

MONTROSE BEFORE 1700

by

W. A. McNEILL, M.A.

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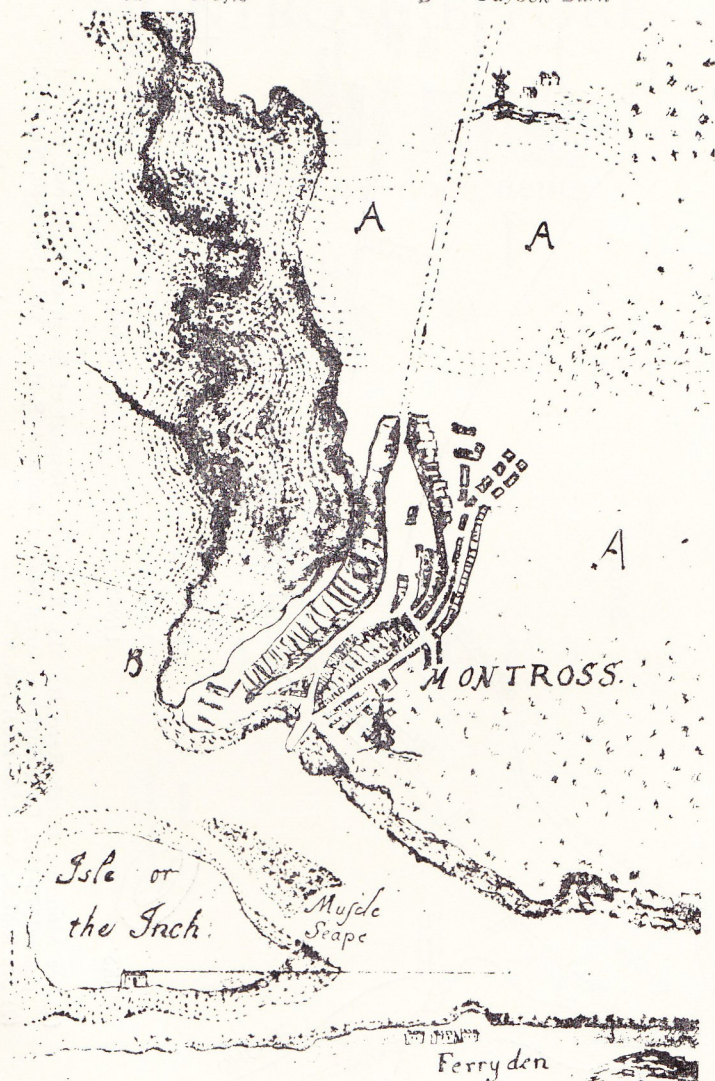
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A — Crofts

B — Tayock Burn



MONTROSE ABOUT 1740
(From a map by Daniel Paterson)

- (1) See Montrose Burgh Records: MS. Rental of Hospital of Burgh of Montrose; n.d. but post-1570-1571. Cf. Register of Great Seal of Scotland [R.M.S.], Vol. 1546-1580, No. 1953.
(2) See R.M.S., Vol. 1546-1583, No. 455.
xxxx = "sufficientes fossae annuatum constructae . . . ad occidentalem et borealem partes ita quod grava super partem de Clayhauch (Clayshed) crescentia essent animalibus illis . . ."

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from original documents

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EDITORIAL FOREWORD

This is an experiment in the presentation of local history. It is neither a consecutive account of the history of Montrose before 1700, nor a mere transcript of original documents. On the other hand what Mr McNeill has written is based almost wholly on his reading and interpretation of the municipal papers of Montrose, and it is a pleasure to record his gratitude to both the present Town Clerk and his predecessor in that office for the facilities and advice they provided.

Encouraged by the reception given to its earlier publications on Arbroath and Perth, the Abertay Historical Society again displays its interest in themes geographically outside the immediate vicinity of Dundee. Is it too much to hope that this may stimulate other students to follow Mr McNeill's example and explore the archives of other ancient and famous burghs?

MONTROSE BEFORE 1700

In the following pages a brief attempt is made to draw from the surviving burgh records some of the remarkable and—in some instances—nationally significant features of life in old Montrose, i.e. from early in the fourteenth century to the beginning of the eighteenth.

A somewhat haphazard and uneven treatment has been imposed on the essay by the disparate character of the manuscripts available and by the wish to survey as wide a variety of topics as possible. Hence, for example, the historically valuable Treasurers' Accounts and the Council Minutes, of which there are many, receive much the same consideration as letters, of which there are relatively few. Whilst this treatment may be academically questionable, it was felt that no other could convey at once a notion of the kind of material likely to be available in other burghs and a hint of the possibilities in it for the local historian.

As a preliminary it would seem desirable to set the scene by sketching in the topography of the town. No satisfactory early original map or plan of old Montrose is known to exist, but the data for a representation are at hand from contemporary sources. The landmarks of the burgh have altered very little in the course of the years and ancient outlines might still serve as the anatomy of the modern town. Though a more exact definition of detail must await a complete investigation of the Protocol Books (now in H.M. Register House) the attempted reconstruction of the plan of the town in Plate II, based on sixteenth century evidences,¹ should suffice tolerably well for the bulk of the period here reviewed. Similarly Plate I² will give an impression of the town in its immediate topographical setting at the end of our period, for though it is believed to date from about 1740 its features closely resemble those on John Adair's *Town and Water of Montross* of 1693 (or perhaps later).³

¹. Particularly MS Hospital Rental, n.d. but post Jan. 1570-1; *Register of the Great Seal of Scotland*, 1546-80, Nos 455, 1953 and 2754.

