

The Lammas Fair – 18th century

It was the custom on the 1st August annually to have a Harvest Holiday.

The farm hands of the parish would meet and have a picnic. The event took the form of a children's sports day with picnics, etc, (not unlike a Gala Day) and was funded by the landowners. The farm hands and their families met at the lea of the hill around Southfield. As the day wore on the menfolk, who worked the lands and tended the herds of the east of the parish, would have a contest with those of the west of the parish. They each built a tower, those of the east would defend a flag at the top of their tower on Corstorphine Hill and those of the west would defend their flag on the top of their tower on Lennox Hill.

The aim was simple – don't lose your flag to the other side. As each matched up to the other they fought to lower their opponents flag, when the flag came down they won the round – the best of 3 flags was the winner. The competition was often fierce and flags were defended vigorously – the defence of a flag often led to a brawl and it was not uncommon for there to be serious injury, as was reported in 1734. The custom was stopped in 1758 following numerous injuries to the farmhands and the Estate Owners being short of men to manage the lands and take in the harvest.

The Mysterious Bell Ringer

The church bell could be rung from outside the tower.

Early one morning its furious ringing awoke the neighbourhood. On venturing to see what anxiety was the cause, it was found to be a goat that had got into the churchyard and was tugging at the rope.

The Well Spas of Cramond

Both Marchfield and Lauriston had purgative springs, the waters from these springs were used for their health and wellbeing properties and seen as being of the same properties as St Bernard's Well, Edinburgh.

A Duel on Cramond Island

In 1592 there was a duel fought on Cramond Island.

Stephen Bruntsfield, who resided at Craighouse, was a supporter of Mary Queen of Scots. At the time when the Queen was being held prisoner at Lochleven Castle, Sir Robert Mowbray of Barnbogle was a strong supporter of the Earl of Moray and was against Mary. In support of the Earl Sir Robert lay siege to Craighouse and Stephen Bruntsfield was cornered and was promised protection should he surrender. However, when being taken to Edinburgh Castle, Mowbray, broke his promise and slew him at the Burgh Loch.

This led to what has become known as one of the legends of Craighouse. Stephen Bruntsfield's widow, who was one of Queen Mary's four Maries, shut herself and her 3 sons up in Craighouse in unrelenting grief. She shut out the daylight by hanging black drapes over the windows and became obsessed with gaining revenge over Mowbray. Stephen, her eldest son, charged the Laird of Barnbogle in combat and was slain. His brother, Roger, equally met the same fate when he charged the Laird. At a later date Henry, the youngest, avenged his father's death at Cramond Island. His mother died full of remorse for the revenge that had been achieved. She is said to have become the phantom lady haunting the old Craighouse when there is a full moon.

The Kirk Gibbet

This story dates back to when the Iron Mills were in full flourish on the Almond.

Some of the workers used to take Iron Rods, sharpen the ends then go out to Cramond Island to spear fish and crabs.

One night, after a successful day fishing, the men called at the local Inn. After celebrating their success for some time, they emerged drunken and made their way up the hill to their homes. However, as they were passing the church a fight broke out during which a rod was thrown into the air but never came back down. The drunks went on their merry way home and forgot all about it.

The rod had got stuck in a branch joint in the tree and as the tree grew around the rod so it wedge more firmly into the structure and remained there for many years. As time passed the rod was often referred to as the Cramond Kirk Gibbet.

The Prophet's Chamber Lauriston

At Lauriston Castle there is a secret chamber built into the wall and overlooks the entrance hall. When guests arrived, and were waiting to be seen, their conversations could be overheard.

The Lauriston Semaphore Window

At Lauriston's semi-circular turret window facing the sea it is said that one affectionate lover communicated with another at Barnbogle by means of lanterns.

The Count of Lauriston and Le Chevalier de Muttonhole

One of John Law's heirs, also named John Law, was Governor of Pondicherry during the Seven Years War. He became Marchal de Camp in 1780 and President of the French Settlements in India. One of his sons became Marquis de Lauriston and adopted the title "The Count of Lauriston". It is also said that the younger brother of the Marquis, who equally wished to have a title, bore the title "Le Chevalier de Muttonhole".

Caroline Park Secret Chambers

At Caroline Park House there are a number of secret chambers. One of these is said to pass under the house, tunnel under the lawns and enable escape out to the sea. Another is said to be a secret hiding place and is set within the wall structure at high level close to the roof space. A third chamber was found behind a wall panel in the south-east tower and used as a way of escaping during a siege.

