The Grahams of the 16-17th century Anglo-Scottish Border and their descendants in Rossadown, Co. Laois, Ireland

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Excerpted from “House GRAHAM: From the Antonine Wall to the Temple of Hymen,” an original – and at times irreverent – look at some illustrious and nefarious Grahams.¹ In the monograph, forthcoming possibly in 2017, this particularly personal material forms Sections VIII and IX.

Section VIII

Reivers – Bandits of the Debatable Land

I used to think that “reavers” were lawless baddies confined to the fantasy worlds of Firefly and Game of Thrones. But no; not only were they flesh and blood, but apparently (as we shall see in Section IX) I am descended directly from their stock. The word reiver, to use the Scots spelling, means “robber, raider, marauder, plunderer”² and, in this case, applies to the innumerable clan-loyal brigands who flourished, from the 13th to the 16th centuries, along the turbulent Border between England and Scotland. Lest I be accused of sensationalising, I shall resort more often than usual to quoting the words of others.

George Fraser introduces the Border Grahams as follows:³

GRAHAM (Graeme) — mostly English (so far as Border history goes), but notoriously ready to be on either side. Originally Scottish, and famous outside the Border area. [...] Apart from the Armstrongs, the Grahams were probably the most troublesome family on the frontier. Their dual allegiances caused confusion, and they were cordially detested by their own English authorities. At one time the most numerous family in the West Border [...] Highly numerous in Cumberland.

The Grahams were localised on both sides of the Border in the Western March, which was usually more violent than either the Middle or Eastern March. In particular, the families of the eight sons of Long Will Graham (Lang Will of Stuble; Section II; Fig. 8.1), were planted in and around the Debatable Land,⁴ a region adjacent to the river Esk claimed by both Scotland and England (Fig. 8.2).⁵ Lang Will (d. ca. 1540) was reportedly “a man of immense size and muscular strength, combined with a commanding personality.”⁶ Seemingly from Dryfesdale in Dumfriesshire, with roots in Mosskesswra/Mosskesso of the same county,⁷ he had allegedly dwelt on the Esk since 1477⁸ and was granted his part of the Debatable Land by Henry VIII in 1538, on the understanding that he and his family would oppose the Scots.⁹ The English Warden – Thomas, Lord Scrope – later referred to his sons and their families as “that viperous generation”¹⁰ and fumed over “the awfullness of the Grahams.”¹¹
Fig. 8.1 Principal male descendants of Lang Will Graham of Stuble on the Border of the Western March, and in particular in or near the Debatable Land. Additional unnamed sons in each generation are shown as +1 (for one), +2 (for two), etc. One granddaughter of Lang Will’s is mentioned as she was married to Kinmont Willie (where named, he is shown in green text). Abbreviations: b., born; d., died; ca., circa; att., attested; gr., granted; m., married; ret., returned; Irl., Ireland. Magenta box: free settler in Ireland before 1606; orange highlight: deported to Ireland in 1606/7, arriving in Dublin; green highlight: implicated in the springing of Kinmont Willie (see relevant subsection in Section VIII). Horizontal dotted grey lines distinguish one generation from the next. The location of Arthuret is shown in Fig. 8.2.

The basics of the Borderer lifestyle are aptly summarised by James Sneyd:  

Cattle-raiding and all the associated violence that went with it was essentially a way of life for the border clans, often called the Border Reivers. They shut themselves up in high stone towers, robbed, burned and murdered their neighbours, and were robbed, burned and murdered in their turn. Their only security was their immediate kinship group, and that not always; Graham would happily murder Graham if the need arose. [...] The border areas were fought over by England and Scotland, to and fro, for hundreds of years, and when the invading armies weren’t reiving them, the locals couldn’t imagine any other way they could possibly live, so they reived each other. Extortion and protection rackets (the origin, it is claimed, of the modern word blackmail) were a profession, and one popular method of execution was drowning, it being cheaper than hanging as no rope was needed.
Fig. 8.2 Features of the Western March and Debatable Land, superimposed on a modern map of the region. The Debatable Land is highlighted with yellow overlay, while the modern Scotland-England border is shown by the dashed grey line. Rivers are shown in dark blue text; key features, including old placenames, are shown in red text. The map enables us to locate the homes of the Grahams of Fig. 8.1, as follows. Lang Will of Stuble came from Stibley or Peth, shown on the map as Stibley peth; Fergus of Mote presumably lived at the Mote of Liddel, John of Medoppe at Meadhope, George of the Fauld at Fauld, Arthur of Canonby/Canobie at Canonbie, etc. Base map courtesy of Google Maps, with whom copyright of that layer remains.

Fraser obliges with a quick character-reference for the Border Grahams, and elaborates on their role in the highly organised “blackmail industry,” which (as Sneyd intimates) we would nowadays call a protection racket: 

The biggest family in the Western March, they also had a fair claim to being the worst. In murder, blackmail, theft, extortion, and intrigue they were second to none. […] The blackmailers employ[ed] collectors and enforcers (known as brokers), and even
something like accountants. There was no secrecy about it; the Grahams, who were notorious blackmailers, “define it as nothing else but a protection money or a reward pro clientelitia,” and regarded themselves as rather robust insurance companies.

Thus, young Hutcheon (Hutchin) Graham ran a lucrative protection racket at the expense of the village of Cargo, which was thereby spared his burning and looting spree during “Ill Week” in 1603. Likewise, Richie Graham of Brackenhill – an outlaw wanted for several murders – was reportedly blackmailing more than 60 tenants in the Lanercost area.

The list of Graham misdeeds appears endless. At different times they had blood feuds with the Musgraves, Bells, Irivines, Carlisles and Maxwells, although personal allegiances were sufficiently complex that different Grahams might find themselves on opposing sides and end up killing one another. A coroner’s document of 1584 shows how some Grahams were killing others of the same name in a “miserable family dispute about land,” and there was also a long and bloody feud between the houses of Richard of Netherby and Fergus of Mote (both sons of Lang Will; Fig. 8.1). The Grahams were no friends of authority, either. In 1596, when a Warden officer – assisted by ten Grahams and a bloodhound – overtook two Scottish cattle raiders that they had been chasing, the Grahams stood idly by while the thieves cut the officer down and stole his horse and dog. When Wattie, brother to Jock Graham of the Peartree, was on trial at Carlisle for horse-stealing, Jock kidnapped the sheriff’s six-year-old son from outside the officer’s home and used him as hostage to secure Wattie’s release. In an attempt on the life of land-sergeant John Musgrave at Brampton, a group of Grahams set upon him and his followers with daggers and guns, and tried to burn him alive in a house. And so on, and on. In 1592, Lord Maxwell complained against the Grahams of Netherby and other of Lang Will’s descendants in respect of their “violent and masterful occupation” for 30 years past of Kirkandrews and Annandale, and 25 years similar oppression and exploitation of five other named districts. Regarding the list of Graham misdemeanours compiled by Lord Scrope in 1600, Fraser writes:

According to this, no fewer than sixty Grahams were outlaws, for murder, robbery and other crimes; they had despoiled above a dozen Cumbrian villages, sheltered felons, fought the Warden’s troops, murdered witnesses, extorted money from their enemies, and in one specific instance burned the house of one Hutcheon Hetherington to force him into the open so that they could cut him to pieces. Add to this blackmail, kidnapping, and ordinary reiving, and their account was a long one.

Fast forward a century: Rob Roy and a resurgence of rustling

Just over 100 years later, the Act of Union between Scotland and England (1707) triggered a sustained increase in the cattle trade between the two countries, but equally saw an upturn in cattle rustling and protection rackets as a way of life. This was particularly evident in the feud between Rob Roy (Robert Roy MacGregor, 1671-1734) and James Graham, 1st Duke of Montrose. In a reversal of the old pattern, the Grahams were now more reived against than reiving, although it could be said that the behaviour of the Duke was nothing more than banditry legitimised by power and title. Either way, here is the story.
Rob Roy borrowed £1000 from the Duke to expand his cattle business, which even from the outset seems to have included watch/insurance services for others that were probably little better than blackmail.\textsuperscript{31} Unfortunately, Rob’s chief drover absconded with a valuable herd, so the loan could not be repaid\textsuperscript{32} Accordingly, Rob Roy was declared a fraud, bankrupt and outlaw. Graham of Montrose saw to it that his family were evicted, his house on Loch Lomond burnt, and his goods and lands seized.

In retaliation, Rob Roy waged a private feud against the Duke until 1722, repeatedly raiding his grain stores and rent collections.\textsuperscript{33} Rob also took to rustling cattle and extorting protection money from farmers on Montrose land.\textsuperscript{34} In addition, he captured and imprisoned the Duke’s deputy chamberlain, John Graham of Kilearn, who had overseen the eviction of Rob’s family with considerable cruelty, and had allegedly allowed Rob’s wife to be raped by his men.\textsuperscript{35}

Eventually, Rob Roy was himself captured and imprisoned. Rob’s previous generosity to the poor, especially those who had suffered at the hands of Graham of Montrose, saw him acquire the mantle of a Scottish Robin Hood in the popular imagination. Having become a folk hero in his own lifetime, he narrowly avoided being transported to the colonies by the grant of a royal pardon in 1727.\textsuperscript{36}

In noticing the parallels between Border reiving and Rob Roy’s campaign, we have got ahead of our main story. Let us now resume our narrative of the Anglo-Scottish Western Border at the close of the 16\textsuperscript{th} century. In so doing, we will switch our attention from Rob Roy’s blood feud against certain Grahams to “the positive mania about the Grahams” that characterised the later years of Thomas, Lord Scrope, English Warden of the Western March from 1592 to 1603.\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{Carlisle Castle, 1596: The springing of Kinmont Willie}