². British Museum, K.Top. XLIX.20. Reproduced here by kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

³. British Museum, K.Top. XLIX, 19.

THE DISPUTED CHARTER

It has long been claimed and almost as long disputed that the precedence of Montrose among Scottish burghs derived from a charter of David I. In support of the claim, or of some privilege arising from it, the evidents of the town have been seldom at home and travelled¹ hither and yon until the earliest of them disappeared in a legal process before the Court of Session in 1775. However the claim for the authenticity of a David I charter seems well grounded. Professor Croft-Dickinson in his recent *Early Records of the Burgh of Aberdeen* (1957) gives substantial support to it of a kind most gratifying to Montrosians. The claim had been earlier urged in an interesting correspondence² which passed (1844-46) between Cosmo Innes, that pioneer of Scottish constitutional history, and James Burnes, the erudite and doughty defender of the antiquity of the town of which he had been Town Clerk and was to be a Provost of renown. This is an excursus on the issue too lengthy for substantial reproduction, but the essential drift of the interchange of views may be illustrated by some brief quotations.

On the 2nd of July, 1844, Cosmo Innes, as successor to the unfortunate Thomas Thomson, then engaged in editing Volume I of the *Acts of the Parliament of Scotland*, wrote somewhat pompously to Burnes, "I have seen it mentioned somewhere that Montrose has a charter from David I which I presume is a mistake . . . Would you have the goodness to give me a note of your earliest and (if it is as far back as William the Lion) to give me a copy." The tone and the challenge not unnaturally evoked from Burnes an immediate and circumstantial riposte in which two details are of particular relevance:—

1. the offer of the office transcript of the David II and Robert II Charters of 1352 and 1384-1385 respectively which engross confirmatorily the alleged Charter of David I, Burnes injecting into an otherwise dignified and

1 Notably in 1600 when her charters were submitted unsuccessfully to the Lords of the Scottish Exchequer in support of a claim to pay the Burgh mails in Scots currency instead of Sterling.

2 Burgh of Montrose MSS.

courteous epistle a trace of irony, observing modestly and subtly that Cosmo Innes "accustomed to documents like the Montrose Charter passing under his notice would be much more able to appreciate the internal evidence" than a mere amateur and continuing (sweetly?)—"I am delighted to make this remark from the observation in your note—that it was a mistake that Montrose held a Charter of David I"; and

2. further, he says innocently, "If you remain sceptical on this point I trust I shall be able to convince you that the burgesses of Montrose were claiming privileges secundum tenorum cartarum suarum in 1287 which was 42 years prior to the accession of David II so that the first Charter being from a David must have been from David I."

On the 4th of July Cosmo Innes replied, not \holly chastened but willing to concede that the Charter was "remarkable" despite the improbabilities of which the following may be considered: that the grant was to the burgesses and that the allocation of 4| ploughgates was unusually large. On the first point modern research would give little support to Cosmo Innes as Professor Croft-Dickinson makes perfectly clear when he writes: "The wording of the Charters (i.e. very early Scottish Charters) is always to a burgh already erected"¹ and consequently "my burgesses" is common form. The 41 ploughgates is regarded by Professor Croft Dickinson as exceptional, but there is no insuperable difficulty in accepting it as valid since the "links" and "muir" of Montrose, appearing as they do in rental after rental or other writings from early times, seem always to have been part of the commonty of Montrose and would extend to something in excess of 400 acres.

It is not surprising that Cosmo Innes, sleuthlike, should have pounced on the difficulties of some of the witnesses to the pretended founding Charter, and it must be admitted that Burnes makes heavy weather with them. He is ingenious and unconvincing and altogether protests too much. On the other hand, in respect of "terra de Salorka". part of the territorial definition, the challenger is on unfamiliar ground and out of his depth in the "aqua de Thawoke". James Burnes, warming to the work, gleefully (one suspects) goes to town on these two, explaining conclusively, with a wealth of reference to Boece, Buchanan, and Johnston that Salork, the Celurca of the Montrosians Andrew and James Melville, was but an ancient name

¹ Early Records of Aberdeen, xxxviii.

for Montrose.¹ "Aqua de Thawoke", the Tayock burn, still visible at low water meandering across the Basin, Burnes sought to persuade Innes to accept as the "Portus de Strom-nay". Happily failure to identify this *terra incognita* does not invalidate the case of Burnes nor greatly impugn a claim to the antiquity of the burgh.

As the correspondence proceeds the stiffness of Cosmo Innes' tone yields to one more friendly and modest. "I look," he now writes, "on the ancient charter as most curious in the constitutional view and you will understand how anxious I am .for your elucidations or argument in support of it when I say that though probably founded on a real genuine charter it appears to me to have been so cobbled in its successive copyings that I must not put it forth in my prolegomena to the Acts of Parliament as a genuine charter of David I, but if you can devote some leisure to the support of the charter of David I, I shall be greatly indebted to you and the public will, I hope, benefit." Since 1844 much work on the Scottish burgh has been done, e.g. by W. Mackay-Mackenzie, Professors J. D. Mackie and Pryde and recently again by Professor Croft-Dickinson who may, in this matter of burghal foundations, have the last word. "The settlement," he writes, "becomes a burgh by a definite legal 'act' of the king conferring that status upon it, probably at first by oral grant, later by charter of confirmation."² This may indeed be the explanation of the "doubtful" David I charter of Montrose, so long controverted.

