

'Beyond Rubies and Pearls and Diamonds': A Manuscript Collection Recovered

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When Thomas Sinclair was writing *The Gunns*, which he published in 1890, he drew upon a range of unpublished manuscripts prepared by other nineteenth-century writers, including the Edinburgh solicitor Æneas Gunn. In the lengthy Appendix to his work he included many excerpts drawn from these sources. Eighty years later in 1969, when writing his history of the clan, Mark Rugg Gunn laments their apparent loss. This communication announces that a collection of documents that Mark Rugg Gunn believed could 'no longer be traced,' has now been found. These manuscripts have been identified as those written by Æneas Gunn. Like a great many Scots themselves, the papers once thought lost, found a home in the Antipodes, in Melbourne, Australia. This paper outlines the method used to establish their status and provides an account of their provenance.

When Thomas Sinclair was preparing his history of the Clan Gunn,² some time between 1872 and its printing in 1890, he drew heavily upon a range of unpublished manuscripts. He refers to these manuscripts explicitly in a lengthy appendix to the volume and includes extended quotations drawn from them. His list includes significant single items, such as the brief history and genealogy of the clan by the Rev. Alexander Sage, as well as collections of manuscript histories, genealogies, lists and other documents assembled by people such as by Æneas Gunn, Solicitor, Edinburgh, and by Captain Alexander Gunn, Braehour, which latter collection Sinclair refers to as the Braehour parchments and papers.

Histories written by gentlemen-amateurs have been evident in the Scottish cultural landscape from at least the twelfth century.³ Characteristically, the dependence on oral traditions and few written records results in a tendency to privilege the accounts offered by established 'authorities', which practice serves further to cement myth, legend and the events of the past into a conventional

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² T. Sinclair, *The Gunns* (Wick, 1890). In his 'Preface' Sinclair explains that he did not go beyond what he called a 'preliminary gathering' of material for a history because of his belief that a complete 'history' would be produced in due course by Mr John Gunn, or Principal Miller of Madras or the Rev. Alexander Gunn, Watten, and his wish to avoid 'forestalling their market'.

³ B. T. Hudson, 'Historical Literature of Early Scotland', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 26 (1991), 141–55.

wisdom which is then passed on as received tradition.⁴ As Sinclair himself says in his preface, ‘The period between 1236 and 1454 is very barren of materials, and from 1454, or 1478, to the present time, Sir Robert Gordon and tradition are the principal sources of information’.⁵

This selection of manuscript histories, written in the first half of the nineteenth century, come late in this period when: ‘Otherwise sober historical documents are embellished with myths, legends and literary allusions ... [resulting in] ... confusion and conflation of history and legend as part of a synthesizing approach to Scottish history’.⁶ They pre-date the transition during the Victorian era from ‘literary’ histories, written from the standpoint of the moral teacher to ‘attract and instruct a wide general audience’, to a new professionalism and a new class of historian whose work was based, self-avowedly, on bodies of ‘objective and systematized knowledge, whose verification, mastery, and advance were the responsibility of fellow experts’.⁷

Eighty years later, Mark Rugg Gunn, writing his own *History of the Clan Gunn*,⁸ drew upon Sinclair’s account, including the material in the appendices. By that means, he became acquainted with the previous existence of these manuscripts containing historical material and laments their apparent loss. Of these he says:⁹

Other works were never completed, or if they were, they have like the manuscript of Æneas Gunn, and the papers of Captain Gunn of Braehour become lost. It would seem that a number of writers have set out with every good intention, but alarmed by the magnitude of the task ahead have either abandoned the project or left their notes in manuscript form which can no longer be traced.

Even as he wrote, at least in relation to the Braehour parchments and papers,

⁴ See P. Hechs, ‘Myth, History and Theory’, *History and Theory*, 33 (1994), 1–19. Hechs argues (p. 3) that ‘Since the time of the Greeks, *mythos* (the word as decisive, final pronouncement) has been contrasted to *logos* (the word whose validity or truth can be argued and demonstrated). Enlightened thinking or *logos*, writes Jürgen Habermas, seeks to convince through “the unforced force of the better argument”, while myth takes its stand on the “authoritarian normativity of a tradition”.’

⁵ Sinclair, *The Gunns*, vii–viii.

⁶ Hudson, ‘Historical Literature’, 141, 142. With this genre, emerging as it does during the transition from oracy to literacy in the recounting of history, there is fertile ground, as Hobsbawm has pointed out, for ‘inventing’ traditions especially when reliable source material is slight. See E. Hobsbawm, ‘Introduction: Inventing Traditions’ in (ed.) E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), 1–14. See also D. Allan, ‘“Fable and Falsehood”: The Historiographical Context’, in *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment: Ideas of Scholarship in Early Modern History* (Edinburgh, 1993), 1–28.

⁷ R. Jann, ‘From Amateur to Professional: The Case of the Oxbridge Historians’, *Journal of British Studies*, 22 (1983), 122–47 (126).

⁸ M. R. Gunn, *History of the Clan Gunn* (Glasgow, 1969).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

Mark Rugg Gunn was in error. The papers of Captain Gunn of Braehour, which included a copy of the Sage manuscript, had been deposited many years earlier in the Caithness Archive Centre at the Wick Carnegie Public Library. Mark Rugg Gunn's oversight is understandable. The bundle was deposited in the library in 1922 when the library was still in its relative infancy. The volume of other deposits made at the same time resulted in the papers being bound together but not individually catalogued. A preliminary catalogue list of the Braehour papers was prepared only in October 2011. The collection comprises 26 manuscripts in fourteen groups spanning the years 1652 to 1903.¹⁰

This communication announces that a further collection of documents that Mark Rugg Gunn believed could 'no longer be traced,' has now been found. These manuscripts have been identified as those written by Æneas Gunn. Like a great many Scots themselves, the papers once thought lost, found a home in the Antipodes, in Melbourne, Australia.

In the appendix to his book, Sinclair refers to five manuscripts by Æneas Gunn from which he had extracted material. Sinclair records that he gained access to these documents through the good offices of Mrs Janet Leslie Gunn,¹¹ Langley Lodge, Wick. First among the papers was a manuscript of 322 bound quarto pages, entitled *History of the Clan Gunn, From the earliest period to the present date, Compiled from the most authentic sources, by Æneas Gunn, writer, Edinburgh*¹² and dated April, 1852. Secondly, Sinclair drew upon a manuscript essay of nineteen pages,¹³ having the title *Origin of the Clan Gunn* written by the same Æneas Gunn, Solicitor, Edinburgh. Thirdly, Sinclair referred to 'A family tree of the Gunns, by the late Æneas ... prepared in 1870, as an improvement on another he made in 1868.' Sinclair notes¹⁴ that in the preparation of the genealogy Æneas drew heavily upon a manuscript history of the clan written by the Rev. Alexander Sage, Kildonan, lent to him by the Rev. Alexander Gunn of Watten.¹⁵ Fourth, Sinclair speaks of 'Another MS. of two pages [that] is a pedigree of the Sinclairs, apparently an abridgement wholly from Sir Robert

¹⁰ Caithness Archive Centre, GB1741/P200, Papers of Captain Alexander Gunn of Braehour in Caithness, 1652–1903. I am very grateful for the assistance of Fiona Platten of the Caithness Archive Centre and Robert Bain of the Wick Carnegie Public Library for assistance in locating and arranging access to these materials and for information regarding their accession to the archive.

¹¹ Sinclair, *The Gunns*, 151. Sinclair refers to Mrs Janet Gunn as the 'relict of Rev. Robert Innes Gunn of the Free Church of Scotland, Keiss'. Robert was older brother to Æneas, the author of the history.

