

A History of Smeaton Hepburn estate: The Ancestral Hepburn Family Land and its people.

Introduction

It was about the year 2000 when I was encouraged by Sir Alastair Buchan Hepburn to research the history of the Hepburn families of East Lothian. Since that time, I have uncovered much more information on the Hepburns of East Lothian especially for the period between 1700 and 1800 by which time male descendants of the Hepburn estate owners had failed to produce male heirs of the line. It included the Hepburns of Smeaton who could trace their lineage back to the Hepburns of Waughton and the Hepburns of Hailes. But Smeaton estate, first granted in 1538 to Adam the third son of Sir Patrick Hepburn of Waughton survived within the family until the appointment of a Judicial Factor in 1933 and its subsequent sale to the late John Gray, a successful farmer whose land at Niddry had been compulsory purchased for the rehousing of residents in Edinburgh's Old Town.

In September 2011, I was invited to talk to the Garden History Society on the significant History of Smeaton Hepburn estate. The presentation looked at two aspects, firstly the people from the era of Sir George Buchan Hepburn, (the first Baronet of Smeaton Hepburn, 1739-1819) and secondly, the landscape. The loss of the mansion house shortly after the end of the Second World War meant that it was not eligible for listing as a designed landscape at that time. The estate is best understood as a whole based on the 1820 estate map by William Dickenson, clearly developed with drainage leading to a burn which is now hidden in a culvert to the north of Prestonmains farmhouse. (At least two visitors to Sir George referred to his enthusiasm for drains. The second significant change in the mid-19th century was the redesign of a road to the present main entrance beside the lodge with the trees to the east of the drive having exposed roots to add to their attraction. This estate was at the heart of the significant Agricultural reform instigated by Sir John Sinclair when he was President of the Board of Agriculture after 1793. Evidence of that close relationship with the first Baronet and the close link between Sinclair and four other men from the Parish, Robert Brown, George Rennie of Phantassie, John Shirreff and Andrew Meikle has now been published.ⁱ

Smeaton was the pivotal estate in the period 1793 to 1820 when Sir John Sinclair, President of the Board of Agriculture was promoting his study of husbandry. Three articles for that period have been published. These all demonstrate the significance of the estate in the development of agriculture from 1793. A further article in the March 2016 edition of East Lothian Life looks at Apple Culture in Scotland and makes a link with Smeaton.

One factor from the research is that throughout the 200 years of Buchan Hepburn family ownership, the owners had other sources of income until the end of that era. One of these

sources was the ownership or use of farming land at Haddington and in Berwickshire. A second factor is that the late George Gray and his father also owned farms outwith East Lothian in their sixty years' ownership. A Limited Company was formed by George Gray to run these with his family and existed until his death in 2008. Consequently, the economic history of Smeaton is not something that can now be assessed.

In May 2013, Anne Gray died, five years after the death of her husband George. Her passing brought an end to an era but the early death of George Gray's father in 1937 followed by his mother's death in 1958 was perhaps more significant when Gladys, sister of George acquired the part of the estate known as Drylawhill which extended to include land to the north of Preston Road. She married a member of the Dale family who owned the estate of Seacliff at North Berwick. The historical ownership of the estate was no longer the possession of one family and evaluation of changes becomes more difficult. The first edition of the publication was completed in 2016. This updated version has been compiled after the death of Sir Alastair Buchan Hepburn, the 7th Baronet in 2022. It will be published on the web page as a digital copy. Reference <https://dkaffleck.co.uk>

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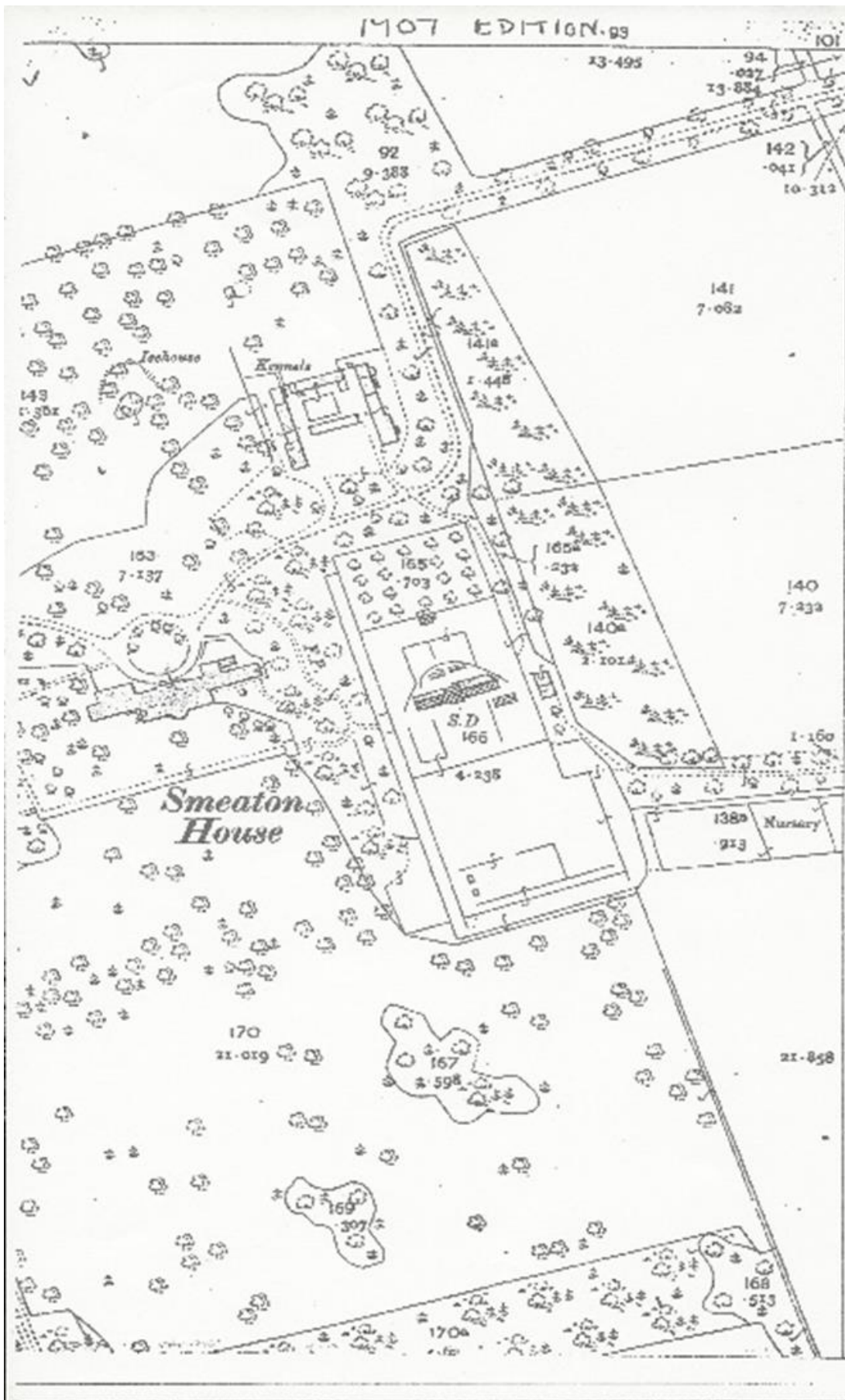
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An artistic impression looking north circa 1782