It must, however, be noted that the charter bears the delimitation of a trade precinct, and that also has rendered it suspect to burghal *cognoseienti* since this kind of ascription is unusual in charters before the reign of William the Lion. One important feature, particularly relevant to the historians of Angus, is that the southern limit of this precinct was the Dichty, and this assignation became the source of the long continued rivalry and friction between Dundee and Montrose, comparable indeed to that between Dundee and Perth over the control of the Tay. Many efforts were made to compose the difference. The decret (1584) by arbiter appointed by Parliament gives a measure of official support to the precedency claim of Montrose, for it confirms the freedoms and bounds of Montrose as laid down—be it noted—in the charters of David

1 Cf. Epitaphium de Joan. Duraei Pastoris Integerrimi et Fidissimi Celurcani by Andrew Melville, quoted in *Autobiography and Diary of James Melville*, Ed. R. Pitcairn for Wodrow Society, Edinburgh (1842), pp. 542-543.

² *Early Records of Aberdeen*, loc. cit.

"the sone of qweyne Margaret of Scotland and confirmit by Kyng Daid the secunde and Robert the secunde".

And as we leave this vexed question of precedence it may be of interest to note that Montrose also featured prominently in the closing days of old Scottish burghal government. It was the "vote by ballot election in 1816 in Montrose" which precipitated the flood of petitions, commissions, inquisitions and reports, and with them, between 1816 and 1835, the old system was abolished and modern municipal democracy was ushered in.

THE BURGH'S RECORDS

Important as the foundation charter of a burgh may be to the student of municipal constitutions and for the prestige of the municipality, it is the growth, character and daily life which signify most to the occasional enquirer. For the satisfaction of that curiosity one must, in the case of Montrose, look beyond the charters to that wealth of miscellaneous documentary material which, happily, still survives, mainly in the town's archives.² Unfortunately most of this local material is not earlier than the fifteenth century and for an early sidelight we should have to go to the Exchequer Rolls in which the first Montrosian notice is for 1328, the year of the treaty of Northampton. Freely translated it runs:

"Account of William sone of Anabilla bailie of the burgh (i.e. submitted in the Exchequer) ii June (1328) of the issues for the period of this account. First he charges himself with £6 ll/- by the issue of the burgh . . . and of 15/11 from the tenth penny for this term and of 15/11 from the contribution ordered for the peace (i.e. the tax to pay the indemnity stipulated by the treaty of Northampton). The total of these receipts is £8.2.10 of which there is payment to the Prior of Restennet of 13/- as second teinds. And since the chamberlain charges himself with 15/11 of Expenses he owes £6.13.11" (E.R. I. 85-86).

1 Session Papers, Vol. 316 (1817), Second Division, Petition and Complaint, John Barclay, etc.

2 Especially the Montrose Burgh Court Books, 1455-67, 1586-87, 1603-6, 1686-94, 1696-1700, and the Protocol Books from 1574 (in H.M. Register House).

The following year the account for the burgh mails [annual payments] was rendered (again at Scone) by David Scot, a name recurrent in Montrose documents over centuries. Here there are certain items of local interest:

1. the receipts are from the *prepositi* of the town
2. One sum £11.0.23d¹ is allowed to remain in the hands of the accountant for construction of the mill of Montrose. an edifice (we learn from the same source) still unbuilt in 1331.

A whole volume might well be founded on the material in these Rolls. Here it must suffice to call attention to the word *prepositi*. Etymologically it should be rendered "provosts", but functionally the *prepositus* until 1359 was a fiscal officer of the burgh and not the chief magistrate as we know him. Thus Montrose is for once conformist, and reflects the constitutional pattern of the country. The references to the mill touch on a more domestic and vital matter, for multures from all burghal tenants, thirled to the town mill or mills, constituted one of the principal sources of revenue and may therefore have led a progressive Montrose to substitute in 1588 wind for water as a motive power.

The domestic records are of course the chief fount of information about the personalia and memorabilia. It may, therefore be not inappropriate to switch from the Exchequer Rolls to the "Eques" which constitute one kind of nexus between central and local governments. The name Eques, derived from the validating phrase of the document, is simply an Exchequer receipt for the burgh mails or feu-duty fixed by a founding charter.² They are very stereotyped documents seldom departing in phrase and form the one from the other. Montrose has a relatively continuous run of these from the end of the sixteenth century to the close of the eighteenth, and they contain much authentic material, genealogical, fiscal and the rest. A typical example is reproduced as Appendix A on page 20.

The Council Minutes afford perhaps the fullest insight into the Montrose of the past, but there is nothing earlier than the seventeenth century and until very recently it was thought that 1639 marked the date of the earliest surviving record.

¹ Actually "xj li xxiiij d. ob. ct q." See E.R. I, 158)

² Instead of sending the Chamberlain round to collect his dues from the burghs, the convenient practice of demanding an annual fixed sum developed from the beginning of the 14th century, the earliest example Aberdeen 1319. Dundee came into line in 1365 and Montrose in 1375.

