

Letters from Hugh Ross to Kenneth Williamson¹, writer, Edinburgh (NAS RH15/184)

Spellings as shown.

1. 15/6/1745
2. 28/7/1745
3. 12/8/1745
4. 7/8/1746
5. 3/9/1746
6. 31/10/1746
7. 10/4/1747
8. 26/6/1747
9. 1747, no month given
10. 21/1/1748
11. 2/11/1748
12. 1740s, possibly related to above
13. 2/12/1748
14. 22/12/1749
15. No date, possibly related to above
16. 13/7/1751

1. 15/6/1745

[Outside] Mr Keneth Williamson writter Edinburgh

Dear Sir,

Tho by some time now past, our acquaintance formerly is much worn, I'm confidence of our former intimacie & freindship do make bold to give you a little trouble by yr berer having no dou't but you'll do all ye cane to favour me in it.

Sometime ago I was employ'd by Mr Gordon² to trimm a currious fancie of a snuff box he hade of a highland fashion, which being seen by some other gentlemen put them in fancie to get ones of the kind which they employ'd me to trimm like to Mr Gordon's, & in consequence of all (having accidently mett with 2wo handsome ones of ye kind) did (myself) fancie to buy them & after the fashion of the former's did munt them to ye advantage, & being told that a good many has the curriosity to be desirous of this hyland fancie, with you at Edr have thought proper to send this 2wo I gote to you, beging the favour ye be so good as to introduce one of them to Mr Gordon whom I believe will not only [illegible/rubbed out word - readily?] buy it himself, but will also introduce ye other to a buyer, but D:S if this trouble you'l take, you'l take care to keep the one closs until ye other be fairly of, this, on condition [illegible/rubbed out word - that?] of seall, but if otherwise happen, you'l return them carefully buckled as sent; herein I satisfie you in there rate of seall - I ordinary get a geanie for on of them done like these but in the event Mr Gordon insist's for a lower charge, ye may tell him plainly that it was I sent it purposely his way, & as I exsperienced his generosity before now, I will submitt to his pleasure in deminishing a shilln or two of that price as he indlyn's tho I stand in prity good hope that he'll give no loss. If ye speed[?] in money you'l send me a note inclos'd in a line of write (if ye don't make two rates of the boxes,) & the ballance ye may keep

¹ Most of the other letters in the bundle are from Mackenzies on the Black Isle, apparently Williamson's relatives. A Daniel Williamson, father Kenneth Williamson, was baptised in Tain in 1725. Kenneth Williamson died in 1753.

² From later letters, this was advocate Charles Hamilton Gordon of Newhall, a younger son of Sir William Gordon of Invergordon and Christian Hamilton, daughter of Sir John Hamilton of Halcraig. His sister Isabel, "Bonnie Bell Gordon", married George Mackenzie, later 3rd Earl of Cromartie, in 1724. Another sister was married to Robert Dundas of Arniston, Lord President. Their daughter Elizabeth married Admiral Sir John Lockhart Ross. CHG married Helen Cunningham in 1744. He was Grand Master of the Grand Lodge 1753/4. His daughter Henrietta married i) Thomas Lockhart and ii) David Urquhart of Braelangwell. She died in 1799 and is buried at Kirkmichael near Newhall. The nearby farm of Henrietta Park is named after her. See www.kirkmichael.info/theurquharts1. Thomas Lockhart was the youngest son of Sir James Lockhart of Carstairs i.e. younger brother of Sir William, Sir James, Sir George and Admiral Sir John Lockhart Ross who succeeded in turn to the Balnagown estate.

till I draw on you for what ye sum may be. This trouble I give you ashureing you of it that much more of your's is alwise wealkcome to me & wherein I can oblidge you in may freely command.

Dr Sir your very afft freind & sertt Hugh Ross

P.S. I know not your direction, so must excuse ye backing ye must take pains to observe how to shutt the head's in the boxes, because all at once a body cannot come by it know it so as to [illegible word] in the circles[?]

Tain 15th June 1745

2. 28/7/1745

[Outside] To Mr Keneth Williamson servitor to Mr Charles Gordon &c Advocate Edr.

