



WERE THE 'FAT CATS' SO FAT?

AN EXAMPLE OF THE POST-REFORMATION FINANCES OF A RECTOR IN THE DIOCESE OF MORAY.

It is interesting to see how one aspect of the finances of a northern parish were managed in the period immediately following the Second Reformation (1560). In this period, it is suggested, much was as it had been previously, that is, in the last days of Episcopacy.

In the "Book of Assumption of Thirds of Benefices (1562)" we find details of the finances of the Parish of Moy, within the Diocese of Moray. The lands within which the parish church stood were a part of the great thanedom (barony) of Moymore, episcopal lands from very early times, quite possibly since the reign of King William I.¹ At an early date 'the Mackintosh' was hereditary tenant of Moy.

When the Mackintosh gained a feu from Bishop Patrick Hepburn (1538-1573), in April 1545, the lands of Moy lay in the baronies of *Moymore* and *Ardclach* {both of which belonged to the Bishop of Moray}. They were: *Moymore* {NGR NH 764362}; *Moybeg* {NGR NH 770342}; *Altnaslanach* {NGR NH 751346}; *Tulloch Clowre*; *Sleauach*; *Tulloch Mackarre*; and *Rowan* {Ruthven? - NGR NH 817331}. [Bain, G. (1928) *History of Nairnshire*. Nairn: Telegraph Office. ii, p.89]

Moy is a typical highland parish. The seat of a Clan Chief, it sits astride the A9 as it descends from the wilds of Drumochter northwards into Inverness. The ancient

¹ On 2 April 1172 x 1174 King William confirms the gift of the island in the loch of Lunnin (Moy) to John the Hermit by Bishop Simon (1171-1184). [RRS, ii, no.142] John had a cell at Ruthven {NGR NH 815331}.

parish church nestles comfortably on the western shores of Loch Moy (in old records called *Ellane-a-Moy*) at the end of a short lane heading off the B9154 {NGR NH 772343}. This area is that which was called *Moybeg* and the parish glebe lands lay within it, round the farm of *Grangeegreen*.²

Bishop Bricius (1203-1222) had planned to make the garbal teinds of Moy (i.e. the *Parsonage share*) into a prebend and this arrangement was confirmed by Pope Honorius III writing from the Lateran on the 20th April 1222.³ But Bricius died before his plans could take effect. It was left to his successor, Bishop Andrew de Moravia (1222-1242), to complete the project, adding the prebend to the Cathedral Chapter, certainly by the time of the Synod of St Giles, 5th May 1226.⁴

This arrangement still existed in the first years after the Second Reformation, over three-hundred years later, and at this time, the prebendary and parson was “ane discreit man”, Williame Sutherlande. Like his colleagues in the Chapter, Canon Sutherland was required to divide his time between the two locations (he had a residence within the Chanonry at Elgin and there would have been a ‘toft and croft’ associated with the parish church). He would also, probably, have had additional interests and duties in other parts of the country. In fact, he would rarely, if ever, be seen within the parish. The *cure* of souls was attended to by a *vicar*, who, in this case, was usually in sub-deacon’s orders. Canon Sutherland was responsible for the vicar’s maintenance and, as was the custom then, as now, this was accomplished with the minimum possible expenditure. In addition, he was required to provide a ‘vicar’ in the cathedral (a *stallar*) to carry out the prebendary’s duties and responsibilities ‘in choir’ when he was not able to be present himself.

² Morayshire OS Name Books, 1868-1871, Morayshire Volume 10, OS1/12/10/31

³ Reg. Ep. Mor., no.55, p.62

⁴ This Synod, called by Bishop Andrew, has left two charters which clearly show that the meeting was of great significance to the bishop. [Reg. Ep. Mor., no. 69, p.73; no.70, p.76] What is also very interesting is the choice of venue – obviously, building-work at the cathedral was not sufficiently advanced for the Synod to be held there. Since the prebend of Moy is listed, in the first of these charters, amongst those six which were already in existence, I believe that Fawcett & Oram are mistaken in suggesting that this prebend was created **at** the Synod. [Fawcett, R. & Oram, R. (2001) *Elgin Cathedral and the Diocese of Moray*. Edinburgh: H.E.S. p.124.]

Now, Prebendary Sutherland had set his church property (parsonage teinds) of Moy out to *feuars* and, consequently, had a return of 80 marks for them annually.⁵ This was a reasonably large sum and the prebendary might have welcomed the degree of comfort such an income might afford were it not for 'taxes' – the world was ever so!

First, he had to pay for his 'assistants' – the vicar of Moy received 8 marks and the stallar 10 marks – 62 marks left!

As a member of Chapter, William contributed 10 marks yearly towards the upkeep of the cathedral fabric, particularly "*for thekin of the queir of Moray*" (for roofing the Choir of the Cathedral of Moray) – 52 marks left.

Now, in these days, churches such as Moy were required to pay a *quarter-part* to the Queen (for her upkeep) amounting to 13 marks – 39 marks left.

Finally, the Crown/government took its 'third of benefices' but, unlike the Queen's quarter, this third was reckoned as $\frac{1}{3}$ of the original income of 80 marks (= $26\frac{2}{3}$ marks) - $12\frac{1}{3}$ marks left.

So, from the original 80 marks of income, Prebendary Sutherland was only going to get, at most, $12\frac{1}{3}$ marks - scarcely more than he paid his own stallar in the Cathedral! No doubt he would be very grateful for his share of the *common fund* of the Chapter and would be keenly casting about for other sources of income, because he would have cooks and servants in his Chanonry manse to pay for; he would have at least one horse to feed; and goodness only knows how much he would need for hospitality and (God forbid) alms for the poor and needy!

I have two fat cats sitting watching me as I write this, and I have to say that I don't think that Canon Sutherland is in the same league as them – not by a long way!

⁵ Kirk, J. (1995) *The Books of Assumption of the Thirds of Benefices*. Oxford. p.470-471

References:

Bain, G. (1928) *History of Nairnshire*. Nairn: Telegraph Office. ii, p.89

Fawcett, R. & Oram, R. (2001) *Elgin Cathedral and the Diocese of Moray*. Edinburgh:
H.E.S.

Kirk, J. (1995) *The Books of Assumption of the Thirds of Benefices*. Oxford. p.470-471

Ordnance Survey Name Books: Morayshire OS Name Books, 1868-1871, Morayshire
Volume 10, OS1/12/10/31 <https://scotlandspplaces.gov.uk/digital-volumes/ordnance-survey-name-books/morayshire-os-name-books-1868-1871/morayshire-volume-10/31> (accessed 7/4/2019)