William Armstrong of Kinmont – better known as Kinmont Willie – was a large-scale reiver of the Western Border\textsuperscript{38} who was married to a daughter of Hutcheon (Hugh) Graham, Lang Will’s bastard son (Fig. 8.1). In late 1595 or early 1596, Willie attended a Warden Court in the Western March; on his homeward journey, he is alleged (rather unconvincingly) to have obstructed an English pursuit of some of his kin and was therefore conveyed as a prisoner to Carlisle Castle, where he was detained by Lord Scrope, the English Warden.\textsuperscript{39} This arrest contravened a sacrosanct promise of safe conduct to and from such Courts, and was greatly resented by Walter Scott, 5\textsuperscript{th} of Buccleuch, who saw himself as the \textit{de facto} Scottish Warden, the position at that time being vacant.\textsuperscript{40} There was already bad blood between Buccleuch and Scrope, and – on the matter of Kinmont Willie’s release – the demands of the former and self-justification of the latter became increasingly intransigent. Diplomacy failed; Buccleuch railed, and Scrope refused to budge.\textsuperscript{41}

Eventually Buccleuch decided to lead a small assault force on Carlisle Castle under cover of darkness with the intention of liberating Kinmont Willie.\textsuperscript{42} This stealth mission relied
upon good discipline, precise intelligence and inside help. The crucial assistance was provided by corrupt individuals on the English side, including Thomas Carleton (a former Deputy English Warden who had been fired by Scrope), and almost certainly including some members of the Castle’s guard. Carleton was related to the Grahams by marriage and was already implicated in some of their unsavoury rackets; in this instance, he colluded with Richard of Brackenhill, Hutcheon’s son Andrew, Richard of Netherby’s son Will, and Will’s son Jock (Fig. 8.1) in a meeting with Buccleuch during which the jail-break was planned.43 Young Hutchin Graham, Kinmont Willie’s nephew, was credited with having first moved Buccleuch to attempt a rescue;44 whether true or not, Buccleuch later admitted of the raid that “I could nought have done in that matter without the great friendship of the Grahams of Eske, especially Francis of Canobie and Walter Graham of Netherby,”45,46 (Fig. 8.1).

It is obvious that the Grahams were essential because they had special ties with both Thomas Carleton and Kinmont Willie and because they controlled the country between the Debatable Land and Carlisle.47 What historians invariably overlook is the fact that the Grahams also had prior experience of escaping from Carlisle Castle; specifically, Walter of Netherby’s grandfather, Richard, had broken out of the same prison in 1528 through an unsecured postern gate, again with outside (and possibly inside) help.48,49 Perhaps the memory of this influenced some aspects of the conspiracy? As we shall see, Walter’s escape had some elements in common with the Kinmont Willie escapade.

It is rumored that Hutcheon Graham’s daughter was allowed to visit her husband during his imprisonment at Carlisle Castle. If so, she may have been Buccleuch’s “woman spy” who was able to pinpoint Kinmont’s location within the fortress. It transpires that he was being kept on parole (and thus unchained) in one of the castle’s domestic buildings.50 Lord Scrope later alleged that one of the Grahams even brought Buccleuch’s ring to Kinmont Willie as a token that he would soon be rescued.51 One way or another, the night of the raid – Sunday, 13 April 1596 – was blessed by foul weather which minimised the assailants’ chances of detection, and the mission went exactly according to plan. An hour before dawn, the castle’s postern gate was breached, either after being smashed by the Scots or opened by complicit English guards. Kinmont Willie’s house was quickly located by Buccleuch’s team. Within minutes, their man was hustled through the open gate and placed on a horse, and the entire party was back on Scottish soil within two hours of sunrise.

The entire saga became immortalised by Sir Walter Scott (the 18-19th century writer, unrelated to Buccleuch) when he included the ballad “Kinmont Willie” in the first edition of his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, published in 1802. The ballad takes many melodramatic liberties with the truth; for example, it has the English Deputy, Salkeld, being killed by Buccleuch’s raiding party on the way to Carlisle, Kinmont Willie being freed from the castle’s “inner prison” and carried in irons down a ladder to freedom, and other embellishments.52

Eschewing political romanticism in favour of historical fact, we can report the aftermath the episode as follows. Lord Scrope, humiliated by the loss of his prize prisoner from one
of the strongest fortress in Britain to a small party of Scots, was quick to accuse Buccleuch of leading the illegal foray and Kinmont of dishonour by breaching his parole.53 “The Grahams,” too, “came in for a major share of his reproaches,”54 and were later to become an obsessive focus of his resentment.55 In the event, Buccleuch voluntarily turned himself over to England in 1597. Surprisingly, he seems to have endeared himself to his warders during his sojourn there and remained friendly toward the English even after his return to Scotland in 1598.56 In 1603, Buccleuch led a company of some 2000 Scots as mercenaries in the Low Countries, fighting against Spain.57,58 After his spectacular release from Carlisle, Kinmont Willie became the leader of a band of Armstrongs in the Debatable Land who continued to pillage in Cumberland until 1602/3. Soon afterward, however, the Western Border was cleared of Armstrongs as effectively as it was of Grahams, and the era of Border reivers came to an end.59 Ironically, Buccleuch was a key protagonist in achieving this outcome.60,61,62

The end of the reivers

The accession of James VI of Scotland as James I of England brought an end to cross-Border rivalries between the two countries and, since the reivers could no longer play one side off against the other, Union of the Crowns deprived the riding clans of their political and economic niche.63 James, determined to pacify a region that was no longer at the fringes of two separate kingdoms but rather seen to be “the verie hart of the cuntrey,” took to purging the Borderland of its endemic banditry once and for all.64 The Grahams of the Debatable Land proved particularly vulnerable to the new order. The King had earmarked a swathe of fertile land, including Eskdale, as a gift for one of his favourites, Lord Cumberland, who at that time was English Warden of the Western March, but unfortunately the Grahams were in the way.65 Accordingly, a corrupt confederation of vested interests made them out to be the sole troublemakers of the Western Border, and had a crusade mounted against them.66 No words describe their plight better than those of George Fraser:67

The chief sufferers along the whole line were the Grahams of Esk. They had been a thorn in the side of the two kingdoms for as long as anyone could remember, and they paid for it terribly. Yet they would certainly have suffered less if they had not been the owners of some of the most fertile land in all of the Marches, on which Lord Cumberland had cast his eye. It was enough; submission would not suffice in the Grahams’ case – they would have to go.

There followed one of the most comprehensive and cruel examples of race persecution in British history. It is not easy to defend the Grahams, who were as wicked a crew as any in the Borderland, but none of their crimes could have justified the spite with which they were murdered, dispossessed, and banished by their persecutors, in the name of law and order, and with the full approval of the King, whose aversion to them seems to have been acute. One of his proclamations announces that the Grahams had confessed themselves to be “no meet persons to live in those countries, and have humbly besought us that they might be removed to some other parts.” Their lands would be inhabited by “others of good and honest conversation.” Cumberland was just full of good and honest conversers ready to take over.

King James’ proclamation named almost one hundred Grahams and their families from the vicinity of the Rivers Esk and Leven. One hundred and fifty “malefactors of the name Graham” were dispossessed in April 1605 and agreed to be deported to the Low Countries, mainly to the English garrison towns at Vlissingen (in English, Flushing) and
Brielle (Brill). If the Scottish Grahams really do have a Flemish origin (Section II), then for some deportees the voyage may in fact have been a return to their ancestral homeland, but any connection to the Low Countries – if there ever was one – had long ago been lost; their homes and hearts were now in Eskdale. The intention was that all capable of bearing arms should serve in James’ garrisons. Many of the exiles managed a covert return to the Western Border more or less immediately; for example, of the 72 Grahams shipped to Vlissingen, 58 had sneaked back home within the year.

Despite the prompt return of many exiles from the Netherlands, the outlook for the Border Grahams remained bleak. Sir Henry Leigh was relentless in his campaign against anyone of that surname, in part as a means of lining his own pockets, while many of the worst Cumbrian marauders (long demanded for trial by the Scottish Commissioners) escaped justice by busying themselves in executing the purge. Some of the most notorious Grahams were taken out of play, and now faced charges for crimes dating back decades. For example, Young Hutchin (Fig. 8.2) had submitted; by this stage a captive in Carlisle Castle, he was indicted for his campaigns of murder and blackmail, for his part in the springing of Kinmont Willie in 1596, and for his raids in “Ill Week,” 1603. A few firebrands remained at large, and occasionally threatened the new order; in 1606, for instance, Sir William Cranston was ambushed and almost killed by Rob’s Fergie Graham, a grandson of John of Medoppe (Fig. 8.2). Such acts of desperation prompted the Border Commission to come up with a “final solution,” in which all of the Grahams remaining in the Borderland would be transported to Ireland and settled in Co. Roscommon.

**Banishment to Ireland**

Sir Ralph Sidley, who owned lands in Co. Roscommon, volunteered to settle the Grahams on his farms there, and received £300 to cover the cost. The money was donated by (or, failing that, extracted from) the gentlemen of Cumberland and Westmoreland.

Amongst those deported to Ireland were Walter of Netherby, and his sons Richard, Arthur and Thomas; William of Mote; William’s brother, Arthur; Richard of Brackenhill’s son, Richard; and Richard of Medopp (Fig. 8.1). Of the 50 families who agreed to be settled in Ireland, it is difficult to estimate the numbers that actually boarded the ship, but 124 Grahams are supposed to have been transported under the leadership of Walter of Netherby. They arrived in Dublin in September, 1606.

The “promised land” in Roscommon proved to be an intractable bogland that lacked potable water, wood and other basic necessities. The new settlers could not communicate with the local Irish, who spoke a different language; the Grahams disliked the natives, and the Irish resented them in return. Rents and labour expenses were high, and – perhaps predictably – none of the money intended to help the settlement become established ever reached the exiles. As most of the strong men best able to make a new start in an untamed wasteland had already been killed, had died, were fugitives, or were in exile elsewhere, the exercise was doomed from the outset.
Within two years, only about six families of Grahams remained in Co. Roscommon. Some of the youngest men had been sent to the army, but their continual agitation over the loss of their Border homeland proved disruptive to discipline. Other deportees simply headed back home in secret, prompting the King to call for their hanging or retransportation to Roscommon. Sir Ralph Sidley, having pocketed the money that should have gone towards settling the exiles on his Irish estates, had the temerity to complain about the bad character of his charges. His opinion – that the Grahams were an idle people hopelessly addicted to drinking and gambling – may accurately reflect the despondent few who remained on his land, but happier outcomes are reported for the many who forsook Sir Ralph’s wasteland in search of greener pastures in this unfamiliar island. In the words of one chronicler, “Many of the banished [Graham] clans found new homes in various parts of Ireland where they prospered.” We shall resume this thread in Section IX.

