

Biographies

The Pont family: a detailed report by Diane Baptie

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PART 1

RESIDENCES OF THE PONT FAMILY

Culross Abbey and Shiresmill

By the 16th century, most of the monastic houses were held by Commendators who began alienating lands belonging to them. In a charter of confirmation of 1538, William, Commendator of Culross, stated that money was needed for various purposes, such as ‘the repair of the Monastery, houses for the monks, for relief from the hands of creditors, and especially for their part of the composition of the great tax imposed on the prelates of the Scottish Church by the Apostolic See’.¹

In 1545, William, Commendator, and John, Abbot of the monastery of Culross, feued out the lands of Blairhall and Patis Poffilis to Cuthbert Blacader and his wife, Marion Boyd. Again this charter records the Abbey’s need of money for the maintenance of their buildings and the relief from ‘divers creditors’.²

Cuthbert Blacader’s heir, Adam Blacader, later was to marry Helen Pont, one of the daughters of a neighbour, Mr Robert Pont of Shiresmill. In May 1540, a precept of sasine by William, Commendator of Culross, directed their baillie to infest Mr Edward Bruce in the lands of Bargady and half of the Shiresmill ‘with half the houses, biggings, tofts and crofts of the same and the multures, knaveship and sucken’.³ Then, in August, sasine was given of a third part of Shiresmill with houses, buildings, orchards and yards together with the multures to David Kynpount, eldest son of the deceased Robert Kynpount,⁴ and then, in September, Mr Edward Bruce was seised in the lands of Bargady and two parts of Shiresmill.⁵ So, it would appear that the Kynpounts or Ponts, as they later called themselves, acquired their share of the mill soon after the Commendator had taken steps to alleviate the abbey’s financial difficulties. David Kynpount died without issue and on 29 May 1550 his brother, Mr Robert Kynpount, as his heir, was given sasine of the property, although the liferent of their mother, Katherine Masterton, was reserved.⁶ In a ‘Rentall of the haille benefices of the Abbaye of Culross in all things alsweil of fermes as of mailes annellis teinds and all uitheris dewiteis quhilk the said abbay and plaice and hes bene in possessioun of in the yeris bigane Maid the xxiii day of Januer in the year of god 1561’

‘Maister Robert Pont payis for the third of Shyris mylne iiii lib iii sh iiii d’, and (in the margin) ‘10 pultrie’.⁷

The Reverend Blacader in his Memoirs states that Mr Robert Pont’s parents were John Pont of Shiresmill and Catherine Murray, daughter of the laird of Tullibardine.⁸ Later printed accounts of the family also state this, presumably having used the Memoirs as their source. However, the documents referred to above show this to be incorrect. His parents were Robert Pont and Katherine Masterton.

It is interesting to note that in a Bond made in 1511 by Mr James Stewart, postulate of Culross, to George Crichton of Brotherton who had paid for a bull of provision, one of the monks at the abbey who witnessed the document was a John Punt.⁹ A John Kynpont witnessed a tack granted by the Commendator in May 1525, a charter in February 1540, and another tack in June 1541.¹⁰ He also witnessed the precept of sasine made in name of Mr Edward Bruce in June of that year and the sasine which followed in September. When Cuthbert Blacader received his feu charter in 1545, a John Kynpont was one of the witnesses¹¹ and in January 1546 John Kynpont again witnessed a charter.¹²

When David Kynpont was given sasine in June 1540, two chaplains were witnesses, one of whom was Sir David Kynpont, and in 1550, when Mr Robert Kynpont inherited his brother's third of the mill, one of the witnesses to the sasine was a James Kynpont.

It would therefore appear that the Kynpont or Pont family produced at least two monks and a chaplain of the Abbey.

In 1584, Mr Robert Pont handed over his portion of Shiresmill to his elder son and apparent heir, Mr Zachary Pont, a charter being granted to him by Alexander, perpetual Commendator of Culross, and its chapter. On this occasion, Adam Masterton of Grange and Mr James Pont, Commissary Clerk of Dunblane, were witnesses.¹³

On 20 June 1589, a charter records that the whole property of the Abbacy of Culross had been erected into a temporal lordship and had been gifted by James VI to Sir James Colville of East Wemyss (nephew of Alexander, Commendator of Culross (1567-87)) in recompense for his having served him during his infancy.¹⁴

Mr Zachary Pont and his wife, Margaret Knox, continued to own the third of Shiresmill until June 1602, when they borrowed 6,000 merks from Mr George Tod and his wife, Margaret Porterfield, and at the same time alienated the property to them.¹⁵ They never redeemed the wadset. In a rental of the Abbey dated 1630, the third of Shiresmill is recorded as being possessed by Tod.¹⁶

Shiresmill today

The mill at Shiresmill and any houses which would have existed at the time the Pont family lived there have obviously long disappeared. On the modern Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 map (Sheet 65), Shires Mill is on the B9037 road and consists of a farm house, barn, and a clutch of small fairly modern cottages which straddle the road. The Bluther Burn runs under the road just as you reach Shiresmill. On the right-hand side, a path leads down to what must once have been the mill pond. On the opposite side of pond, an embankment has been built up and the earth flattened. This must be where the mill once stood. Finally, in the wall of a pair of cottages on the other side of the road, an old mill stone has been embedded, proving that there was once a mill there.