¹² *Ibid.*, 151. Æneas Gunn, Solicitor, Edinburgh, is given by Sinclair to be the son of Æneas Gunn of Tacher Farm, who was in turn the son of William in Ascaig, Kildonan.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 147–8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁵ The Sage manuscript later appeared in one of a series of articles prepared by Sinclair, as an extension of his history, and published in the *Northern Ensign* between 2 December 1902 and 15 September 1903.

Gordon.¹⁶ Finally, he refers to ‘a careful list, making three quarto pages, extracted from the parish registers, of every Gunn name from 17th April, 1791, to June, 1818’.¹⁷

Documents seeming to match the description given by Sinclair were, until recently, in the possession of Æneas Selman Gunn of Melbourne, Australia. The extent and significance of these documents only became evident with the cataloguing of his collection of Scottish and colonial correspondence and papers following his death in July 1998. The documents in question, which formed a single fond¹⁸ within the larger collection, include two manuscript histories indicating authorship by Æneas Gunn, one manuscript history of uncertain attribution, three Gunn genealogies, a pedigree of the Sinclairs bearing the note that it was ‘abridged from Sir Robert Gordon’ and a list of Gunn births extracted from Caithness Parish registers.

Strictly speaking, the archive which now contains the fond is a collection of Scottish and colonial correspondence and papers rather than an archival collection of colonial records.¹⁹ To understand its place within the collection, Moir’s threefold classification of Scottish records in Canadian repositories may be applied: material of research interest to repositories acquired through deposition or purchase; material generated in Scotland on Scottish issues and entering Canadian repositories either as a result of families of means having room for personal papers when emigrating or as a result of inheritance and the transfer of material to descendents in a colonial setting; and records generated after migration.²⁰ While the fond in question is comprised of Scottish material that came into the collection as a result of inheritance, as described more fully below, most of the collection is Australian material generated after migration; a small portion relating to the lives of the emigrants in Australia but most to the lives of their children. That said, there has been a conscious attempt over the years to build the collection by taking in items that are relevant, by purchase where necessary, but those items have been exclusively Australian.

The *prima facie* evidence suggests that these manuscripts that have come to

¹⁶ Sinclair, *The Gunns*, 151. Because it adds nothing new, Sinclair describes it as being ‘for this alone of little value’.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ P. Horsman, ‘The Last Dance of the Phoenix, or The De-Discovery of the Archival Fonds’, *Archivaria*, 54 (2002), 1–23. This group of documents has been kept intact and stored separately from the balance of the collection, thus warranting the use of the term ‘fond’.

¹⁹ See G. Yeo, ‘Custodial History, Provenance, and the Description of Personal Records’, *Libraries & the Cultural Record*, 44 (2009), 50–64, for an analogous case study. For a general discussion of the tensions associated with family records and public archives, see E. Wells, ‘Related Material: The Arrangement and Description of Family Papers’, *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 33 (2012), 167–84.

²⁰ M. B. Moir, ‘Scottish Manuscripts in Canadian Repositories’, *Archivaria*, 17 (1983–84), 145–61.

light may well be the material consulted by Thomas Sinclair and subsequently believed to be 'lost'. This possibility is based on an undated letter, also contained in the collection, written by Æneas James Gunn to his brother Peter Robert Innes Gunn some time between 1899 and 1901. The letter reads in part:

Enclosed I hand you a letter of Mrs Alexanders for perusal at home. There is not much in it but a great good heartedness and human kindness which doubtless in their own way and time are much. But Mrs Alexanders goodness takes practical shape. She has sent out a M.S.S. volume by Uncle Æneas containing the history of the Clan Gunn done by himself and several valuable M.S.S papers, genealogical trees of the Gunns etc. a mass of M.S.S. that I consider beyond rubies and pearls and diamonds in value.²¹

It is important to consider how the prima facie evidence might be tested. At first blush, the standing of the documents seems incontrovertible and their provenance impeccable. However, caution is required before the status of the manuscripts in this Australian collection can be confirmed. Caution is necessary because the physical characteristics of several documents are not precisely as Sinclair describes them. The possibility must be taken seriously that these handwritten documents might be drafts and not the final copies consulted by Thomas Sinclair. Some judgement is required as to whether the manuscripts now located in Australia are those that Sinclair had to hand during the preparation of the appendix to his history and which he esteemed so highly. If doubts persist and the evidence leads to the conclusion that these manuscripts are not the precise ones consulted by Sinclair, a further judgement is required as to whether they may contain, nonetheless, sufficient common material to enable them to be relied upon as effective substitutes for those still 'missing'.

The status of the manuscripts may be addressed in three ways: by reference to the degree of correspondence between Sinclair's physical description of the items he consulted and the physical character of the items now to hand; by reference to Sinclair's detailed account of the content of each document and the ordering of its narrative, and the content and ordering of material in the documents; and by a closer consideration of the provenance of the documents now held in Australia.²²

Each of the documents will be considered in turn. Each will be assessed for its conformity to Sinclair's description of its physical form and his account of its content.

This examination begins with the 'careful list.' In the appendix, Sinclair refers to a list extracted from parochial registers. He describes its physical

²¹ Gunn Family Archive, Series 3/05/01, Correspondence of Æneas James Gunn and Jeannie Gunn (née Taylor) c.1899–1953.

²² For an introductory account of the principles of document authentication followed in this case, see J. Nickell, *Real or Fake: Studies in Authentication* (Lexington, Kentucky, 2009), 7–12.

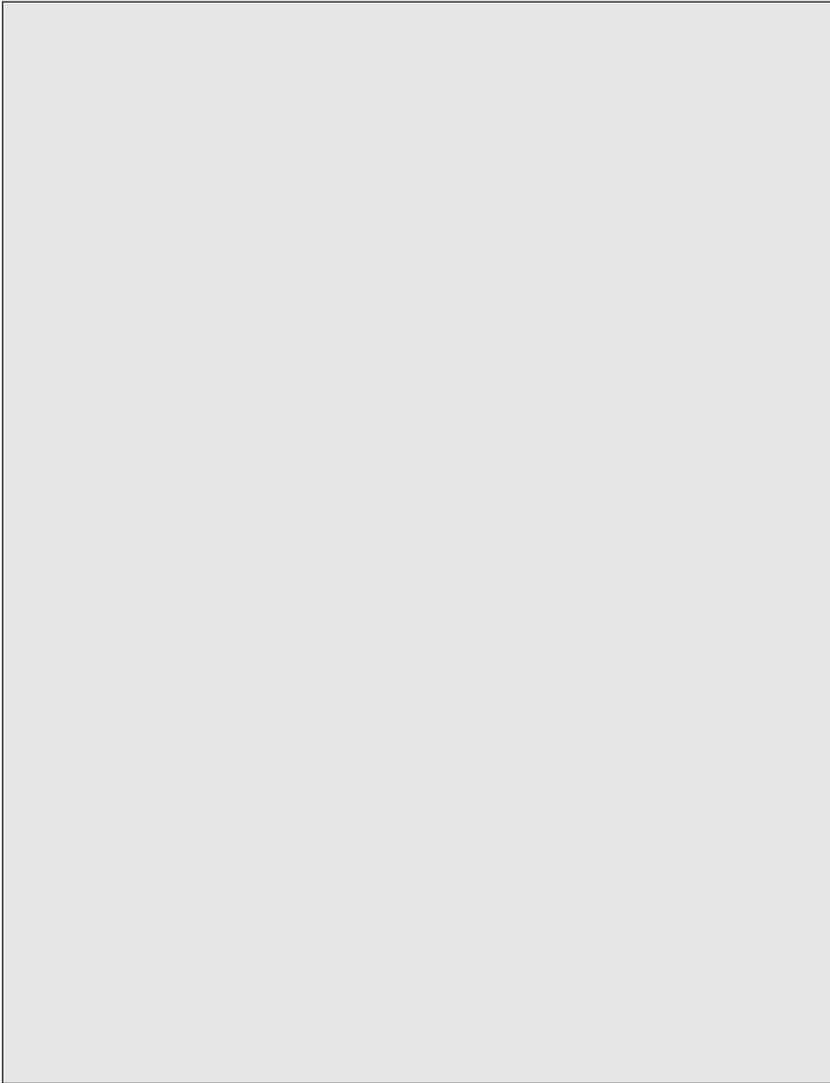


Plate 1 Page three of the 'careful list, making three quarto pages, extracted from the parish registers, of every Gunn name from 17th April, 1791, to June, 1818'. Gunn Family Archive, Series 1/01/04, Papers of Æneas Gunn, Solicitor, Edinburgh, 1828–68; Sinclair, *The Gunns*, 151.