**Back on the Border**

Not every Graham living near the old Western Border was deported. William and Robert Graham, sons of Fergus of Nunnery (himself a son of William of Carlisle and grandson of Lang Will; Fig. 8.1) were “dwelling inward in England, – very good subjects.” Accordingly, these were allowed to retain their land after the Union of the Crowns and went on to become what was called “county family.” As late as 1614, a proclamation forbade any Grahams to return from Ireland or the Low Countries; despite this, many did slink back, some under assumed names. In an unusual case, the eldest son of Richard of Brackenhill was allowed to return because Richard’s widow successfully challenged the legality of their dispossession from a freehold; in consequence, the Grahams held Brackenhill for another five generations, and then sold it. As the political situation eased, other exiled Grahams “returned to the Border, where, in happier times, they settled again into their old haunts, becoming excellent members of society.”

In 1628, another Richard Graham, son of Fergus of Plomp (see Fig. 8.2 for location), acquired lands in Netherby and Esk from Lord Cumberland, and thus established a new line of Grahams in what had previously been the Debatable Land (Fig. 8.3). In 1628/9, he was knighted and made a baronet, Sir Richard of Esk. All in all, despite the diaspora of the early 17th century, there survives a population of Grahams in the Debatable Land to the present day. Over the last four centuries, Border Grahams – whose origins range from the old riding clans to the new line of gentry – were absorbed by the growing cities of Cumberland. Accordingly, by the mid-20th century, Graham had become one of the commonest surnames in Carlisle.
Fig. 8.3 Lineage of Richard Graham of Plomp, 1st Baronet of Esk. This family constitutes what Lord Burghley described as “another sort of Grahams inhabiting the Rivers Leven and Sark,” who were thought not to be descendants of Lang Will. Richard of Plomp and his family occupied the lands at Netherby and Esk vacated by the descendants of Lang Will when the latter were exiled in 1606/7. Two apocryphal descents of Richard of Plomp from the Grahams of Menteith are shown with finely dotted lines against a yellow background. Conventions and abbreviations are as for Fig. 8.1.
Section IX
The Grahams of Queen’s County (Co. Laois)

The origin of the Irish Grahams who for generations – spanning at least the 19th and 20th centuries – farmed in Rossadown, near Mountrath in Queen’s County (subsequently called Co. Leix and now Co. Laois) has, until now, been a mystery. Ordinarily, this Protestant family in a central part of the Republic would not warrant any mention in a brief overview of Graham history, but — since they happen to be my immediate forebears — you will have to indulge me. And, as it turns out, their story (assembled here, rather tentatively, for the first time) is interesting in its own right, and helps us to appreciate the broader sweep of Graham history.

Of the Graham farmhouse standing at Rossadown in ca. 1850, no trace could be found in 2015 (Fig. 9.1a-c). The subsequent dwelling, which was built in the late 19th century about 430 metres from the site of the old house, has undergone many modifications, but still stands (Fig. 9.2a,b). From a combination of family recollection and the usual records of birth, marriage, census and death, my pedigree (Fig. 9.3) can be documented securely back to my paternal great-great-grandfather, John Graham (b.1797 d.1875) in Rossadown. Family memory names his father as John Robert Graham (b. 1767) (Fig. 9.3), but there – for the present, at least – the genealogical trail runs cold. Parish records reveal that, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, there were other Grahams of the same religion in nearby townlands whose relationship to the Rossadown family is unclear. For example, Thomas Graham of neighbouring Monasup may or may not have been another son of John Robert Graham (b.1767); either way, he and his wife Mary had one son and five daughters between 1810 and 1817. James Graham of Cardtown may not have considered himself related to those who shared his surname at Rossadown, 6 km (3.7 mi) distant. He and his wife Elinor had three sons and seven daughters between 1777 and 1797, and there were Grahams at Cardtown until at least 1918. Equally, there may be no connection between the Rossadown family and the William Graham (b. 1740) who in 1761 married Elinor Dane at Ballyfin, 9 km (5.6 mi) from Rossadown.

In general, Irish Grahams are thought to be descended from the reivers of the Western Marches in general and the Debatable Land in particular (Section VIII). There are claims that, subsequent to the first shipload of Border Grahams bound for Co. Roscommon (described in detail in Section VIII), there were further transportations of this type to the north of Ireland; Sir Walter Scott allegedly mentions two such shipments, including a company of Graham deportees that were landed in Groom’s Port, Co. Down. However, it is difficult to corroborate these claims, and the supposed name-lists indicate substantial confusion both with free settlers and with the original deportees to the Roscommon settlement. Others claim merely that exiled reivers migrated to Northern Ireland, leaving open the possibility that they chose their destination voluntarily. Overall, it is
Fig. 9.1 Rossadown, Co. Laois. (a) Composite map showing both the old Graham house (mapped \textit{ca}. 1850) on the wooded high ground known locally as Bark Hill,\textsuperscript{110} and the new Graham house and farm out-buildings (mapped \textit{ca}. 1911) on the plain below the wooded ridge. Lacca Chapel of Ease, a satellite of the Church of Ireland church at Anatrim (Coolrain, Co. Laois),\textsuperscript{111} is also shown; it appears only on the later map. (b) Recent satellite photograph of the area covered by the map, shown to the same scale; image courtesy of Google Earth, with whom copyright remains. A scale bar is shown at bottom centre. (c) Photograph from the approximate site of the old Graham house, looking towards the new house and farm out-buildings (red box), taken 9 April, 2015. The woods on the ridge had been devastated by recent clear-felling activities (not shown), and no trace of the old building could be found.
Fig. 9.2 The new Graham house at Rossadown, (a) As photographed in the late 19th century; the group on the left are believed to be Robert Graham (1848-1931) and his parents, John and Mary Graham. (b) Photograph of the same house, taken 9 April, 2015. The farm out-buildings lie behind the house and are in a state of disrepair. The complex is no longer in the possession of the Graham family.

Fig. 9.3 The pedigree of my father, Sydney Graham, is documented back to John Graham (b.1797) of Rossadown, Co. Laois. Beyond that, family memory provides clues for just another generation or two. My grandfather, Harry Graham, relocated from Rossadown to Dublin, bringing his branch of the family to the capital.
likely that most of these migrants made their way north from the failed settlement in Co. Roscommon, since this cohort is known to have scattered in search of better locations in Ireland.\textsuperscript{114} The north may have appealed because it had attracted Protestant Lowland Scots as settlers since 1600, and from 1609 the influx of Scots was greatly amplified by the Plantation of Ulster.\textsuperscript{115} Irrespective of how they got there, the ex-Border Grahams arriving in Ulster settled especially in Co. Fermanagh, from which they spread widely through the surrounding counties.\textsuperscript{116} Another major focus of settlement was Glenwherry, Co. Antrim.\textsuperscript{117,118} Today, the surname is overwhelmingly concentrated in Ulster, particularly in counties Down and Fermanagh, as well as Armagh, Monaghan and Tyrone.\textsuperscript{119} The problem for us is that these epicentres lie in Northern Ireland, a long way from Co. Laois in the centre of the Republic.

\textbf{Free settlers: Sir Richard and Sir George}

There were Grahams in Queen’s County as early as 1577, because – under orders from the Lord Deputy of Ireland – they assisted in that year’s scandalous massacre of the Irish chieftains at Mullaghmast, in the adjacent county of Kildare.\textsuperscript{120} We also know that several Borderer Grahams descended from Fergus of Mote (one of Lang Will’s sons; see Fig. 9.4 for his coat of arms) had settled voluntarily in Ireland before 1606. The report

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{Coat_of_arms_granted_on_10th_December_1553_by_the_Norroy_King_of_Arms_to_Fergus_Graham_of_the_Mote_Lyndysdale_Cumberland_for_services_rendered_in_the_time_of_Henry_VIII_and_Edward_VI.png}
\caption{Coat of arms granted on 10\textsuperscript{th} December, 1553, by the Norroy King of Arms to Fergus Graham of the Mote, Lyndysdale, Cumberland, for services rendered in the time of Henry VIII and Edward VI. “Barry of six pieces argent and gules, over all in bend a branch of an oke root branched, within a border engrailed sable, on the first gules a boar’s head couped argent. Crest: an arm bendy in four pieces gules and azure holding in the hand charnell a branch of the bend, on a wreath argent and gules, mantled of the same.”\textsuperscript{121} The “oke root” emblazoned in the Graham shield symbolized the antiquity of the Graham family and the stability of its loyalty to the crown of England.\textsuperscript{122} The boar’s head has precedents in early Graham heraldry (Section I).}
\end{figure}
Fig. 9.5 Genealogical tree of Graham adventurers (free settlers) and deportees from the Anglo-Scottish Western Border (Fig. 8.1) for whom details of Irish descendants are known. The relocations to Ireland occurred in the late 1500s and early 1600s. Colour conventions and abbreviations as for Fig. 8.1 with, in addition, m., married; d.s.p., died sine prole (i.e., died without issue); bef., before. In contrast to Fig. 8.1, daughters are here included in the count of offspring (+4 indicates 4 children, etc.); where women are named, the text is coloured brown.
that Fergus’ son Richard or Roger went to Ireland, where in 1565 he had a grant of the advowson of Whitechurch, Co. Kildare (Fig. 8.1), is somewhat dubious, even though this living was later held by Fergus’ Irish descendants. Fergus does not seem to have had a son called Roger, and his son Richard was Richard of Breconhill (Brackenhill) – the man who built Brackenhill Tower in the western Borderlands in 1586 and aided Buccleuch in springing Kinmont Willie from Carlisle Castle in 1596 (Section VIII). If Richard did go to Ireland in the 1560s, he evidently did not stay there. The story may reflect the migration of some other Graham(s) from the Border country to Co. Laois around that time, which in turn might account for the Graham presence there in 1577.