Neighbours at Shiresmill

The Blacaders of Blairhall

Just before Shiresmill, the crow-stepped gables of the farm house of Blairhall can be seen. In the rental of the Abbey of Culross in 1561, Cuthbert Blacader is recorded as paying £5/16/- and 6 poultry for his feu of Blairhall.¹⁷

When the marriage contract was drawn up between his heir, Adam Blacader, and Helen Pont, daughter of Mr Robert Pont, at Shiresmill on the 17 October 1575, it had been arranged that Adam Blacader would apply for a new infeftment to made to him and Helen, his future spouse, of the lands of Blairhall and a tenement in the town of Culross and that infeftment was to be given to Mr Robert Pont and his heirs. Marion Boyd, widow of Cuthbert Blacader, was also persuaded to resign her liferent of half the properties.¹⁸ (The Rev John Blacader in his Memoirs states correctly that Adam Blacader was the son of Cuthbert Blacader and Marion Boyd.) The terms of the contract indicate that Adam Blacader was in debt and Mr Robert Pont appears to have bailed him out. In 1582, Mr Robert Pont paid him 3,500 merks out of the sale of Blairhall which he, Mr Pont, had sold to Robert Bruce of Easter Kennet.¹⁹ In the rental of Abbey lands in 1630, the owner of Blairhall is recorded as Robert Bruce.²⁰ The tenement, house and yard in Culross was sold in 1583 by Adam Blacader to Mr Mathew Gaw and his wife.²¹

The Mastertons of Easter Grange

Easter Grange lies less than a mile to the north of Shiresmill. It was part of the property of Grange which was divided into Wester, Middle and Easter Grange. Wester and Middle Grange were occupied by others in the rental of 1561, while Easter Grange was in the hands of Adam Masterton. In the 1630 rental, it was still owned by the family, along with a pendicle of Dively (Devilla). In 1575, when the marriage contract was drawn up between Adam Blacader and Helen Pont, Adam Masterton of Easter Grange was a witness. He also witnessed the sasine to Mr Zachary Pont in 1584 and to a bond made by him and his wife in 1592.²² By 1594, his son, John Masterton, had inherited the property and the family appear to have continued there throughout the 17th century.²³

Property in St Andrews

In 1566, the choristers of the parish kirk of St Andrews gave up a rental along with evidents of property in St Andrews to the Provost, baillies and council.

On the north side of the North Gait was ‘Sanct Annes chapell now Mr Robert Pont(’s) land lyand betwix Mr Jhon Broun at the west and Mawis Robertson at the e(a)st’.²⁴

The inclusion of ‘now’ indicates that Mr Robert Pont must have acquired the property fairly recently. The date of 1566 is of particular significance as his son, Timothy Pont, was almost certainly born either in 1565 or 1566.

On 10 October 1586, Mr Robert Pont and his son and apparent heir, Mr Zachary Pont, disposed of a tenement of the chapel or chaplainry of St Ann and a yard on the North Gait of St Andrews, as well as a piece of land which Mr Robert Pont had acquired from John Brownhill, mason in the burgh. The purchaser was Patrick Monypenny of Pilrig.²⁵

Residences of the family of Mr Robert Pont

Mr Robert Pont inherited Shiresmill in 1550 and it is probable that he and his wife spent the early years of their marriage there. On 17 October 1575, the marriage contract of their daughter Helen and Adam Blacader of Blairhall was drawn up at Shiresmill. As has already been shown, the Blacader property was just down the road from Shiresmill and so this explains how the young couple got to know each other.

In 1559, Mr Robert Pont was in St Andrews and was present at the General Assembly of 20 December 1560, 'as one of twenty within the bounds of St Andrews declared to be qualified for ministering and teaching'.²⁶ He was then briefly preacher at Dunblane in 1562, being transferred to Dunkeld at the end of that year. In 1563, he was appointed commissioner of Moray, Inverness and Banff. Then, in 1571, he was appointed Provost of Trinity College near Edinburgh and remained in the burgh until his death in 1606.

His settlement at Dunkeld does not appear to have been for long and there then follows a period in his life, until his appointment to Trinity College in 1571, where he appears to have led an itinerant existence. It is unlikely that he would have taken his family with him, as he journeyed about the county, but it has proved difficult to ascertain exactly where they could have been based. The fact that his daughter Helen's marriage contract was drawn up at Shiresmill in 1575 perhaps suggests that they may have been living at Shiresmill until the move to Edinburgh, but there was also the property in the North Gait of St Andrews which Mr Robert Pont had acquired before 1566.

Mr Robert Pont was first Provost of Trinity College, near Edinburgh, where no doubt a residence was provided for him. When he became minister of St Cuthbert's, in Edinburgh, there was apparently no manse and he applied to the General Assembly for one to be built, but at a meeting in Dundee in October 1593, he was told that they could not afford one and so he agreed to pay for one to be built himself which would belong to him and his heirs, until redeemed by the heritors.²⁷ He also owned a property on Edinburgh's Castlehill.²⁸

THE PONT FAMILY

Robert Pont (deceased by 1540) married Katherine Masterton
They had:

(i) David (Kyn)pont who was seised in the third of Shiresmill on 18 August 1540.²⁹ He died without issue.

(ii) Mr Robert (Kyn)pont, born in 1524,³⁰ who was heir to his brother, David, in May 1550.³¹

(iii) Mr James Pont, educated at St Leonard's College, St Andrews, 1551-4.³² At the General Assembly in 1562, he was appointed to Melrose 'to minister the word and sacraments till next Assembly'.³³ By 1568, he was Commissary of Dunblane.³⁴ In June 1595, he was appointed Commissioner to look into the dilapidation of benefices in Stirlingshire, Strathearn, and parts of the west and south.³⁵ He married Abigail Strang and died on 25 July 1602. He left no issue, his brother, Mr Robert Pont, being served heir to him on 8 September of that year.³⁶

(iv) Jonet Pont married Andrew Rowane of Barnhill.³⁷ They had a son, John Rowane, tailor in Edinburgh, described as 'sister sone' of Mr Robert Pont.³⁸

Mr Robert Pont and his family

Mr Robert Pont's life is well documented in printed sources. The main events in his life were:

c.1524 born at or near Culross

1544 matriculated, St Leonard's College, St Andrews

February 1559 and June 1562 recorded as an elder of the parish of St Andrews

July 1562 appointed preacher at Dunblane

December 1562 removed to Dunkeld

June 1563 Commissioner of Moray, Inverness and Banff, a position which he held until March 1574

1567 presented to the parish of Birnie in Moray

June 1571 appointed Provost of Trinity College

January 1571/2 made a Lord of Session

1573 received a pension out of the thirds of Moray

1574 became minister of the second charge of St Cuthbert's, Edinburgh

1578 appointed minister of the first charge, following death of William Harlaw, minister there

1584 fled to England

1585 resigned as provost of Trinity College

1590 to 1601 Commissioner of Orkney

1602 relieved of his teaching 'in respect of his great age, long travels in the kirk and continual sickness'

8th May 1606 died aged 81

He married two or three times. In the Notes in Wodrow's *Collections upon the Lives of the Reformers*, the source for the name of Mr Robert Pont's first wife is given as Blacader's Memoirs who says she was the daughter of the Laird of Grange. However, the charter of 1550 to Mr Robert Pont records that Katherine Masterton was his mother. It is, of course, possible that Mr Robert Pont married his cousin, also called Katherine, and that the Rev John Blacader is correct in that respect, but not in the case of generation before that.