The estate of Smeaton Hepburn in the Parish of Prestonkirk. A Chronological History of ownership.

- Smeaton originally owned by the Hepburns of Waughton.
- c1510 Sir Patrick Hepburn of Waughton married Helen Hepburn of Craggis
- First ref in 1538 to their third son, Adam Hepburn of Smeaton.
- 1562, Adam Hepburn bought church lands and rectory of Prestonhaugh from his second eldest brother, George.
- Hepburns of Waughton and Luffness sold Luffness in 1739 and soon after Hepburns of Smeaton became head of the family line.
- John Buchan of Letham, son of George Buchan and Ann Hay, marries Elizabeth Hepburn (date not known)
- Their son George Buchan born 1739. In 1764, George Buchan inherits Smeaton from his mother's brother, George, and changes surname to Buchan-Hepburn
- 1781. Sir George Buchan-Hepburn marries second wife and builds new mansion house at Smeaton by 1793
- 1819. Sir George dies. His wife Margareta survives him.
- 1804. Sir Thomas Buchan-Hepburn, grandson of Sir George born. His father, Sir John is next of kin to the late John Buchan W.S of Letham in 1824.
- 1830. Sir Thomas completes excavated lake at Smeaton. He is primary creator of present landscape.
- 1893. Sir Thomas dies and is succeeded by Sir Archibald Buchan-Hepburn. He was President of the Scottish Horticultural Association in 1909, a County Councillor from 1892 and Convenor of East Lothian Council in 1906.
- In 1929 Sir Archibald died. Succeeded by his second son, Sir John Karlake Thomas Buchan Hepburn. Estate managed by a Trust. Judicial Factor appointed July 1933
- 1934. Estate sold to John Gray farmer of Craigmillar. Died 1937.
- Early 1950's, house demolished
- George Gray, his son, managed estate on behalf of his mother until she died 1958.
- 1962. George and Anne Gray moved into redesigned head gardener's house beside walled garden. He died in 2008. His widow died in April 2013.



The

Estate of Smeaton Hepburn. Part 1: The People.

The first significant reference to the estate of Smeaton is contained in a Sasine dated 1538.ⁱⁱ It granted the lands to an Adam Hepburn, the third son of Patrick Hepburn of Waughton and Luffness and Helen Hepburn his cousin. His parents were married at Bolton in East Lothian in 1510 by special dispensation of the Catholic Church Archbishop.ⁱⁱⁱ The Hepburn family had its origins in Northumberland after their 13th Century appearance as Hyburne of Hyburne in Northumberland. At the turn of the sixteenth century, a Sir Adam Hepburn of Craggis held the position of Master of the King's Horse. He died at Flodden leaving four daughters, one being Helen. Another separate junior branch was linked to the adjacent Castle of Hailes. In 1488, a Patrick Hepburn, the 2nd Lord Hailes was created the 1st Earl of Bothwell, a line that was to lead to the birth of James, later the 4th Earl of Bothwell who was born in 1536 and who was to marry Mary Queen of Scots.

The late Professor Gordon Donaldson undertook research on a number of aspects of Hepburn history at the time of the Reformation. Within the limited family archives was a letter from Mary to Adam Hepburn of Smeaton which indicated a close friendship. In his book, *All the Queen's Men*, Professor Donaldson looked at the relationship of Mary with Scottish nobility and identified a hesitancy in her attachments with those closest to her in rank. (Donaldson, 1983 p62)^{iv}. It is an interesting perception especially at a turbulent time in Scottish history with conflicts splitting families and traditional allegiances.

One of the present uncertainties of the history of the estate is the location of a possible fortified tower as the residence of Adam of Smeaton. It is known that the fortified tower at the main Hepburn home located nearby at Waughton was taken on the 24th February 1548 by Grey of Wilton during the war of the Rough Wooing along with Hailes, Saltoun, Nunraw, Yester and Herdmanston and there is no mention of Smeaton. (Merriman, p314).^v Professor Donaldson refers to six members of the Hepburn family including the Laird of Smeaton who held Dunbar Castle until September 1567 on behalf of the Queen and her husband James 4th Earl of Bothwell. (Mary and Bothwell had retreated there after their marriage in May that year but headed back to Edinburgh via Seton Palace in early June). The adjacency of Hailes and Dunbar being the main protective castles in the early 1500's perhaps meant that Smeaton, like Waughton, did not need extensive defences. The Hepburns of Waughton line also had the alternative castle of Luffness which they had acquired in 1463. It had been rebuilt and occupied by the French in the 1540's and later rebuilt again by a Patrick Hepburn in 1584. Further preliminary archaeological investigation has been proposed to identify the site of the earlier residence of five generations of Hepburns of Smeaton for the period to 1764 but has not been agreed. (One unresolved question is the location of a well.)

The Buchan Hepburns of Smeaton.

