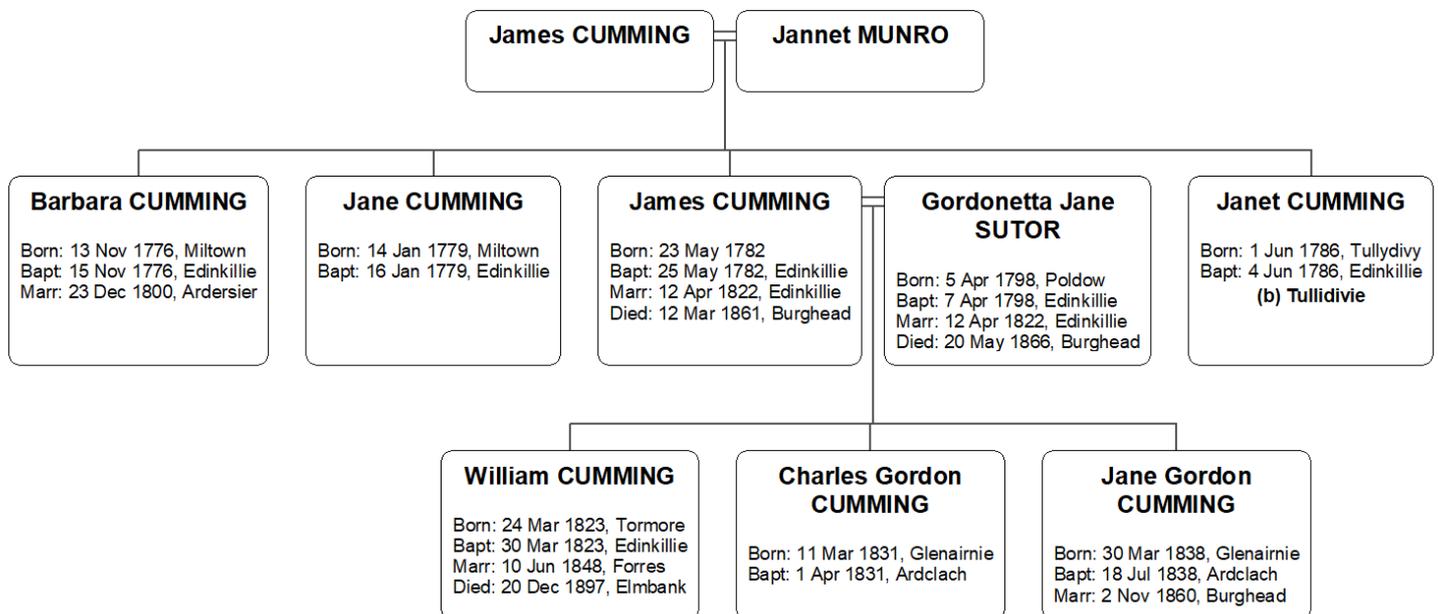


## The family connections of Jannet Munro, born 1759

I am the great-great-great-grandson of William Cumming, the eldest of nine known children. The names of his paternal grandparents appear on the 1861 death certificate of his father. James Cumming and Jannet Munro appear to have had three daughters and one son, and although no marriage record has been found, the baptismal records for the four children all indicate that James and Jannet were married.



Virtually every online tree – including, until recently, my own – shows James’s parents as being James Cumming and Barbara McNortterer, who married in 1749. The only evidence cited for this appears to be that the eldest child of James and Jannet was also named Barbara. However, this would mean that the family did not use a traditional naming pattern, and a cursory look at the parish registers shows that there were many Cumming families using a small selection of forenames. In a similar manner, there is a possible baptism for Jannet Munro (baptised in 1752 to father Alexander in Aitnach, Edinkillie), which is generally regarded as the correct entry, but no corroborating evidence has been found. Without further evidence it was impossible to make any definitive progress on the parents of either James Cumming or Jannet Munro.

