

#### IV.

### THE PRINGLES OF FOUNTAINHALL AND SOUTRA.

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Under the "County Homes of Scotland" in a late number of the *Scots Pictorial* appeared an article entitled "Fountainhall, East Lothian," which was beautifully illustrated. The house was considered mainly from an architectural point of view. Of its history, and of the Pringles who occupied it during the fifty years that preceded the Lauders, little seemed known, and no interpretation of the monogram and the various initials that appear on the eastern wing of the building was offered. Information on these points supplementary to the article quoted is therefore a desideratum, and is herewith given.

And first as to the origin of the surname Pringle. The first to bear it in the records is Robert de Hoppryngil of the "Soltre Chartulary," who witnessed a charter at Soutra Monastery about 1275, during the reign of Alexander III. Hoppringill is the name of a place, like its cognate Hopkailzie (now Kailzie), etc. In the older records it is found two or three times unabridged as Hoppringhill, which hill—on the side of which it is situated in the parish of Stow—after rising to a height of about 1000 feet, abuts at its western extremity on the Gala in a remarkably rounded contour. Douglas, an unscrupulous genealogist, in order to support the absurd derivation of it from the Welsh *Ap* and *pilgrim*, and, by inserting an "r" into Pingle, his assimilation of the Hoppringills with the Pingles of Whitsome and Aberdeen—a widely spread English family, members of which had migrated into Scotland with David II.—split the surname in two, as Hop-Pringle, a hyphenated form of which not a single instance is to be found in any record prior to his day, and a manifest fabrication, which if applied to the other

great Border clans would give us the Arm-Strongs and the Turn-Bulls! The dominant spelling in the records down to 1600 is Hoppringill, between 1600 and 1650 Pringill, and after that Pringle; but the Hoppringles of that ilk never dropped the prefix, John, the last of that long-descended line, who died in 1737, always signing himself Hoppringle.

The only other Hoppringill to be met with in the thirteenth century is Elys de Obrinkel, whose name is entered thus in the famous Ragman Roll at Berwick on 28th August 1296, along with those, in similar disguises, of his immediate neighbours, as a tenant of the Bishop of St Andrews in Midlothian. The spelling is similar to Obendrit and Obbarris for Hopebendrit and Hopebarris in Shropshire, of the same period, while rink is only the less guttural form of ring. His seal is probably that numbered 188 in the list of unattached Scottish seals given in vol. ii. of the *Calendar of Documents*, described as "Oval, a hunting-horn, S. Helias de Hoprigkil," the letter "n" being represented by the customary superior stroke.

#### FOUNTAINHALL.

To resume. John Sinclair, who had a kindly tack of Ewingston, died in 1550, and Robert Hoppringill, brother german of George of Torwoodlee, married his widow Alison Harwood, promising in 1555, it was alleged, to vacate the tack when Sinclair, junior, came of age. By his spouse Robert had three sons—(1) Robert; (2) William; (3) John—and three daughters. Robert, the eldest, who predeceased his father in 1579, left by his spouse Margaret Ker a daughter Marion, whose curator was William Hoppringill of Westhousebyre. We next find Robert and his second son William further down the valley in the neighbouring farm of Milton; and here, according to his testament, Robert died in 1582.

William Pringill in Milton, who died in 1637, by his spouse Elizabeth Baptie had issue: (1) Robert of Templehalls and Woodhead, W.S.; (2) John, the elder, in Milton, of Soutra and Blackshiels; (3) John, the younger, of Magray, who died in 1629; (4) William, in West Pencaitland, who died in 1645; (5) George, in Magray, who died in 1630; (6) James, in East Spott Mill; and three daughters.