In 1764, the direct male succession of the Hepburns of Smeaton ended with the death of the last George Hepburn, the sixth laird since the grant of the estate to Adam. The estate was inherited by his nephew, George Buchan, an advocate in Edinburgh, whose father John Buchan of Letham in Haddington had married Elizabeth Hepburn, sister of George, the sixth Laird.^{vi} She had predeceased her brother in 1742. The arrival of George Buchan to ownership of the estate of Smeaton Hepburn was the start of a fifty-year period of significant development in the Parish of Prestonkirk and its local heritage. He adopted the name Buchan –Hepburn and assumed the arms of his late uncle and later was created the first Baronet of Smeaton in 1815. He was to become a significant agricultural improver and experimenter and described by a Thomas Dickson, a nurseryman of Edinburgh as “one of the most significant farmers of his age”. Dickson was joint secretary of the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society formed in 1809 and related to the Howden family of Lawhead Farm on Tynninghame estate. He had been given a gold medal in December 1811 by the Society for a paper on disease in potatoes and had acknowledged that Sir George had inspired the solution. Smeaton estate had been visited by Andrew Wight of Ormiston in 1778 as part of his research on *The State of Husbandry of Scotland*^{vii} who recorded,

‘Mr Buchan-Hepburn, an advocate by profession, has turned his thoughts to agriculture and has exerted great skill in the management of his farm. There is a great skill exerted in cropping his fields according to the nature of each. In general, he is attentive to crop them lightly by which they wear a face equal to the best.’ Wight goes on to describe how the farm was enclosed with well-tended hedges and ditches, and that Sir George had made the land perfectly dry ‘by hollow drains conducted with art and industry.’

We get a hint of Sir George’s legal mind in his 1794 report on *The State of Agriculture in East Lothian*, when, on the subject of the influence of large farms on the population, he questions what constitutes the term ‘large farm’. However, he also expressed a number of radical views. On farm rents, for example, he argued that a landlord mistakes his true interest if he endeavours to ratchet up a rent as high as possible, a practice being exploited by many other estate owners of the time. (See Smout 1985 p 289)^{viii}. He also recommended ‘that landed proprietors should plant a few of the best bearing apples and pears in the gardens of their cottagers instead of barren trees’, adding that ‘if cottagers were allowed the profit resulting from this additional wealth, it would prove a comfortable aid to that class of people.’ His extensive report, written “neither for fame nor for profit but from a sincere desire to communicate useful information”, includes a description of his experimental methods of planting thorn hedges in detail and contrasts their success with planting beech. The writer of the General Report of the state of Agriculture in Midlothian, George Robertson, later wrote *Rural Recollections, or the Process of Improvement and Rural Affairs* which was published in 1829^{ix}. In his chapter on the most remarkable improvers, he mentions the names of significant husbandmen from East Lothian and lists the Wights, the

Walkers, the Bogues, the Begbies, the Brodies, the Dods, the Dudgeons, the Rennies, the Hepburns, the Murrays, the Ainslies, the Hunters, the Browns, the Sheriffs and the Skirvans but does not specifically mention Sir George, presumably because he was not a husbandman. The omission is surprising when earlier in the chapter, Robertson explores the application by estate proprietors to husbandry, and both men undertook the first County reports at the instigation of Sir John Sinclair in 1794.

In 1811/1812, the estate was visited by Dr Patrick Neill as part of his enquiry into walled gardens and orchards for Sir John Sinclair and the Board of Agriculture.^x The account left to us by Dr Neill gives detailed information on the design of the walled garden which we are told was erected in 1782. It also refers to the importance of apples and pears.

The Baron is very curious with regard to the different kinds of fruit. He has got several kinds of apples, that is, grafted plants, from New York and Long Island, and also from Canada, from Normandy and pears of different kinds from Guernsey and recently from Jersey.

In June 1812, he gave a lecture to the recently formed Caledonian Horticultural Society on the pruning of fruit trees 1812 and had been voted an honorary member in the previous year.

Sir George died in June 1819 which may explain the commissioning of an estate map by William Dickenson, the Parish schoolmaster which is dated 1820. He had married Jean, daughter of Alexander Leith of Glenkindle and they had one son John, born 17th June 1776. But it is his second marriage to Margaretta Beck or Grant or Fraser in April 1781 that seems to have been the more significant in relation to the development of the estate. They were married at Prestonkirk on the 19th April 1781. She was twice widowed and a recipient of two fortunes from her former husbands. Did she help to finance the construction of the walled garden in 1782 and the apparent changes to the house in 1786/87 when there were an additional ten windows added to provide a total of 29? By 1793, the old Hepburn home was rebuilt with a thirty - six bedroomed house and minor changes to the landscape followed. We know little about her life after their marriage other than the wedding present of two Derby *His and Hers* porcelain chamber pots decorated by William Billingsley. It is possible that this wealth helped Sir George and his immediate heirs cope with the crisis in Agriculture in the immediate years after the end of the Napoleonic wars.^{xi} Sir George was also a Baron of the Court of the Exchequer in his later years while the second and third generations were also advocates by profession.

The following is an extract of a letter of 24th March 1824 written by John Buchan W.S. of the Exchequer Chambers to Lord Melville;

“The loss sustained by the recent death of my only brother Sir G. B. Hepburn, your Lordship’s attached and faithful friend was experienced on this occasion, the first of its kind that had occurred for more than half a century. From his long residence in the county, his intelligence, integrity and hospitality, he was placed in a state of prominence and respectability in Society as well as among Freeholders which enabled him to arbitrate and prevent dissension or reconcile the Partys where or

when it occurred. Now however the landlord is removed, the House of Smeaton is sherd being with the parks and Gardens etc. liferented by the good old Dowager who avoids company of all descriptions as well as cards.”

It is appropriate to note that the Christening Bowl in Prestonkirk Church was donated by Margareta, Lady Buchan Hepburn in 1817 and is now inserted in an oak font donated by a later Lady Buchan Hepburn in 1917. It is still in use today.



The first Lady Buchan Hepburn

Sir John Buchan Hepburn b. 1776. Died 1833.

There is little evidence of the second Baronet, in the life of the estate. He seems to have inherited the estate of Letham from his grandfather, John Buchan. According to Burke’s Peerage, he married Mary Turner Hog on the 29th August 1800. She died on the 24th February 1854. They had at least two children, Thomas born in 1804 and John born 29th May 1806. Their second son acquired the estate of Clune in Fife. The late 7th baronet, Sir Alastair Buchan-Hepburn, was a direct descendent. He died in 2022.

Sir Thomas Buchan Hepburn. b. 1804, died 1893.

It was the grandson Sir Thomas, born in 1804, whose interest in trees has perhaps had the greatest impact on the landscape we can enjoy today. We have very little primary source material on him but a private publication by an Edward Hepburn refers to “the charter chest of Sir Thomas Buchan Hepburn of Smeaton”, an archive source which cannot now be located. He was a Member of Parliament for Haddington from 1838 to 1847. He married Helen, the daughter of Archibald Little from Surrey in 1835 two years after the death of his father and had a residence at Norwood in London.