appearance as: ‘a careful list, making three quarto pages, extracted from the parish registers, of every Gunn name from 17th April, 1791, to June, 1818’.²³ The manuscript to hand is quarto, i.e. a single sheet folded once to form pages that are approximately 8¼ x 10¼ inches in size. The first page is blank. The date, the name of the child, the names of the parents and place of residence are carefully written in tabular form on each of the remaining three pages. There is no title given nor is there an indication of the name of the person making the extract. At the tail of the manuscript is appended the comment: ‘This is every “Gunn” name in the Record between 1791 & 1819 inclusive.’ Physically speaking, there are no indications that are contrary to the general conclusion that this ‘careful list’ conforms to one available to Sinclair.

With regard to its content, Sinclair provides little information either about the content of the ‘careful list’ or about its ordering. His description of its contents is limited to two observations. The first concerns the dates of the first and last entries. Here the manuscript and Sinclair’s text agree precisely with both referring to the period 17 April 1791 to June 1818²⁴ (Plate 1).

In his second observation, Sinclair notes that:

There is a William Gunn in Asgag or Askaig, married to Elizabeth Gunn, mentioned from 1795 to 1799, and a William Gunn in Asgag, married to Isabella Gunn, who appears in 1812 and 1814 as father of children, probably the same William married twice.²⁵

The manuscript copy of the parochial register does indeed refer to three children born to William and Elspathe Gunn of Asgag, between March 1795 and April 1799 and to two children to William and Isabel Gunn of Asgag between May 1812 and April 1814. In these respects the manuscript in Australia matches the substantive material referred to by Sinclair – save for the questions as to why Sinclair uses ‘Elizabeth’ where the manuscript uses the diminutive ‘Elspathe’ and why he uses ‘Isabella’ where the manuscript uses ‘Isabel’. At this time those questions cannot be answered. This comparison of physical features and content reveals nothing inconsistent with the conclusion that this is one of the documents that Sinclair consulted.

The second manuscript to be considered is the pedigree of the Sinclairs. The document of two pages, referred to by Thomas Sinclair, is described as being:

Another MS. of two pages [that] is a pedigree of the Sinclairs, apparently an abridgement wholly from Sir Robert Gordon, and for this alone of little value. The name ‘David Coghill, Tacher,’ is written on one page several times.²⁶

²³ Sinclair, *The Gunns*, 151.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

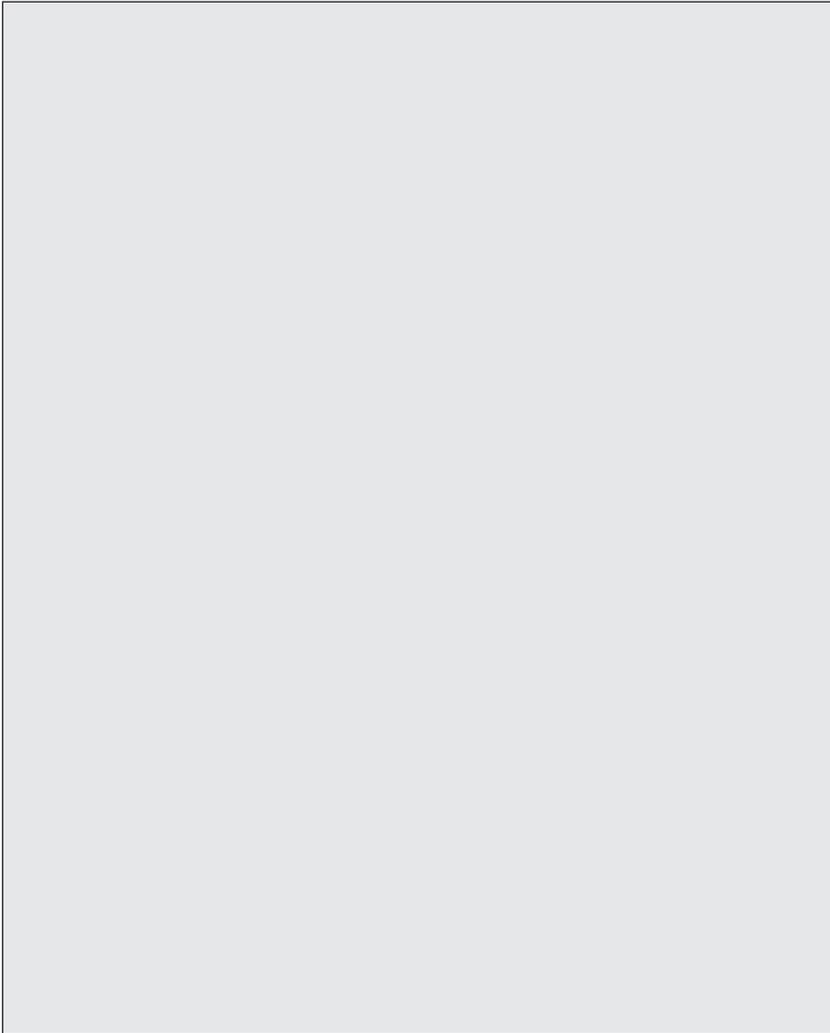


Plate 2 Page two of the 'Pedigree of the Sinclairs' showing, below the main text, the space where the 'name "David Coghill, Tacher," is written ... several times'. Gunn Family Archive, Series 1/01/05, Papers of Æneas Gunn, Solicitor, Edinburgh, 1828-70; Sinclair, *The Gunns*, 151.

Sinclair provides no description of this document beyond the note that it is comprised of two pages. The manuscript that has now come to light, providing ‘a pedigree of the Sinclairs’, is written on both sides of a single sheet of paper measuring 9½ x 7½ inches. The paper has no watermark. To the very limited extent a judgement about physical correspondence is possible, there are no indications that are contrary to the general conclusion that this ‘pedigree’ conforms to the description of the one available to Sinclair.

A more definitive comparison can be made in relation to content. In the margin at the foot of the first page of the manuscript, which is quite densely covered with text, the name of Æneas Gunn appears, although possibly in a different hand. The text occupies only about two-thirds of the available space on the reverse side. In the remaining space the name ‘William’ is written twice, ‘David’ appears three times, ‘David Coghill’ appears twice and ‘Tacher’ once (Plate 2). The names are not well formed nor are they aligned with the border of the page and give every appearance of having been penned in an idle moment. William was the name of both Æneas’ older brother and his brother-in-law, father to David Coghill his nephew, and Tacher the name of the family farm in Caithness. To the extent enabled by Sinclair’s brief description, the indications are that the physical characteristics and the content of the manuscript are consistent with the physical characteristics and content of the document available to Sinclair.