The Granton Quarry Disaster

The overseer of Granton Quarry lived in a house which, over the years, had become closer to the edge of the quarry. One evening he awoke suddenly and noticed a crack in the ceiling of his room. He roused his family and got them out of the house and up the banking. Almost immediately the seas broke through the quarry wall, rushed in, and half the house fell into the quarry. The incoming sea water flooded the quarry and its machinery. The following day it was determined that the water levels were too dangerous to try and recover the quarrying equipment.

Some Strange and Ghostly Tales

The Caroline Park Ghosts

Legend has it that one evening a phantom soldier suddenly broke through a window and dashed across the drawing-room. The frightened occupant shrieked in terror and called out for assistance. When assistance arrived the room was completely undisturbed with no sign of its visitor from the supernatural.

- A ghostly cannonball was seen from time to time bouncing across the drawing-room causing no harm or injury to the occupants, other than terror.

- From time to time a Green Lady rises at midnight from a moss covered well and rings the courtyard bell that was used to call the farmhands to work.

The Grey Lady of Muirhouse

The ghost of Lady Oliphant, who was murdered by her son, could be seen within the ruins of the old house at Muirhouse.

The Craigcrook Ghost

Lord Jeffrey's ghost is said to haunt the castle. Many unexplained disturbances have been reported, these include strange noises, footsteps, items being moved around the room. Also, the library is reputed to be unnaturally cold even when the heating is otherwise fine.

A Murder at Craigcrook

In 1707 John Strachan of Craigcrook had a 'town house' in Edinburgh. His maidservant, Helen Bell, was murdered on her way from town to Craigcrook Castle. Two men were said to be responsible and took from her the key for Mr Strachan's house—they made off with £1,000 leaving only £100 in gold coins. Only one man, William Thompson, was brought to trial and executed.

Some 12 months later Lady Craigcrook claimed that she saw the other person in her dreams kill the girl and hide the money in two barrels. She recognised him as an old servant. On her husband making inquiries he found the old servant in possession of an unusually large amount of money. When his premises were searched they found the bags and some of the missing coins.

Granton House - "Tales of a Great-Aunt"

Margaret Hope, daughter of Rt Hon Charles Hope, Lord Granton, wrote up a number of her stories from her past so that the family could be aware of the events of her early life.

She lists her many recollections of life at Granton House and tells the tales of *how the Beggars were treated; of Smugglers; of a Shipwreck rescue; of the King's visit to Hopeton; and of Queen Victoria's visit.* Each of these tales she recorded so that the members of her family, in time to come, could recall how life was in earlier years.

Here are a few of her tales:

- The Beggars who roamed the area would be given a bowl of meal before being sent on their way and the 'The Laird' at Cramond was generous to those he saw to have the bearing of an ex-soldier who had fallen on hard times;

- Those beggars who were infirm were taken from house to house in a hand carried cart;

- That smugglers would bring their haul ashore at Granton and hide it in the woods ready for uplift;

- A ship bringing passengers to the royal visit, in 1822, struck the rocks at Granton and her father, Lord Granton, and his staff managed the rescue; and

- Fishermen would haul trout ashore from the River Forth.

N. B. An extract of her stories can be found in the January 1951 edition of Blackwood's Magazine – a copy is held in the Edinburgh Central Reference Library.

The Granton Fossil Tree

Granton Quarry aroused widespread interest when a great fossil tree, a 75 feet long Araucaria, was discovered and had to be left in situ as it was too large and heavy to be moved. When the quarry was infilled the fossil was re-buried and is marked on the 1853 edition of the OS Map.

*Visit the Maltings on Cramond Foreshore where you will be able to see many items of life dating from Roman times and can obtain books and/or leaflets that help you understand some of Cramond's history. **Open** from Easter until October—Saturday and Sunday from 2—5 pm and on each day during the Edinburgh Festival.*

The Cramond Association

Promoting the amenity of the community of Cramond, Barton and Cammo and safeguarding its heritage



Some Tales of Legend of the Old Cramond Parish



Cramond Parish Church

The following tales are just some pieces of information that I struck upon whilst searching the libraries and archives for information on the Mansion Houses of the old Cramond Parish.

Bill Weir, Cramond Association.

A Dead Man Hung a Live Man

This story dates back to the age of body-snatching.

One dark night a body-snatcher entered Cramond Churchyard and stole a corpse. He placed the body in a sack, tied it up with a rope, then set off towards Muttonhole. To help manage his load he put the rope around his neck and shoulder. By the time he reached "the Dungeon" (the area adjacent to the trees and the south gate-lodge of Cramond House) he decided to take a rest. He hoisted the body on to the top of the dyke, however, the body fell over the wall and, with the rope tightening around his neck, he was choked to death.