More concretely, one Fergus Graham – a grandson of Fergus of Mote (Figs. 8.1 & 9.5) – is reported to have settled voluntarily in Ireland before 1606, and seemingly did so before 1602. His abode of Nurletown or Mirleton cannot be identified with certainty, but may be Meylerston in Co. Kildare. Fergus Graham’s two sons, Richard (b. ca. 1550) and George (b. ca. 1570), had both been born in Scotland. Like their father, they moved voluntarily to Ireland (Figs. 8.1 & 9.5), seemingly during the Nine Years’ War (1594-1603), and settled there as Crown servitors. Both brothers distinguished themselves as leaders of horsemen in Sir George Carew’s army; in separate battles, both prevailed over much superior forces and received injuries in the process. For his victory over the Sugan Earl of Desmond, Richard received a knighthood in 1600, with the crown vallery (a prized military decoration) as a crest (Fig. 9.6). George was knighted in 1603. In 1601, Sir Richard Graham – who also appears in the records as Sir R. Greames and Dick

Fig. 9.6 Schematic of Sir Richard Graham’s signet ring, which survived until at least the 1860’s in the possession of William Brooke, QC, Master in the Irish Court of Chancery (Fig. 9.5). It is described as “a large circle of heavy and pure silver, containing a stone of red porphyry, on which is engra\ven the knight’s badge – a small shield, divided by a Templar’s sword, and R. G. engraved on each side of the blade, a wreath of wild laurel, the badge of the Graham, half surrounding the shield, emblematic of victory, as the sword is of military service, and the initials expressive of identity; the whole surmounted with the vallery crown.” This last honour – “the reward of him who first forced the enemy’s entrenchments” – he received from Elizabeth I. For a time it was appropriated (without any justification) by the younger line of Grahams at Netherby/Esk, i.e., descendants of Richard Graham of Plomp (who became 1st Baronet of Esk in 1629) for use above their coat of arms, and passed thence to the Grahams of Norton-Conyers, York.
Grimes – commanded 150 men against the Spaniards at Kinsale, and was rewarded by Elizabeth with the grant of Ballylynan (known also as Ballylehan, Ballyneheran, Balliinenan, Linnastonne, Rahenderry or Rahin) and Cremorgan, both in Co. Laois. In 1604, he was the Constable and Governor of Maryborough Castle (Portlaoise Castle), also in Co. Laois, and served as the first High Sheriff of that county. In 1610, Sir Richard had become Constable of the Fort of Old Court in Connaught, and (along with Sir George) was granted lands in Co. Cavan, but he had evidently put down roots at Ballylynan, since this is where he died in 1625/6 (Fig. 9.7). Upon his death, some of this estate was sold to the Weldons. For his part, Sir George Graham was granted land in Co. Galway in 1606, and also acquired lands in Carlow, Kildare, Wicklow and elsewhere. He died either in 1619 or 1624, seemingly in Cavan.

Both of these knights had families. Sir Richard had ten children (including at least five sons) by his wife, Elizabeth Hetherington, who lived on until 1663. His son George led cavalry under Sir Richard Greenville at the battle of Kilrush in 1642, and became a Member of Parliament in the same year. In the following year, he defended Ballylynan Castle against the Earl of Castlehaven, whose memoirs recall it to have been “commanded by the Grimes, a valiant people, with a strong garrison;” “English and Scottish mungrells, the best horsemen in them parts...” Around the same time, he successfully broke a three-day siege of the castle by Irish insurgents under Macdonnell and O’Dempsie. In Pender’s Census of 1659, Sir Richard’s widow Elizabeth and some of her sons are recorded as “English” landholders of Ballylynan, Co. Laois. The record is less full for the family of Sir Richard’s brother. Sir George married twice, first to Jane

Fig. 9.7 Coat of arms of Sir Richard Graham of Ballylynan, Queen’s County: Or, a mullet Gules charged with a crescent Argent, on a chief Sable three escallops of the field. The device of a silver crescent on a red background beneath a black chief charged with three golden scallops is also seen in the 1st and 4th quarters of the 1772 arms of Graham of Gartmore, which were re-matriculated in 1972.
Huntingfield, and after that to a Miss Crahill; by the former he had six children, of which at least two were male: William, b. ca. 1594, and Marcus, later of Tobinstown, Co. Carlow.\textsuperscript{154}

One might expect that the origins of the later Grahams at Rossadown would be found in one or other of these lineages, and perhaps especially in Sir Richard’s descendants at Ballylynan, which is just 35 km (22 mi) from Rossadown. But here history has been cruel to the amateur genealogist, for the surname in both lines appears to have dwindled and ultimately died. In 1863, Sir Bernard Burke observed that “Many of Sir George's issue appear to have passed away sine prole,” i.e. without offspring.\textsuperscript{155} The same is true of three of Sir Richard’s sons, namely Thomas, Peter and George. The only sustained lineage recorded in the history books is one descending from Sir Richard’s son, William. William is remembered unfavourably for his cruel persecution of the O’Byrnes with the intention of usurping their lands in Co. Wicklow.\textsuperscript{156} Late in the 17th century, William’s son, Richard – perhaps inspired by his father’s bad example – petitioned fraudulently for the return of the portion of Rahin (Ballylynan, Sir Richard’s seat in Co. Laois) that had long ago been sold to the Weldons.\textsuperscript{157,158} He went on to be a captain in James II’s army during the Jacobite rising, for which he forfeited his part of the family estate in Co. Laois;\textsuperscript{159} it was sold in 1702.\textsuperscript{160} No children are recorded for Richard. Another of William’s sons, John of Gortowell, appears to have feared the confiscation of his land, and therefore sold his part of the family estates (including land in Co. Laois) in order to consolidate in Co. Cavan. John did have children; his son, Hector Graham (known locally as Capt. Grimes) held land in Culmaine, Co. Monaghan, but returned to Co. Laois and occupied Lea (Leix) Castle for 25 years (1712-1737). Hector is reported to have been honest and chivalrous, but fell foul of an O’Dempsey whose perjury almost had him hanged for horse-stealing.\textsuperscript{161} Unfortunately, Hector’s only recorded grandson – son of Col. Richard Graham of Culmaine – died without issue in 1761,\textsuperscript{162} so once again the genealogical trail runs cold.

In an evocative eulogy based on the coat-of-arms granted in 1553 to Fergus of Mote (Fig. 9.4), the patriarch of these Irish lineages, Sir Bernard Burke commented on the decline of his house in the following words:\textsuperscript{163}

\textit{The old “oke roote” bore but few branches – its leaves had not been for healing, but for hurt; not beneficial, but contrariwise baleful; and the retribution of barrenness had been theirs, and God had withered and broken the boughs in his just and holy anger.}

Later, and with characteristic prolixity, Sir Bernard concluded his judgement of the landed Grahams of Queen’s County:\textsuperscript{164}

If evil were to be erased from the page of History because it is evil, we should know nothing of the character of Alexander the Great, Pizarro of Spain, or Catherine II of Russia. True it is that the Grahams were violent, rapacious, and at times unprincipled, and, no doubt, a little mad occasionally; but then they were valiant, loyal, and most chivalrous. Possessing at one period great power and position, they were naturally subjected to equally great temptation; they had also the misfortune to live and flourish in a contaminating time, when wickedness sat with an unblushing brow in high places […] These Grahams were not literary men; the hand that wielded the sword so well was
maladroit to handle the pen; they have left no journal, and transmitted no biography: we, perhaps, know too much of their failings, and too little of their virtues; their public deeds are on record, and “live after them;” their private worth may be “interred with their bones.” As regards personal daring, they were brilliant and intrepid soldiers, “grand old cavaliers,” Bayards in bravery, and without question “sans peur,” though, alas! not “sans reproche.” […] Lastly, the crimes they committed, which were justly punished by the extinction of their race and name, may serve as beacons on the headlands, to warn us off these dark cliffs where honour and principle lie shipwrecked.

The extinction may have been less complete than Sir Bernard imagined; there is always the possibility that some collateral branches of the family have perpetuated Fergus Graham’s line in central Ireland. Hector Graham’s brother appears to have continued the line in the northerly county of Cavan. Besides Col. Richard, Hector had another son, Hugh, of whom nothing further is mentioned, but who presumably may have had sons. Equally, Hector’s uncles – Arthur, who was at least married, and Richard – may have had male heirs whose existence was not recorded. There are also genealogical loose ends in the earlier generations.

Deportees: the ship’s complement of September, 1606

In our attempt to find the origin of the Rossadown Grahams, there are good alternatives to clutching at lacunae in the genealogical tree of Sir Richard and Sir George. One highly plausible option is the contingent of Grahams exiled from the Western Border by James I. As we saw in Section VIII, they arrived in Dublin by ship in September, 1606, destined for settlement in Co. Roscommon. The disembarking Grahams were met “by two gentlemen of their own name, Irish residents, who promised to help them to settle.” A more specific chronicler mentions “the succour they received from two knights of their name and race who met them on their arrival, and comforted them with kindly entertainment and promises of help.” This greeting party, of course, consisted of Sir Richard and Sir George Graham. When the Roscommon plantation collapsed (Section VIII), many of the families moved onto Sir Richard and Sir George’s estates. The former, having his main estate in Co. Laois, obviously holds the greater interest for us. In 1643, the Earl of Castlehaven claimed that Ballylynan held over one thousand Englishmen and Protestants, while other accounts mention 250 to 500 refugees. Either way, the estate was clearly well peopled by that time.

Of the nine baronies in Queen’s County that were assessed in Pender’s Census of 1659, all of the Grahams were found in the Barony of Ballyadams, in which Ballylynan is situated. For Ballylynan, the “English” landholders at that time were the surviving family of Sir Richard, augmented by a total of 45 unnamed Irish people. Graham was also one of the most prevalent names among the Irish of this Barony, with 9 Grahams among a total of 592; for comparison, the most popular Irish surname, Dun, was shared by 14 people. The list of “Irish” would have included settlers of Scots extraction, and would presumably have accommodated Grahams banished from the English side of the Border as well. In other words, the families of any Anglo-Scottish deportees who had abandoned Roscommon to settle as tenants on Sir Richard’s estates would have been counted as Irish in the Barony of Ballyadams. In fact, many of the early settlers applied
for and were granted “denization,” since it was otherwise illegal for them to buy or bequeath land in Ireland.\textsuperscript{175} Being declared denizens of Ireland naturalised them and enabled them to purchase and grant land in their new homeland.\textsuperscript{176} For this reason, the list of Irish at Ballylynan may even have included some cadet or collateral members of Sir Richard’s family who had found it in their interest to become denizens of Ireland.