However, further documentary evidence did already exist, although it had been neglected. Oral history provided by an online contact, combined with a Y-DNA match discovered in 2020, also proved critical. The rest of this article is a summary of what has been discovered after considering:

- the baptismal records for Barbara, Jane, James, and Janet.
- the family being centred upon the parish of Edinkillie, Moray
- a piece of oral tradition which claims that Barbara (born 1776)  
*“was of the gentry. According to family tradition she was disinherited by her family because she fell in love with her music teacher. He was considered below her station. As a girl she rode a pony to school, a sign of opulence and station.”*
- the middle names chosen for two of William’s eight siblings. Jane Gordon was probably named for her mother, Gordonetta Jane, but why did Charles also receive the name Gordon? Until now, no reason has been suggested.
- the naming pattern James and Jannet *may* have used for their children
- a Y-DNA test the author completed.

This article attempts to weave these strands into a coherent whole.

### The DNA test & Edinkillie parish

I completed a BigY-700 test with FTDNA, and three of my four closest matches are with Cumming males, implying that my paper trail showing Cumming ancestry is accurate. The complex details of the research resulting from my closest match are a story for another day. For the purposes of this article, it is sufficient to say that there is excellent evidence that my Cumming line goes back to the

family of Presley and Relugas in the parish of Edinkillie. The implication is that there may have been some wealth on the Cumming side, which agrees well with the account of Barbara having had a pony and a music teacher – these would not have been common in eighteenth century Moray.

### ***The baptismal records***

Transcriptions of these records are shown below, all of them being from the parish of Edinkillie:

*Barbara lawful daughter to James Cumming & Janet Munro in Milntown was born 13 Nov 1776 and baptised 15 Nov 1776. Witnesses: Mr Elison & James Miller of Tillydivie.*

*Jane lawful daughter to James Cumming & Janet Munro in Milntown was born 14 Jan 1779 and baptised 16 Jan 1779. Witnesses: Mr Elison & Peter Cumming.*

*James lawful son to James Cumming was born 23 May 1782 and was baptised 25 May 1782. Witnesses: Mr Elison in Milntown and Mr Biue in Relugas.*

*Janet lawful daughter to James Cumming & Janet Munro in Tillydivie was born 1 Jun 1786 and baptised 4 Jun 1786. Witnesses: Thos Cumming & Alexander Cumming at Milntown.*

It is plain that 'Mr Elison' was significant to the family, as well as being a man of some importance in his own right. Elison (however spelled) was a rare name across the north-east of Scotland in the 17th and 18th centuries. Records occur with these frequencies:

	Baptisms	Marriages
Moray	8	9
Nairnshire	1	0
Banff	0	0
Aberdeen	0	1

Mr Elison almost certainly belonged to Moray. Indeed, all eight baptismal records there are for the parish of Kinloss, and at least five of those are siblings born between 1711 and 1727. None of those children married Cummings, but the parents' marriage record states:

*15 Jul 1710. Parish of Kinloss. Testimonie being received from the Kirk Session of Raffurd that John Elison in this parish and Jean Cumming in the parish of Raffurd were matrimonially contracted their proclamations were appointed to go on.*

It seems probable that one of the two sons of John Elison and Jean Cumming grew up to become the 'Mr Elison' of the baptisms. They were:

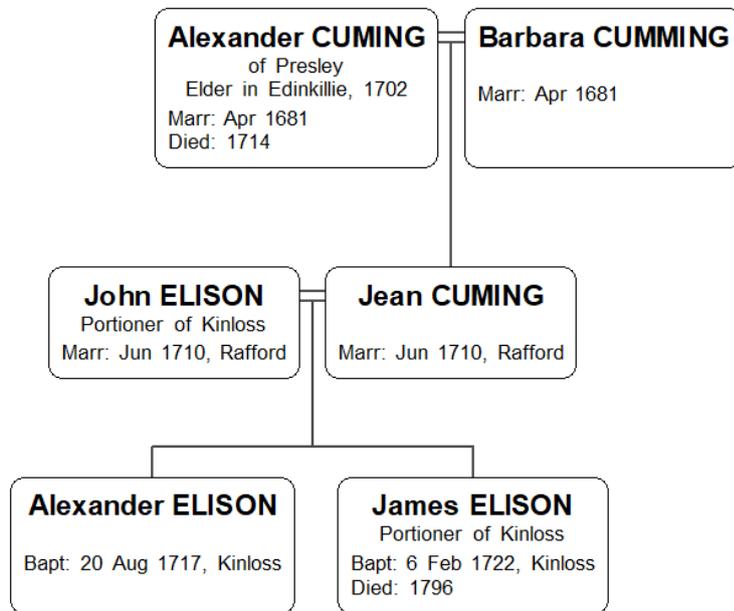
Alexander, baptised in Kinloss, 1717  
James, baptised in Kinloss, 1722

There is a 1785 Edinkillie baptismal record which described one witness as 'James Ellison in Kinloss'. This is only three years after 'Mr Elison' witnessed the baptism of James Cumming.