At a personal level, there is one interesting comment in the records of East Linton Curling Club when in 1853 he accepted the invitation to become their honorary President but advised that he did not participate in public dinners. It is through his second son Archibald that we can find out about his significance. Archibald had studied the statistics of significant

conifers in East Lothian as reported in the records of the Conifer Conference of 1891. These had been collated by Malcolm Dunn, then Head Gardener to the Duke of Buccleuch at Dalkeith but his list of significant conifers in East Lothian only referred to conifers at Whittingehame.^{xii} In a speech to Berwickshire Naturalists' Club in 1902,

Archibald explained he had located his father's journal from 1830 and had compiled a list of conifers which were planted before 1860 and were still growing in 1902. We are also told that the lake was excavated by 1830 and that this had been done in two separate operations.

Sir Thomas was a member of the Oregon Association who sent out John Jeffrey to follow the earlier trail of David Douglas and collect new seeds and plants in Canada and Oregon. His enthusiasm led to at least two first introductions of trees to the U K being planted at Smeaton. One of them was a *Sequoia sempervirens*, the Coast Redwood which is believed by Alan Mitchell to have been acquired from seed offered in 1843 by Knight and Perry.^{xiii} Their source was a Dr Fischer at Leningrad who had received the seed either from a Russian Colony at Fort Ross in California or a batch from the Crimea.

Another original *Sequoia* traced by Mitchell at the estate of Dropwood cost 5 guineas. Unfortunately, some of the early significant trees have been lost but there are enough still surviving in the landscape to enable us to see his purchases in their maturity.

Sir Thomas was father to six children, one being a daughter Agnes who married into the McDouall family and who is credited with the setting up of Logan garden at her home near Stranraer as well as being the inspiration to her two sons to become plant collectors. (Logan is now managed by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh).

Another daughter, Jane, had married into the Milne Home family of Paxton House in Berwickshire.^{xiv} Despite the apparent diffidence of Sir Thomas in holding the office of President of East Linton Curling Club, he must have arranged for one of the first photographs of curling to be taken.

This is probably dated from 1860 and appears to show a curling game of the era with probably Sir Thomas as a central figure. We also know from the curling archives that he had a house at Upper Norwood in London as he wrote to the club about the unauthorised use of the lake for a curling match in 1886. He was assured that this was not a club match and that they were aware of the need to have permission.



Curling on the lake circa December 1860. Probably the second oldest photo of Curling.



Smeaton House from the north

Sir Archibald Buchan Hepburn. b. 1852, d.1929.

Sir Thomas had lived to the age of eighty-nine at the time of his death in 1893. His second son, Archibald succeeded to the title and the estate in 1893 as John George, the eldest son of Sir Thomas, had been murdered in Mexico in 1883. He was a Barrister at the Inner Temple in London but returned to Smeaton when he then took an active part in East Lothian life, eventually becoming Convenor of East Lothian Council in 1906, Captain of Dunbar and North Berwick Golf Clubs, and Director of the new Edinburgh Curling rink.^{xv} His arrival back home to Smeaton has been described by the newly appointed First Footman, Mr Charles E Balls who answered an advert for the post in May 1893. The house had not been occupied by the family for about a year and he described the challenge of restoring the silver to a proper condition and getting it fit for use.

It took him the best part of five weeks to complete this task. Silversmith's rouge was used and he refers to having to use bare hands to finish off with. It took a long time for his hands to return to a normal condition. Lighting in the mansion house was by oil lamps as there was no gas or electricity. Mr Balls was responsible for the 40 lamps upstairs and the second footman was responsible for the downstairs lighting using 25 to 30 lamps. At the end of his memoir, Mr Balls records that the time he spent with Sir Archibald and Lady Buchan Hepburn as one of their servants was among the happiest years of his life and that he would gladly live the time over again.

Sir Archibald Buchan Hepburn was President of the Scottish Horticultural Association in 1909, an organisation intended for people who were practical gardeners. It was at a time when the possible amalgamation was being discussed with the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society, an organisation two of his ancestors, Sir George and Sir Thomas had been involved in. The Ordnance Survey Map of 1909 has a reference to the existence of an aviary to the north west of the mansion house which suggests a further personal interest. Another useful record is given by Sir Herbert Maxwell who visited the estate in May 1908 and refers to the remarkable collection of trees, shrubs and flowering herbs and the lay out of the rock garden and its alpine treasures.

The period of thirty years from 1893 almost coincides with the brief life of Thomas, the eldest son who died in 1923 as a consequence of war injuries in the Great War. In 2014, a family photograph album was made available for study at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Old photograph albums sometimes do not have names of the past generations but it is possible to identify Sir Archibald and his family visiting his sisters either at Logan in Wigtonshire and or at Paxton in Berwickshire as well as some photos taken in the garden at Smeaton. Most appeared to be dated around 1910 or slightly earlier. Perhaps the most poignant was one of Sir Archibald with his eldest son Thomas and the next son John on the doorsteps of the house at Logan, (the garden of which is now under the management of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh). Gun dogs are often featured which fits with the provision of kennels shown on the Ordnance Survey map of Smeaton for 1911. But there is also a

selection of photographs of paintings in the galleries of Antwerp. He appears to have taken a special interest in the family link to Mary Queen of Scots. Some of her possessions had been held at Smeaton since her lifetime.

Sir Archibald died in May 1929 and was succeeded by his second son, Sir John Karslake Buchan Hepburn. After Sir Archibald's death, the management of the estate had been undertaken by Trustees but by 1934, a Judicial Factor was appointed. It was the end of an era with the sale of the house, estate and a significant collection of silver, some from the estate of Margaretta, the second wife of the first Baronet. This Sir John, the fifth Baronet, showed his knowledge of horticulture by writing three articles on the development of his own garden in the Journal *My Garden* of 1936. He had taken a house with nine acres on a long lease in Sussex and describes the planting of a hedge of *Cupressus macrocarpa* using three-year-old transplants all round a 17 yards by 700 strip and added that rock gardening was the one branch of gardening he cared for least with the comment "Why I do not know". Could it be that this was one of the favourite activities of his father who only allowed the head gardener to assist him care for the rock garden at the lake entrance? Meanwhile, the 800 acre Smeaton estate was bought in 1934 by Mr John Gray, a successful tenant farmer from Edinburgh.

The Grays of Smeaton Hepburn

John Gray, born in 1873, was a highly successful farmer, descended from a 17th Century family of farmers at Torphichen in West Lothian. In the early 20th century, he had helped the widow of Col. Wauchope at Niddry farm in Edinburgh where he had taken on the tenancy and faced with a compulsory purchase order for the land by Edinburgh Town Council to provide new housing for families in the Royal Mile, he had acquired Smeaton Hepburn at a bargain price and also a farm of 400 acres at East Fenton.