By his first wife, Mr Robert Pont had:

(i) Mr Zacharias/Zachary Pont, elder son and heir.³⁹ He was educated at St Leonard's College, St Andrews, graduating c.1583. On 1 May 1584 he was granted a feu charter of his father's third part of Shiresmill.⁴⁰ On 28 October 1590, he was given a licence to exercise the office of chief 'imprentare' to print all kinds of books 'set furth in ony kynde of toung or language not forbiddin be the statutis and lawis of his maiesteis realme'.⁴¹ He married, pre June 1591, Margaret Knox, one of the three daughters of John Knox by his second wife, Margaret Stewart, daughter of Lord Ochiltree.⁴² Deeds executed by him and his wife indicate that they got into debt and in June 1602 were forced to alienate the third part of Shiresmill to Mr George Tod, writer, and his wife, Margaret Porterfield.⁴³ In June 1603, they lent 1,300 merks to Andrew, Lord Ochiltree, and in December he repaid Margaret Knox, Mr Zachary Pont, being absent.⁴⁴ Zachary was probably in Caithness, for sometime between 1599 and 1601 he was appointed to fill the vacant living at Bower.⁴⁵ In an action which he brought before the Lords of Session in 1605, he claimed to be also minister of Kirkwall and Walls, although the Register of Assignations and Modifications of Stipends does not bear this out.⁴⁶ On 2 September 1608, he was nominated as Archdeacon of Caithness.⁴⁷ In June 1609, Robert Monteith of Egilshaw in Orkney had to find caution not the harm Mr Zachary Pont, minister of Bower in Caithness, his men tenants and servants.⁴⁸ He died before 20 January 1619.⁴⁹

They had at least 3 children:

(a) Robert Pont who was left 100 merks by his great-uncle, Mr James Pont, Commissary of Dunblane.⁵⁰

(b) Samuel Pont baptised 26 October 1609 at Prestonpans.⁵¹

(c) James Pont married Amelia Grier, daughter of Robert Grier of Troughmoire in Ireland, son of Robert Grier(son) of Lag

They had:

Josias Pont.⁵²

Mr Zachary Pont and Margaret Knox may also have had daughters:

(d) Jean Pont, first wife of Mr Robert Murray, minister of Balmaclellan, married in Canongate kirk on 16 July 1625.⁵³

(e) Katherine Pont married John Bonar, merchant, burghess of Edinburgh. She died 11 May 1642.⁵⁴

They had:⁵⁵

- (1) Margaret Bonar baptised 21 March 1634
- (2) Catherine Bonar baptised 4 May 1636
- (3) John Bonar baptised 27 July 1637
- (4) James Bonar baptised 12 October 1638
- (5) Robert Bonar baptised November 1639
- (6) William Bonar baptised 17 January 1641
- (3) Andrew Bonar baptised 16 March 1642

(ii) Mr Timothy Pont - see below.

(iii) Helen Pont, possibly the eldest child. She married Adam Blacader of Blairhall, son of the deceased Cuthbert Blacader of Blairhall and Marion Boyd.⁵⁶ Their marriage contract was dated 17 October 1575.⁵⁷ From them descended the Rev John Blacader, author of the Memoirs.

(iv) Margaret Pont. In the Records of Trinity Hospital, there is an undated and unsigned charter of the five merklands of Hill in the barony of Balano (Balerno) to William Wardlaw, son and heir of Alexander Wardlaw of Riccarton and Margaret Pont, his future spouse.⁵⁸ The charter before it is dated 1578 and the one after 1579 and it would appear that the marriage had been arranged to take place round about that time. However, in July 1580, Alexander Wardlaw of Riccarton and William Wardlaw, his son and heir, borrowed 400 merks and £5 Scots from Mr Robert Pont, the bond arranging for repayment to be made to Mr Robert Pont and his daughter Margaret by Martinmas.⁵⁹ This indicates that the marriage did not actually take place. She married Alexander Borthwick of Nether Learnie (Leny) instead, being recorded as his wife in May 1585,⁶⁰ and at a later date, Mr Zachary Pont and his son Robert had a bond drawn up at Nether Leny which was witnessed by Alexander Borthwick and Mr Alexander Borthwick, his son.⁶¹ Alexander Borthwick also stood as surety to Mr Timothy Pont when he applied for land in Ulster in 1609.⁶²

(It is interesting to note that the Rev John Blacader's mother, Barbara Strang, was the daughter of Mr William Strang, minister of Irvine, and Agnes Borthwick, daughter of George Borthwick of Leny.)

(v) Catherine Pont, who married Patrick Dunbar, prebendary of the Chapel Royal at Stirling. They had a son, Mr Patrick.⁶³ Patrick Dunbar is recorded as prebendary of the Chapel Royal in 1591/2.⁶⁴ In Sir James Balfour's collection 'Church Affaires from the yeire of God 1610 to the yeire 1625' - Information anent the first and present estate of K.M Chapell Royall - 'The person of Balmaklellan hes only 50 marks: Patrick Dumbar, titular, attends and is skilful'.⁶⁵ She and her sister were granted a heritable bond of provision by their father of an annualrent of 40 merks out of the property he had disposed to their mother in liferent. They were infeft on 4 December 1592.⁶⁶

(vi) Beatrix Pont who was the first wife of Mr Charles Lumsden, minister of Duddingston, burgh of Edinburgh. They had twins, Robert⁶⁷ and James, baptised 28 March 1599, and Rachel, baptised 8 August 1602.⁶⁸