Acquint me of your direction I know not Mr Gordon's distinct tytles.

Dr Sir

I rece'd your's & I'm very glade to know so much of your wellfair, of which I heartily wish a continuance, I'm very much oblidge to your generous complymts in your lettr & may depend on a due return where in my power, I was exspecting a lettr from you by last post but it seem's your convenience did not allow of such, I exspect to hear from you how soon possible, & I'm with sincere regard

Dr Sir your afft & ready sertt Hugh Ross

Tain 28 Jull 1745

This goes inclos'd in a lettr to on Mr Procter in Edr.

3. 12/8/1745

[Outside] To Mr Kenneth Williamson writer at Edinburgh

Taine Aug 12th 1745

Dear Sir

It appears by your long silence to me, that those things I sent by this bearer when last your way, ly's still on hand; if these shall find the case otherwise, good, but if not, you'l fail not to send the things themselves by the bearer as I found away for them my self, but if it will be cash you'l send, you'l doe all possible to inclose it in a lettr. And I am with my kind service

Dear Sir your affectionate friend & ready servt Hugh Ross

4. 7/8/1746

[Outside] To Mr Kenneth Williamson writer in Edinburgh. To the care of Mr Francis Scot clerk to the Post Office of Edinburgh.

Dear Kenny

I will write you no more till I have the pleasure of hearing from you which I expect soon and long for, I have been closs at home, till yesterday, since I arrived from Lieth. I have been in John McRa's all last night, he, Mrs McRa, your sister Baby and other ffriends here are all well; Baby I can assure you, Kenny, is a very pretty girl and I am sure you cannot do better than take all the care you are able of her; she is now at school, but she tells me when her present quarter is elapsed she will be bestowed no more upon at school by her present landlord, of whom, I am afraid your great opinion goes too far, Baby tells me she has been a month at Bindal³ sometime agoe & stay'd one night at Wilkhaven, she promises to come and see me to Bindal soon, I have in the

³ Bindal and Wilkhaven are at the end of the Tarbat peninsula about 10 miles from Tain. HR's comment implies that he would be staying at Bindal. There were Rosses there in 1750, when Hugh Macleod of Geanies attempted to influence the elders in favour of George Balfour as the new minister over another candidate by gathering them at Mrs Ross's at Bindal and "heating them with liquor to such a degree that some of them were ready to quarrel upon the highway" (*Church Life in Ross & Sutherland* p186). There is also a possible connection with Charles Hamilton Gordon, as by this time his brother Sir John Gordon of Invergordon was the major landowner in the parish of Tarbat.

meantime a commission from her to apply to you for a pair of slyes[?], the measure of which is sent inclosed. I saw George Balfour⁴ yesterday, he asked for you, he was so hurried with buying timber that I had but a very short time of him. John McRa tells me, he sent you Cadbol's horning⁵ for caption and that you have the grounds of debt but knows not if Cadbol has suspended. I am just now going off by sea for Tarbat and cannot write you more; my dear secretary, peruse, seal, deliver & forward the inclosed letters, be sure to get me David Rosse's answer in course if possible, in case of going up the way it is not amiss for me to put some confidence in Andrew Ross which you see I do; mind me kindly to my good friends George & Angus & let me know about you all. Baby desires to be minded to you & I ever am
My Dear Sir yours most affectionately Hugh Ross

Tayne 7th Augt 1746

5. 3/9/1746

[Outside] Mr Keneth Williamson writter Edr

Tain Sept 3d 1746

Dear Sir

'Tis of a good time past since the troubles of these times has interrupted a convenient occasion for me to write you till now, I was glade to hear by one from Edinr of your wellfair as to health, amidst the disturbances ye have at Edr, & I hope these shall find the continuance; I suppose I need not dou't but the s box (of the two) remaining in your hand's when ye write me last is `ere now gone of, & humbly beg's pardon for ye trouble ye got in them, 'tis certain that tho my self woud have sold them very well, often since sent your [illegible word - lentle?], that you're not in ye least to be blame'd for ye hinder of ye money, the times being so confused, you'l give the berer the money, & acquaint me in a line how much. I wish I may have ane opportunity to recompence your trouble, & where I cane serve you in a greater matter & I'm with sincere regard
Dr Sir your afft friend & sertt Hugh Ross
Turn over for a P.S.