John Gray died suddenly in 1937 and is buried at Prestonkirk. His widow remained as the owner of the estate, living in the former dower house which had been the head gardener's house earlier in the 19th Century. After her death in 1958, her son George Gray and wife Anne moved from East Fenton farm to the redesigned house in 1962 and took on the challenge of managing the estate as well as undertaking an active life in local and national interests. Many distinguished horticulturalists have visited the estate in the past fifty years and referred to their appreciation as to what they found. One special visitor was Patrick Buchan Hepburn, (Lord Hailes of Prestonkirk,) who made a visit to the estate he had grown up in shortly before his death in 1974 and subsequently wrote to George and Anne that he was pleased to find the place very much alive and deeply cared for and that an interest was being taken in the lake and the trees. ^{xvi}

The Landscape of Smeaton Hepburn.

Information on the landscape before 1793 is limited. The earliest account is the record of the observations of Andrew Wight of Ormiston who visited the estate in 1778 as part of an agricultural tour of farms. The other source for information on farming activity is contained in the report of 1794 written by George Buchan Hepburn for the Board of Agriculture. The author tells us about the planting of hedgerows and the experiments on suitable plant material. Fortunately, there is a copy of the original estate plan of 1820 by William Dickenson which can be compared with the map by Thomson published in 1832 and Roy's Military survey of 1752-55. Both show the location of the farm buildings at Preston Mains and the cottages at Cauldside with more detail given in the Thomson map. The southern boundary of the estate extended to the River Tyne and included the old settlement of Preston with its row of cottages, some of which have since been sold. Within the area between the Tynninghame Road and the river is the site of Preston Mill which was given to the National Trust of Scotland in 1950 by the Gray family. Land was also sold for new housing at The Dean in the 1970's and a family reallocation of the estate involved the transfer of land to the east at Drylawhill and is now vested in the Dale family. (The late George Gray's sister Gladys became Gladys Dale on marriage.)

One change that is of particular interest is the road between Prestonmains farm and the site of the mansion house. It originally ran straight to the north of the farmhouse and joined a road near Lawhead farm cottages which ran west to the north of the present steading and garden centre. The present route from the former Head Gardener's house is shown in the Ordnance Survey map of 1907 and it is only in recent years that Kenneth Gray ploughed up the less direct route between the farm and the estate mansion house. The original farmhouse before the present Georgian House can still be identified to the north of the current stables.

The Lake Area (Post 1820)

According to the published talk given by Sir Archibald Buchan Hepburn in 1902 and based on the journal of Sir Thomas, excavation of the lake which occupies the site for half a mile round and running nearly due east and west was completed in 1830 and took place in two phases. This occupied the site of an ancient bog during the excavation of which two entire skeletons of red deer with large antlers were found, one measuring eight feet from the tip of its antlers to his hoofs. Sir Thomas took full advantage of the shelter in the lake area to plant a selection of conifers and this now has some of the tallest specimen trees with heights of 110'. To the North of the lake path, there is a rough track which is believed to be on the line of the original north boundary of the 1825 enclosure. The late George Gray later advised the writer that when the present north boundary fence was erected, the additional ground was planted with a variety of trees which would provide a constant pattern of changing colours throughout the season; the sombre dark colour of the Crimean Pines contrasting with the early green of the larches and the later leaves of the birches, beeches

and oaks followed by the leaves and flowers of the Chestnuts. In summer sun, the bright orange bark of the Scots pine also makes its own not inconsiderable contribution. This planting is best viewed from the park or field to the north which is now cultivated and not open for public access. There are at least ten substantial *Pinus nigra var. caramanica* planted along the present boundary fence. These Crimean pines are recognisable with the bole breaking into vertical stems and must have been planted from the same order.

The 1820 estate map suggests that there were no trees at that time in the lake area, although the sycamore on the south of the lake (Number 170) probably dates before the excavation period. The main early planting areas appear to have been the North East area towards the gate where we now find yew and the stump of a lost *Cedrus atlantica*, the lime avenue taking us along the north shore towards the west of the lake with its important range of specimen trees and the area beside the old curling hut with another range of forest giants including *Pinus ponderosa* (number 22), *Picea smithiana* (number 21) and *Abies grandis* (Number 25).^{xvii} A later avenue of specimen conifers and flowering cherry's follows the line of a path to the south of the curling hut that eventually leads to the top of the cliff on the south of the lake. This path is not suitable for public access. Other significant specimens are found alongside both sides of the lake path such as *Abies borisii-regis* on the north (number 11) and the *Abies pindrow brevifolia* on the south which was planted in 1844 and reported by Alan Mitchell as a first introduction to Britain. The *Alnus cordata* (Tree number 1) between the lake and the road is also a significant tree for its height of 25.5 metres (85 feet) in 1998 and is believed to have been planted in 1880. Study of Mitchell's notes of 1966 suggest that most of the lost giant trees such as a monkey puzzle tree and a *Pinus jeffreyii* were planted at the south-west end of the lake where we can still find a *Thuja plicata* and a Douglas-Fir.

One interesting question is the effect of the lake in creating a microclimate and providing a moist atmosphere that some plants enjoy, such as the epiphytic plants on the old sycamore tree to the south of the lake and also some rare lichens. Some of the recent conifers planted under the Conifer Conservation programme have grown better than the Royal Botanic Garden staff had anticipated. The main climatic problem is the wind from the east and the west and this has affected some of the earliest plantings.

The Rhododendrons at Smeaton Hepburn.

There are no records available for the early years to help trace the history of the Rhododendron shrubs around the lake. According to the late Mr Davidium, a highly respected Rhododendron expert at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, samples of *Rhododendron ponticum* have been found in pre- ice age deposits in Belfast. Plant number 27 is a special form of a species *R. ponticum* with a delicate small white flower. The identification was confirmed to me by Mr. Davidium with the instruction to *treasurer it, it is very rare*. He advised but this species was mainly re-introduced to the U.K. from Portugal in the late 1700's. The initial period of collection of the Himalayan species of Rhododendrons

was in the early 1800's but it was Joseph Hooker's trip to Sikkim in 1848/9 which is linked to the major introduction of this plant to Scottish gardens. The early species from the Indian Himalayas were extensively hybridised at that time and therefore difficult to classify without the original records. The significant first introduction tree, *Abies pindrow*, (number 162,) on the south of the lake in 1844 could support the view that new Rhododendrons of the time were also introduced around the lake and two of these could be *Rhododendron x thomsonii* and *R x arboreum forma roseum*. The Himalayan species *R. barbatum* is also to be found on the south of the lake with its plum-coloured bark and brilliant red flowers. This is best seen in February rain! None of the 300 new species introduced from China and Tibet by George Forrest from 1907 are to be found on the estate and most of the recent Rhododendrons were planted by George and Anne Gray in May 1991.