Mr Robert Pont made an antenuptial agreement with his future spouse, Sara Denholm on 1 July 1587, whereby he disposed a tenement he owned in the Castlehill to her in liferent. It is uncertain whether the marriage actually took place, for in 1592, he provided an income for this two youngest daughters, Catherine and Beatrix, out of that tenement, reserving his own liferent. No mention was made of Sara Denholm.⁶⁹

He married secondly or thirdly to Margaret Smyth, by whom he had:

(vii) James Pont baptised 18 May 1595.⁷⁰ In November 1629, he was served nearest heir to the deceased Mr James Pont, Commissary Clerk of Dunblane, being described as his nephew (brother son) in an annualrent out of the lands of Alloway (Alloa) called Galberston and in another out of the lands of Calder's Quarter.⁷¹ In March 1630, having been repaid, he renounced the former, the clerk erroneously calling him brother and heir of the deceased Mr James Pont.⁷² He must be James Pont made a burgh and guild brother of Edinburgh on 5 June 1633 by right of his wife Jonet, daughter of the deceased William Lowsoune, 'chirurgiane'.⁷³ There is an 1893 copy of heraldic work *c.*1633 by James Pont, son of Robert Pont, the reformer, in the National Library.⁷⁴

They were married on 30 November 1626 and had:⁷⁵

(a) 23 September 1627 - James Pont merchant & Jonet Lowsoune a s(son) n(amed) Robert, w(itnesses) Robert Monteith, James Schaw, John Marjoribanks

(b) 24 February 1630 - James Pont merchant & Jonet Lasoun a s(son) named James - James Schaw of Broch, James Stevinsone, Johnne Smyth Painter, Thomas Lasoun, James Mooreheid

(c) 1 November 1632 - James Pont merchant & Jonet Lowsoune a s(son) named William w(itnesses) William Couper, Mr James Ainslie, James Stevinsone and Johnne Douglass

(viii) Robert Pont (born post May 1595 and before 1598)

(ix) Jonathan Pont (born post 1598). He was witness to the baptism of Andrew Bonar, son of John Bonar and Katherine Pont.⁷⁶

On the 12 February 1598, James VI had granted a pension of 300 merks to Mr Robert Pont

‘haiffing consideratioun of the greit charges laiboure and trubellis takin’ by him ‘in the nort(h) pairtes of his hienes realme’. It was to have been uplifted out of the teinds of the bishopric of Orkney and he was also given 100 merks out of the salmon fishing of the ‘cobillis of Spey’. (Mr Robert Pont was already in receipt of the latter, following the death of George, Bishop of Moray.) After his death, the 300 merks was to be divided between his sons James and Robert for their schooling for 7 years and to ‘mak thame able for the ministrie during thair lifetyme’. In December 1602, this was affirmed and Jonathan’s name added.⁷⁷ In 1615, James and Robert Ponts brought an action in the Court of Session against James, Bishop of Orkney, because they had never received the proceeds of the gift, since their father’s death in 1606. As James was only 10 at the time, it is obvious that someone else was behind the actual action. The outcome was that James, Bishop of Orkney, was able to prove that through the Act of Parliament made in 1606, involving the restitution of bishoprics and their livings, all dispositions and privileges granted by the King in the Act of Annexation had become null and void.⁷⁸

Mr Robert Pont died on 8 May 1606. He had made a will, as his wife, Margaret Smyth, is recorded as his executor testamentar, when she produced an inventory of his goods and gear before the Commissary Clerk of Edinburgh on 5 September 1610.⁷⁹ She appears to have had trouble drawing it up, partly because she had to bring an action in the Commissary Court on 27 July 1610 against Alexander Fairlie of Braid over the tack of the small teinds - ‘lamb, wool, teind stirk, staig, guis, qoys buttir, cheis’ - which her husband had been granted by Alexander Wilson, servitor to the King, and which had been appropriated by Alexander Fairlie for part of 1607.⁸⁰ In July 1614, she brought another against Alexander Wilson over her right to the vicarage teinds of St Cuthbert’s.⁸¹ In the same year, she was at least successful in obtaining payment from the Town Council of Edinburgh of the small teinds due to her husband which he had claimed following his demission of the provostry of Trinity College.⁸²

Sources

1. *Culross Abbey and its Charters* - William Douglas, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries (PSAS)* vol. 60, p.76 - translation of RMS 1513-46, no. 1923
2. *PSAS*, vol. 41, p. 326
3. RH6/1238 - Calendar of Charters (NAS)
4. RH6/1247 - ‘primogenito quo(n)d(am) Rob(er)ti Kynpount’
5. RH6/1249
6. RH6/1488 - ‘reservando... Katrine Maist(er)toun m(a)tri sui liberum tenementum’
7. Adv Ms 31.3.12 (NLS)
8. WOD QU xcvi (NLS) - ‘qui Robertus fuit filius Johannis Pont de Shyresmill legitime inter ipsum Johannem & Cathrinam Moraviam filiam Domini Tullibardi procreatus’
9. GD124/9/6 - Mar and Kellie Muniments (NAS)
10. *Calendar of the Laing Charters AD 854 - 1837*, ed. J Anderson, nos. 350, 442 and 456
11. *PSAS*, vol. 41, p.326
12. *Calendar of the Laing Charters*, no. 507
13. RH6/12/2724
14. *PSAS*, vol. 60, p.87 - he quotes RMS 1580 - 91, no.1675
15. RD1/85, f.6 - Register of Deeds of the Court of Session, first series (NAS)
16. Adv MS 31.3.13
17. Adv Ms 31.3.12
18. CS7/60, f.302 - Acts and Decrees of the Court of Session (NAS)
19. RD1/202/2 - last March 1582