John Elison, husband of Jean Cumming and father of 'Mr Elison' is mentioned in a 1714 will left by 'Alexander Cumming of Presley':

*... Jean Cumming second lawfull daughter to the said umqle Alexr Cumming of Presley ... and he did assign her said provision to and in favour of John Elison portioner of Kinloss her husband ..."*

This establishes a documented connection between Mr Elison (who witnessed the baptisms of my relatives), and the Cumming family of Presley (to whom I am connected, as evidenced by DNA). A simplified pedigree is shown below:



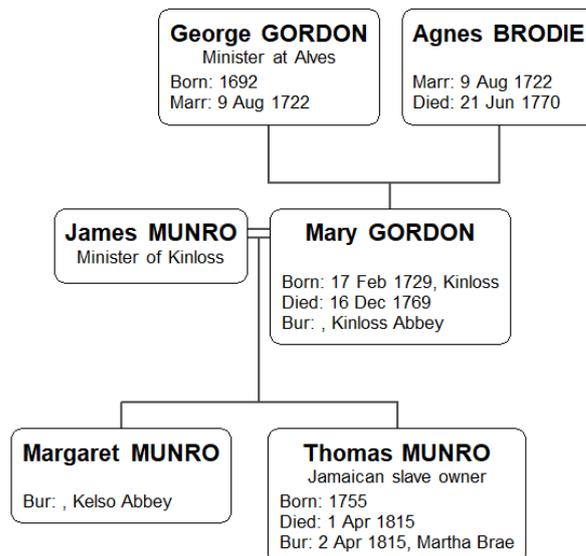
James Elison died in 1796, and left a will of his own.

### ***Naming patterns for children***

If my ancestors James Cumming and Jannet Munro followed the traditional naming pattern for their children then their first daughter – Barbara – would have been named for her mother’s mother. However, searching for a marriage between a male Munro and a Barbara has been fruitless.

It is of interest, then, that James Elison named his housekeeper in his 1796 will. She was a Barbara Munro. Who might she have been?

On the basis that James Elison’s housekeeper may have been of a moderately well-known Kinloss family, the search went in that direction. An internet search for “Munro Kinloss” immediately turns up references to Thomas Munro, a planter in Jamaica, who died in 1815. A little further research reveals the following family:

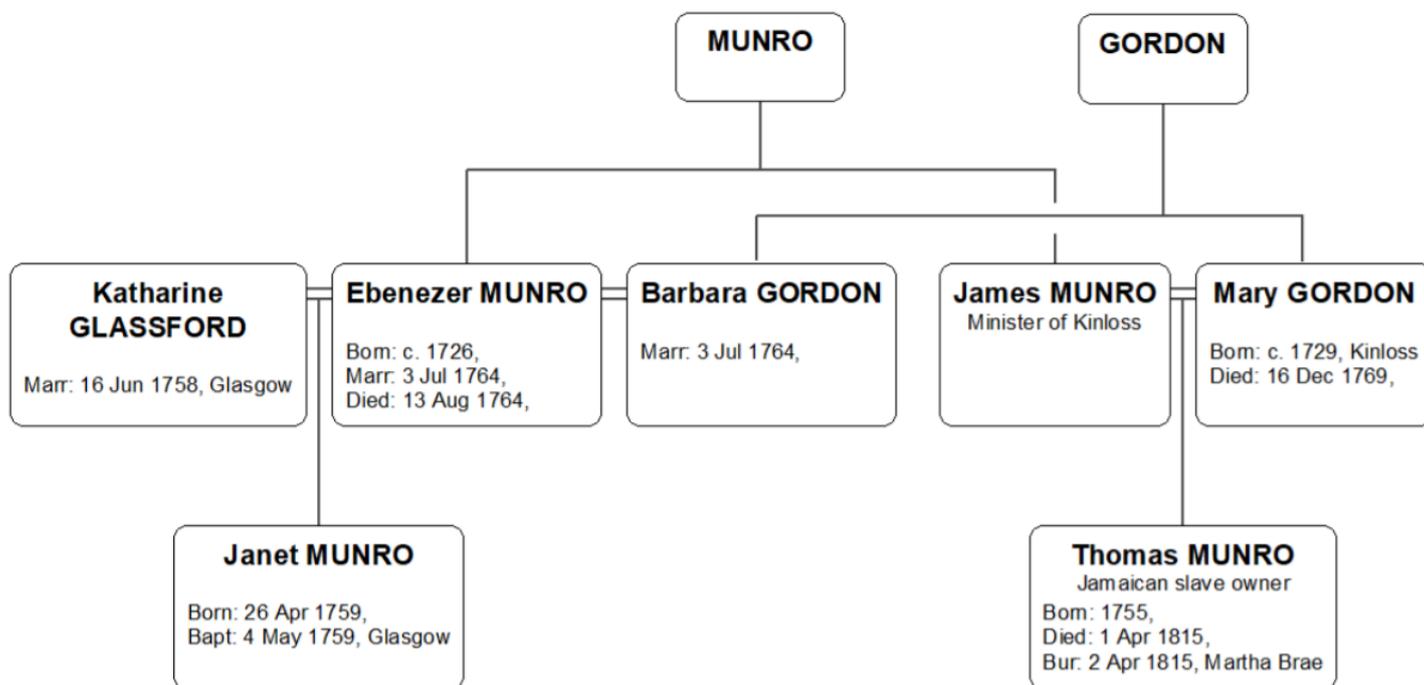


Thomas’s mother, Mary Gordon, was buried at Kinloss Abbey. Her memorial (translated from the original Latin) reads as follows:

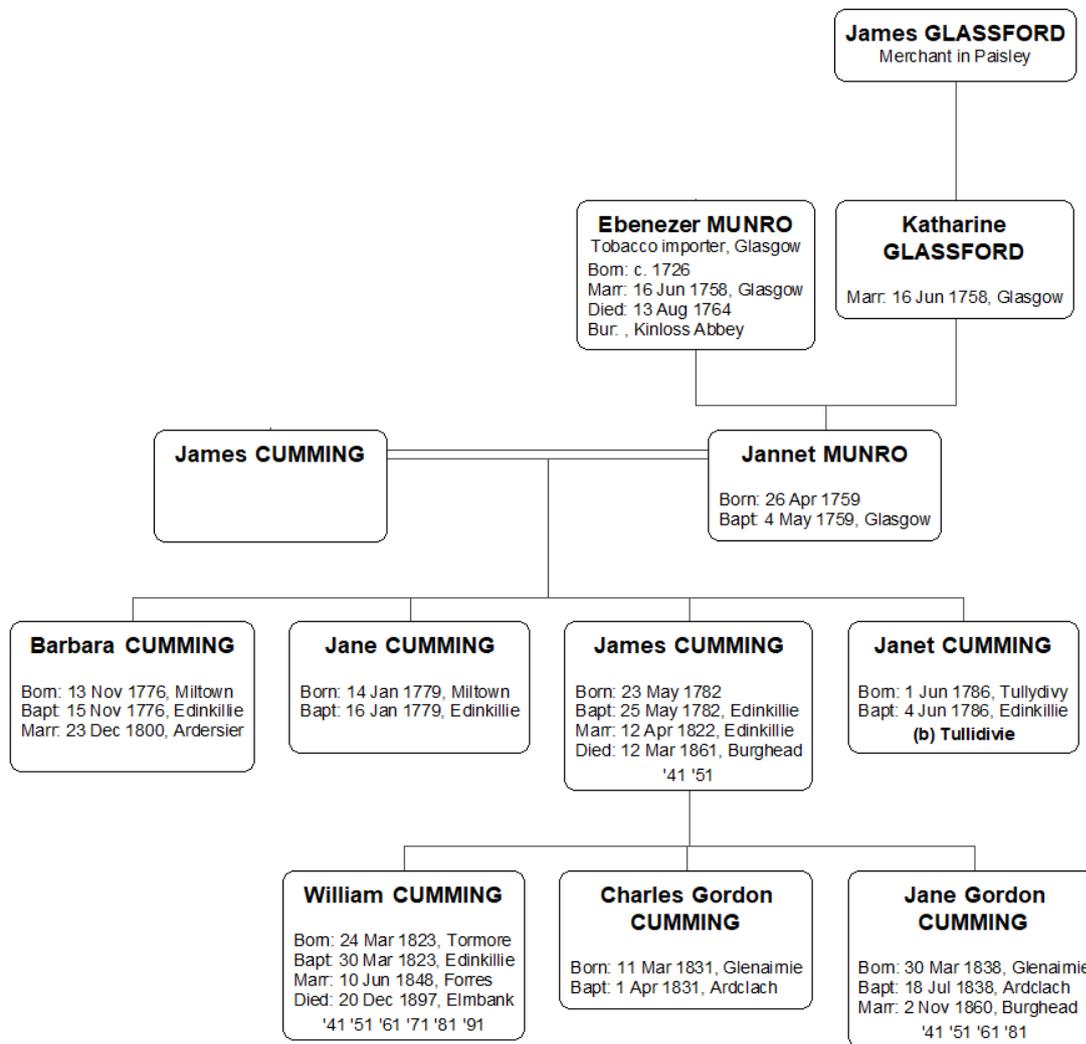
*'The hour comes when the dead shall hear his voice and issue forth from their tombs.  
The Reverend Mr JAMES MUNRO,  
Of The Gospel, ordered this dwelling for the dead  
because his wife MARY GORDON, departed this life on the  
16th day of December 1769, aged 40, is buried here.  
Alas, how the house was made desolate on that day!*