The Park

This part of the garden has been described in the past as the Annex, the extension and the house. It is now described as The Park, placed between the lake to the west and the Hepburn garden to the east. There is now no sign of the 36 roomed mansion house which had to be demolished in the early 1950's. Its location was to the south of the drive facing over to the Lammermuir hills and the photograph gives us an indication of the appearance. One of the unresolved questions is the location of a possible tower house and a replacement residence before George Buchan Hepburn built his mansion house with 36 rooms in 1793. A reference in the *Scottish Field* of December 1915 refers to it "taking the place of an old structure which stood on a site some 300 yards north of the eighteenth century mansion." Detailed investigation of this location took place in January 2012 but archaeological investigation would be needed to identify the specific site. There would have been an earlier building on the site, probably towards the steading to the north east.

To the east of the south gate of the lake, it is possible to see the remains of the rockery which was much admired by Sir Herbert Maxwell when he visited in 1908. His subsequent article advised that Sir Archibald has added a keen intelligence in the cultivation of herbaceous and alpine plants and that to do justice to this fine collection would have taken more hours than the author could spare! It is also reported that only Sir Archibald and the head gardener were allowed to work in the Rockery. There is also evidence of the pond or bog garden to the east of the road and midway between the two gates to the Lake. Further east was a fine terrace flanked by two statues as seen in a photograph from the 1920's but only some steps are now visible.

The trees situated adjacent to the rockery area would have been part of the garden with the other trees being chosen for their potential shape and interest. We learn from the article by Sir Herbert that a fine deodar, 70 or 80 years old stood near the mansion house in "sisterly proximity" to a *Cupressus macrocarpa* from the opposite hemisphere and that they were of mutual benefit to each other by encouraging upward growth. Unfortunately, the *C. macrocarpa* has been lost along with a special *Sequoia sempervirens* planted in 1844. In

1998, the Boxing Day gale blew down a special tree from California, *Abies bracteata* which Alan Mitchell had described as a splendid tree and rare in Southern Scotland. There is still a selection of interesting trees for us to enjoy today, with a young sapling planted in the location of the former house.

Special trees worth noting are as follows.

<i>Pinus radiata</i> ;	the Monterey pine fast growing when young
<i>Cedrus deodara</i> ;	the Himalayan cedar introduced to the UK in 1831
<i>Picea smithiana</i> ;	the Himalayan Spruce dating from 1840
<i>Pinus sylvestris aurea</i> ;	the golden form of the Scots Pine; a beautiful tree in winter
<i>Abies homolepis</i> ;	from Central Japan. Whittingehame also had one 88' in 1987
<i>Sequoiadendron giganteum</i> ;	the giant redwood from California planted 1855
<i>Quercus robur 'Filicifolia'</i> ;	described by Mitchell as the biggest known
<i>Quercus canariensis</i>	included by Mitchell in his 'Book of Trees'

The Hepburn Garden

This shrubbery area to the east of the mansion house site and bordered by the walled garden also contains significant heritage trees including two substantial conifers, *Picea smithiana* (number 75), the Himalayan spruce from the Central and western Himalayas and, a form of *Pinus nigra* (number 78) described in the earlier records as the variety *larico*. It had been labelled *Pinus var. caramanica* (Crimean pine) but Alan Mitchell thought it to be the Corsican pine (*var. maritima*). It is a substantial tree and measured 80' in 1931 and was probably planted in 1843. Also in the area is a substantial Bhutan pine, again from the Himalayas and measuring 64' in 1986. As you look around, you will see evidence of recent plantings of rhododendrons, hebe and bamboo throughout the shrubbery. To the west of the *Picea smithiana*, there is a special form of a tree that looks like a yew, number 106. Its correct name is *Cephalotaxus harringtonia* 'Fastigiata' and it was introduced to the UK in 1861 from Japan and is rarely seen except in collections. To the south, Number 125 is a recent planting of the Bhutan pine, *Pinus wallichiana*. Tree number 71 is a Coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) planted as a gift in the late 1960's. To the south there was a path that led to the washing green area which would have been more exposed to the drying wind. This path was hidden from the view of the house by the Scots pines along the fence and holly hedges and came from the laundry which was close to the east of the mansion house.

There are a number of special shrubs in this section of the garden, not all of which have been identified. Interestingly, there are three plants all named after the plant collector, Maximowicziana.

The Pinetum.

The area to the East of the Walled Garden and the present residence was set aside as a collection of pine trees for ornamental purposes probably about 1920. The original boundary ran to the immediate east of the present house in line with the fence to the east of the drive to the north and was close to the back of what was then, the head gardener's residence.

The survey of conifers carried out in 1931 listed 49 conifers for that part of the estate of which only 28 were above 10' tall. F.R.S. Balfour of Dawyck described the garden in 1932 "as having one of the most complete collections of the newer species in Scotland " It is known from a cash book that he supplied a number of plants over the years between 1914 and 1925 from his nursery at Dawyck and that was possibly during the time the pinetum was developed. Sadly, this area is exposed to the east wind and only 5 of the original list of 49 conifers have been traced. The exposed area has been particularly difficult for varieties such as *Cupressus macrocarpa* with its denser foliage. Some deciduous trees appear to have been better survivors than the pines and firs. The lower part of the area now has a number of recent plantings mixed with some older trees and is better protected from the east including a Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) which was planted in 1963 and measured 40' in 1986. This tree which was believed to be extinct until found in China in 1941 has also been planted in a group South West of the lake. Its potential height in this country is not yet known.