20. Adv Ms 31.3.13
21. GD16/24/160 - Airlie Muniments (NAS)
22. RD1/84, f.26
23. *Index to Dunblane Commissary Court* - Scottish Record Society
24. B65/22, no.355 - Calendar of St Andrews Charters (NAS)
25. RD1/26, f.271
26. *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* - Hew Scott, vol. 1, p.93
27. *The Early Days of St Cuthbert's Church, Edinburgh* - George Lorimer, p. 24ff
28. B22/1/33, f.35 - Edinburgh Burgh Sasines (NAS)
29. RH6/1247
30. *De Scriptoribus Scotis* - David Buchanan, p.128 - records Inscription in St Cuthbert's churchyard
31. RH6/1488
32. *Early Records of the University of St Andrews*, ed. James Maitland Anderson, pp.151;152 and 255
33. *Collections upon the lives of the Reformers and most eminent members of the Church of Scotland* - Rev Robert Wodrow, ed. William J Duncan, vol. 1 - Notes p. 504ff
34. B66/1/5 - Protocol book of Robert Ramsay - 6 February 1568 (Microfilm in NAS) - note: *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* states that he only held office from 11 July 1598
35. *Collections upon the lives of the Reformers...*, vol. 1, notes p.504ff
36. C22/2 - Retours (NAS)
37. RH6/11/2548 - Index to Calendar of Charters (NAS)
38. SL1/12 - 2 June 1609 - Edinburgh Town Council Minutes (Edinburgh City Archives)
39. RD1/26, f.271
40. RH6/12/2724
41. PS1/61, f.63 - Register of the Privy Seal (NAS)
42. *John Knox's Descendants* - Ralph Stewart - The Scottish Genealogist, March 1995
43. RD1/88, f.627
44. RD1/105, f.120 - note: this was not a gift from Lord Ochiltree as claimed by Ralph Stewart in 'John Knox's and his Descendants'; RD1/107, f.267
45. E47/8 - Register of Assignations and Modifications of Stipends (1599 and 1600) (NAS)
46. CS7/211, f.244; E47/8 and /9
47. CH4/1/4 - 2 September 1608
48. CS295/5 - 22 June 1606 - Cautions in Lawburrows of the Court of Session (NAS)
49. *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, vol. 7, p.113
50. CC8/8/39 - 25 June 1604 - Edinburgh Commissary Court Testaments (NAS)
51. Prestonpans OPR
52. GD220/6/2035/12 - copy of birth brieve, 1662 - Montrose Muniments (NAS)
53. Canongate OPR
54. CC8/8/60 - 29 April 1643
55. GD194/ Box 8 - Bonar Papers
56. WODR QU xcvi
57. CS7/60, f.302
58. SL152/8,f.96 - Records of Trinity Hospital (Edinburgh City Archives)
59. RD1/19 - 21 July 1581
60. RD1/23, f.331
61. RD1/208, f.262 - made 5 May 1612
62. *RPC* viii, p.330
63. Moses, bundle 2, no. 80 - 11 July 1622 - (Edinburgh City Archives)
64. *RPC* iv, p.709

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57. CS7/60, f.302
58. SL152/8,f.96 - Records of Trinity Hospital (Edinburgh City Archives)
59. RD1/19 - 21 July 1581
60. RD1/23, f.331
61. RD1/208, f.262 - made 5 May 1612
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63. Moses, bundle 2, no. 80 - 11 July 1622 - (Edinburgh City Archives)
64. *RPC* iv, p.709
65. *History of the Chapel Royal of Scotland* - Rev Charles Rogers. He quotes Adv Ms 33.3.12
66. B22/1/36, f.84
67. CC8/8/55 - Testament of Charles Lumsden, 4 June 1631
68. *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, vol. 1, p.18 - source given 'Edin Counc Bapt'
69. B22/1/33 f.35
70. Edinburgh OPR
71. RS1/27, f.70 - General Register of Sasines (NAS)
72. RS1/28, f.33
73. *Roll of Edinburgh Burgesses 1406 - 1700* - Scottish Record Society
74. Adv Ms 53.3.7
75. Edinburgh OPR
76. GD194/Box 8 - Bonar Papers
77. PS1/70, f.172; CH4/1/3 - 7 December 1602
78. CS7/295, f.280
79. CC8/2/22 - Edinburgh Commissary Court Register of Decrees. Note: there is no records of either an inventory or will in the Index to Edinburgh Commissary Court Testaments - Scottish Record Society. There is a gap in the Registers between 13 August 1607 and 1 June 1608 and so there are possibly others.
80. CC8/2/42
81. CC8/2/45 - 25 July 1614
82. SL1/12, f.298

PART II

TIMOTHY PONT

Date and Place of Birth

It is only possible to estimate the year in which Timothy Pont was born. By an Act of Parliament in December 1567, patrons having provostries, prebendaries of colleges, altarages or chaplainries were encouraged to grant bursaries to young men to study at the universities. This was 'because the povertie of many is in sik fort, that they may not hald their Children at letteris, quhairby the maist part of the youth of this Realme wantis the guiftis and graces of learning'.¹ On 10 July 1574, Timothy Pont, son of Mr Robert Pont, was granted a charter by Alexander Henrysoun, master of the hospital of Trinity College near Edinburgh, Patrick Spruyle, sacristan, James Henrysoun, prebendary of Broderstanis, Mr William Auchmowtie, prebendary of Strathmartin and of Trinity College, parsons of the parish of Strathmartin (with the consent of the provost and prebendaries of the College) of the Kirklands of Strathmartin commonly called Pentempen in Angus. They were to be held in feuferme by paying annually £6 Scots and 10/- augmentation at two terms in the year.² As Timothy Pont only went to St Andrews University six years later, this grant must have been for his earlier schooling. On 18 April 1583, a precept of a charter of confirmation of the lands to Timothy was issued under the Privy Seal, perhaps anticipating the Act which was made in August 1584, requiring feus of kirklands which had been granted since 8 March 1558 to be confirmed.³

According to *The Early Maps of Scotland*, vol 1, Timothy Pont matriculated at St Andrews University in the Session 1580/1 and graduated M.A in 1583.⁴ As boys then went to university aged 14 or 15, this suggests that he was born c. 1565/6.

He was the younger son of Mr Robert Pont of Shiresmill and his first wife. Their elder son was Zachary Pont (see notes, above, on the family of Mr Robert Pont).