The third document to be assessed for correspondence is the ‘19 page’ manuscript. Thomas Sinclair describes the shorter of the two manuscript ‘histories’ as follows:

Under the title ‘Origin of the Clan Gunn,’ the late Æneas Gunn, solicitor, Edinburgh, wrote 19 pages of MS. heralding his subsequent ‘History’, and some items of it require to be preserved.²⁷

The surviving shorter history on the origins of the clan meets these very limited physical criteria. The manuscript comprises nineteen pages of text, although it is written on both sides of ten leaves. It bears the title, *Origin of the Clan Gunn*, precisely as Sinclair gives it (Plate 3). The sheets are folded once. The resulting leaves measure 7½ x 8 inches, making it slightly smaller than the principal manuscript. The presentation of the text is more note-like in character and some sections of it are written with less apparent care than others. There are few emendations or corrections. There are no physical indications contrary to the general conclusion that this manuscript conforms physically to one available to Sinclair.

Sinclair quotes seven passages from Æneas Gunn’s nineteen-page manuscript history entitled *Origin of the Clan Gunn*. These extracts can be compared with the same passages from the manuscript that has been uncovered. One of these, the second, will serve as an example of the degree of correspondence typical

²⁷ Ibid., 147.

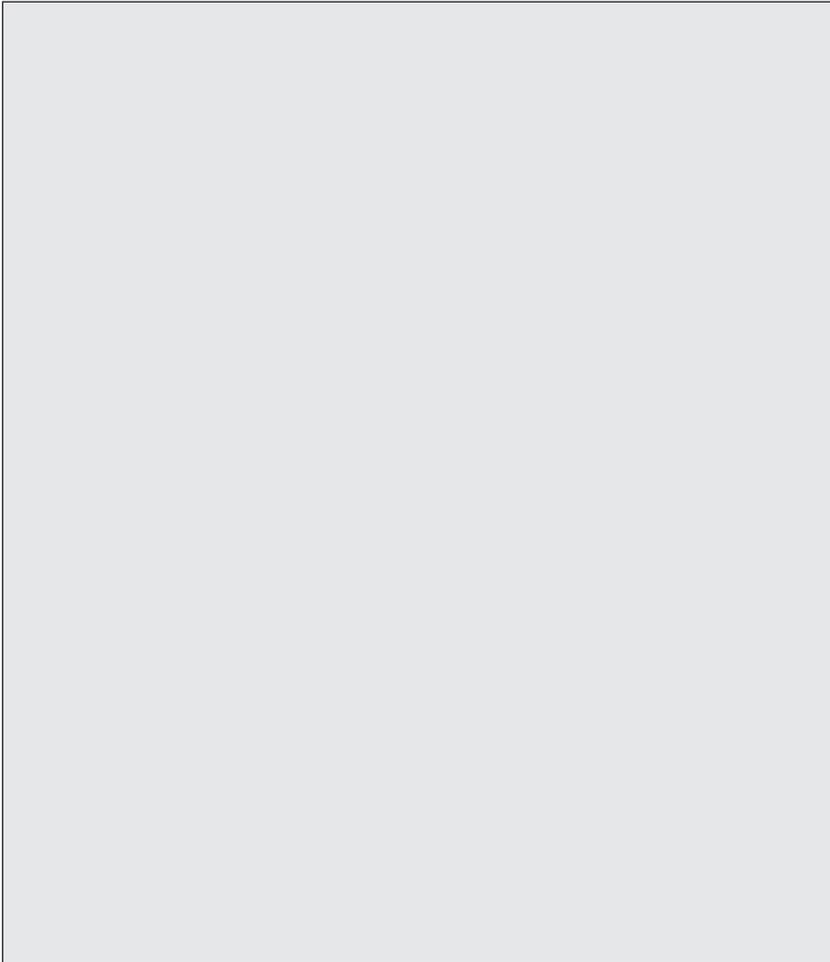


Plate 3 Title page, nineteen-page manuscript, 'Under the title "Origins of the Clan Gunn," the late Æneas Gunn, solicitor, Edinburgh, wrote 19 pages of MS. heralding his subsequent "History". Gunn Family Archive, Series 1/01/02, Papers of Æneas Gunn, Solicitor, Edinburgh, 1828-79; Sinclair, *The Gunns*, 147.

of his treatment of his source. This extract refers to Gunn, son of Olaf, the putative progenitor of the clan and is the manuscript text most at variance with Sinclair's account. Sinclair's text²⁸ reads:

Afterwards he came to Sutherland, and there married Ingired, daughter of Eric Slagbrillar by Ragnilda, only daughter of Ronald, earl of Orkney. She inherited half of Orkney, but Harold usurped and obtained the lands. By marriage to her daughter, Gunn enriched his family. Their son Snaekol Gunn claimed his grandmother's lands from Earl John, the son of Harold, whom he slew afterwards at Thurso.²⁹

In comparison, the corresponding passage in the manuscript reads:

After this he came to Suthd and there mard [married] Ingired or Ingegerdu dr [daughter] of a noble ... residing there – Eric Slagbrillar – by wh [which] marge [marriage] he enriched his family. Slagbrillar's wife Ragnilda being Ronald E [earl] of O [Orkney's] only child and dr [daughter] who inherited an half of Orkney but one Harold usurped & obt [obtained] the lands. Snaekollus Gunns son claimed these lands from John [,] Earl Harolds son who he slew afterwards at Thurso.³⁰

Sinclair treats the other extracts from this '19 page manuscript' in much the same way; expanding the manuscript's abbreviations and Anglicising the Latinised names. The changes appear to have been made only to the extent required to make the text readable, leading to the minor textual differences that are apparent, notably in word order. The close correspondence of physical characteristics and the agreement on content for all seven extracts are together sufficient to allow that this brief nineteen-page essay is indeed the manuscript to which Sinclair refers.

The next manuscript to be tested for correspondence is the 'family tree of the Gunns'. Sinclair does not describe in any detail the physical characteristics of the genealogy to which he had access. The extent of his comment is:

A family tree of the Gunns, by the late Æneas, junior; this historian, was prepared in 1870, as an improvement on another he made in 1868, both of which have useful items.³¹

There are now four genealogies in the collection of papers. One of these may be excluded readily. It is a tree prepared by Mrs Jeannie Gunn, wife of Æneas James Gunn, and easily recognisable from her distinctive hand. The tree prepared by her is presented in portrait format. The large sheet, which

²⁸ Ibid., 147–8.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Gunn Family Archive, Series 1/01/02, Papers of Æneas Gunn, Solicitor, Edinburgh, 1828–70.

³¹ Sinclair, *The Gunns*, 133.

measures 27 x 49 inches, is formed up out of three sheets laid in landscape format each being 27 x 17 inches.³² Further evidence that this tree has Australian origins is provided by watermarks in the paper. The two topmost sheets bear the watermark 'Cowan Extra Strength', while the third sheet carries the watermark 'Norman Bros. Made In Britain'. These watermarks are consistent with paper widely available from suppliers and stationers operating in Melbourne, Australia, early in the twentieth century.³³ The clearest evidence that this tree was not one prepared by Æneas Gunn of Edinburgh is that it refers to people who were not born until after Æneas' death.

Three documents remain as candidates for the family trees that Sinclair consulted. One may be singled out as quite possibly the 1868 genealogy by virtue of its watermark and the fact that there is no date later than 1868 in any of its lineages. This large sheet, in landscape format, measures 32¾ x 21½ inches and is formed of four smaller sheets in landscape orientation, each approximately 16¾ x 10¾ inches in size. All four sheets are watermarked 'A Pirie & Sons 1867'.³⁴ The watermark in the paper and the presence of no date after 1868 suggests that this tree is the earlier one to which improvements were later made.

A further tree, more extensive but less carefully prepared, and with emendations and pencilled additions, may well be a draft upon which a later work was based. There is no watermark readily apparent in the paper. It is landscape in format but almost square having the overall dimensions of 34 x 32 inches and is formed up from two sheets in portrait orientation that are approximately 17½ x 32 inches and therefore not of standard size. The most recent entries in any of its lineages are dated 1869.

