Prince presented

him with a case containing his silver spoon, knife and fork, saying "Keep you that till I see you again". The case came into the possession of the late Sheriff and was much prized by him as a relic of the Prince, of which the genuiness of which there could be no question.'

This story is attested to, with minor variations, in several contemporary accounts of Prince Charles's meetings with Macleod, and will be investigated in greater depth later. Charles Shaw WS was a great-grandson of Dr Murdoch Macleod through his mother, Miss Macleod of Ebost (Mrs Duncan Shaw) who in turn was the elder daughter of Kenneth Macleod of Ebost and his wife, the elder daughter of Murdoch Macleod. Shaw, however, was given the cutlery directly by his great-aunt, Anne Macleod, younger daughter of Murdoch. Anne never married and lived in her father's house at Eyre in Skye, both before and after his death. She gave the knife, fork and spoon and shagreen case directly to her grand nephew Charles in 1839, a few years before her death (Cameron, *Inverness Courier* 1934). The gift is recorded by the contemporary inscription on the mahogany box which was presumably made at this time to contain the precious heirlooms (illus 4).

Having traced the descent of the cutlery back from the present to its ownership by Dr Murdoch MacLeod in the mid 18th century, we must now look at the evidence which documents the link between Murdoch and Prince Charles Edward Stuart.

TABLE 1  
Descent of knife, fork and spoon in Malcolm Macleod's family



The earliest and most important account of the original transaction between Murdoch and Prince Charles was written only a few months after the event and is included in Bishop Robert Forbes's *Lyon in Mourning* (*Lyon*, ii, 72–77). Forbes transcribed this from an account in Murdoch's own handwriting of the Prince's journey between Skye and Raasay, accompanied by Murdoch (the laird of Raasay's third son) and Captain Malcolm Macleod, his cousin, both of whom had fought at Culloden. Murdoch delivered up this account to Robert Forbes in person while visiting him at the Citadel in Leith on 13 April, 1748. It would seem that the Prince had been taken to Raasay from Skye because it was thought that the smaller island would be safer, having already been searched and harried by the Government forces. After staying for two and a half days, however, it was decided that the island was too small to hide on, and the party crossed once more to Skye (*Itinerary*, 54–5). The account in the *Lyon* states that after conveying the Prince back to Skye on 3 July 1746, Malcolm Macleod and the Prince carried on their journey, leaving Murdoch behind as he was too weak from wounds received at Culloden to travel further (*Lyon*, i, 130). As the Prince

'was going away he gave Mr [Murdoch] Macleod his silver spoon, knife and fork and desired him to keep them until he saw him again' (*ibid*, ii, 77).

Bishop Forbes added a note in his manuscript after this stating

'The said spoon, knife and fork Mr Murdoch Macleod brought to Edinburgh to have a new case made for them. Upon Tuesday April 19<sup>th</sup> 1748, Mr Murdoch Macleod supped with my Lady Bruce [Forbes's patron, in whose house at Leith he resided after his release from imprisonment], when he shewd the company the spoon knife and fork made of French work. Robert Forbes A. M' (*ibid*, i, 77n).

There can be little, if any, doubt that the cutlery now in the national collection is that which Murdoch Macleod records as having been the gift of the Prince. The present black shagreen case must therefore be the one which Macleod bought during his visit to Edinburgh (*ibid*). It was no doubt during this visit that he had the pieces engraved with their inscription 'Ex Dono / C.[harles] P.[rince] R.[egent] / July.3<sup>d</sup> / 1746'. The style of engraving is certainly contemporary and is typical of the work being produced in Edinburgh at the time. The content of the inscription is also accurate, as the title 'Prince Regent' was recognized universally by Jacobite adherents as the correct form of address for Charles. He had been granted a Commission of Regency by his father James VIII on 23 December 1743 (*Jacobite Peerage*, 249), and used this title consistently throughout the '45 Campaign.

Murdoch Macleod later became a physician and settled at his house at Eyre on Skye. He was visited there by Dr Johnson and James Boswell on 14 September 1783 during their tour of the Highlands, where they 'had a dish of tea at Dr Macleods who had a pretty good house' (Boswell 1786, 166). Macleod went with Boswell and Johnson to visit MacDonald of Kingsburgh and his wife Flora MacDonald, where the story of the gift of the cutlery was again told, although Boswell said that the case for the items had also been given by the Prince (*ibid*, 179). This inaccuracy is also repeated by John Home in his *History of the Rebellion*, although the details of the rest of the account are the same (Home 1802, 249–50).