Then, by good fortune, there emerged from the most unexpected quarter, not only the complete record of Council Minutes, from October 2, 1617, to September 18, 1634, a thing exciting enough, but also, as bonus, a variety of documents or fragments of papers and parchment, the earliest dating from 1447.¹ These contain lists of provosts and members of parliament, filling gaps in other records and give for good measure a record of the Head Court between about 1458 and 1476, disclosing the existence of a guild and the rare use of the title "alderman". We learn of the admission from 1447 of 137 burgesses on payment of the fee of 5/- and haphazardly, as it would seem, simply by "agreement with the provost". Of the buildings in the town at this time we discover that there was a church with altars dedicated to St Mary and St Peter to each of which the Laird of Laureston had to pay two pounds of wax for redemption of some unspecified transgression. The school, always a conspicuous building in Montrose, is twice mentioned, and, of course, the Tolbooth, as ever in need of repair. Sidelights are cast on the economic life of the town. Thus fragments of the Treasurer's Account of 1470 show that Walter (*I* Walter Richard) would not burden himself with a charge of 8/4 for "a bait of mussilt" due by John Anderson, of 3/- due by David Wrycht and a like sum by Andro Wilson for similar "baits". One would assume that the mussel beds were part of the common good of the town. In a port trade and talk of trade were ever-present. There is a record of a hearing by the Bailie Court in 1461 of a case concerning a cargo of hides and the relevant charter party. It seems to have continued, inconclusively and probably irregularly, before an assize of ten burgesses down to 1463 when the record ends. "The law's delays" was no empty phrase in the fifteenth century!

Occasionally we find a cuckoo in the nest, distinctive and rare enough to repay the trouble in deciphering the crabbed hand that disfigures a batch of letters sent from Lisbon, Copenhagen and Bergen by a burgess of Dundee, John Well-wood. These were to enlist the support of the provost of Dundee and the sheriff-depute of Angus against Wellwood's alleged fraudulent co-partners in a ship of Dundee. How this essentially Dundonian correspondence came to repose in Montrose is a matter for speculation. The same is true of the following letter from one Margaret Fullertoun to her anonymous brother. Unlike Wellwood's, this is in a really lovely script, which, though faded to a soft sepia, compensates for

¹ In the Montrose burgh records.

the tortured syntax. Here it is, direct from the heart, or should one say the shoulder?

Loweing Brother my heartlie commendationes remembered into yowrselſ yowr bedfellow and yowr beirnes I have wreit in thir few lynes vnto yow by my housbands knowlege Letting yow to vnder-stand that I mairuel of yowr Ingratitud and vnthankfulnes Towards my housband and me in assuering and perswading ws of ane horss for payement and we trusting that in yowr worst Yit ye wold schaw ws for kyndnes That for a little more moneyis ye wald sell him to an vther the laird of Craige which dewetie iff it hade bein sworne into ws we wald not haue beleived it to be done be yow Yet we perceiue the Contrair Theirfor brother I must earneslie Intreat yow as ye wald that my housband and I sould be ane kynd freind vnto yow and yowrs We desyre yow to schaw ws that kyndnes In movinge the Laird of Craig to give yow that horss againe for I hop if the Laird knew that we sould have that horss first his maistris wil not refuse bot wil giue him againe and brother as for litl mor moneyis that ye got fra him I could have in schorl space recompensed it albeit It hade bein that hail sowne, I pray yow brother obey this my reququyst as I salbe ready to do the lyk for in treuth my housband is somquhat angrie with you that he sould have receiued such kyndnes from a brother of myn not forder bot commits yow and yowrs to god and rests

Yowr loving sister

Margarit fullartoun

Brechin

6 July 1638

The letter of 3 October 1608 from the Earl of Mar who was then provost of the town is distinguished neither for calligraphy nor orthography and despite the advantage he should have derived from the tuition of the great George Buchanan, was defective in composition as well. It is in the true Erskine tradition of which Mar's cousin writes elsewhere¹ to Mar "pray remember my service to your sone my Lord Erskyn. If I culd reid his letter he suld have an answer. I thank God one of the name wrets noe better then my selfe."

It is addressed to "my luffing freindis the Bailleis and Counsall of the hurt of Monnrose" and proceeds "before I ressaute yowr Ire frome the berar I wreit to yow that ye micht be acquainted wt my hamecuming whiche Ire I think will be careit to yow before now. Tuitching the electioun of yowr magistrates becaus I maye not convenientlie be with you against yowr ordinarie daye [i.e. Michaelmas]. Nather is it werrie requisite that I suld be thair swa ye maye beir with my absence And I wiss yow To proceid in yowr accustomed manner And to mak choice of sic honest and discreit men that in yowr

¹ See Hist. MSS. Commission Supplementary Report — *MSS. Mar and Kellie*, pp. 67-68.

Judgmentis ar meitest to execut and discharge that office without ony respect hot Justice and equitie iff thair be ony vther thing which belongethe me to do wpone adwerteisment ye sail find me reddie sua I leaff you to godis protectioun ffrome Sterling this 3 off October 1608

Yowr werrie luffing

freind and prowest

J. Mar"

The blank portion of the letter has been used to record the voting itself, but this loses value because some of the names are indecipherable and a corner has been torn off. Mainly of value to the specialist student of burghal administration, it is not without general human interest. The salutations are of course merely formal but the absence of the names of those who in 1599 resisted the election of Mar as provost may just betoken a measure of cordiality between Mar and his council.

FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

It is a moot question whether the Council Minutes or Treasurers' Accounts of Montrose constitute the more vivid record of her past. In bulk the Minutes have it, but the accounts, though less continuous, cover a longer period and come closer down to earth.¹ And what do we see?