P.S. I have no news, so great as the melancholy loss of Cullcairn⁶, who was shote out of a bush a'jacent to a greater wood in the hight of Lochaber, its said that the Master of Ross was walking by him in the time about a pistole shote forward of the rest of the men (I suppose) on march, it's probable, that ye man shote him is in hand's. The corpes is to burryed this day in his own burying place at home his death redoubles the cause of there grief, in this unfortunate corner, which suffered so much loss of brave men in these unhappy times. I [illegible word] HR.

⁴ George Balfour b.1724, whose father was the minister at Nigg. He attended Marischal College, Aberdeen, and was apprenticed to an Edinburgh merchant in 1741. He was licensed to preach by the presbytery of Tain in 1749 and became minister of Tarbat in 1750.

⁵ Possibly related to the long-running dispute between the town council and Roderick Macleod of Cadboll over his repeated encroachments into the burgh lands. In 1746 a special court was held at St Katherine's Cross (one of the girth crosses) where he had built houses across the boundary. The town council was assisted by the Convention of Royal Burghs, the matter went to the Lords of Session and in 1749 Cadboll was ordered to pull the houses down. Similar problems persisted until his death in 1770.

⁶ This was Captain George Munro, younger brother of Sir Robert Munro of Foulis, who was shot mistakenly by Dugald Roy Cameron. Cameron's son (or brother) had been executed on the orders of Captain Grant of Knockando. Cameron swore revenge and lay in wait above Loch Arkaig for an opportunity to take it. Unfortunately Captain Munro had borrowed Grant's distinctive grey horse and met the fate intended for Grant.

6. 31/10/1746

[Outside] Mr Keneth Williamson writter Edr

Sir

I received your's, Mr Gordon came not here as ye made mention of, but as I have a small thing of credite depending (for so much) on the small sum I thought ye wou'd have for the boxes `ere now I inclose a short line to Mr Gordon which comes to same purpose as if I saw him myself, which ye may deliver him in the manner ye think proper, being open, may read, seall, & back it as ye think proper, for I know not his direction, but on thing I earnestly beg of you, as a friend & well wisher, that ye do all possible to procure the money directly, with the ballance of your own one (hereafter treated of), & deliver it to Mr John Proctor⁷ seall cutter in Cannongate, or his order's, who deliver's you the letr seall'd wth a [illegible word - cifar?] head, for this man (tho I never saw him) deall's so punctually & discreetly, that I only fear any failures on my own side, in doing him justice, so hopes that this you'l regaurd how far in your power. I shu'de be sorry for any bade sales[?], as to the 2d box I hope you'l come by it but at any event if it be your own choice to keep it (if extant) ye may use freedom with 2 or 3 shills less than the medium of the two prices given to Mr Gordon, but by no mean's*, but the one given Mr Gordon I exspect a geanie for, & when I sent `em to you, I expected 2 geanies for both directly, to be disposed of as ca I render you hearty thanks for your diligence in my last comissions, which came very seasonably to my hand, & the same here will very much add to former obligations, & alwise waiting an opportunity to make a return, I still am
Dr Sir your afft & ready sertt Hugh Ross

Tain 8ber 31 1746

*to make that any further [illegible word] than in consideration to the disappointment youre like to get

Being confuse'd wth by stander's[?], I happened to direct ye inclose'd to your self which you'l ammend

7. 10/4/1747

[Outside] To Mr Keneth Williamson writter Edr

Tain App 10th 1747

Dear Sir

I suppose ye gote the letter I sent by our ffreind Andrew Munro, partly treating of the small thing ye was to advance to Mr Procter on my acct, whither the same is given him by you then, or not, I'm not yet inform'd of. He know's best if it's necessary to trouble you with these, or not, and as trouble this way has been to both of us more frequent than I desire'd (but especially expected) I hope that ane answer to these will satisfie me, that the small affair is so clear'd as will need no more trouble; I already so much repeated the charge of the thing's, the manner of giving Mr Procter the money on acct that I need no further enlarge than that Im alwise ready to return ye trouble ye was please'd to accept of in ye matter, where possible & Im
Dr Sir your very humble sertt Hugh Ross