At the time Timothy was born, Mr Robert Pont owned two properties - a third of Shiresmill in the parish of Culross and a tenement in St Andrews. When Timothy was born, his father was engaged for much of the time up north, in his capacity as Commissioner of Moray. It is unlikely that his family travelled around with him and so they must either have been living at Shiresmill or St Andrews. In 1575, a year after Timothy had been granted a charter of the lands of Strathmartin, the marriage contract between his sister, Helen Pont, and Adam Blacader of Blairhall was drawn up at Shiresmill.⁵ Later, Timothy married Isobel Blacader.⁶ It seems highly likely that she was related to the Blacader family, which tends to suggest that in the early years of their marriage, Mr Robert Pont and his wife made Shiresmill their base.

In 1575, Timothy would have been about 10 or 11 and the family were probably then living in Edinburgh, his father having been appointed provost of Trinity College in 1571. It therefore seems likely that he would have attended school in the burgh.

Commission by John Lindsay

In 1567/8, Cornelius de Vois, a Dutchman, was appointed to seek out and discover gold and silver mines. The Commission to him recorded that the King, his regent and council were concerned that the 'principale caus of the decay of the myneis and mynerallis of gold and sylvir within this realme this lang tyme bypast to the gret hurt and detriment alsweill of the patrimony and renew of his crown as of the commonwele of the samyn partlie to have bein be not putting men of knowlege and judgement to the inventing seiking out spying and discovering of the samyn'. Also, that individuals had 'transportit and carit the haill ure fund and wyn be thame in the saidis myndis furt of this realme'. They were therefore intent on 'augmenting of the renew of his crown'. In 1584, Eustacius Roghe, mediciner and his partners, two 'Englishmen', Edward Barnecastell and Henry Lawsons were appointed for 21 years, but in August 1592, their contract was declared null and void, as they had not fulfilled it. Two months before that John Lindsay, parson of Menmuir, had been appointed Master of the Mines.⁷ He appears to have chosen Timothy Pont as his first Commissioner, an undated and unsigned copy of the commission being recorded among the Mines and Mining Papers.⁸

'Be it kend till all men quhome it effeiris and speciallie to the inhabitants of Orkney and Shetland me Mr Jhon Lyndesay person of Menmor and one of the Senators of Soverane Lords Colledge of Justice and master of visiting the mineralles of his hienes Realme appointed by act of parliament to have maid constitute and ordeined my lovit Master Timothie Pont my Commissioner depute in that parte Geving and committing to him my full powar and Commission the (sic) visit the mynes and mineralles or appearing of funding out of mineralles within the boundis of the saidis cuntries of Orkney and Shetland and to trye the Metalles therof and report unto me the proof and exemplers therof ... Chairging all our soverane Lordis lieges in his Maiesties name not to mak anie stay stop or impediments to the said Master Timothie in searching out of the saidis mineralles and mettalles, wer it ore of gold sylver copper brasse lead or any other kynd of mettall that can be fund within the saidis boundis bot to assist him therinto as loyall service to his Maiestie...'

According to *The Early Maps of Scotland*, this commission was issued after June 1592 when John Lindsay recorded a note: 'Robert Pont anent the lead of Orkney: to ask for his commission at his returning'. Mr Robert Pont was still in Shetland in August.⁹

It can be seen that Mr Robert Pont ensured that his two eldest sons had an income. Mr Zachary Pont, by the laws governing heritable property, inherited his father's third of Shiresmill and was included, as his heir, when the property in St Andrews was sold. Mr Timothy Pont being the second son was not entitled to inherit any of his father's property and so was helped by his father, through his position as provost of Trinity College and later through his being a Senator of the College of Justice. Both sons' later appointments to parishes in Caithness were also due to their father being an influential member of the church.

Mr Timothy Pont does not appear as a witness to any of the deeds involving his family made in the last decades of the 16th century. Those made by his brother, Mr Zachary Pont, consist of deeds made at Edinburgh on 23 June 1591,¹⁰ at Shiresmill on 6 October 1592,¹¹ and at Leith on 28 July 1593.¹² He also did not act as a witness to any of those involving his father. There are no records of deeds made by Mr Timothy Pont in the Indexes and Calendars of Deeds of the Court of Session for that period nor in Edinburgh Commissary Court.¹³ The Sheriff Court Deeds do not extend back to that period. There is no reference to him in the Register of the Privy Seal (post 1584). The only evidence of his presence occurs in the Minutes of Edinburgh Town

Council, where he is recorded in June 1593, collecting money assigned to him by his father.¹⁴ This absence tends to suggest that this was the period during which he was travelling around Scotland and this is confirmed by information contained in a letter written by the Dean of Limerick in July 1596 to Sir Robert Cecil, telling him of one Pont who had travelled over the whole of Scotland.¹⁵

His Appointment to Dunnet

In the Register of Assignations and Modifications of Stipends, the parish of Dunnet is recorded as being served by a reader, Andrew Clerk, in 1599, but by 1601 Mr Timothy Pont is recorded as having been 'newly provydit' to the living with a manse and glebe and a stipend of £133/6/8d. There is a gap in the Register until 1607 and 1608. In these two years, Mr Timothy Pont was still there. A further gap occurs until 1614, by which time he had demitted the office.¹⁶

Date of death

Timothy Pont and his wife are recorded in Edinburgh in May 1611 as lending 1,000 merks to George, Earl of Caithness. It has been suggested that he had died by 25 March 1614. In *The Early Maps of Scotland*, the author records that 'in March 1614, the widow of Robert Pont collected from Edinburgh Town Council the arrears of the annuity which he had assigned to Timothy'.¹⁷

The actual Town Council Minutes tell a slightly different story. The Council had encountered some difficulties in arranging for Mr Robert Pont to relinquish his position as provost of Trinity College. Part of their problem would have been the fact that Mr Robert Pont fled to England in 1584. The records of Trinity College record in January 1584 that they had been unable to enter tenants and others in the lands as their seal was 'in the handis of Mr Robert Pont o(u)r provest quhilk could not be had in respect of his absence this lang tym bypast'.¹⁸ He returned in 1585 and on 16 June the Town Council agreed to pay him 300 merks at the ending of his contract. In addition, he was to receive, a sum (left blank) for life.