At the end of the sixteenth century the total gross income from all sources might amount in a good year to about £900: in the 1680's £1400 would not be far out and at the end of the 17th century it could fluctuate between £2300 and £2600. The years between 1639 and 1660 with their upheavals; economic and social distress; the plague (1648); the crushing burdens of war taxations—maintenance, assessment and excise—must be disregarded in any estimation of normal conditions and tendencies. It was, on the surface, a seemingly healthy state of affairs. But an official Report of 1691² must stay over-hasty judgment. "The town," so runs this doleful document, "is superexpended and in debt to our thesaurars as will appear by ther accompts to some 100 lib starling a year and to some 200 pound starline." But one suspects from this and the

¹ An extract is reproduced in Appendix B p. 22).

² Printed in *Records of the Convention of Royal Burghs*, 1677-1711, pp. 596-599.

general tenor of the Report that the magistrates and clerk, though on oath, were determined to present to the "visitors" the image of the town in the worst possible light. At any rate an attempted reconstruction of the finances reveals a less critical state of affairs. Taking the annual indebtedness at the figure of the Report—£2750, the difference on the wrong side would be £343 for 1685, £138 for 1686, £337 for 1687, £449 for 1688 and £459 in 1689 or something between c.£29 - c.£38 sterling p.a. In 1600-1601 the figure of the loss was £108 and in 1601-1602 £209, Scots, and these sums must be divided by 12 to give the sterling equivalent. On the other hand there were throughout the 1620's small credit balances averaging annually c.£66¹ for the decade. But despite this I think we must accept the general view of the "visitors" of 1691 that all was not financially well in the burgh.

The greater part of the deficit accrued from the mounting charges at 5%² on an increasing public debt which had attained by 1691 to the sizable figure of £15,280:13:0, and this despite a steady, if unspectacular, growth in ordinary income. Would it be wrong to cite this as an example of "deficit finance" by which the unpleasant consequences of falling into debt are nominally and virtuously disguised and by which the town could, in another phrase, "rest awand" in substantial sums (Scots) to a long line of 17th century Treasurers¹ without apparent impoverishment of the victims? It may be, however, that there were compensating factors—on the principle of the "roundabouts and swings". At any rate in the office of Treasurer Scots, Beatties, Taylors, Rennys, Renny-Tailyours, Christies *et al* figure in the records through the years ("Betes" from the fifteenth century) as men of increasing substance, the burghal elite in fashion not dissimilar to the Scrimgeours, Youngs, Finlaysons, Wedderburnes, Kyds and Clayhills of Dundee.

However different in origin, development and otherwise the old unreformed Scottish burghs may have been, from each other, they shared these features—a monstrous burden of debt and a dilapidated common good. Montrose was no exception.

¹ Exceptionally we have to note, 25 Feb., 1625—"the quhilk day Rot. Keith thesaurer comptis mertimes — and witsonday 162[?] yeris hard sein and allowit be the counsell abunewrettin and his charge beand fund to extend to £694: 2:0 and the discharge to extend to £675:14:0 the computer Restis awand to the towne 22Li 8s [!] as the futt of the siidis...[Rot] with his awand hand himself proporis" [MSS. Council Minutes, 1617-1634: Montrose Burgh Records.]

² cf. p. 23. Rate of interest on Rokate's loan is c. 5¼% per "terme".

BURGH ADMINISTRATION

Perhaps the most valuable service these accounts can render us is to cast a direct light on the day to day administration of the town. Inevitably it must be a composite picture, incidental snapshots of stray bits and pieces put together in a pattern, but nevertheless authentic and significant.

A thing that strikes even the casual examiner of the accounts of this time is the frequency with which business was transacted in "public" houses—John Wilson's, Thomas Smith's, John Miller's Will Murray's, John Neil's, and, at least on one occasion, Elspeth Lowrie's—to "take wine" for "mornings" and "afternoones". The distribution of the custom was apparently catholic, but inexplicable, but mostly resort was made to John Wilson's.

These items from the Treasurers' Accounts may offer some idea of the kind of business¹ transacted and the sum spent in refreshment an indication of its importance, or of the social standing of some visitor whom the 'good town' might seek to honour.

There is for a first example "that day the sheriff Boner was in John Wilson's"—five marks six shillings and eight pence (£3/13/4). At the "sichting (i.e. inspection) of the muir in John Wilson's 30s." Again £9 8/- was expended by the "auld belyes". Was it a thanksgiving or the "greetin' Meeting"? An odd expenditure of £3/3/4 reads simply "vith the Heland man at the bailyeis command": and 4/- was paid by the order of bailie Erskine "for putting certane Heland men across the vater", reason not stated but one may detect here a very natural Montrosian reluctance to entertain for long visitors from beyond the Mounth. There is the revealing entry "to James Windram and his man and the rest of the company for vyne," £7 10/-. James was an important man, Clerk to the Convention of Royal Burghs, and therefore a man to be cultivated, to be entertained with wine not beer, for he could confer favours and withhold them, even though the burghs paid his salary.

When really notable people were 'banketted', as was, for instance the Chancellor of Scotland, John, Earl of Montrose, when the Privy Council met in Montrose to oversee that General Assembly which made the first tentative restoration

1 e.g. the "trying" of ale and bread to see that they were up to standard: the "visiting" (inspection) of grazings and burgh property, like the windmill, on the links. (See p. 23)

of the estate of Bishops, the Provost, Bailies, and Councillors no doubt felt that something extraordinary was called for, and "fowr boustis (boxes) of scrotschettis and comfeittis" costing 40/- were bought. Similar junketing marked a visit of Provost, the Earl of Mar.