The final tree has the overall dimensions of 49 x 31½ inches. There are no watermarks apparent in its paper. It is presented in portrait format but it is not easily discernible whether it is one sheet or formed of several sheets due to breaks which were the result of past heavy folding now being confused with possible joins. The lineages contain no entries dated later than 1870 and on this single ground is the most likely candidate to be adjudged the tree that 'was prepared in 1870, as an improvement on another he [Æneas Gunn] made in 1868'.³⁵

While there are no watermarks evident in the paper, the latest dates

³² Probably prepared from Foolscap quad sheets whose standard size was 27 x 34 inches.

³³ A paper-mill at Pennycook was operated by the Edinburgh-based Alexander Cowan & Sons during part of the nineteenth century. There is no Norman Brothers paper-mill operating in Scotland late in the nineteenth century so it is more likely that, wherever the sheets were manufactured, they were made for Norman Brothers, a large and reputable Melbourne stationer. For details of Scottish paper manufacturers, see the Scottish Book Trade Index at <http://www.nls.uk/catalogues/scottish-book-trade-index>.

³⁴ Alexander Pirie & Sons were paper-makers and stationers in Aberdeen and operated the Stonywood mill in Buxburn, Aberdeenshire, about this time. See note 33.

³⁵ Sinclair, *The Gunns*, 133.

contained in this final genealogy match the description of the family tree available to Sinclair and to this extent there is no inconsistency between Sinclair's description of his source and the genealogy now in Australia.

Next to be considered is the longer manuscript entitled *History of the Clan Gunn, From the earliest period to the present date, Compiled from the most authentic sources, by Æneas Gunn, writer, Edinburgh*. Sinclair describes the principal manuscript in the following terms:

The MS. is a bound quarto of 322 pages, carefully written for press on one side of the paper, and would make an octavo volume of 150 printed pages. An introductory chapter, 28 pages in the MS., ... An attached table of descent of all the clans is of some general value ... A genealogy is appended. ... There is a preliminary note of the armorial bearings of the Gunns, and another on their music.³⁶

When measured against these physical criteria it is immediately apparent that there are problems of correspondence between Sinclair's description of the manuscript he was able to consult and the nature of the one to hand in Australia. First, it would be an exaggeration to say that the manuscript now held in Australia was 'carefully written for press'. While the majority of the text is indeed presented in a manner that may be described as 'carefully written', other sections show signs of extensive editing with sentences and paragraphs deleted and marginal additions made. On widely scattered pages some additions and corrections have been entered in pencil, although it is not clear by whose hand or when this was done. Secondly, not all the text is 'on one side of the paper'. Over and above the sections where marginal emendations have been made are other sections where additional material, or corrections too lengthy to be written in the margin, has been presented on the page opposite. Thirdly, a count of the pages reveals that there are 289 leaves or, alternatively, 313 complete or partial pages of text, which is somewhat short of the number in the manuscript to which Sinclair makes reference. Fourth, at the head of the title page is written the word 'draft', which is inconsistent with Sinclair's claim that the text was 'carefully written for press' (Plate 4). Finally, some material extracted by Sinclair from the manuscript he consulted is not found in the manuscript in Australia at all, and other material is to be found written on several loose sheets without a clear indication of the proper placement of these sheets in the larger document.

Against this, some features do conform to the description provided by Sinclair. First, the manuscript to hand comprises leaves measuring approximately 7½ x 9¾ inches³⁷ and gathered in a manner that could reasonably be typified as 'quarto'. Secondly, the introductory chapter is indeed comprised of 28 pages of text (but only has 22 leaves since six pages of text are written on the reverse

³⁶ Ibid., 134, 146–7.

³⁷ Quarto pages (one sheet, two folds, four leaves, eight pages when cut) of this size could be readily formed from a Crown (15 x 20 inches) sheet.

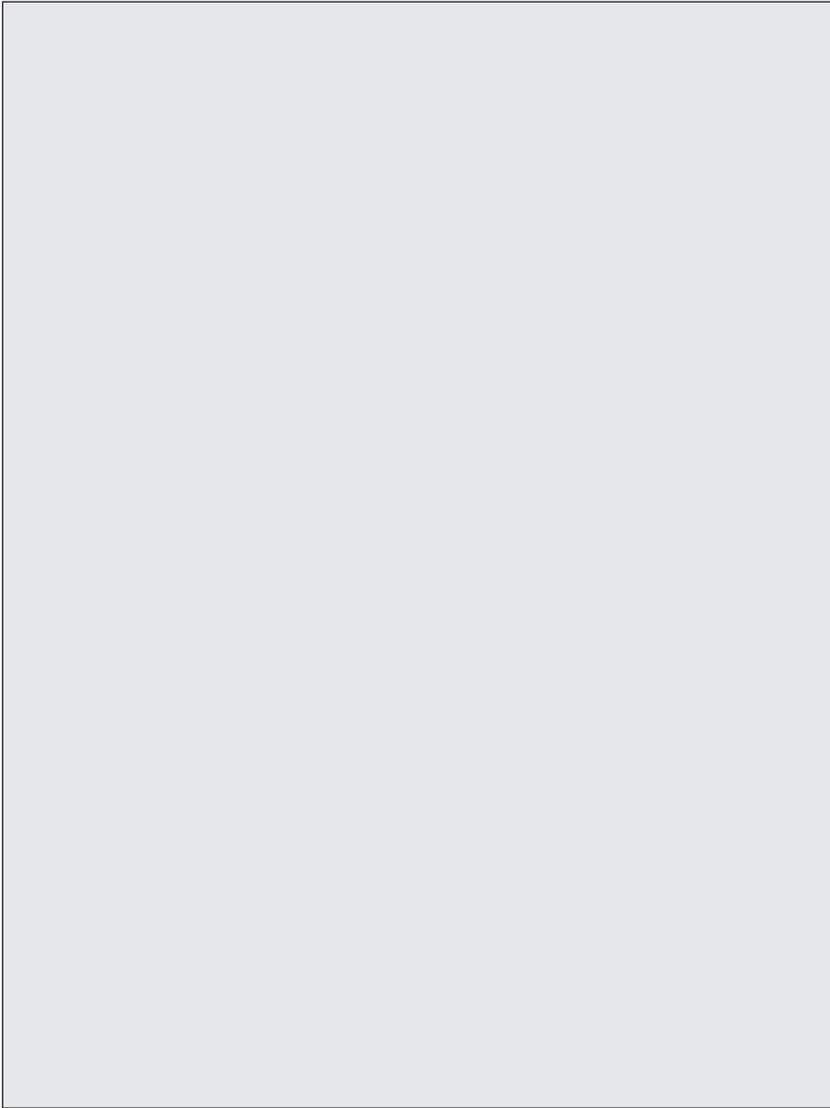


Plate 4 Title page from the 'History of the Clan Gunn,' the principal manuscript. Gunn Family Archive, Series 1/01/03, Papers of Æneas Gunn, Solicitor, Edinburgh, 1828–70.

of the page). Thirdly, a remnant, possibly half of a ‘table of descent of all the clans’ is lined in at the designated place. Fourth, a genealogy is appended at the end of the manuscript. Fifth, a ‘preliminary note of the armorial bearings of the Gunns and another on their music’ are both placed where Sinclair describes them, ahead of the introductory chapter.

In sum, these physical characteristics raise the distinct possibility that the manuscript that has survived is the penultimate draft rather than the final clean copy, particularly if the existence of a document ready for typesetting may be inferred from Sinclair’s description. Nonetheless, in the absence of a later version this one may well serve as a substitute. That judgement will be the subject of the discussion that follows below.