On 30 June 1587, it was recorded Mr Robert 'hes the haill rent of the provestrie induring his lyftym and annuell furt of the commoun mylnis', apart from £20 which was to be paid to the minister of Wemyss annually.¹⁹

On 29 June 1593, the provost and council ordered John Johnston, collector, to pay to Mr Timothy Pont, son and assignee of Mr Robert Pont, minister, 'the annell awand to him' by the burgh.²⁰

Then, on 22 May 1605, Mr Adam Hall, collector, was ordered 'to payit Mr Timothie Pont sone to Mr Robert Pont minister the sowne of sevin scoir pundis money' which 'the said Mr Robert hes furt of the commoun gude of this burt to the quhilk annuell the said Mr Robert hes maid the said Mr Tymothie his assigney and this for the terms of Witsunday and Mairtynmes 1604 yeris'.²¹

Seven days later, in presence of the provost, baillies etc 'Comperit Mr Tymothie Pont Minister of Dunnett and producit and delyverit unto thame the assignatioun maid to him be Mr Robert Pont his faythir of his lyfrent of the annuellrent of sevin score pundis money besyde twenty pund gevin yeirlie to the Minister of Weymes quhilk he hes furth of the commoun mylnis of the said burt for thair warrand & releif thairof at the hands of the said Robert Pont and to be furt cumand to the said Mr Tymothie as he sall haif ado thairtil'.²²

So, apart from the 300 merks given to Mr Robert Pont when he had given up the position of provost of Trinity College, he had also been granted an annual payment for life of £140. On 21 February 1593, Mr Robert Pont had assigned the £140 to his son. In May 1605, Mr Timothy Pont had collected the annual payment and then a year later his father had died. As Mr Robert Pont had only been granted the life interest of the money, payment would have ended with his death.

What Margaret Smyth, widow of Mr Robert Pont, received from the council in 1614 was therefore some payment other than that which the council had agreed to pay Mr Robert Pont when he gave up the position of provost in 1585.

On the last day of December 1600, the Town Council minutes record that they were planning 'to intert and conferat with Mr Robert Pont minister anent the teynd of the commoune mylnes acclaimit be him And to bring the samyn to sum poynt'.²³ Nothing more appears until 4 September 1601, when the treasurer was ordered 'to pay to Mr Robert Pont Minister at St Cudberts kirk the soum of forty shillings money of all yeiris bygane quhilk he has of before payit to him be thair theasurer for the tyme'.²⁴

On 25 March 1614, when Margaret Smyth, widow of Mr Robert Pont, collected an undisclosed amount of money from the treasurer, this was for 'the byruns of the small teynds of the commoun mylnes of this brugh payit of befor to umquhile Mr Robert Pont minister'.²⁵ Margaret Smyth had therefore not collected the money due to Mr Timothy Pont, but the arrears of the small teynds which her husband had claimed were due to him in 1600.

Among the list of those who applied for land in Ulster in 1609, Mr Timothy Pont, minister, appears. His surety was Alexander Borthwick of Nether Laich.²⁶ However, Mr Timothy Pont's name does not appear in the list of 1611, indicating that his bid had not been successful.²⁷ That was the year in which he and his wife had lent 1,000 merks in gold to the Earl of Caithness. Perhaps, having failed to purchase land in Ulster, they invested their money in the bond to the Earl.

He must have given up his position as minister of Dunnet between 1611 and 1614, as in the latter year a new minister is recorded there. He and his wife were in Edinburgh in May 1611 and it is possible that he was there to announce his demission of the charge. Robert Gordon in a letter to Scot of Scotstarvit records that Mr Timothy Pont 'returned', intending to publish his maps, but 'while awaiting better times, untimely death took him away'. This indicates that he did not die in Caithness. As he intended publishing his maps, it seems likely that he 'returned' to Edinburgh.

In March 1606, a licence to print the Bible, Psalm book, and several other books had been acquired by Thomas Finlayson from John Gibson and his son, James. In June, Thomas Finlayson's licence was confirmed and was to run for 25 years. He was also given licence to print 'playing cairdis, mappes, cartes, plates and draughtis of cuntreyis cities townes schyreis and uther portraitis and piktouris of men and women'. These he could sell within the realm or 'transport and send furth of the same' free of custom dues.²⁸ Robert Gordon recorded that Mr Timothy Pont had been prevented from publishing his maps by the greed of printers. Perhaps, Thomas Finlayson's was one of those men.

Robert Gordon also records that the maps were left to Mr Timothy Pont's heirs 'who were men without knowledge of such things' and who 'neglected the whole matter'.²⁹ There is no record of Timothy Pont having left a will, which is understandable if he died unexpectedly. There is also

no record of an edict being applied for by his next of kin before 1620.³⁰ If he left children, it seems unlikely that they would have been ‘without knowledge of such things’. His heirs therefore would have been Robert, Samuel and James, the sons of his brother, Mr Zachary Pont. If Isobel Blacader survived him, her heir, if she did belong to the Blacader family, would have been John Blacader, father of the Rev John Blacader. The fact that the maps were in such a bad state of repair when Sir James Balfour purchased them, in or before 1628, perhaps suggests that some time had elapsed since Mr Timothy Pont’s death.