PS As Mr Procter is directed to advance some money for necessary's to be sent p berer, I hope you'l not be the [illegible word - loss?] HR

8. 26/6/1747

[Outside] To Mr Keneth Williamson writter Edr

⁷ Probably Robert Procter: "Seal Cutter and Lapidary near the Palace of Holyrood House, first close within the Strand, north side of the street. Cuts stones of all sorts for Watch Cases, Snuff Boxes, Rings and Ear-rings, Coat, Vest, and Sleeve Buttons, according to his employers' fancies. Daily customers served pretty quickly by his having plenty of hands at work and a good collection always by him ready to cut." Caledonian Mercury, 22nd August 1749.

Tain 26 June 1747

Sir

I received your's by Jno Ross & I'm sorry you'd have any reason of charging me in troubling you so much, when I sent you these boxes 1st I meant no further trouble than that ye might show them to Mr Gordon or any oyr who might fancie them so as to dispose of em directly, or return them directly, oyrwise not to take the trouble of them at all, which I wish ye did, I very litle thought when sending them to you, that there value wou'd come out so lingering & dissatisfieing ane acct. However D.S. as a clearing any further trouble lyes in your hand, I hope this will be the last necessary on the head's; I'm much surpriz'd you'd propose giving Mr Gordon to me in way of debit for on of ye boxes, since ye so frankly declared in your 1st letr how freindly ye woud procure me money for them, your acct ye have one the tail of this, and also a leter to Mr Gordon since ye insisted for it. Both the boxes very equally valueable believe me, & if ye send me both, or any one of em, in a tolerable condition (tho used) I'll accept of them willingly, tho indeed I hade litle exspectation of such proposals when sent them to you. I still continue to offer you many thanks for your trouble about them & hopes this will conclude, & Im wth my service

Sir your very humble sertt Hugh Ross

P.S. I thought I informed you already how I might have 18sh 6pen Ster here for each of the boxes, but my ordinary price being a geanie I hope Mr Gordon will not scruple to it, so my acct for them is two geanies, of which, I grant you 2 or 3 shills deduction in ye ane ye say ye lost, I received your charge for ye thing's ye bought for me which according to your own letr is termed twixt six & seven shills. Now I earnestly beg this be the last trouble HR

9. 1747

[Outside] To Mr Keneth Williamson writter Edr

Dr Sir

As I sent by the last occasion your acct which ye so much wanted, I thought to have a more effectuall return. Jonston told me ye indifferently answered him, that you'd draw on a certain on in this country to pay me, but as this may readily give but more needless trouble to both of us I earnestly entrait, ye rather pay the money to Jonston in presence of my ffreind Andrew Munro, whom I hope do'th take ye trouble to speak to you, as I suspected the lake of right application in my former messages. I still am
Sir your most humble sertt Hugh Ross

Tain 30th 1747 [sic]

10. 2/1/1748

[Outside] To Mr Keneth Williamson writter att Edinburgh

Sir

I hitherto exercise all patience in the unexpected useage ye give me in my payment of those fortfortunate snuff box needless herein to exsplain, & according to your disire have already sent you frequent doubles of my acct & what ye gave, but I hope that neither the lake of good principles or will more as of generosity is the cause why ye so much neglect doing me satisfaction, I this once more do put you in remembrance, humbly beging ye either advance to ye berer, or give draught on any good person here for the small sum, what I received according to your own letr is twixt 6 & 7 shills. My whole demand, & ordinary price for each of those boxes, in the time & fashion I sent them to you, was a geanie, so of two geanies take you return to your ca advance, as also any reasonable deminution ye please, I put my self in your will & I'm with my hearty wishes of all success & prosperity to you in the new year