Sinclair’s appendix includes twenty passages of some substance, which he records as having been extracted from the principal manuscript. These passages, too, may be compared with the manuscript in order to assess the degree to which the Australian manuscript is likely to be the source.

In his remarks on the longer manuscript history, Sinclair gives an indication as to the manner in which he used the information it contained. He says:

Some digest of it, and a free quotation of the passages original to himself which have notable value, will form an effective addition to the lore of the subject.³⁸

Where the manuscript text contains contractions or Latinisms these are rendered in plain prose. In only a minority of cases is word order varied, and the resulting changes typically improve readability. This consistency of treatment is well within the parameters of Sinclair’s intention of making ‘Some digest of it, and a free quotation of passages’.

The first passage³⁹ he drew upon is a lengthy extract of which he says that Æneas Gunn ‘quotes from the *Miscellanea Scotica*’. This passage reads:

It is recorded that three brothers called Guin, Leod and Leandris came out of Denmark to the north parts of Scotland to follow their fortune, and that Guin took possession of the braes of Caithness, where his posterity remain to this day called the clan Gunn; that Leod conquered Lewis, from whom are descended the Macleods; and that Leandris conquered Braechat, namely, Lairg, Creich, Slishchillish, together with the lands of Strathcharron, Strathoykell, Scrivater, and Glenbeg. To Leandris succeeded his son Tyre, and to Tyre, Paul Macintyre, whose daughter and heiress Catherine was married to Walter, named Cluggmach, laird of Balnagown. From Leandris are descended the clan Leandris, now named Ross. Paul Macintyre was a valiant man, and caused Caithness to pay him blackmail. It is reported that he had 180 cows yearly on this footing out of the diocese. He had a son Murdo Reoch, a stout and hardy captain, who while he was taking up the custom cows was killed by the men of Caithness at Spittal Hill. Murdo’s sons then retreating were drowned at Helmsdale.

³⁸ Sinclair, *The Gunns*, 133.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 134.

This passage, included in Sinclair's appendix, may be compared with the manuscript version of the same events, which reads as follows (slightly extended to indicate the origin of Sinclair's reference to the original source):

The following notice regarding the Origin of the Clan Gunn is extracted from the *Miscellaneous Scotica*, a collection of tracts on the Antiquity and Topography of Scotland collected from various authors. The excerpt in question is as follows:

It is recorded that three brothers called Guin, Leod and Leandris came out of Denmark to the north parts of Scotland to follow their fortune: and that Guin took possession of the braes of Caithness where his posterity remains to this day called the clan Guin; Leod conquest the Lewes; and of him are descended the McLeods of Ross, and the rest of the name of McLeod; and that Leandris conquest Braechatt, vizt. Lairgg, the Parish of Creich, Slishchillish, or Forrin Countie, together with the lands of Strathcharron, Strathhockell, Scrivater and Glenbeg. To this Leandris succeeded his son Tyre, and to Tyre, Paul McTyre, whose daughter and heire (called Katerin) was marryed to Walter agnamed [surnamed] Clugmach, laird of Balnagowne. Of the foresaid Leandris are descendit the [whole?] clan Leandris now surnamed Ross; Paul McTyre aforesaid (grandchild to Leandris) was a valiant man and caused Caithness to pay him blackmails. It is reported that he got sixe scoir [score] of cowes yearly out of Caithness for blackmail, so long as he was able to travell. This Paul had a son called Murdo Reoch (a stout and hardie Captain) who (while he was taking up his custom ky [cows]) was killed be the Caithness men at the Spittal hills, and Murdo's bairns coming out of Cathnes then, were drowned at Helmsdaile.

The second extract, which Sinclair says was drawn from Torfaeus in his *Orcades*, reads:

About the year 1136 there lived in the island of Gairsay in Orkney a man of high rank named Olaf, who was held in the greatest esteem by earl Paul. His wife was Asleif, a lady of noble extraction and much talent. Their children were Waltheof, Gunn, and Swen, with one daughter, Ingegerdi, who all had a liberal education in the branches then in repute.⁴⁰

The same passage appears in the principal manuscript where it reads:

About the year 1136, there lived on the island of Gairsay, Olafus, a man of high rank & of the greatest esteem with Earl Paul. His wife was Asleif, a Lady of noble extraction, & of great talents. Their children were Waltheofus, Gunn and Swen, with one daughter Ingegerdis, and they were all educated liberally in such branches as were then in repute.

Clearly, with both these passages, there is a close correspondence between the extracts and manuscript passages. Where differences exist, they entail the removal of Latinisms, some minor changes to word order and insignificant omissions for the sake of brevity and clarity. None of these differences suggest

⁴⁰ Ibid., 135.

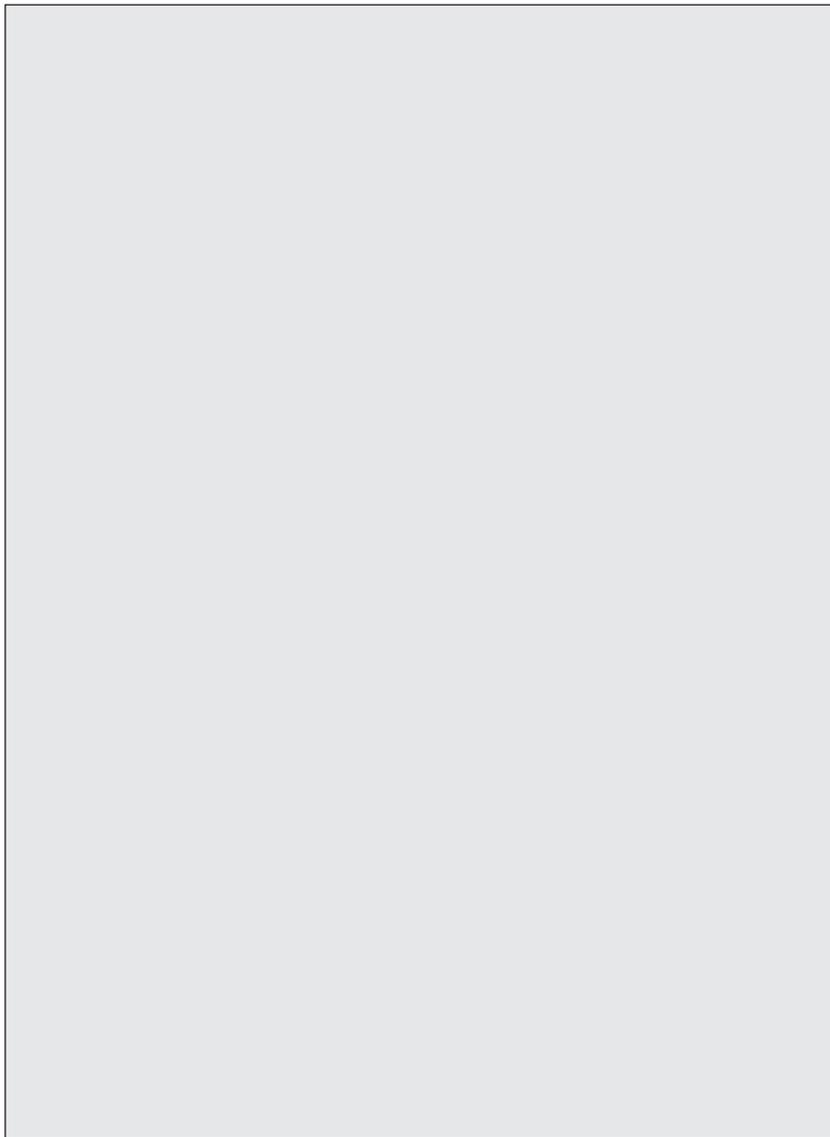


Plate 5 First page of the 46-page unidentified manuscript showing the title 'History of the Clan Gunn'. Gunn Family Archive, Series 1/01/03, Papers of Æneas Gunn, Solicitor, Edinburgh, 1828–70.

a different source given Sinclair's intention of making 'Some digest of it, and a free quotation of passages'.