Sources

1. *The Laws and Acts of Parliament*, ed. Sir Thomas Murray of Glendook, 1681, p.185
2. SL152/8, f.90 - Records of Trinity Hospital (Edinburgh City Archives)
3. *RSS* viii, 1260
4. *Early Maps of Scotland*, vol 1, quotes - St Andrews University MS Records - Acta Rectorum Session 1580/1 - UY305/2 f.9 and Faculty of Arts bursar’s book - UY412 f.62)
5. CS7/60, f.302 - 10 December 1575 - Acts and Decrees of the Court of Session (NAS)
6. RD1/225, f.119 - Register of Deeds of Court of Session (NAS) - see photocopy and transcription
7. PS1/61, f.33 - Register of the Privy Seal (NAS)
8. Adv Ms 19.1.24 - Mines and Mining Papers (NLS)
9. *Shetland Documents 1580 - 1611*, ed. John H Ballantyne and Brian Smith, no 204
10. Calendar of Deeds, vol. 47 - 23 November 1593 (NAS)
11. RD1/84, f.26
12. Calendar of Deeds, vol 47 - 29 December 1593
13. CC8/18/1 - Minute Book of Deeds, Edinburgh Commissary Court (NAS)
14. SL1/8, p.412 - Edinburgh Town Council Minutes (Edinburgh City Archives)
15. *Early Maps of Scotland*, vol. 1, p.38 who quotes the *Calendar of State Papers relating to Ireland, 1596 - 97*, p.40
16. E47/8,/9 and /10 - Registers of Assignations and Modifications of Stipends (NAS)
17. *Early Maps of Scotland*
18. SL152/8 - 20 January 1584
19. SL1/8 - last June 1587 (Edinburgh City Archives)
20. *ibid*, p.412
21. SL1/11, p.336
22. *ibid*, p.337 - 21 February 1593
23. *ibid*, p.39
24. *ibid*, p.112
25. SL1/12, p.298
26. *RPC* viii, 330 - the transcriber must have misread Nether Laich. It surely should be Nether Learnie/Leny, lands belonging to Timothy’s brother-in-law
27. *RPC* ix, lxxxix
28. PS1/75, f.128
29. *The Early Maps of Scotland*, vol.1, p.41
30. The Register of Decrees of Edinburgh Commissary Court contain Edicts - period searched - 1611 to 1620 - CC8/2/42-47

(Several of the above references were pointed out to me by John Ballantyne to whom I am very grateful.)

Obligation by the Earl of Caithness to Mr Timothy Pont and his wife

In P(rese)nce of the Lordis of Counsal compeirit Mr Jon Murdisone p(rocurato)r for George Erle of Caithnes as prin(cipa)ll George Oustean & Ronnald Murray cau(tione)rs and gaif in the obliga(tio)un underwr(itt)in desyring the same to be reg(ist)rat in the buikis of Counsal w(i)t(h) l(ette)res and exe(cutoria)llis to be direct thairupone in maner thairin conteinit The q(uhi)lk desyr the saidis Lordis tho(ch)t ress(ona)bill and thairfoir ordainit & ordaines the said obliga(tio)un to be reg(ist)rat in the said buikis & dec(er)ns the same to have the strent(h) of thair decret and ordaines l(ette)res and exe(cutoria)llis to be direct th(air)upone in maner spe(cife)it th(air)intil q(uh)rof the tenor followis We George erle of Caithnes be the tenor hei(ro)of grant us to have borrowit and ressavit reallie & w(i)t(h) effect in numerat mo(ne)y fra the handis and thankfull delyverance of Mr Tymothie Pont minister at Dunnet in Caithnes and Issobell Blacader his spous the soum of ane thousand m(er)kis guid and usuall gold and mo(ne)y of this realme of Scotland for performeing and accomplieing of c(er)taine o(u)r necess(a)r effaires and bussinis q(uh)rof we hald us weill content satisfiit and payit renunceand the exceptioun of not numerat money and all uy(the)ris exceptiones of the Law q(uha)tsumevar that may be preponit or allegit in the contrair and for me my airis exe(cuto)ris and ass(i)gnis exoneriss quytclames and simply discharges the said Mr Tymothie Pount his airis exe(cuto)ris and all uy(ther)is q(uh)en it efferis of the say(min) for now & evir be thir p(rese)ntis q(uhi)lk soume of Ane thousand m(er)kis mo(ne)y foirsaid we as prin(cipa)ll & George Oustean tailzeor & Ronald Murray m(er)chand burgessis of Edinburgh as cau(tione)rs soverties & full dettoris for us faytfullie bind & obleis us bayt(h) prin(cipa)ll & cau(tione)ris foir(sai)d conjunctlie and severalie o(u)r airis exe(cuto)ris ass(i)gnis successoris to us in o(u)r landis & heretagis and intro(mitte)ris w(i)t(h) o(u)r guidis & geir q(uha)tsumevir thankfullie to content repay and delyvir againe to the said Mr Tymothie Pont and the said Issobell Blacader his spous and langar levar of thame tua thair airis exe(cuto)ris or ass(i)gnis haill and togidder in ane soume betwix the dait herof and the feist and t(er)me of Witsonday nixt to cum in the yeir of god Jajvict and twelff yeiris but langar delay fraud or gyll Togidder w(i)t(h) the soume of ane hundret pundis mo(n)ey foirsaid as for expenssis in caice of failzie & not thankfull payment of the said prin(cipa)ll soume at the t(er)me abovewr(itt)in and we the said George erle of Caithnes be thir p(rese)ntis faytfullie bind & obleis us & o(u)r forsaidis to warrand freith releiff and skaytles keip the said George Oustean & Ronald Murray o(u)r caut(ioner)s aboveno(min)at and ilk ane of thame thair airis exe(cuto)rs and all uy(ther)is q(uh)en it efferis of the cau(tion)rie abovespe(cife)it and of all coists skaytis damages expenssis and enteres that they or any of thame or thair foirsaidis sall happin to incur or susteine th(air)throw in ony tymes cuming And for the mair securitie we bayt(h) prin(cipa)ll and cau(tione)rs foirsaidis ar content and consentis gif neid beis that thir p(rese)nts be insert and reg(ist)rat in the buikis of Counsal And dec(er)nit to haive the strent(h) of ane act & decret of the Lordis haveand thair auc(thor)itie to be int(er)ponit therto And that l(ette)res and exe(cutoria)lls of horning & poynding the ane but preiudice of the uy(thir) be decret thairupone and the horn(in)g to pas on ane singill chairge of six dayis warning allanerlie And for reg(istrat)ing herof we have maid & constitut be thir p(rese)ntis Mr Jon Murdisone advocat coniunctlie and severly o(u)r lawuly pro(curato)r In ubri forma promitten de rata In witness of the q(uhi)lk thing wrettin be James Stratoun wry(ter) we bayt(h) prin(cipa)ll & cau(tion)eris foirsaid have sub(scrib)it thir p(rese)nts w(i)t(h) o(u)r handis as followis At Edinburgh the Last day of May, the yeir of god Jajvixt and ellevin yeiris befoir thir witnessis Jon Sinclair of Gaudy, Mr Jon Sinclair & Mr Jon Mansoun o(u)r servitoris (Signatures follow)