Sir your ffreind & servant Hugh Ross

Tain Jany 2d 1748

11. 2/11/1748

Account John Ross pewtherer in Tain, to Hugh Ross silver smith there Dr

Nov 1739	To cash advanced in your absence to your mother's [illegible word – funderalls?]	£4/10/0
Decembr	To cash lent you payable per bill Whitsunday 1740	£2/2/0
Sept 1740	To cash advance'd to Mr John Henderson Offr of Excise, for you	£0/7/0
November	To cash given you then in borrowing	£1/7/6
Ditto	To cash given to Inverchassly on your acct	£0/6/6
Ditto	To cash lent you	£0/5/0
Janry 1741	To cash lent you, which ye promised to return in a few day's & a just recompence for the use of it till paid	£5/0/0
Febry	To cash given you at different times in small's	£0/3/4
	To 25lbs old tin	£0/12/6
Decembr 1747	To cash lent you	£0/4/0
Ditto	To 25lbs tin ye sold of mine in made work	£0/16/8
		p sum <u>£15/14/0</u>

To interest of £2/2 for eight years & half £0/17/0

To interest on £5/0 for eight years leat two months
£1/19/0

£2/16/0

Whole £18/10/0

Mr Keneth Williamson
Sir

Tain Novr 2d 1748

You please charge the above John Ross pewther in Tain, befor the Lords of Session at Edinr either in your own name or mine as ye think most proper. Tho I choice that ye give the charge, & obtain decreet in your name, since I hereby together with my letr sent you of this date, impower you to the same, & will send you in course of post all necessary voutchers to constitute the above articles of acct, so I hope you'l not fail to use all necessary means to obtain decreet as above⁸
Hugh Ross

To Mr Keneth Williamson, writter Edinr

12. 1740s (corner of page crumpled), possibly related to letter of 2/11/1748

[Outside] To Mr Keneth Williamson writter Edinr pr a ffreind

Tain..... 174..

Sir

Some time ago I received from my ffreind Andrew Munro the snuff box ye thought was lost also your draught on John Ross for 10sh 6d. I have not recd the contents yet, but will satisfie you when I get the money, I'm only afraid the other box will go out of Mr Gordon's mind, `ere he pay, & therefor I beg ye take care it does not, I'm vext ye hade any trouble about them at all, & tho they came out as they did, I alwise observed your good will.

Inclos'd I give you ane acct due me by a ffreind of my own, who notwithstanding that I advance'd the whole contents in the most duty full manner possible in way of ffreindship he in a very unaccountable manner [illegible word – shuffles?] me out of payt & notwithstanding all the endeavours I make to get clear'd in `e easiest way for him I find all

⁸ This may be the "afair lying by" that he refers to in his letter of 7/3/1754 to Lady Pitcalnie.

so much in vain, that I must use proper means to force him, & to such design I find it by much more effectually to give him a charge before the Lord's to Edr. Then any other way hereabouts, he's none other than my own brother⁹, & I leave it to my friend Coll. Ross (the design'd bearer hereof) to explain you any other circumstances necessary for you to know, it being superfluous to enlarge here that way. Now, on several accounts I would chuse the charge in any other name to be given him, particularly as a [illegible word] distant person's threatenings, will every way have more effect, & that you would be so good as to put all in your own name, I would take it a singular instance of friendship not to be forgotten, [illegible word – abstract?] from a just return to your trouble & to help you to fair in the properest manner (that I know you'd proceed in) you'll please in your own best ordered way, to charge him in your own name, & to write to the person you'd judge properest here to give him the charge, that I made assignation of the above account to you to the purpose of making the contents good, & consequently you're to have him before the Lord's to know his opposition, because ye was resolved to place the decree you'd obtain, in ye hands of Mr Alexr Ross Sheriff Clerk to force immediate payment, by all necessary diligence, this being well managed will inevitably frighten him in at once to do me justice, without any further trouble & as the most proper season is just now in the very nick of it's time, you'll unexpressibly oblige me in your friendship & diligence in the above, in course of post. For the £5 article I have no bill, but his verbal assurance of a sufficient recompence for its use, along with the sum to be paid next week, so by his promise he's bound to the ordinary interest, after the article of the interest I add an ample order to you as to the account, which I suppose is sufficient enough mandate. So relying on your friendship & expedition I am
Dear Sir your afft & ready servantt Hugh Ross