Sinclair's text includes eighteen other extracts of a like nature that he says were drawn from the 322-page history. However, eight of the nine extracts that follow immediately upon the two quoted above cannot be located in the principal manuscript. The remaining ten extracts are all present. These ten extracts all show the same signs of a close correspondence evident in the two examples that have been quoted here.

The failure to locate eight substantial extracts throws doubt on any claim that the longer manuscript that has come to light in Australia was the document upon which Sinclair drew. The questions raised by the absence of these extracts will be addressed after the remaining manuscript has been considered.

Finally, there is a third manuscript history, an unidentified manuscript, in the fond. It has the title *History of the Clan Gunn*. Neither Thomas Sinclair nor Mark Rugg Gunn refers to a manuscript of that description. This manuscript bears no indications of authorship. There is no title page and no indication that one is missing. To the contrary, it seems as if there never was a title page as the first page has no corresponding page at the end of the gather – a stump remains, sufficient to allow the first page to be sewn into the gather. The title appears at the head of the first page, immediately above the text (Plate 5). It is handwritten on one side of quarto, with a generous margin, and comprises 49 leaves and 46 pages of text. A small number of pages have textual emendations or additions on the opposite page. Its pages measure approximately 7½ x 10 inches.⁴¹

When an examination was made of the 46 pages of text it became immediately apparent that all eight extracts that Sinclair gave as having been drawn from the principal manuscript, but found to be absent from the longer Australian manuscript, can be found in this briefer document. Two examples follow.

Sinclair's fifth extract from Gunn's manuscript to which he had access refers to the burning of Bishop Adam at Halkirk in September 1222. In relation to this incident, Sinclair says:

His residence was situated between the present manse and Quoycrook, the ruins of which were visible about a century ago, when the ground was ploughed up and every trace of them effaced. The church stood near Quoybrook, and was called St Katharine's, a green spot full of stones pointing out the place where it stood.⁴²

The comparable passage in the shorter unidentified history reads:

The Bishop's residence was situated between the present manse of Halkirk & Croy Crook. The ruins of it were visible about a century ago, where the ground was

⁴¹ Again, these quarto pages could readily be formed up out of Crown 15 x 20 inches sheets. See note 37.

⁴² Sinclair, *The Gunns*, 137.

ploughed and any trace of them effaced. The church stood near Quoy Crook and was called St Katherines. A green spot full of small stones points out the place where it was situated.

A later extract, the tenth of the twenty extracts that Sinclair said came from the 322-page document, refers to the drowning off the Caithness coast of the daughter of the King of Norway who had married a Gunn. Sinclair's text reads:

the Runic stone in the graveyard at Ulbster was placed over the spot where the lady who perished by shipwreck was buried; and, in the burying ground at East Clyth, a stone about six feet in height may be seen, where it is said a brother of the princess was interred, he having been drowned at the same time as his sister. There is no inscription on the latter stone, but it is marked with the cross, which shows that it was set up in Christian times.⁴³

The equivalent passage in the unidentified manuscript reads:

the Runic stone in the burying ground at Ulbster was placed over the spot where the Lady, who perished by shipwreck, was buried; and in the burying ground at East Clyth, a stone about fully six feet in height may be seen where it is said that a Brother of the Lady or Princess was buried, he having perished at the same time as his sister. There is no inscription on this stone, save the cross, which shows that it was set up in Christian times.

This analysis of the principal history and the unidentified manuscript points to two conclusions. First, given that Sinclair attributes all twenty extracts to a single source leads to the conclusion that the shorter manuscript, having the title *History of the Clan Gunn* but bearing no indication of authorship, and the longer *History of the Clan Gunn From the Earliest Period to the Present Date*, where the authorship is clearly stated, were both penned by Æneas Gunn, Writer, Edinburgh.

Secondly, we are inevitably led to the conclusion that the longer Australian manuscript history, in physical terms, is not the 'bound quarto [manuscript] of 322 pages, carefully written for press on one side of the paper'. The greater likelihood is that the longer and shorter manuscript histories together formed the penultimate draft of the text of Gunn's final clean manuscript, whose whereabouts still remains a mystery.

It remains now to ask whether a sufficient link can be established between Æneas Gunn, solicitor, Edinburgh, the author of the manuscript histories, and Æneas Selman Gunn, Melbourne, into whose possession they eventually came.

Sinclair provides a thumbnail sketch of Æneas Gunn of Edinburgh, the author of the manuscripts. Sinclair's description, based only on a tombstone inscription in the Wick churchyard, is incomplete. He says:

⁴³ Ibid., 138–9.

This Edinburgh solicitor was the son of Æneas Gunn, Tacher farm, the son of William in Askaig, Kildonan. In Wick churchyard there is a tombstone erected by John Gunn, Jamaica, to his mother, Catherine Innes, wife of Æneas Gunn, Tacher. She died 7th August, 1831, aged 59. Her son George, a doctor of medicine, died in Jamaica on 1st February, 1826, at the age of 25. Another of these brothers was William of the Inland Revenue.⁴⁴

In fact, Æneas Gunn of Tacher and his wife Catherine Innes together had nine sons and four daughters. Æneas Gunn of Edinburgh was their youngest child. The eldest son was William, who remained at Tacher and did serve with the Inland Revenue. Second was John, who became a planter in Jamaica. Third was George, who studied medicine at Edinburgh and migrated to Jamaica where he practised until his death from yellow fever at the age of 26. Fourth was Sutherland, who remained at Tacher. Fifth was James who also studied Medicine at Edinburgh. Sixth was Innes, who also served with the Inland Revenue. Seventh was Peter, who studied Theology at Edinburgh. After taking a short course in medicine for missionaries, he migrated to Melbourne, Australia, arriving in February 1842, where he ministered within the Presbyterian Church. Eighth was Robert who also studied Theology at Edinburgh and became Minister in the parish of Keiss. Æneas, the youngest son, studied Law at Edinburgh and was a Writer to the Signet. He visited his brother Peter in Australia several times and died in Edinburgh on 30 August 1872. There four daughters were Mary (Mrs Gordon), Barbara (Mrs Munro), Catherine (also known as Esther, who became Mrs William Coghill and mother of David) and Janet, who died in infancy.

Sinclair records that Mrs Janet Leslie Gunn, the widow of the Rev. Robert Innes Gunn of the Free Church of Scotland, Keiss, made the manuscripts available to him. This Robert was older brother to Æneas, the author of the history.

Of all these nine brothers, the Rev. Peter Gunn alone fathered sons. After his arrival in Australia, he married Jane Scott and they had four children: William John, Æneas James (the recipient of the collection of manuscripts), Sutherland George and Peter Robert Innes. William died in 1942 leaving no male heir, his only son Edwin Innis having been killed during the battle of Fleurbaix in the attack on Fromelles, France, in 1916. Æneas James married Jeannie Taylor and died in 1903 on the Elsey Station in the Northern Territory, Australia, childless, a little more than a year after his marriage. Sutherland George died in infancy. Only Peter Robert Innes, who was in business as a stock and station agent in Melbourne, had male heirs that survived his own death, which occurred in 1957.

Peter Robert Innes Gunn (known as Robert or Bob) married Nellie Mabel Selman and they had three sons and two daughters: Robert Albert, Æneas Selman, Geoffrey Russell, Mavis (who died in infancy) and Catherine Innes.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 133.