In contrast to the large sum spent at a rousing of the shepherd's house an outlay of 3/4 at one "resaitt (collection of multures) of the vind miln" would seem disproportionately small, for, after all, the windmill was a source of great revenue; but perhaps 3/4 is not the whole story. More particularly one might wonder at the disbursement of £5 5/- for "ane barrrell of beir" at "the ryding of the merchis of the toun." This is one of the few references to beer in the Treasurers' Accounts.¹ Another may sound more odd-to-day than in 1600. It notes that £5 was spent in providing "ane barrrell of beir for the ministeris", presumably those attending the General Assembly² in Montrose. But what would a barrel of beer be among so many ministers?

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

A burgh in the position and of the standing of Montrose must in greater or smaller measure reflect in its day to day activities the happenings of that outside world of which it forms a part. We find that the local manifestation of national events was sometimes surprising and clarifying. Thus the stern and protracted struggle between James VI and the Melvillian Kirk is high-lighted in the detail which the proceedings of the-Montrose General Assembly disclose.³ Again the constant efforts of almost all seventeenth century governments to mould the burgh councils to their will is reflected in a succession of documents of which the Mar letter of 1608, already quoted, is the first, and that from Chancellor, the Earl of Perth, on 13 November, 1688, requiring the election of "loyal magistrates" is the desperate last in Stuart times.

¹ There are plenty of references to beer in other records of the town—to beer, English beer, Dutch beer and Danish beer with conditions of sale and the fixed prices of each, reflecting the sumptuary laws of the time.

² This is the Assembly at which Andrew Melville, threatened by the King, "putt his hand on his craig and said 'Take you this head and cutt it aff if you will and you sail sooner get it than I sail betray the caus of Christ.'"

³ See *Autobiography and Diary of James Melville*, pp. 537, 542-3.

During 'the troubles' 1638-1660, the shifts of fortune are manifest in the archives of the town. The sufferings of the torn and. tormented nation speak eloquently from the papers bearing the signatures, and sometimes seals, of outstanding persons of the times—Argyll, Montrose, Rothes, London, Bglintoun, Henderson, Oliver St John, Sir Harry Vane, General Richard Deane and "George Monck. In the "Instructiones" to the burgh we can read between the lines (so to say) of the first, fierce, revolutionary fervour of the Committee of the Estates which in very fact struck the sceptre from the hand of Charles and ruled in his stead; of the peremptory demand for the sinews of war from lieges whose zeal for the Covenant did not always extend to their money-bags; of the careful local organisation of the insurrection,¹ which, incidentally, involved Montrose in an enforced and unwonted collaboration with Dundee. The ill-starred interlude of 1650-51, revolving round Charles II, 'the Covenanted king' is to be traced in a document, variously dated as it passed from authority to authority—first "at Perth, the last of March 1651", then 1 May (presumably at Edinburgh) and finally "at Stirling 3 off June 1651". Here the pathetic efforts of the fugitive government to maintain a semblance of actuality can clearly be seen. The document itself is an exercise in 'passing the buck'—a petition from the Burgh of Montrose to the King (Charles II) and the Estates of Parliament begging some relief from the parlous state in which it found itself. From "the king in Parliament" it was sent to the "Committee of Moneyis" with the dubious, equivocal recommendation to allow the petitioners all the favours and ease . . . which has been granted to any other town which has borne the lyke burthen". "The Committee of the Monyes recommends to Sir James Murray and George Garner (officials of the committee) to sie the Instructiones of the within writtin supplica-tione and to report." The recommendation is signed by the clerk, William Purves, later Sir William Purves of Woodhous-lee and author (1681) of the *Revenew of the Scottish Crown*.

So far as the Royal government of Scotland goes, that is the end of the matter unless the letter 15 July 1651 "Att the

¹ In the Montrose MSS. a circular letter covering the "Instructiones" is significant in this direction where it says: —

"... we earnestlie Intreat and doe certainlie expect the effectis of yor dilligence in all thir particulars . . . and at the expyryng of everie ane of the dyettis prescryvit be thir Instructiones we will expect ane exact accompt of yor travellis and dilligence for trewly we wilbe . . . resolut to caus execut the last certifat of the Instructiones vpon such as shalbe fund remiss . . ."

Leaguer Larber Bridge" signed by Sir Archibald Primrose, Clerk to the Privy Council, is the fruit of this recommendation. This exempts the town from supplying its contingent for the garrison of Burntisland since Montrose is "dispeopled with plague and pest", troubled with "transient" quarters and threatened with landing from enemy ships. But exactly a year later the inhabitants of Montrose, tried beyond endurance—oppressed by permanent as well as "transient quarterings", their corn and other provisions "eaten uppe and destroyed", compelled to pay 'cess' above the normal 'maintenance', their "shippes" taken at sea, without trade or the means to support their families "much lesse beare their burthens", humbly petition for relief the "Commissioners of the parliament of England for ordering the affaires of Scotland" which had. 27 February 1652, taken into its "protection" (they having accepted incorporation) Edinburgh, Dundee, Brechin. Forfar, Arbroath, Crail, Perth, Banff and Montrose.¹ It does not matter which colour of government is in power the departmental technique remains the same. On this occasion the committee tossed the ball to General Deane, commanding in chief, with, of course, "recommendations". General Dearie's officialese response is interesting and partly explains how it was that the Commonwealth and the Protectorate managed to wring so much more from Scotland than did their predecessors and successors. It deserves quotation:

"I have reduced the burgh of Montrose to the lowest proportion agreeable to that other townes beare that is to the Surme of thirty-pounds sterling per mensem², and whereas I formerly ordered them to pay 30' 15^s I have ordered the Collector to abate them 15^s."