13. 2/12/1748

[Outside] Mr Kenneth Williamson writer Edinr

Dear Sir

I wrote you a letter sometime ago inclosed in another to my friend Colline Ross, with a certain account inclosed, my importunity for an expeditious answer, & the [illegible word – longsumness?] in the same, makes me suspicious, the letter came not to your hand, but if it came to your hand, I earnestly beg the favour, ye let me know in course how far I can depend on you, either by returning me the letter & account, or otherwise by informing me of your resolutions about it. Whatever is necessary to enforce, & regulate your proceeding in the manner I demanded, will be sent you as ye inform me. I offer you my kind respects, & I'm
Dear Sir your afft friend & obedient servt Hugh Ross

Tain Decr 2d 1748

P.S. May relay your trouble will be very heartily recompenced Hugh Ross

14. 22/12/1749

[Outside] To Mr Kenneth Williamson writer Edinr

Tain 22d Decr 1749

Sir

⁹ If this letter relates to the previous one, it could mean that John Ross pewterer was Hugh Ross II's brother, in which case he could be the John Ross who was dealing with Hugh Ross I's affairs in 1733. However, in the first line of the account HR refers to "your mother", which he surely would not do if the men had the same mother. This is a problem for the following reasons. Their father could have been widowed and remarried, in which case Margaret Manson, the mother of his children baptised in the 1720s, would have been the second wife, as both John and Hugh Ross would have to have been born earlier than this. As the person dealing with his father's business after his death, John was presumably the oldest son, therefore Hugh would be a son of Margaret Manson born before the start of the parish register in 1719, and John the son of an unknown first wife. However, John's mother was still alive in 1739 so this cannot be the case. Hugh would therefore have to be older and a son of the unknown first wife. He could have been away at the time of his father's death in 1731, perhaps serving an apprenticeship elsewhere.

I hope you'l not fail in doing all possible asistance, to put Mr Hm Gordon in remembrance of the snuff box, since that was his only stope[?] from paying me when last in this country, of which I wrote you lately, the berer has a letr for Mr Hm Gordon, & on your moving the thing to his remembrance, paytt will immediatly ansr to the berer, who is to send me some comissions depending on the same.

I have not seen John Ross since I wrote you, I told you in my last how he pay'd me a part at last meeting, of your 1st geanie, when he pay's the rest, your money will be sent you & Im

Dr Sir your very humble sertt Hugh Ross

15. n/d, possibly related to letter of 22/12/1749

[Outside] To The honoured Mr Charles Hamilton Gordon of Hallcraig advocate Edinr

Hond Sir

The indose'd two lettrs are sent to put you in remembrance of a letter I sent you to Invergordon when last in the country, anent the payment of a snuff box you bought of me by the hands of Keneth Williamson; bothe the inclosed's, with Mr Williamson's presence will soon satisfie you in all & as I'm clearing some money to Mr Procter seall cutter, I depend on the price of the box you received, for so much, being a guenie, it will be about 5 years since due, I am with all due respect's

Honrd Sir your obedtt & very humble servant Hugh Ross

NB Mr Gorry's¹⁰ inclosed letr was ane ansr you desire'd him give to mine sent you of that date HR

16. 13/7/1751

[Outside] To Mr Keneth Willam writter in Edinr

Dr Sir

After saluting you with my kind respect's, I entreat the favour you do all possible to procure to the berer the guenie due by Mr Ha Gordon for the long ago known snuff box, I already sent to the care of Mr Robert Procter seall cutter the letr, & I hade avoutching all for Mr Gordon's satisfaction &c, & now I hope the afair won't miss of answering as I hope its disagreeable to Mr Gordon to hinder the small matter any further & with my complymts I am in haste

Dr Sir your most afft sertt Hugh Ross

Tain 13 Jully 1751

¹⁰ John Gorry was factor of the Invergordon estate.