One other mechanism is known to have generated Irish Grahams. In some parts of Ireland, indigenous Irish by the name O’Greachain chose to Anglicise their surname to Graham, but this is unlikely to be the case for Co. Laois. For a start, the O’Greachain heartlands lie in Co. Westmeath and Co. Galway, neither of which are even adjacent to our region. Second, as mentioned at the start of this Section, the Grahams that we are interested in were Protestants, whereas rebadged O’Greachains would most likely have remained Roman Catholic. Third, the usual Anglicised form of O’Greachain is its phonetic equivalent – Grehan – rather than Graham, and in any case conversions to English spellings were more likely to occur in the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries than in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{177} Fourth, the renaming process provides no explanation for the highly partisan distribution of the surname Graham in 1659 – i.e., the startling fact that all the Grahams of Queen’s County were concentrated in a single Barony, the Barony of Ballyadams. In contrast, the re-settlement of Graham refugees at Ballylynan in that Barony and their denization as Irish over the subsequent half-century would be expected to give rise to a situation just like the one recorded in Pender’s Census. The concentration of all the Grahams in the one Barony also suggests that the early Graham line present in Co. Laois in 1577 had been lost by 1659, or that it too had consolidated at Ballylynan.

We have already seen that Arthur, the brother of William of Mote and of Fergus, the father of Sir Richard and Sir George, was amongst those deported to Ireland (Section VIII & Fig. 8.1). His second son, another Arthur, rose to some prominence in the army there, serving as a captain under Sir Patrick Wemys and Col. Robert Bayley (Fig. 9.5).\textsuperscript{178} His service in Queen’s County can be construed as evidence that some descendants of the exiled Grahams – who in 1610 the Lord Deputy of Ireland still considered to be “ill neighbours, for they are a fractious and naughty people”\textsuperscript{179} – morphed fairly quickly into respectable citizens, at least in Co. Laois. Interestingly, Capt. Arthur is recorded as being in Dublin in 1648, where he renewed the coat-of-arms of his great-grandfather, Fergus of Mote (Fig. 9.4). The Cpl. Fergus Graham who died in a duel in 1666, and who lies buried in Dublin, also bore these arms,\textsuperscript{180} which suggests that he may have been a son of Capt. Arthur. The latter seems to have maintained some links with his ancestral Borderland, insofar as he is attested at Arthuret (a village on the River Esk; Fig. 8.2) in 1662. In Ireland, he was probably the progenitor of the Grahams of Platten, near Drogheda.\textsuperscript{181}

\textit{The big picture, and the big questions}

At this point, we have two plausible mechanisms for the existence of Grahams in Rossadown, Co. Laois, in the 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries. They may represent an unrecorded cadet or collateral branch descended from Fergus Graham, grandson of Fergus of Mote (Fig. 9.5), in which case they most likely emerged from Sir Richard’s family at Ballylynan. Alternatively, their ancestors may have been among the contingent of
Grahams deported to Co. Roscommon in 1606, who subsequently found refuge on Sir Richard’s estate at Ballylynan. In either case, they were originally Anglo-Scottish Borderers but, by 1659, would have been counted among the Irish at Ballylynan, the epicentre of Graham presence in Co. Laois. As mentioned previously, Rossadown is just 35 km from Ballylynan.

A deeper question arises of whether these Irish Grahams have any blood ties to the famous Scottish houses of Montrose, Menteith, Inchbrakie, and so on. The answer to this hinges on the vexed question of whether any of the Border Grahams are in fact descended from William de Grame, the first historical Graham (12th century; Section II). In other words, were the bloodthirsty reivers of the Western Border (Section VIII) actually related to the illustrious nobles and eminent generals (Sections II, III & VII) with whom they shared a surname? To quote from *Irish Pedigrees*, “It will be seen that the Grahams at an early date were troublesome inhabitants of the Borders. Nothing is said to show whether they were descended from the Scottish family of the name, or whether—which seems just as likely—the Scottish house was of Border origin.”

Others claim that the lineage of the Border Grahams ultimately goes back to Peter de Grame, elder son of William de Grame, whereas it is certain that both the Montrose and Menteith lines arose from William’s younger son, Alan (misrecorded in the peerage as John).

The peerage records that Peter's line “failed in male issue in the fifth generation” – actually the seventh – but it is widely believed that it gave rise to cadet branches and collateral lines that account for the Grahams of the Western Borderland (Fig. 9.8). Thus, in the second or third generation, Henry of Dalkeith was lord of the Dumfriesshire parish of Hutoune (Hutton), within which lies the Barony of Mosskesso/Mosskesswra/Mackesswra; in the fourth, the last Henry of Dalkeith married into the Avenel estate, which included the same Barony; in the fifth generation, Sir Nicholas held lands at Eskdale, while his brother Henry (Section III) – who had lands at Dumfries and Northumberland – is listed in armorials as Sir Henry de Graham of Mackesswra; in the sixth, Sir John Graham of Dalkeith and Eskdale was sometimes styled “of Mosskessen.”

Mosskessen, variants of which are mentioned through multiple generations of Peter’s line (orange highlights in Fig 9.8), has particular importance because it is the place where Lang Will of Stuble’s immediate forebears are thought to have come from. Lang Will, of course, was the patriarch of the notorious Graham families of Eskdale and the Debatable Land (Section VIII & Fig. 8.1).

Accordingly, if the Border Grahams are related at all to the ennobled Scottish Grahams, they must be derived from the “elder line” (Fig. 9.8); however, their descent from Montrose or Menteith (in the “younger line”) was at times attested by these houses in an attempt to exercise influence and control over the Border mavericks. Pseudo-descents of this nature – whereby the Border Grahams in general, and Sir Richard Graham of Esk in particular (Fig. 8.3), are purported to be descendants of Malise, Earl of Menteith – are attested in the Peerage, the Herald’s College and the Lyon Court; however, these are now known to be impossible. Nevertheless, in 1628/9, 1665 and 1681 they legitimated the grant of Menteith-based arms (Fig. 9.9) to the family of Sir Richard of Esk (Fig. 8.3), and in 1665 to George, a grandson of Fergus of Nunnery (Figs. 8.1).
Fig. 9.8 Origin of the Grahams in the Anglo-Scottish Western Border. Colour conventions and abbreviations as for Fig. 9.5 as well as incl., includes, and orange highlight for the place where Lang Will’s immediate forbears are thought to have originated. In addition, the dashed lines indicate lineal descent for which the generational details are not known, whereas tandem arrows indicate lineal descent for which the generational details are known but omitted for brevity. Beware that there is another River Esk in Dalkeith, seat of the early Grahams of the “elder line,” which is unrelated to the River Esk and Eskdale of the Western Border.
Fig. 9.9 Cadet Graham of Menteith arms granted in 1665 to the line of Fergus Graham of Nunnery (grandson of Lang Will), headed at that time by Fergus’s grandson George, then 72 years old. “Quarterly, 1& 4, on a chief sable, 3 escallops of the field; 2 & 3, Or a fesse chequy argent & azure, in chief a chevronel gules, all within a bordure engrailed.” The colour of the border may be inferred from the arms granted two days later to Sir Richard of Netherby, 1st Baronet of Esk (formerly Richard of Plomp), which reads “As Graham, of Nunnery, with a crescent for difference;” here, the bordure is azure.

For the descent of the Irish Grahams of Co. Laois from the Anglo-Scottish Borders, and for the descent of the Border Grahams in general from the dynasty founded by William de Grame, we have plausible theories. So much for supposition; is there any direct evidence?

Molecular genealogy to the rescue – deep ancestry and the Y-haplogroup

Molecular genealogy studies have revealed that most of the important Scottish family names exhibit a common pattern: (A) one large related family at its core, augmented by (B) a number of other unrelated lines that carry the same surname. For the Grahams, as we saw in Section II, the signature of the ancestral Scottish Grahams – the “A-group” – is Y-chromosomal haplogroup J1, a haplogroup whose geographic epicentre lies in the Arabian peninsula and northeast Africa; it is uncommon in Britain or even in western Europe. At Family Tree DNA, the Graham Surname Project has far more J1 individuals than any other surname project. Moreover, all the Grahams in the J1 group can be recognised from their short tandem repeat (STR) values at specific genetic loci. The subgroup of J1 characterised by their STR values is extremely rare on the world scene, but is common among Grahams. The founder of this group is believed to be William de Grame, the first historical Graham. The other important observation from the Family Tree DNA database is that the largest major Y-haplogroup among Grahams in general is not J1 but R1b. There is no sign of extensive inter-relationship among R1b Grahams; on
the contrary, this group consists of at least 15 unrelated small families, plus numerous unrelated individuals. Many of the ancient names in Scotland are characterised by R1b, as it is a haplogroup indigenous to western Europe and Britain. From this, it is evident that the R1b Grahams form the “B-group” for this surname, i.e., disparate families native to the British Isles who adopted the Graham surname, but who are not descended from William de Grame.

On discovering the Graham Surname Project database, one of my first actions was to see if it contained any members of Border descent. The surname “Nethery” is believed to be derived from the Grahams of Netherby (Fig. 8.2), who are descended from Lang Will Graham of Stuble (Fig. 8.1). The Netherys in the database were of Y-haplogroup R1b, in which they spanned two different subclades (indicative of at least two unrelated families). Likewise, the larger ySearch database contained two Grahams whose ancestors were from Canonbie, in the Debatable Land (Fig. 8.2); they too were R1b, and in this case were judged “probably related” to each other. From the available sample, it looked very much as if the Grahams of the Western Border were native Britons, i.e., not descendants of William de Grame, and thus not related by blood to the noble Scottish dynasty.