As the trees age over an extensive period since 1830, they become more susceptible to wind damage and the cycle of severe gales takes its toll. Two days of gales at the end of December 1998 saw further loss of some of the significant trees and substantial damage to the structure of others. Previous serious losses had occurred in the gale of 1968 when the wind came from the south-west and damaged a number of trees in the Park. The pinetum area which had been highly praised in 1930 was clearly never suitable for some of the rarer species because of its exposure to the cold east winds from the sea and recent plantings have been concentrated around the lake and to the less exposed area of the pinetum nearer the house. Much of the planting has been of a replacement nature with cuttings from lost species or new strains such as elm trees that are believed to be resistant to Dutch elm disease. The other major development has been participation in the Conifer Conservation Programme, an international initiative for the conservation of endangered conifers which is based at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Smeaton-Hepburn is one of a number of sites providing land for groups of conifers to assist re-introduction back into the wild. Early plantings under this programme have been very successful and further plantings have taken place during 1999, 2008 and 2010/2011.

Some of the trees will come to the end of their lives in the years ahead. The Holm oak at the entrance to the lake, (tree number 93) and believed to have been planted in 1793 at the time of erection of the mansion house is now subject to rampant basal decay. A new shelter belt planted to the South of the Scout Park area *circa 1995* clearly now delineates the boundary between the land at Drylawhill and vested in Gladys Dale but may also have anticipated possible new housing in the field to the south. It is an example of a significant change in the original designed landscape and incorporated the sale of housing in the area known as The Glebe in the 1970's. Before 1900, the area to the north of Preston Road would have been agricultural land. When serving as the local area Councillor, Sir Archibald Buchan Hepburn undertook the paving of the footpath on the north of Preston Road at his own expense.

Trees are essential to the life of man on earth and what probably began as a plant collectors' interest in the 1800's now has an important conservation and educational contribution to make for the future.

The Walled Garden

In 1812, Patrick Neill, secretary of the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society, made a visit to Smeaton as part of his survey of Scottish orchards and walled gardens on behalf of Sir John Sinclair, President of the Board of Agriculture. Patrick had close links with Sir George and three other men from Prestonkirk parish, Robert Brown of Markle, John Shirreff and George Rennie of Phantassie and all five men had close links with Sir John. He recorded that the fine (walled) garden was laid out in 1782 and consisted of an area about four Scots acres square intersected by two cross walls so that it had the appearance of three gardens. With an added verge of planting to the north, "it was now completely sheltered from every inclement blast from three points of the compass." We are told about the soil, the trenching when the walls were constructed, the provision of hollow drains filled with coarse quarry stones and the Baron's desire to keep the garden area free from superfluous surface water to prevent chilling water stagnating about the roots of fruit trees. Detailed information is given on fruit production; apples, pears and 142 feet of glass with two late peach houses and a greenhouse with trained vines as well as two vineries. The most delicious peach was the variety *Royal George*.

The next significant reference is contained in the record of Sir Herbert Maxwell's visit of 1908 where he refers to the herbaceous plants occupying borders in the old walled garden "where also is a teeming and interesting nursery of that most perplexing yet fascinating race, the Saxifrages". The location of the garden has a significant link with the former Head Gardener's House which had been converted into a dower house for the widow of Sir Archibald and then became the residence of the widow of John Rennie Gray until she died in 1958. During the war years, the main enclosed garden area was used for food production. Later aerial photographs for the years 1952, 1959 and 1962 continue to indicate the emphasis given to the intensive growing of young plants such as cabbages which were

grown and then sent to the London market by train, a task George Anderson, then apprentice gardener remembers in his personal reflections of a career in horticulture in 2011. It was during the 1960's that the then head gardener, Gordon Collingwood established a demonstration garden adjacent to the former dower house using the newer dwarf form of conifers suitable for domestic scale gardens. By the year 2000, many of these 'dwarf' conifers were dominating the private garden area and advice was sought by Anne Gray on selected removal. Her husband George reluctantly accepted the need for renovation. Through their friendship with Sir George Taylor, who had been Curator at Kew before he retired to Dunbar, and friends with an estate at Helensburgh, new planting of rare varieties was undertaken within the private garden area such as Hoheria and recommended plants by Sir George such as Cistus cultivars with an ability to survive dry conditions. The last project was to plant a collection of roses supplied by David Austin.

The former Head Gardener's House.

In 1962, the house became the home of George and Anne Gray after a period of reconstruction. The story of this period is recorded in an article by a Thomas Leslie in the November 1975 edition of Scottish Field and includes the reference to the garden cottage being built in 1715.

Doocots

Smeaton estate had two Doocots in the 1930's, one at Drylawhill and the other one above the Stables at Prestonmains Farm. The one at Drylawhill has been cared for by the owners of the adjacent House but the one above the old Stables at the Farm has been modified to make way for agricultural buildings.

Prestonmains Farm; the Steading and Cottages.

The earliest 18th century maps show the location of Prestonmains Farm on the site of existing farm buildings and to the north of a burn still existing as a culvert. The present farmhouse is believed to have been built in the 1830's. With the help of window tax records, it is possible to identify a John Begbie having an eighteen-window house at Prestonmains in 1754 and continues to be listed until 1771. If he was the John Begbie baptised at Prestonkirk in 1712, he was the eldest son of a family of ten children to an Alexander Begbie and his wife, Margaret Walker. The family appear to be associated with farms at Tynninghame, Newmains, Preston, Cairndinnis and Phantassie over three generations but the records are not always specific in identifying the farmhouse. By 1776, the window tax records show that a 15-window house at Prestonmains was occupied by a Mr Sheriff. The 1781 record lists the occupier as a Richard Sherriff although the number of windows varies from 15 to 9, then 14 to 10 and he continues there until 1794. (Income tax was introduced in 1799). The Shirriff's (the spelling is inconsistent,) were a noted family of farmers, the most significant in 1800 being John who died in 1818 at the age of 59 and who is buried in Prestonkirk near the grave of his father, John Shirreff of Mungoswells. By 1841, James Kirk, known to be head gardener to Sir George had become Farm manager living at the farmhouse. Information from the 1861 census shows that he was succeeded by a James Hepburn who is described as Farm and Estate manager. (The 1841 census lists James and his wife Sibella, both aged 22 as living in Smeaton House when presumably the Buchan Hepburns were absent on Census day) It is this Hepburn family that had a link with a Captain John Hepburn who founded a settlement in the state of Victoria Australia in 1849 which he named Smeaton and built a mansion house in 1849 -50.

There is no doubt that Sir George Buchan Hepburn would have fitted the following description reported in the County Report for Midlothian written in 1795 (and also referred to in his book *Rural Recollections* published in 1829

A gentleman farmer had asked his neighbour the following question

"How does it happen that I can never get my farming operations so expeditiously accomplished as you though I have dextrous men and better horses?"