Dated at Dundie this 5th of Marche 1651."

When in 1658 the town again went on its knees to General Monck with the like petition, brought up to date, it had the same dusty answer.

¹ Order signed by the Committee viz. Richard Deane, Oliver St John, George Fenwick, Robert Tichborne, Richard Salwav and Sir Harry Vane. Three other papers relative to this Committee survive: —

1. 24 February 1652. The preliminaries to the acceptance of protection.

2. 8 September 1652. Regulations for election of officers under the new regime leading to

3. The Modell and forme of government craved by the tradesmen of the brogh of Montrose.

² i.e. c. £4200 (Scots) per annum, viz., a sum equivalent to about *four* times the gross revenue of the earlier part of the 17th century and approaching *twice* that of the last years of the century.

It will be clear that Montrose is notably rich in miscellaneous mementos of the 'troubles' all of which have something to contribute to an understanding of that unhappy time. Two further examples may be quoted for their grim reminder of another side of the story. The first is an order, 24 December, 1650, by the Committee of Parliament for military affairs for quartering on Montrose soldiers of the regiments of Colonel Andrew Lesly and of Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Melville "sore wounded and plundered" at the Battle of Dunbar. That of 5 February 1651 is concerned with the payment of Montrose's quota of the sum due for clothing "the naked souldoures in the garrisons of Stirling". Stark commentary on the unquiet times.

Echoes of post-Restoration events among the nondescript papers are much fewer and less dramatic. Even the Council minutes and similar records tend to confine themselves to domestic routine matters. The north-east of Scotland was not violently opposed to the government: the trouble spots lay rather in the south-west. The east went on with its daily business, little disturbed, at least for the rest of the century. The expulsion of James VII is represented by a small number of papers. There is, for example, an order, 24 August 1689, directed to the magistrates of the town by General Hugh Mackay to receive 12 rebel prisoners, probably from Dunkeld where the newly raised Cameronians three days before had routed the Highland Host. Of the dissolution of Mar's Jacobite army in 1716 and the nocturnal departure from Montrose of the Old Pretender for France on the night of February 3-4 there survives little evidence, but much more remains relative to the closing stages of the "Forty-Five" when Montrose was again unpleasantly involved successively to supply the creature needs of Jacobite and Hanoverian armies *en route*, to their *rendezvous* at Culloden.

APPENDIX A

EQUE: BURGH OF MONTROSE – 1604 / 4 pp. Quarto

[Endorsed]

Equ of the Burgh of Montrose 1604

[f.li.]	Computum Balliuorum burgi de mont
Montros	rois redditum apud Perth per Willielmum Barclay
	Thesaurer dicti burgi nomine eorundum vigesimo quinto die
	mensis Julij anno domini millesimo sexcentesimo
	quarto De Omnibus receptis suis et expensis
	sis Julij anni sexcentesimo quartij usque in diem hujus
	computi Et sic de duobus terminis infra hoc computum
[Charge]	1. Item Onerat se de j ^{ct} lx ^{li} nonete
	per commutationem Sedecim librarum sterlingorum
	contente in infeofamento dicti burgi Ex asse
	ditione domini regis facta euisddoem in feodo
	ab antique de terminis computij
	Summa hujus oneris Patet
[Discharge]	2. De quibus allocator computanti in
	triginita sextem libris sex solidis octo denariis
	de dictis firmis solutone Roberto Arnot Receptorij
	deputato ipso testante super computum
Respondet	xxxvij ^{li} vj ^s viij ^d proqua summa Receptor Respondet
Muray	Et eidem in duodecim libris quinque solidis
Receptor pro	quatuor denariis annuatim solution Episcopo brechenensis
xxxvij ^{li} vj ^s viij ^d	ab antique dicti episcopo ab antique pro se
	cundis decimis debitum ut constat
	auditoribus scaccarij super computum – xij ^{li} vj ^s iiij ^d
[f.lb.]	Summa harum Expensarum
	Jct Ixli et sic Equ
	Eq..... Eq.....

A. Knowis1

P. Innes2

[f.2a.]	{	Debursit in cheker [i.e. Exchequer]	
[Audit office		To the Comptroller ³	xxxvij ^{li} vj ^s viij ^d
Fees]		To the Clerk of the Equ	Liij ^s iiij ^d
		To the Blak Buik ⁴	xx ^s
		To the isher	vj ^s viij ^d
		To the wtheris ⁵	Xl ^d
			P. Innes

-
1. Notary and an important Exchequer official “Dictator of the Rolls” (of Exchequer)
 2. “Seritour” to clerk of Register, sir John Skene, clerk of the Exchequer, in charge of Burgh Customs and Bullion rolls.
 3. Until c. 1611 shared with the Treasurer the main management of fiscal business.
 4. Probably a constant standing charge.
 5. Subordinate officials like the door-keeper.