I therefore fully expected my Y-chromosomal haplotype to fall within haplogroup R1b, and – extrapolating from the Netherby/Canonbie data – had even predicted my subclade. You can imagine my surprise when I obtained my STR test results and the haplogroup predicted from them (Fig. 9.10a): Y-haplogroup J1, and thus a descendant of William de Grame, related by blood to Montrose and Menteith. The J1 assignment was confirmed by a definitive follow-up test (Fig. 9.10b). The presence of J1 Grahams among the Western Border population is supported by the existence (as we shall see below) of J1 Grahams in parts of Ireland known to have been settled by Western Border deportees, including Glenwherry, Co. Antrim. It is possible that Lang Will was himself a J1, descended from the elder line of William de Grame, as endorsed by T.H.B. Graham (Fig. 9.8), but that other Graham families of the western Borders who claimed kinship with him (later Grahams of Netherby, Plomp, etc.) were unrelated to him by blood. Alternatively, it is possible that the connection between the elder line of William de Grame and the Border Grahams actually bypassed Lang Will’s family (who in this scenario would probably have been R1b) and involved only minor families whose pedigree was soon forgotten in the turbulence of Western Border strife, eclipsed (but not extinguished) by the rise of Lang Will’s brood. Below, in the final section, we will be able to use Y-DNA data to favour one of these two options.

More molecular genealogy – STR profiling and my new-found relatives

Beyond assigning the person to a Y-haplogroup, an individual’s Y-chromosome STR profile can be used to identify new relatives amongst other people who have undergone similar testing. Naturally, I used my STR profile (Fig. 9.10a) to search the database for genetic relatives. And, as with the haplogroup assignment, I was once again in for a surprise.
Fig. 9.10  (a) My 37-panel STR profile, or “genetic barcode.”216 Marker loci are listed in bold in the upper row of each strip, while the number of tandem repeats at each locus is shown in the lower row. On the basis of the STR profile, my Y-haplogroup was inferred securely to be J1, which is defined by the Single Nucleotide Polymorphism (SNP) called M267. (b) I then took a SNP test for M267 which, being positive, confirmed my assignation to J1 (M267) beyond doubt. This haplogroup, which is often abbreviated as J1 or J-M267, establishes ultimate descent from the ancestral Graham line in Scotland. All J1Grahams carry the distinctive signature DYS388=15 and YCAII=22-22; my conformity with this in panel (a) is highlighted by blue fill. From the STR profile, my subclade within J1 was putatively L1253, corresponding to DYS557>18. DTS557 was not actually one of the markers tested in my panel, so I took a follow-up SNP test for L1253; being positive, this test confirmed my assignation to subclade L1253, as certified in panel (b). This SNP, which appears to be limited to Britain and Ireland, is diagnostic for “Ancient Grahams” (see text).

It turned out that many of my closest relatives in the Family Tree DNA database did not share my surname.217 Of the nineteen independent closest matches to my profile, at Genetic Distance (GD) = 0 or 1, only nine actually bore the surname Graham. One of these could trace his ancestry back to Josias Graham (d. 1879) of Glenwherry, Co. Antrim, an epicentre of Western Border Graham re-settlement in Ireland following the collapse of the Roscommon venture; this, of course, fitted perfectly with my forebears’ presumed origins in the Western Border. Similarly, a Graham at GD = 0 who was added later to the database (and whom I shall call KG) had traced his ancestry back to the early 1800s in Co. Fermanagh or Tyrone.218 Both KG’s family and mine were Church of Ireland, and we have an estimated 99.8% chance of a shared ancestor in the last 20 generations (i.e., since ca. 1500). A straightforward explanation of our shared heritage would go as follows: our deep origin lies in the ancestral Scottish house of Graham (J1); our common ancestor moved from the traditional Graham lands to the Anglo-Scottish
Western Border in the 16th century; this ancestor’s descendants were among the Grahams of the Western Border deported to Co. Roscommon in 1606; following the collapse of the Roscommon settlement, KG’s branch of the family headed north (as did most of the deportees) and settled in Co. Fermanagh/Tyrone, while mine moved south-east and settled in Co. Laois.

And then the database served up another surprise: of the ten remaining relatives – i.e., the non-Graham ones – no less than seven bore the surnames of other Border clans. Indeed, my collection of new-found relatives seemed designed to highlight the names of the most prominent riding clans, such as Johnson (one at GD = 0, another at GD = 1) and Armstrong (two at GD = 1).\(^{219}\) Moreover, it focused upon clans that were co-localized with the Grahams, i.e., the inhabitants of the English and Scottish Western Marches.\(^{220}\) In the Borders, Johnson would originally have been Johnstone/Johnston/Johnstoun with a “t”;\(^{221}\) among the 29 relatives at GD = 2, with >96% probability of a shared ancestor within the last 16 generations, was a Johnston who had traced his line back to William Johnston (b. 1814) of Lockerbie, in the Scottish Western Borderland. At the same genetic distance (GD = 2) I even had a relative with the surname “Borders.” Present more closely, at GD = 1, was an Irwin, whose paternal forebears were Irwins back at least to 1777; this surname is cognate with the Border surname Urwen/Irvine/Irving.\(^{222}\) Present more closely again, at GD = 0, was a Turner, bearer of another clan surname from the Borders.\(^{223}\)

Importantly, none of the traditional Graham lands within Scotland – neither those at Montrose and Dundee, nor the Menteith lands north of Glasgow – have Johns(t)ons, Armstrongs, Turners or Irwins as neighbours; the eastern lands abut the territories of the Keiths, Carnegies, Lindsays, Lyons, Scrymgeours, and Hays, while the western ones are surrounded by Stuarts, MacGregors, MacFarlanes, Buchanans and Drummonds.\(^{224}\) The region of Dalkeith, associated in the 12-13th century with the descendants of Peter de Grame, is characterised by the surnames Douglas, Stewart, Ros, Oreston, Richardson, Kerr, Ramsay and Sinclair. Only at the Anglo-Scottish Western Border do we find the necessary nexus of surnames.

One may reasonably suppose that the surname switches (resulting in lineages of Johns(t)ons, Armstrongs, etc., who are genetically Grahams) reflect – at least in part – the prevalence of infidelity/rape/illegitimacy events in the turbulence of Western Border life up to the early 1600s.\(^{225}\) In his detailed account of reiver life, George Fraser comments that the Graham men seem to have found the Armstrong girls particularly attractive,\(^{226}\) and makes specific mention of a Graham-Irvine feud.\(^{227}\) An additional driver was the need for fugitive Grahams to change their surname (which, after 1606, was required of almost all Grahams who chose to remain in or return to the Border region); at this time, Grahams were reported to be hiding amongst the Johnstones and other families of the Scottish West March,\(^{228,229}\) and some may have changed permanently to these new surnames. It is also possible that adoptions occurred between allied clans, and the Grahams were generally on reasonable terms with the Armstrongs and Johnstons.\(^{230}\) The extent of intermarriage between these three riding clans was considerable,\(^{231}\) and we know of at least one Graham married to a Johnston girl;\(^{232}\) accordingly, yet another
mechanism could be the acrimonious breakdown of such marriages, followed by a return of the woman and her children to her family of origin and a resumption of that surname.

All up, it would appear that a big clue to my antecedents’ location in the middle of the last millennium survives in the form of relatives who are genetically Grahams but who bear other surnames, a legacy of the fact that their nominal forebears were co-located with my actual ones in that chaotic time and place. Thus, the existence of a plethora of surname-discordant relatives has proved helpful in confirming an otherwise conjectural stage of a family’s history.

At the deeper and more populous level of GD = 4, which represents the most distant matching reported by Family Tree DNA, there is no trace of Johnsons, Armstrongs, Turners or Irwins among my non-Graham matches; at ySearch, only one such match (an Armstrong, GD = 4) is found at GD = 4, 5 or 6 (the maximum distance reported). This suggests that my ancestral line was not always co-located with the riding clans, or that the earliest period covered by the genetic comparisons lacked the social upheavals necessary to cause the wholesale entanglement of surnames. The observation is consistent with a non-Scottish origin for William de Grame and the idea that the antecedents of the Border Grahams were initially located on the east coast of Scotland (Fig. 9.8).

**Genealogical conclusions**

The largest genetic subgroup within the Graham Surname Project, termed “Ancient Grahams,” is defined by the terminal SNP L1253. My positive test result for this SNP is shown in Fig. 9.10b. When this SNP is found in a tester with the surname Johns(t)on, Brown, Jordan, Armstrong, or Irving/Irwin, it is a strong indicator that the individual is genetically a Graham and has “Border reiver” heritage. The preponderance of Western Border riding clan surnames amongst my closest genetic relatives places my more recent ancestors at the same location. In the Border Reivers DNA Project Y-DNA Results table, my STR profile is ranked near the middle of a 30-member subgroup titled “Graham and Johnson,” where it is flanked by a Graham and a Turner. In the Graham Surname Project Y-DNA Results table, my profile is placed centrally within J1 Group Type 01: J1-L1253, a 15-member group titled “Probable Ancient Graham line in Scotland.”

T.H.B. Graham, probably the most astute analyst of Graham genealogy in the Border region, wrote in 1910: “I conclude that all the Grahams of Esk, Leven, and Sark were descended from a common ancestor.” The new evidence from molecular genealogy suggests that this is incorrect. Descendants of the Grahams of Netherby span different subclades of R1b, which reveals a lack of kinship even within this group, and neither of these families seem to be related to the Grahams of Canonbie. Not only was there heterogeneity of this type within this collection of indigenous Britons, but it now clear that there were J1 Grahams – genuine descendants of William de Grame – in the Border mix as well. The prominence of their genetic signature, J1-L1253, among the (nominal)
descendants of other western riding clans suggests that they were numerous, and this in turn favours the idea that Lang Will was himself a J1.

As far as we can tell, the recent origins of the Grahams of Rossadown lie in the Western Anglo-Scottish Border, among the notorious reivers. Unlike some of the Border Grahams, they were ultimately descended from William de Grame, probably via his elder son Peter and potentially via Lang Will. Accordingly, they were – and we, their descendants, are – true kin to the Grahams of Montrose and Menteith, who descended from William’s younger son Alan (“John” in the peerage).