Why Sir, says the honest countryman "when you want a thing done, you say to your men Go and do so and so- I say "Come lads and let us do it"

So apart from Sir George and George Gray's son, Kenneth Gray, it is the farm managers who have managed the success of farming at the Smeaton Hepburn estate. In addition, families like the Begbies and their marriage links with the Dudgeons of East Broomhouse, the Shirreffs and the Howdens of Lawhead were at the heart of the contribution of Prestonmains to the farming legacy left by George Rennie, Andrew Meikle, John Shirreff, Robert Brown and Sir George, all now known to be colleagues of Sir John Sinclair and his

mission to improve agriculture and husbandry between the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

The Head Gardeners.

Finally, it is relevant before we leave this look at the people to note the list of known head gardeners during the time of significant estate development.

James Kirk.

He was described as gardener to Sir George at Smeaton when he joined at the first Society meeting of the new Caledonian Horticultural Society as a corresponding member on 5th December 1809. In its early years, he exhibited and won awards for fruit and vegetables and submitted a paper on protecting the blossom of greengage plums in 1810 and on mildew in peach trees in 1813.

He is described on his tombstone as *Factor* when he died at the age of 80 at Prestonmains in 1850. He would have been present at the time of the excavation of the lake.

George Fowler.

He is listed as head gardener at Smeaton, in the 1851 Census. He exhibited at the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society in September 1852 when he was referred to as gardener to Lady Buchan Hepburn. He was born in Galloway in 1809. It appears that he was the eldest son of a George Fowler who was a successful Head gardener at Luffness winning prizes for his fruit exhibits. It then appears that his father moved to Betony farm by 1841 in the parish of Athelstaneford. He appears to have married a Jane Ewart of Beanston farm. They had a son who died while a toddler and is buried in an unmarked grave at Prestonkirk. There is no reference to him or his father's family in the Scotland's People archives from 1855 which suggests they left Scotland.

John Black 1858-1908

In 1858, Sir Thomas appointed a John Black as head gardener on the recommendation of Mr. James McNab of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Mr Black would have had a hard time in the winter of 1860 and 1861 when the snow lay 37 inches all over and, where drifted, interrupted communication for more than a week with the thermometer 6 degrees below 0 Fahrenheit. John Black tended the Smeaton garden for 50 years and his achievement was referred to in the Gardeners Chronicle of November 1908 with the comment that " Mr Black is still the first up in the morning and the hardest worker on the place, the difficulty being to get him to realise that at the age of 78 years he should be saving his efforts. Mr Black has kept the records of the meteorological station in the Smeaton Hepburn garden during the 50 years, night and morning, with scarcely a break".

William Black

John Black had three sons who became gardeners. A. Black is known to have been Head Gardener to the Duke of Leinster at Carton in Eire around 1895 and William Black is recorded as the purchaser of plants from F.R.S. Balfour of Dawyck in 1915.

John Orr

John Orr served his apprenticeship as a forester and gardener at Yester and came to Smeaton as head gardener in 1929. He was working with Sir John Buchan-Hepburn when the estate was sold to John Gray in 1934. Sadly, the co-operation with the new owner ended with John Gray's sudden death in July 1937.

Albert Gordon Collingwood

Gordon Collingwood was appointed Head Gardener in 1947 and held that position until 1986. In 1960, he started to develop a tree and shrub nursery. He concentrated on stock suitable for modern smaller gardens with the plan to generate income for the maintenance and improvement of the wider collection of trees.



The lake at Smeaton in the winter sun.

Postscript.

In March 2015, the lake area of Smeaton Hepburn became part of the National Tree Collection of Scotland. It is expected this will lead to better information on the collection for the benefit of the public and in replacement planting to ensure the future of this significant tree collection.

Appendix.

A significant collection of photographs exists on the landscape and people. These are being catalogued as a digital file and will be available at The John Gray Centre, Haddington.

ⁱ An account of that relationship can be found *All the President's Men* in Vol XXVIII of the Transactions of the East Lothian Antiquarian Society

ⁱⁱ Nesbit. *System of Heraldry*. V1 p 162

ⁱⁱⁱ Laing Charters, No 278

^{iv} Donaldson. Gordon (1983) p62 *ALL the Queen's Men*. London.

^v Merriman. M (2000) *The Rough Wooings*. East Linton.

^{vi} The History of the Buchan family has not previously received attention. There is some evidence of property transactions and perhaps financial commitments by Sir George and his brother John before Sir George married his second wife. The family link as legal officers to the Commission of Forfeited Estates and the York Building Company is a subject for further investigation

^{vii} Wight, Andrew, (1778) *Present state of the Husbandry of Scotland* (London)

^{viii} Smout. 1985. *A History of the Scottish People*. Fontana Press.

^{ix} Robertson George, (1829) *Rural Recollections*. (Irvine)

^x Neill, P. (1812) *On Scottish Gardens and Orchards*.

^{xi} The late George Gray who farmed Smeaton in the latter part of the 20th century held the view that the acreage was too small for economic sustainability in the 1790's. The Buchan Hepburns also farmed land at Alderson and Letham in Haddington. It is also now clear from the will of George Buchan of Kelloe in Berwickshire, that his uncle, Sir George, and his cousin Sir John Buchan Hepburn had the life rent of Kelloe estate.

^{xii} Dunn, Malcolm Statistics of Conifers in the British Isles 1892 in Journal of the Royal Horticultural Soc. Vol; XIV. 1892

^{xiii} Not much is known about his life in London Society but it is likely that he had contacts with nurseries marketing significant introductions of trees in the period 1838 to 1846. William Lobb was plant collecting for James Veitch at that time.

^{xiv} Jane married Lt Col David Milne-Home of Paxton. She died on 26th December 1881. Her son and his wife attended the golden wedding of John Black, head gardener at Smeaton in 1908 when he presented the couple with a gold pen and pencil case.

^{xv} A fuller account of Sir Archibald and his life in to be found in *East Lothian Life*, Issue 90 Winter 2014 pp30-33

^{xvi} Patrick Buchan Hepburn was the youngest son of Sir Archibald. He was a significant politician from 1934 and became the first Baron of Prestonkirk in 1957, a title that ended on his death in 1974.

^{xvii} This account was first drafted in 2016. Since then, two new tree identification systems have been introduced following the trees at the lake becoming part of The National Tree Collection of Scotland. The former cow tag system linked to the data base I compiled had some of the tags removed without appreciation of their importance to the data base.