The following is a free rendering of the Latin part of the Eque—

The Eque of the burgh of Montrose — 1604

Montrose	The account of the burgh of Montrose rendered at Perth by William Barclay, treasurer of that burgh in their name on the 25 July, 1604 concerning all receipts and expenses relating to the burgh mails (i.e. the annual rent due to the Crown by charter) from 8 July, 1603 to the date of the current audit, i.e. for two terms— (Martinmas and Whitsunday.)
[Charge]	1. The accountant charges himself (over the terms of he account) with £160 (Scots), that is equivalent 1 to £16 sterling as provided for in the infeftment of the said burgh in feu-farm, contracted of old between the king and the community.
[Discharge]	2. From this sum the accountant is allowed £37/6/8 in payment to Robert Arnot, Receiver-Depute who acknowledges it in the account and is responsible for it: and £37/6/8 for which ¹ the Receiver is responsible.
Murray Receiver acknowledges responsibility for £37/6/8	An annual allowance of £12/6/4 by ancient provision is made to the Bishop of Breehin in name of second teinds as is agreed by the Auditors of the Exchequer.
	Total of these Expenses £160 and so it balances

¹ By the beginning of the seventeenth century the rate of exchange between the Scottish currency and sterling was officially £1, sterling for £10, Scots.

APPENDIX B BURGH OF MONTROSE — 1600-1601

CHARGE: TREASURER'S ACCOUNT — 1600-1601

[CHARGE] The thesawrer compt of the hurt of Montrois maid be William harde thea^f thereof be uertu of his Intro missione with the common guid of the said burt betwix Mertimes j^m vj^c and Witsounday j^m vj^m and ane bayth standand rentall and accidentis Charge and discharge thereof in the yeir foirsaid

Imprimis the said thesaurer chairgis him selff with the standand rentall of the said burl for the termes foirsaid according to the particular rentall quhilk extendis to

Item he chairgis himselff with the small custumes of the said burt for the termes foirsaid

Item the coust ? siluer

Item the schip¹ girs²

The Wyhous

Item Mr David Boner fridome siluer

Item Joⁿ carnegis Rot hog Daud milleris fridome³ siluer³

Item for tho findlaw flescher fridome³

Item for thomas grill tailyour his fridome³

Item for thomas Alex^r merchand his fridome³

Item fra Wm kay cordener for his fridome³

Item fra Mr thomas McBryde for his fridome³

Item fra george crawmond for his fridome³

Item from Ja m^ckein

j^{ct} v¹ iij^s vjd 1pt^d

vij^{xx} xij¹
Lix¹ vj^s viij^d
viij^{li} vj^s 8^d
xxiiij^{li} vj^s 8^d
vj¹ xiiij^s 4^d
xx^{li}

v^{li}

5 mks

xx^{li}

vj^{li} 13^s 4^d

x^{li}

xx^{li}

x^{li}

Summa iijj^{ct} L^{li} xvj^s vj^d j^{obl.*}

Swa the charge and discharge being considerit by them the cownter is fund superexpendit ane hunder and sewin poundis xvj^s jjd awande be the towne to him

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | Sheep | } the grazing on the links |
| 2 | Grass | |
| 3 | Fee paid for admission as burgess | |

* Sum should be £450 16s 10d and a fraction of a penny.

BURGH OF MONTROSE — 1600-1601

PART OF DISCHARGE TREASURER'S ACCOUNT — 1600-1601

(1 page)

Item to allexr duroww for spredding ballast vpon the schoir	ij ^s
Item in rhomas smythys hous at the bailyeis command	x ^s
Item that day j resautit the rental In lames guthries	x ^s
Item that day the aill and bread Var tryit at the bailyeis command in my hous spendit	Lvij ^s
Item delyuerit at the bailyeis & counsaillis command to James Guthrie the soum off	J ^{ct} vj mks borovit fra robt rokate
Item for the proffeit thereof four termes	xyj libs
Item to Mr Richart andersone at the bailyeis command	v mks vj ^s viij ^d
Item the last day of marche that yeir for bread to communione	xxiiij ^s
Item for Vyne therto that day	vj libs
Item for xvijj bollis lyme to the kirk	vij ^{li} xvij ^s iij ^d
Item for leiding theroff to the cartaris	vj ^s
Item to the man that brocht the commissiione of the burrovis1	v ^s
Item delyuerit to Patrik grahame for Mr Villiam hutones pension	x libs
Item that day the shreffe James bonar Vas In Johne Vulsonis and at bayth the bailyeis command	v mks and vj ^s viij ^d
Item delyuerit In Johne grayis houss at the bailyeis command that day the Linkis Var Visitit	vj libs ij ^s viij ^d
Item to the man that brocht the commissiione to the checker2 at the bailyeis command	v ^s
Item delyuerit to andro batye bailye for suspensiione	iiij libs y ^s
Item delyuerit to Daudid durye sclatar in arlis	vjs viij ^d
Item delyuerit for thre hundreth sclaitis	iiij libs
Item to the kartaris for Loading theroff	iiij libs x ^s
Item to ane boye that playit on the sweche	v ^s at the muire
Item that day the chancelair3 vas in robert lichtonis for sweit meits (sic)	iiij ^{libs} vj ^s viij ^d

Summa lateris j^{ct} xlj^{libs} vij^s iij^d *

-
1. Precept to attend the Convention of Burghs.
 2. Precept to appear at the Exchequer audit.
 3. The Earl of Montrose. The Council met in Montrose for the General Assembly meetings in March.

* Sum should be £149 5s 8d.

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