Robert, William's eldest son, appears to have served his apprenticeship in the office of John Gray, public notary, Haddington, where in 1598 he writes a charter. In January 1606 we find him a notary in the office of John Easton, W.S., Edinburgh. Between that date and March 1614 he wrote fourteen charters for Easton, was twice a donator of escheats, and once an assignee of a debt. Easton was married to Margaret Cant of St Giles Grange. Robert Pringill married Violet Cant of the same family. John Easton dying in 1616, Robert and Mr John

Cant of the Grange, apparently his brother-in-law, act as curators of his son and heir John Easton. Robert succeeded John Easton as a Writer to the Signet, and became the leading W.S. of his time. As to his work, suffice it to say that he and his servitors or clerks, of whom some twenty are named, appear in the Register of the Great Seal alone some 230 times: and it is interesting to note that amongst his clientèle were included all the principal Pringills of his time, as those of that ilk, Smailholm, Whytbank, Torwoodlee, Clifton, Stitchill, Greenknow, Buckholm, etc. Take this entry as an illustration of the times—John Logan, angry that a bond for which he was cautioner had been assigned to a Robert Logan, came to Pringill's "awne wretting chalmer" on the 12th inst. at three in the afternoon, imperiously demanding if he had written the assignation, and how he durst do the same. Pringill answered with that respect that became one of his calling, telling him that he was in a public charge to serve all His Majesty's subjects. Logan then became abusive, calling the said Robert and his servants false knaves, vowing and swearing that he should eat them all and have their lives. With that he minted to his whinger, and would have attacked Pringill had he not been protected by others present. He was put out of the chamber and down the stair; when coming directly upon Robert Logan, who was standing at the stair foot, he would have assaulted him also with the drawn whinger had he not been stayed; on the 14th (June 1621) both parties compearing personally, the Lords find John Logan guilty, and commit him to ward in the Tolbooth.

In June 1625 Robert is at Milton, and writes the testament of his brother John, younger. In August 1629 Robert Porteous, for a certain sum of money, dispones to him for ever the whole kirklands of Pencaitland, with the old mansion of the same, barns, glebe adjacent, teind-sheaves, houses, and pertinents. In 1631 Robert has sasine of an annual rent of £1000 Scots furth of the barony of Salton. In 1633 he and his son John have sasine of certain acres in Newhaven, and the bailiary, but resign them shortly afterwards on being paid 5000 merks. In March 1634 Mr John Pringle and Joneta Byres his spouse, and John Pringill in Milton his uncle, have sasine of annual rents granted by Sir Robert Richardson, furth of his lands of Easter Pencaitland. On 29th May 1635, at Edinburgh, Sir George Cockburn of Ormiston, by contract, sells to Robert Pringill, W.S., and his son and heir apparent, Mr John, without reversion or regress, the lands of East and West Templehall, Huntlaw, and Dryburghland, as occupied by the late Mr Samuel and the late Francis Cockburn; also the lands of "Southwood alias Woodhead" and tofthouses, with the lands and acres called Parisflat and Vicarsfold pertaining of old to the Vicarage of Pencaitland, lately disponed by

Sir Robert Richardson of Easter Pencaitland to Sir George; with the manor-place of "Woodhead alias Southwood," houses, orchards, dovecot, coals, and coalheuchs, together with the teind-sheaves and other teinds great and small of all the above lands, and power to win limestone in the same quarries as Sir George's tenants wherever situated: sasine was taken in August following, Robert intimating that the lands were to be his son's in satisfaction of the 28,000 merks he had promised to give him on his marriage with Joneta Byres in 1633. In September 1635 Robert Pringill, W.S., has sasine of Nether Lugate and Meikle Hoprig, irredeemably and without reversion. In April 1645 Robert and his second son Robert, upon a precept granted by John Lord Borthwick, have sasine with actual possession of Dewar in the parish of Heriot, upon the resignation of James Pringill thereof. In August 1646 the King confirms to Robert Pringill of Templehalls, W.S., his heirs and assignees, the lands of Whitburgh and Blackhouse, possessed by William, James, and Thomas Borthwick, which William Earl Marischal resigned; also the lands of Bowshielhill, apprised by the said Robert in 1637, which Lady Lawson of Ednam resigned. In 1647 Robert and his son Mr John are amongst the Commissioners of War appointed by Parliament for Haddingtonshire. Robert died in August 1652, having had issue by his spouse Violet Cant of the Grange: (1) Mr John, his heir; (2) Robert, of Dewar, admitted a W.S. in 1655.