The manuscripts were in the possession of Æneas Selman Gunn at his death in July 1998.

A letter within the collection establishes that at some point between 1890, with the publication of Sinclair's history of the Gunn clan, and January 1902 with the departure of Æneas James Gunn from Melbourne to take up the role of manager of the Elsey Station, these manuscript materials came into the latter's hands. Æneas James Gunn marks the receipt of the manuscripts with the following letter to his brother Robert to accompany the letter from Mrs Margaret Alexander, quoted in part earlier:

My Dear Bob,

Enclosed I hand you a letter of Mrs Alexanders for perusal at home. There is not much in it but a great good heartedness and human kindness which doubtless in their own way and time are much. But Mrs Alexanders goodness takes practical shape. She has sent out a M.SS. volume by Uncle Æneas containing the history of the Clan Gunn done by himself and several valuable M.SS papers, genealogical trees of the Gunns etc. a mass of M.SS. that I consider beyond rubies and pearls and diamonds in value. I have not yet had time to go into it closely. Its only come to hand but I'm promising myself a treat. I intend reading it carefully and if possible bringing it down to date and getting it published. I am beside myself with gratitude and pleasure at the receipt of such a gift and am afraid I must confess I wept tears of joy over its receipt. Perhaps the excessive weakness I am suffering from may have something to do with that. My feelings are easily overwrought just now. Goodbye for the present. If I come over on Sunday I will bring my treasure over with me.

I am

Your affectionate brother

Æneas

The letter from Æneas James Gunn to his brother Robert is undated. Insofar as Bob was residing in Melbourne or its environs continuously, the suggestion of a Sunday visit leads to the conclusion that Æneas himself was in Melbourne when he received the manuscript materials. Æneas Gunn's letter to his brother Robert was almost certain to have been written between the years 1895 and 1901. In 1890, Æneas had sailed on the schooner *Gemini* to Darwin and then to the Prince Regent River with his cousin, Joe Bradshaw, on an enterprise to open up northern Australia to the cattle and sheep industries.⁴⁵ This pastoral property, which Bradshaw had named 'Marigui', failed to flourish and the whole venture was moved in 1894 to a location on the Victoria River and became known as 'Bradshaw's Run.' Æneas returned to Melbourne during 1895 suffering from recurrent malarial fevers and the reference to his 'excessive

⁴⁵ Some of his experiences during this time were written up and published. He contributed 24 articles under the title 'Pioneering in Northern Australia' simultaneously to the *Prahran Telegraph*, the *St Kilda Advertiser* and the *Malvern Argus* between May and November 1899. These were followed *inter alia* by two articles dated 14 April 1900 and 21 April 1900 in the *Prahran Telegraph* describing his time on the Victoria River in the Northern Territory.

weakness' suggests the legacy of the ailment that caused him to retreat from his cousin's enterprise.⁴⁶ The date of the receipt of the manuscript materials could not be later than the end of 1901 since just days after his marriage to Jeannie Taylor, on 31 December in that year, Æneas and his new wife sailed on the *SS Guthrie* back to Darwin and the Northern Territory to manage the Elsey cattle station on the Roper River. He died at the Elsey on 16 March 1903.

The limits to the date range for the writing of the letter may be narrowed even further. Janet Leslie Gunn, who made manuscript materials available to Sinclair at some time prior to 1890, died on 31 March 1899. Her will records that the executors of her estate were her nephew Peter Munro, Farmer, of Knockglass, William Alexander, Grocer, of Wick and his wife Margaret Alexander, née Budge. Margaret Alexander is the Mrs Alexander referred to in Æneas James Gunn's letter to his brother. Following her death, the Clerk of Court at Wick received Janet Gunn's inventory list on 18 September 1900. In her will, Janet Gunn named Æneas James Gunn as one of her legatees. Her will reads in part:

[I] do will and bequeath (at the request of my dear husband) the sum of one hundred pounds to his three nephews in Australia, sons of the late Reverend Peter Gunn, Minister of Campbellfield.⁴⁷

The date at which Æneas received the manuscript can then, in all probability, be narrowed to a period between March 1899 and December 1901.

Thanks to the letter from Æneas James Gunn to his brother Peter Robert Innes Gunn, the provenance of the manuscript collection now appears clear. Mrs Margaret Alexander, one of the three executors of the estate of Janet Leslie Gunn, sent to the author's nephew and namesake, Mr Æneas James Gunn, the manuscripts in question at some time between March 1899 and December 1901. It is not clear who held them following Æneas James Gunn's death in 1903 but, as Æneas Selman Gunn was not born until 1911, the manuscripts must have been held in other hands – either those of Æneas James Gunn's brother, Peter Robert Innes Gunn, or Æneas James Gunn's widow Jeannie Gunn, who died in 1961. The former is the more likely given that the manuscript materials are known to have been in the hands of Æneas Selman Gunn, Robert's son, well prior to his aunt's death.

Thomas Sinclair's history of the clan entitled *The Gunns* was known to the antipodean Æneas. This much is certain because Æneas' copy of this volume

⁴⁶ During this time in Melbourne, Æneas James Gunn was employed as the Librarian for the Prahran Library, a Municipal Free Library, established with the opening of the Prahran Town Hall in 1861 in one of Melbourne's inner suburbs. He was appointed Librarian in 1898 and served there until December 1901.

⁴⁷ National Records of Scotland, SC14/40/16, Wick Sheriff Court, Gunn, Janet Leslie, 1900.

survives to this day. It cannot be established, however, whether the book, or the manuscripts, came into his hands first.⁴⁸

Had Æneas Gunn's manuscript eventually been published it may have resembled Sinclair's own, or that of Gunn's contemporary, J. T. Calder, whose *Sketch of the Civil and Traditional History of Caithness from the Tenth Century* was published in 1861. Like them it bears the hallmarks of a history written by a gentleman amateur, most notably a heavy reliance on respected authorities and 'myth, legend and literary allusion'.⁴⁹

Some conclusions may now be drawn. By comparing Sinclair's description of his sources with the physical nature and content of the manuscripts now held in Australia, it is clear that four of the six documents are indeed the precise documents used by Thomas Sinclair. They are: the manuscript essay of nineteen pages having the title *Origin of the Clan Gunn*; the 'family tree of the Gunns, by the late Æneas ... prepared in 1870, as an improvement on another he made in 1868'; the 'MS. of two pages [that] is a pedigree of the Sinclairs, apparently an abridgement wholly from Sir Robert Gordon' and the 'careful list, making three quarto pages, extracted from the parish registers, of every Gunn name from 17th April, 1791, to June, 1818'. The remaining two documents that have been located in Australia, the 'principal' and 'unidentified' histories, have a different status. While between them the two manuscripts contain all twenty extracts that are found in Sinclair's Appendix, Sinclair says all twenty were taken from a single document 'carefully written for press' by Æneas Gunn. It follows that the two documents are likely to be the penultimate drafts of the single manuscript lent to him by Janet Gunn. Nonetheless, because all the material that Sinclair extracts from his single source can be found in these two documents, they may serve as valuable substitutes for the 322-page manuscript history to which Sinclair had access. Exploration of the provenance of the documents suggests that all have been in Australia since late in the nineteenth century.

⁴⁸ The latest the Sinclair volume could have been purchased was early January 1902 as it was on 4 January 1902 that Æneas James Gunn and his wife left Sydney on the *SS Guthrie* for Darwin. There can be no doubt that he purchased books in Sydney while awaiting departure. Writing to his brother Bob in Melbourne, immediately before sailing on from Sydney, he said, among other things: 'Still I'm going round with a meat axe looking for the man who said it's cheaper than Melbourne. Only in the bookshops have I done a deal – and that's on my Melbourne reputation which has reached here.'

⁴⁹ See note 3.