*With what wailing all (? the house) resounded when  
such a mother beyond compare was snatched away!  
And because his brother german  
EBENEZER MUNRO, a citizen of Glasgow  
reputable and outstanding lies here as well,  
who married BARBARA GORDON sister of  
Mary on the 3rd day of July 1764 and, alas,  
died on the 13th of the following month aged 38.  
He left four orphans of his former marriage whom  
his faithful widow took into her care. With a mother's  
affection this noble sister was at hand with aid,  
a consolation to the household of Mary on the  
day of affliction and she willingly undertook the  
hard task of rearing her sister's little ones.*

Using the evidence of the memorial in conjunction with further research, it has been found that Ebenezer Munro had four children (Janet, Margaret, Thomas and John) by his first wife, Katherine, sister of an immensely wealthy Glaswegian Tobacco Lord, John Glassford. Katherine died and Ebenezer remarried – his second wife was Barbara Gordon. Five weeks later Ebenezer died, leaving his new wife with four young step-children, but appointing his brother Rev. James Munro of Kinloss as the children's tutor. This would only have been feasible if Barbara took the children back to Kinloss soon after Ebenezer's death. Five years later Barbara's sister Mary also died, leaving children of her own. Barbara took them under her wing as well, resulting in the accolade of 'noble sister'. The simplified pedigree below illustrates the relationships which resulted.



It is therefore proposed that Janet Munro, born in 1759, was the woman who married James Cumming. She was only seventeen when she had her first child, Barbara, whom she named after her step-mother Barbara Munro. Mr Elison, for whom Barbara Munro was housekeeper by 1796, may have been a surrogate grandfather-figure to Janet and her siblings, and so he was a witness at three of the baptisms. Perhaps he even provided the means for Barbara to have a pony!



The clinching argument in all this is the sudden and otherwise inexplicable use of the middle name 'Gordon' in the 1830s – it is another remembrance of the remarkable Barbara Munro nee Gordon, the second wife of Ebenezer Munro.

This synthesis of 18<sup>th</sup> century parish records, oral history, traditional naming patterns and modern DNA technology has led to a much fuller understanding of my Munro line. The author would be very pleased to hear from anyone who believes themselves descended from this or any other Cumming line from Edinkillie. He can be contacted at [cummingwj@hotmail.com](mailto:cummingwj@hotmail.com).