While the Rossadown Grahams might be easily be overlooked, it seems that their history illustrates the full sweep of Graham migration in the British Isles – initially northward from Normandy to eastern Scotland (Section II), then southwest to the Anglo-Scots Border, and finally southwest again to central Ireland. It also spans the extremes of Graham behaviour, encompassing as it does the chivalrous Scottish knights of the 13-14th centuries (Section III) and, two to three centuries later, the rapacious reivers of the Western Border (Section VIII). Their forebears enjoyed privilege as landed gentry in Scotland, held their own in the Borderland’s reign of terror, endured dispossession and banishment from the Border upon the Union of the Crowns, and emerged as survivors on the farmland of Ireland.

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Unless otherwise noted, online citations were all accessible on 10 Jul, 2015.

1 Dedicated to the memory of my late father, Sydney Graham.
8 This is probably an exaggeration; Grahams first appear in public records relating to Cumberland in 1528 [T.H.B. Graham (1914) “The Debatable Land – Part II,” Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, Series 2, 14, p.132-157, at p.148].
12 Sources include TBHG The Barony of Liddel; TBHG The Debatable Land I & II; John O’Hart, Irish Pedigrees, vol. 2, p.231-234.
Assembled from The Debatable Land I, maps facing p.49 & 56; The Debatable Land II, maps facing p.133 & p.148; frontispiece map (inset) in SB, and modern placenames cognate with those of the 16th century.

14 The Debatable Land II, p.148 fn.


25 The relationship of these individuals to those in Fig. 8.1 is uncertain, and even T.H.B. Graham was unable to position the Grahams of Peartree in the pedigree. He contends that Jock of the Peartree lived at a place of that name at Randilinton (Randylinton, Fig. 8.2), a site on the R. Leven (now R. Lyne) different to the Peartree associated with Hutcheon’s line (far right, Fig. 8.1). Graham (1911) “The Barony of Liddel and its Occupants,” p.61.


49 Fraser (2008) The Steel Bonnets, p.227-228, fn2


58 Graham (1907) *Conditions of the Border at the Union*, p.198 gives the number as 200 rather than 2000.
62 Graham (1907) *Conditions of the Border at the Union*, p.198-199.
65 Graham (1907) *Conditions of the Border at the Union*, p.125.
69 Graham (1907) *Conditions of the Border at the Union*, p.138.
71 Graham (1907) *Conditions of the Border at the Union*, p.150-151.
72 Graham (1907) *Conditions of the Border at the Union*, p.153-156.
73 This despite the fact that James, then James VI of Scotland, had at the time delighted in the success of the raid. Graham (1907) *Conditions of the Border at the Union*, p.176.
75 Graham (1907) *Conditions of the Border at the Union*, p.139-140.
77 Graham (1907) *Conditions of the Border at the Union*, p.186, 189-193.
81 Graham (1907) *Conditions of the Border at the Union*, p.188.
85 Graham (1907) *Conditions of the Border at the Union*, p.196.
86 Graham (1907) *Conditions of the Border at the Union*, p.194.
88 Graham (1907) *Conditions of the Border at the Union*, p.196.
92 Graham (1907) *Conditions of the Border at the Union*, p.165.
94 Graham (1907) *Conditions of the Border at the Union*, p.196.
99 Sources include: TBHG *The Debatable Land I & II*; John O’Hart, *Irish Pedigrees*, vol. 2, p.231-234; Clan Graham website, online at www.ClanGrahamSociety.org

100 The Debatable Land II, p.153-155; Pedigrees Recorded, p.54


102 Church of Ireland.

103 It was certainly built before 1911, since it shows up on the Ordnance Survey map of that year; indeed, it is clearly a well established property in photographs dated 1911. The old Graham dwelling is not shown on that map.

104 Ellen, bap. 15 Apr, 1810; Eleanor, bap. 24 Mar, 1811; Susannah, bap. 26 May, 1811; John, bap. 13 Feb, 1813; Mary Anne, bap. 15 Dec, 1815; Lydia, bap. 12 Oct, 1817. Source: Parish of Offerlane Registry Book, 1777-1823, Representative Church Body Library, Churchtown, Dublin.

105 James, b. 11 Mar 1777; Ann, b. 10 Jan, 1779; Elinor, b. 10 Feb, 1781; John, b. 11 Feb, 1784; Susanna, b. 22 Jun, 1786; George, b.11 Jul 1788; Mary, b. 4 Aug, 1790; Margaret, b. 14 Feb, 1792; Jane, b. 11 Mar, 1794; Mary, 14 Apr, 1797. Source: Parish of Offerlane Registry Book, 1777-1823, Representative Church Body Library, Churchtown, Dublin.


107 Married 18 Apr, 1761, St. Michan’s, Church of Ireland, Ballyfin, Queen’s County. Source: Dublin Probate Record & Marriage Licence Index, 1270-1858.


110 Personal communication from my uncle, Eric Graham, Clondalkin, Dublin; Mar 2015.

111 Personal communication from my uncle, Eric Graham, Clondalkin, Dublin; Mar 2015.

112 Photo courtesy of uncle, Eric Graham, Clondalkin, Dublin; Mar 2015.

113 Information from my great-aunt Eileen Holmes, via personal communication from my uncle Eric, Clondalkin, Dublin; Mar 2015.

114 Fraser (2008) *The Steel Bonnets*, p.370

115 In 1610, official thought was given to removing all of the ex-Border Grahams still in Ireland to Ulster, with the intent of consolidating them there, but the idea was vetoed by the Lord Deputy of Ireland.

116 Irish Times resource “Irish Ancestors – Surname History – Graham.”


119 Irish Times resource “Irish Ancestors – Surname History – Graham.”


121 TBHG *The Debatable Land II*, p.150 & 151; also R.R. Stodart, Scottish Arms vol. 1, p.383.

122 Vicisitudes, p.132

It could relate to the first colonisation of Co. Laois, which took place in 1556 when Thomas Lord FitzWalter, later Earl of Sussex, attempted to install Scottish & English settlers on lands that used to belong to the O’Moore clan. It was not particularly successful. The plantation settlements were grouped closely around the forts of Maryborough and Philipstown, which were largely independent of one another. Tadhg Ó hAmracháin (2014) “Plantation, 1580-1641,” In: The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish History, ed. Alvin Jackson, Oxford University Press, at p.294.

Sir Bernard Burke believed they were born in Ireland; Burke (1863) “Hector Graham, of Lea Castle,” p.140-146.


Burke (1863) “Hector Graham, of Lea Castle,” p.140-146.


Vicissitudes, p.146

Vicissitudes, p.146


E.g., John B. Burke (1852) A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Peerage and Baronetage of the British Empire, 14th ed., p.449-450

Burke (1863) “Hector Graham, of Lea Castle,” p.147 & 157-158. Here, Rahin/Rahenderry is reported to have been forfeited by Mac Edmond Macdonald/Macdonnell.

25 May, 1601: The Queen to the Lord Deputy and Lord Cancellor for Sir Richard Greame “Graeme has served us well etc. We are pleased to grant him at his suit, the towns, etc. of Rahin, late in the tenure of Edmond McMolmory and Hahinduff and Crymorgan, lately held by Lisaghe O'More, and Dowrie, held by Shane O'More, and Money ne Bolie, late in the holding of Cale O'Kelly ... in King's county. These lands are in the yearly value of 16/19/- or thereabouts and are forfeited by the rebellion of the tenants therof; ...” Addenda, Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, p. 631; Linley family website, “Sir Richard Graham or Greame,” online at http://www.linleyfh.com/oursecondsite-p/p381.htm#i11383.

Burke (1863) “Hector Graham, of Lea Castle,” p.147.


Linley family website, “Sir Richard Graham or Greame,” online at http://www.linleyfh.com/oursecondsite-p/p381.htm#i11383.


Burke (1863) “Hector Graham, of Lea Castle,” p.156.

Burke (1863) “Hector Graham, of Lea Castle,” p.156.


Burke (1863) “Hector Graham, of Lea Castle,” p.157-158. However, in another account, he is accused of turning upon a Dempsey escort that had safely escorted a party of English to Ballylynan, in defiance of an assurance that the escort would not be harmed. James Graves (1850) “The Ancient Tribes and Territories of Ossory. No. 1.” Transactions of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society 1, (2), p. 230-247.


“Quarterly; 1st & 4th Or, a pale Gules charged with a crescent Argent, on a chief Sable three escallops of the First; 2nd Or, a fesse chequay Azure and Argent, in chief a chevron Gules; 3rd Argent, a shakefork Sable.” Online at http://www.armorial-register.com/arms-sco/cunninghame-graham-arms.html


156 Burke (1863) “Hector Graham, of Lea Castle,” p.151-153. When the Grahams of Eskdale displaced the Storeys from their land in the 1520s, there was at least some culpability on the part of the victims; Graham (1911) “The Barony of Liddel and its Occupants,” p.58-59.


158 He also petitioned to be made controller of the much deteriorated castle of Maryborough (Portlaoise), where Sir Richard had been Constable. Facebook: Laois Heritage Society, online at https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=413146788830304&id=17922248889403

159 Sir Bernard Burke claims that Richard came to possess the estates of both Sir Richard and Sir George; if so, Ballylynan may have been part of the lands forfeited on his account. Alternatively, it may have been sold off soon afterwards by his brother John (see text). Burke (1863) “Hector Graham, of Lea Castle,” p.161-162.


166 Amongst Sir Richard’s own sons there is a Richard (and possibly a John) attested at Ballylynan in 1659, either of whom may have had unrecorded families [Pender’s Census, 1659, online at http://www.igp-web.com/laois/records/Ballyadams.htm]. Equally, one of Sir George’s sons may have perpetuated his line.


168 Graham (1907) Conditions of the Border at the Union, p.194-195.


173 A total of four, including one “John” whose origin is unclear. The names are Dame Elizabeth Grahams, Lady; Thomas Grahams, Esq.; John Grahams gent[man]; Richard Grahams gent[leman]. Elizabeth was Sir Richard’s widow; Thomas and Richard were his sons.

