

KEITH AND GORDON NOTES: *ADDENDA* AND *CORRIGENDA*

by *Andrew B W MacEwen*¹

ABSTRACT

The author offers additions and corrections to his Keith and Gordon notes published in the *Tribute to Charles Evans*. Three Keith obits have survived in a little known source. The original readings are restored to several passages of the text.

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Addenda

In 1999 Dr Dauvit Broun² drew attention to “a rather unpromising and decidedly modest piece of history-writing. This is a summary chronicle added into a breviary, Edinburgh University Library MS 27, beginning on the first two folios and continuing on folios 231-32.^[69] It was written (evidently in the late 1380s) in one hand up to the verso of fo. 232 and has been continued contemporaneously in more than one hand up to 1401.^[70]” According to Broun’s note 69, “It is known as the ‘Aberdeen Cathedral Breviary’; see C R Borland, A

¹ For the author’s contact details see his article on p.391 of this issue.

² Dauvit Broun, “A New Look at *Gesta Annalia* Attributed to John of Fordun,” in Barbara E. Crawford, ed., *Church, Chronicle and Learning in Medieval and Early Renaissance Scotland*, (1999), Chapter 1, pp.9-30 @ 18.

Descriptive Catalogue pp.38-41; the summary chronicle is transcribed in appendix iv (at 329-32), but not entirely accurately.”³

“There are seven entries in the continuation,” he adds, “concerning either the north-east or events of regional significance; two relate to Robert Keith (d1401). Borland noted obits added in other parts of the MS; they are of people who died in the period 1373 to c.1410, all with north-east associations. The Keiths are the most prominent laymen whose obits have been recorded: John Keith (18 March 1374), and his father William, the Marischal (15 October 140?: the last figure is illegible): Borland, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, 40. The obit of John Keith’s son, Robert, appears in the summary chronicle. This information removes most of the uncertainty about their death-dates in the account in *The Scots Peerage*, vol. vi, 35-37.”⁴

Borland’s *Descriptive Catalogue* was published seven years after the appearance in 1909 of Charles T Gordon’s article “Keith, Earl Marischal,” in Volume VI of *The Scots Peerage*.⁵ Unfortunately, it escaped the notice of Miss Ethel Stokes, who later wrote the Keith article for *The Complete Peerage*.⁶

John Keith, then, died on 18 March 1374/5, leaving two children, Robert, now seen to have died in 1401, and Elizabeth, the eventual sole heiress of her grandmother Margaret Fraser. Gordon stated that John “married Jean, youngest daughter of King Robert II., by Elizabeth Mure. On 17 January 1373-74, he had a charter from king Robert II., on the resignation of William de Keth, Knight, Marischal of Scotland, and Margaret, his wife, ‘dilecto filio nostro,’ of all lands and offices belonging to his father [sic!]. He died, v.p. before 27 December 1375, leaving a son, Robert,”⁷ It was, of course, his mother’s estates and offices which were settled on him, as Miss Stokes correctly pointed out.⁸

According to Gordon, who was quite unaware of the existence of John’s daughter Elizabeth, Robert “was betrothed to Elizabeth, daughter of Sir William Graham, but died before marriage, at a date previous to 1 August 1404, when she had a dispensation to marry Walter [Stewart], Earl of Caithness.”⁹ “Sir William,” he pointed out, “was still alive on 2 May 1407, when he granted a charter of the lands of Aboyne. He died not long after, or before 1410,....”¹⁰

Sir William Keith the Marischal had thus survived his son and heir John by more than thirty years, dying on 15 October in 1407, 1408, or 1409, having outlived his grandson and heir Robert as well. The succession to the Keith estates then opened to Sir William’s younger son Sir Robert, the ancestor of the later family. The Fraser estates, which should have descended to Elizabeth Keith and her daughter Elizabeth Gordon, were in the end split between the Gordons and the Keiths, owing to the *ultra vires* grants made by Sir William and his wife Margaret Fraser, who were in fact merely liferenters after their resignation in 1374.

³ Broun, *op.cit.*, p.26, n.69.

⁴ Broun, *op.cit.*, p.26, n.70.

⁵ Charles T Gordon, “Keith, Earl Marischal,” in Sir James Balfour Paul, *The Scots Peerage*, Vol.VI, (1909), pp.25-65.

⁶ Ethel Stokes, “Marischal,” *CP*, vol.VIII, (1932), pp.464 *et seq.*

⁷ Gordon, *op.cit.*, pp.36-37.

⁸ Ethel Stokes, *op.cit.*, p.473.

⁹ Gordon, *op.cit.*, p.37.

¹⁰ Gordon, *op.cit.*, p.36.

Corrigenda

The following corrections to the published paper¹¹ should be noted. They restore the original text which had suffered editorial modification unbeknownst to the author.

p.155, the third quotation, following note 8, should have read:

the grandson and heir-apparent of Sir William, the Marischal of Scotland.

p.159, lines 7-10, should have read:

He "had wished to marry Elizabeth but had been unable to do so as they did not have a dispensation."^[38] He clearly died unmarried and *sans* issue.

p.174, lines 13-14 from the bottom of the page, delete "no man is heir to the living", and also note 116 on p.188, which were editorial additions. Read instead:

One would be indeed credulous to accept the suggestion that she was "heiress in part at least during her brother's life."

p.182, the final sentence of the paper, as published, lost its intended rhythm, and was supposed to read:

There are thus pitfalls in "traditional" pedigrees, too, but ignoring them altogether puts one in danger of throwing out the baby with the bath.^[148]

Bibliography

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¹¹ Andrew B W MacEwen, "Some notes on the Keith and Gordon pedigrees," in *Studies in Genealogy and Family History in Tribute to Charles Evans on the occasion of his eightieth birthday*, ed. Lindsay L Brook (1989), 153-89.