The cutlery apparently remained in the Doctor's possession and he is recorded as having

'set great value on these souvenirs, and preserved them carefully in his escritoire up to the time of his death and they were not removed from there until his daughter [Anne *qv*] handed them to her grand nephew [Charles Shaw *qv*]' (Cameron 1871, quoted in *Obituary* 1885).

As can be fairly deduced from above, both contemporary documentary evidence and recorded family descent demonstrate that the present items of cutlery are undoubtedly the mementoes which were handed over by Prince Charles to Murdoch Macleod for safe keeping and possibly for retrieval by the Prince at a later date (*Lyon*, ii, 72; Boswell 1786, 179).

At first, it would seem a natural hypothesis to suggest that they were simply among the remaining personal possessions of the Prince, originally gathered in Paris prior to the expedition to Scotland. Colonel John William O'Sullivan, one of Charles's companions and Quartermaster General, records that he was ordered to make ' . . . memoire of what he thought wou'd be necessary for the Princes Equipage for the Campagne . . . ' and subsequently gathered together in Paris certain personal necessities for the Prince including 'an Armor [wardrobe or travelling chest], bed and a set of Pleat [silver plate]' (Taylor & Taylor 1938, 47).

A much later biographer also comments on Charles's personal possessions when in Paris, although this time it is in the context that Charles was in such serious financial difficulties in 1744 that all the plate he had consisted of 'but twelve forks spuns and nives' (Lang 1903, 76). Unfortunately as is often the case Andrew Lang does not give the source of his information. The fact that the cutlery was made in Paris between 1738 and 1740 does suggest, superficially at least, that it was obtained by or for the Prince during his stay in Paris before his ill-fated voyage on board *Le du Teillay*. The lapse of four years between manufacture and purchase could be explained by the pieces having lain as stock in a goldsmith's shop, or by them having been bought secondhand.

A further reading of the very informative *O'Sullivan's Narrative*, however, shows that the above explanation of the cutlery's route into Dr Macleod's possession may in fact be a blind alley.

Colonel O'Sullivan was one of Charles's most trusted companions and was with him during most of the period of his wanderings. While on Benbecula the Prince's party was aided by Ranald MacDonald of Clanranald, who, according to O'Sullivan, on 14 May 1746 brought them some food and drink (Taylor & Taylor 1938, 184–5). The next day he sent them some personal clothing and utensils including 'a silver cover and a silver cup' (*ibid*). Within the context of the account the term *cover* can only mean the utensils used when laying a table for a meal (eg '1) . . . the cloth, plates, knives, forks etc with which a table is covered or laid. 2) the portion of these appropriated to each guest' (Murray 1893)).

O'Sullivan expanded on this

'The cover and cup was necessary to, for it was a cruel thing to see him drink brochan at his turn in the only wooden vessel we had, after every body. Yt was the thing yt repugned him, for he is not delicate in anything else. We provided ourselves with dram cups, in the little Island were we got the fish and a great heap of shells. The Prince carryed his alwaise in his pocket, one [shell] served him as a spoone and the other a dram cup, but now it is commonly said, he was like a Prince, he had a silver cover, A silver cup and a couple of napkins . . . ' (Taylor & Taylor 1938, 184–5).

Many other accounts of the period in hiding, principally in the *Lyon*, attest to the party having very little baggage or personal belongings, and the above account makes it clear that Clanranald did present the Prince with several items of silver. The question remains, however, as to whether or not they were the same items of French silver which Charles gave into the safe-keeping of Murdoch Macleod only some six weeks later. The nature of the available evidence renders proof one way or another virtually impossible. O'Sullivan's account, however, suggests that it was unlikely that the Prince had in his possession any other items of silver cutlery before his meeting with Clanranald. Therefore, unless someone else presented him with further pieces of silver between 15 May and 3 July 1746, it seems at least reasonable to infer that the items given to the Prince by Ranald MacDonald were those which he later left with Murdoch Macleod.