174 Excluding any granted denization in England; see note 176.


176 Between 1603 and 1634 a number of residents of Ireland, particularly Ulster, “all of the Scotch nation or descent” were recorded in the Irish Patent Rolls as having been granted denization. For more exceptional Scots, denization as English was also possible. For example, on 12 Feb 1618/9, Thomas Graham, potentially the eldest son of Sir Richard, was party to the “Grant of denization to John Dunbarr, esq. Jas Dunbarr, his son, Alex. and Geo. Dunbar, Tho. Graham, Arch. Acheson of Clancarny […] & 8 others […] all of Scotch birth or blood, whereby they are released from the yoke of servitude of the Scotch, Irish or any other nation or blood, and entitled to enjoy all the rights of Englishmen;” Linley family website, online at http://www.linleyfh.com/oursecondsite-p/p381.htm#i12092. A similar grant of English liberty is recorded in 1605 for Sir Hugh Montgomery of Scotland and his issue; Dobson (2001) Scots-Irish Links, 1575-1725, Part III, Introduction (n.p.).


180 Burke (1863) “Hector Graham, of Lea Castle,” p.159.
184 The sixth or seventh, depending on whether one considers Peter’s offspring the first or second generation of his line. We shall take Peter’s offspring to be the second generation.
191 William of Moskesen, attested 1476 & 1480; Graham (1914) “The Debatable Land – Part II,” p.147-149.
192 As indicated in the figure, the “elder line” is the one derived from Peter de Grame, elder son of William de Grame; the “younger line” is the one derived from Alan (John), the younger son.
194 Mentioned previously as Richard Graham, son of Fergus of Plomp (Section VIII).
195 The Herald’s College for English arms, the Lyon Court for Scottish ones.
197 Fergus was the son of William of Carlisle and grandson of Lang Will (Section VIII). Fergus’s descendants are detailed in Joseph Nicolson & Richard Burn (1777) The History and Antiquities of the Counties of Westmorland and Cumberland, vol. 2, Straham & Cadell, London, p.431.
200 The Menteith coat of arms consists of the Montrose shield/scallops quartered with Stewart of Strathearn.
201 The Debatable Land II, p.154; Pedigrees Recorded, p.55.
202 Pedigrees Recorded, p.54. These arms were later re-granted to Richard of Plomp’s grandson Richard, Viscount of Preston, by which time the border and crescent had been removed, leaving just arms of Menteith.
205 In particular, all of them have DYS388=15 and YCAII=22-22
Independent of surname, the Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms (SNPs) defining R1b and its commonest sub-clades in Scotland/Ireland are, from senior to junior, M343>P297>M269>L23> ... >P312>L21. Specifically, the most common European subclade is L23; the most common R1b subclade in Scotland/Ireland is P312, and within that L21. The Nethery entries in the Family Tree DNA Graham Surname Project included 3 individuals with R-M269, 4 people with R-U106 (the main alternative SNP to P312, representing over 25% of R1b in Europe), and 1 with R-L48 (a subgroup of R-U106). Netherys in different subclades would be unrelated to each other.

Online at http://www.ysearch.org/.

These probably are descended from Richard Graham of Plomp rather than the Lang Will Graham of Stuble, as they trace their ancestry back to a William Graham of Canonbie, b.1648. As mentioned in Section VIII, Richard of Plomp acquired Netherby in 1628, becoming Sir Richard of Esk in 1628/9; Sir Richard re-populated the region from which Lang Will’s descendants had been banished in 1606/7 with his own line of Grasms [Graham (1911) “The Barony of Liddel and its Occupants,” p.79-80]. However, this twist may be of little consequence. Plomp too lies in the Debatable Land intimately connected with the lands occupied by Lang Will’s offspring [Fig. 8.2; Graham (1911) “The Barony of Liddel and its Occupants,” p.61, 66-67 & 79]. After comparing the pedigree of “Graham of Nunney,” who was admittedly a Graham of Esk” (actually, the great-great-great-grandson of Lang Will) with that of Sir Richard’s grandson, “the descendant of Fergus Graham of Plomp, who was apparently not a Graham of Esk,” T.H.B. Graham concluded that the two families did in fact share a common ancestor. See Graham (1911) “The Barony of Liddel and its Occupants,” p.80-82.

Independent of surname, the SNPs defining R1b and its commonest sub-clades in Scotland/Ireland are, from senior to junior, M343>P297>M269>L23> ... >P312>L21. Specifically, the most common European subclade is L23; the most common R1b subclade in Scotland/Ireland is P312, and within that L21. The Canonbie Graham entries in ySearch provided only phylogenetic strings with no test date or terminal SNP data. This complicates the interpretation, as there is currently no haplotype-to-haplogroup subclade prediction program for R1b (i.e., an application that converts an STR profile to a current phylogenetic string or defining SNP). The short string (a 30-STR from Ancestry.com; user 5NBGH) claimed to be R1*, i.e. M343 without P297, which is extremely rare; since their STR profile is considered “probably related” to the other Canonbie Graham (see the next note; an impossibility if the short string really is R1b*), we can safely assume that it is just a misreporting of R1b. The longer string is R1b1a2a1a2 from a 37-STR Family Tree DNA test (user JU6E8); it is almost certainly a test undertaken in 2011 or 2012, and thus haplogroups as R-P312 (R1b1a2a1a2 in 2014 nomenclature), without information as to L21 status.

Genetic Distance (GD) = 2, for a 27 marker panel. A GD = 2 for a 25 marker panel (with shared surname) means “Probably related: may share a common male ancestor within the genealogical time frame (15 generations); the probability of a relationship is good” so this is the minimum interpretation for the Canonbie result. See online at https://www.familytreedna.com/learn/y-dna-testing/y-str/two-men-share-surname-genetic-distance-25-y-chromosome-str-markers-interpreted/.

M269, and within that P312 (see note 212 for terminology).

Family Tree DNA kit ID 367943. The connection to William de Grame assumes, of course, that the Family Tree DNA – “Graham Surname DNA Project – Results,” Dec 2010 assessment of the population genetics for the surname is correct.

Determined in February 2015 by Family Tree DNA, www.familytreedna.com

Search of February, 2015.

KG was added to the database in Aug 2015, after my main analysis had been completed.

While a GD = 0 theoretically indicates >99% probability of a shared relative within the last 12 generations (i.e., since about 1700), the time-spans seem in practice to be underestimates. For instance, at GD = 0, I am supposed to have a >97% chance of a shared ancestor in the last 8 generations (i.e., since ~1800) with a Johnson whose ancestry in the US dates back to David Johnson, b. 1757, but our shared ancestor must actually lie more than 10 generations in the past. I am predicted with certainty (100% probability) to share an ancestor with relatives at GD = 0 within the last 24 generations, i.e., since the early 1400s, and that time-frame is perfectly consistent with the proposal of shared Western Border origins advanced above.

221 Fraser (2008) *The Steel Bonnets*, p.2. However, it was common enough even in the Border lands for the “t” to be dropped; see Fraser (2008) *The Steel Bonnets*, p.62.


223 Fraser (2008) *The Steel Bonnets*, p.64.


226 Fraser (2008) *The Steel Bonnets*, p.64.


229 Graham (1907) *Conditions of the Border at the Union*, p.152.


233 Including, of course, the flight or death of the husband.

234 After the advance online publication of this chapter in Nov 2015, it was brought to my attention that another researcher had set up a fee-for-service business based on the same logic. For Y-DNA testers with Irish or Scottish origins, the combination of recurring non-cognate surnames among their genetic matches are used triangulate their “paternal ancestral genetic homeland.” See online at http://www.irishorigenes.com/ and http://www.scottishorigenes.com/.

235 Searches with 37 markers, performed 5 Nov, 2015. The surname Jordan persists through all levels to GD = 6, suggesting a very early involvement with this surname.


237 “J1 with SNP L1253 – Results. All results to hand show testers with origins most likely in the Scottish-English Border Region. […] As of 24th. May 2014, […] Our L1253 SNP dates approximately to the Plantation of Ulster by Scots and English in the early 1600’s CE. Among the families driven out of Scotland’s border region by the Stuart monarch at this time were the Elliots, Armstrongs, Ivines, Bells, Grahams and Johnstones among others.” Family Tree DNA Project group, online at https://www.familytreedna.com/public/11c3d-with-SNP-L1253/default.aspx?section=results.


240 In a 37-marker comparison run on 4 Nov, 2015, the ySearch engine (http://www.ysearch.org/) placed me at Genetic Distance (GD) = 3 from the Graham Modal entries (SXQ83 and CMCCFF), the STR profiles interpolated for the Scottish line’s founder. This level of match is interpreted as “Related;” https://www.familytreedna.com/learn/y-dna-testing/y-str/two-men-share-surname-genetic-distance-37-y-chromosome-str-markers-interpreted. GD = 3 affords more than enough proximity for that ancestor to have been William de Grame. Notionally, this GD corresponds to a 99% probability of a common ancestor within the last 24 generations, or about 600 years, but – as pointed out in note 219 – the
timespans inferred from GD values seem to be underestimates. William de Grame lies some 900 years in the past.

I used the ySearch Genetic Distance tool to compare the haplotypes of Grahams that traced back to Canonbie against those of the Netherys, descendants of Graham of Netherby; the best match was JU6E6 vs. TJU3Z at 2 Genetic Distance (GD) units apart for the 12 marker panel, interpreted (for a shared surname) as “Possibly related: Unlikely to share a common male ancestor within the genealogical time frame (15 generations).” Two other comparisons (ZXSW8 vs. TJU3Z and 5NBGH vs. TJU3Z) were 3 GDs apart, interpreted as “Too far off to be considered related within the genealogical time frame (15 generations).” To be fair, we should bear in mind that 15 generations is about 375 years, which only gets us back to 1639, and that it is therefore possible that the tested individuals share a common ancestor further back in time. My own experience, however, is that the time-spans calculated from GD values are underestimates (see example in notes 219 and 240), so I am inclined to take at face value this failure to detect kinship between Netherby and Canonbie Grahams.

See notes 236-237.