The remaining link in this chain of ownership must surely be to connect Clanranald with the pieces of French silver, or at least give some explanation as to why he had these in his possession instead of, say, either English or Scottish flatware. Again, the nature of the existing evidence means that it is virtually impossible ever to establish direct, documented proof that the present pieces of French flatware were Clanranald's property. Short of finding a contemporary receipted account



between him and a Parisian goldsmith, the following argument must remain tentative, based on circumstantial evidence. Despite the reservation, however, it is possible to sketch out an extremely probable scenario as to how Clanranald had items of French silver in his possession by May 1746. The first and simplest plank in his argument, of course, is that there was absolutely no reason why he should not have household goods or personal possessions of French manufacture. The numerous trading links between many members of the Scottish merchant and aristocratic classes and France at this time are too well documented to require discussion here. Added to this is the long tradition in the Western Islands and Highlands of strong, direct social, educational and cultural ties with the Continent. It would, therefore, be as natural for someone in Clanranald's position to look to Paris for his luxury goods as it would for them to go to London or Edinburgh. As far as the Clanranald family in particular was concerned, however, there were even stronger links than most with France and the Continent. The family moved consistently within a Roman Catholic continental orbit and their cultural parameters were centred on Paris and Madrid markedly more than on Edinburgh and London. They were truly European in outlook. There was a tradition within the leadership of the family of completing at least part of their education in France. This last point brings us to the most plausible and direct explanation for Clanranald having in his possession French cutlery of the particular vintage in question.

Ranald MacDonald, younger of Clanranald, born sometime after 1720, son of Ranald, 17th Chief, was educated at St Germain's in France, at the expense of Penelope, widow of Allan MacDonald of Clanranald. He is recorded as having been there in 1740 when he had as his tutor Neil MacEachen, who was later to become such a valuable friend and guide to the Prince (MacDonald 1904, III, 234–5; Maclean 1982). Young Ranald is also said to have become intimately acquainted with the Prince during his stay in France (*ibid*), and indeed it was young Clanranald who led his people in the campaigns of 1745–6.

This surely brings the argument full circle. As MacDonald was undergoing his education in Paris in 1740, the year in which the knife, fork and spoon would have been ready for sale, it is reasonable to infer that he acquired these, possibly as part of a complete canteen, either for his use in France or to equip his household when he returned to Nunton. Further, his reported acquaintance with the Prince would make the gift of the French 'cover' six years later seem particularly appropriate.

This last piece of evidence hopefully provides the final link in the chain which traces the history of the knife, fork and spoon from its place of manufacture to its final resting place. To recap upon this chain of events (see table 1), the cutlery was made in Paris between 1738 and 1740, possibly purchased by Ranald MacDonald, younger of Clanranald, sometime during his education in Paris and then returned with him to his father's home at Nunton House, Benbecula. His father then gave them to Prince Charles Edward Stuart on 15 May 1746. The Prince retained them in his possession for only six weeks until he presented them to Murdoch Macleod on 3 July 1746. They remained with Dr Macleod until his death whereupon they passed to his daughter Anne. She, in turn, in 1839 passed them on to her grand nephew, Charles Shaw in whose family they descended until their acquisition by the National Museums of Scotland in 1987.

It is perhaps somewhat curious that the general public interest in these pieces of silver stems from their connection with Prince Charles Edward Stuart, when it seems likely that they were only in his possession for a matter of six weeks. It is their significance as mementoes of the Prince, however, which has imbued them with importance to their various owners and which has ensured that both the documentary evidence and family tradition relating to them has remained intact. The reasons for their elevation to the status of 'relics' of the Prince are deeply involved with the development of the whole 'cult' of relics and the associated propaganda of the Jacobite cause. The investigation of this fascinating, but diverse, subject lies outside the scope of the present paper. The documentary proof

demonstrated above, however, should perhaps make one wary of indulging in the prevalent academic phenomenon of dismissing *all* items supposedly associated with Prince Charles Edward as being merely products of an over-active romantic imagination.

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I am indebted to Mr John Gibson for drawing my attention to the reference to Clanranald's 'cover' in O'Sullivan's narrative. My colleagues Mr Godfrey Evans kindly provided me with detailed information on the marks on the cutlery and Mr Hugh Cheape generously made available his extensive knowledge of the history of the Clanranald family. I am also very grateful to Mr G A D Chalmer for providing information on the cutlery's descent within his family. As is customary, I absolve all but myself from any sins of omission, commission or errors of fact which appear in the above account.

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