It should be remarked here that Robert Pringle who bought Stitchill, and who was collector of fines for the Treasurer at the justice courts held at Jedburgh and Dumfries, and resided for upwards of twenty-five years at Baitingbush in the Debateable Land as baillie to the Scotts of Buccleuch, is always erroneously referred to as a Writer to the Signet, in the belief apparently that he was one and the same person as his contemporary Robert Pringle of Woodhead, W.S.—an error which appears even in the List of the Society of Writers to the Signet, but which, on its being pointed out to them, we are informed, has now been corrected.

In August 1652 Master John Pringill, now of Woodhead, upon a charter granted by William Lord Cranston, has sasine of the lands of Cranstondean, Loanhead, Paistonburn, New Mains, and others, with the mills, lime quarries, coalheuchs, etc. In 1655 he is retoured heir of his father Robert in the lands of Whitburgh and Blackhouse. He died in 1659, and was buried on 18th January of that year in Greyfriars. He married, first, Joneta Byres in 1633; second, Margaret Dickson; third, Jonet Bruce, whose second husband was Edward Wallace of Shewalton. Mr John left, according to his testament, farm stock and plenishing worth £1573, and bonds granted or assigned worth £29,165, amongst the

debtors being the Master of Gray, Viscount Kingston, the Earl of Winton, Sir John Ruthven of Dunglass, and William Lord Cranston—a great Royalist, whose lands were saved from confiscation by Cromwell at the intercession of the King of Sweden. Mr John by Margaret Dickson had issue: (1) John, his heir; (2) David, born in 1645; and Susanna as youngest of the daughters; and by Joneta Bruce, a daughter Janet, born in May 1658.

Robert Pringle of Dewar, W.S., second son of Robert of Woodhead, W.S., after a somewhat inglorious career, was dead before November 1670, as was also his widow Margaret Ker, leaving no children.

John Pringle, now of Woodhead, returned heir to his father Master John, and his curators, are successful in obtaining decreets for repayment by certain of the granters of the above bonds. In 1666 he is appointed a Commissioner of Excise for Haddingtonshire. "On 25th June 1674," says Wodrow in his *Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, "I find another decret of the Council against the keepers of conventicles in the garner house of the laird of Stevenson . . . and in a house alleged to be made up on purpose for conventicles by Mr Robert Hodge, bailie of Lamington. The preachers at these places are . . . Pringle of Woodhead, for being at some of them, is fined in a fourth part of his yearly valued rent, and some others; and a good many of the meaner people are ordered to be denounced for non-compearance. I find John Pringle of Woodhead is liberated from prison on 16th July upon paying £277 Scots." In 1678 John is appointed a Commissioner of Supply for Haddingtonshire. A Privy Council paper of the date 13th September 1678 says: "Forasmuch as it is found by an assize that . . . (4 women), prisoners, are found guilty of the crime of witchcraft, and are decerned by us the Lords Commissioners of Justiciary to be taken to Paiston muir upon Friday next, the 20th day of this inst., between 2 and 4 in the afternoon, and there to be strangled at a stake till they be dead, and thereafter their bodies to be burned to ashes, these therefore require and command Sir Robert Hepburn of Keith and John Pringle of Woodhead to see the said sentence and doom put to execution as they shall be answerable." In June 1685 Parliament ratifies in favour of John Lauder of Fountainhall, merchant burghess of Edinburgh, and Sir John Lauder his eldest son, the charter granted to them by Charles II. on 13th August 1681, of all and hail the lands above mentioned possessed successively by Robert, Mr John, and John Pringle of Woodhead, and resigned by the said John: also parts of the barony of Cranstondean, viz. Paistonburn, New Mains, etc., resigned by the late Lord Cranston. In July 1690 in the action of Susanna Pringle and her second spouse Mr George Home against William Cleland, it was stated that he had granted her a bond for 3600 merks,

with 400 merks expenses, annual rents, and £20 penalty for each term of failure, on 13th July 1681, and she had assigned to him a bond for 5000 merks granted to her by her deceased brother german John Pringle of Woodhead, whereupon Cleland led adjudication of Woodhead, but she and he transacted with Sir John Lauder to take no action till nine years thereafter; in the meantime Cleland had paid to her during her widowhood and at her second marriage certain sums of money: after adjustment of accounts between the two, the Lords ordain Cleland to pay to Susanna £1786. John Pringle of Woodhead and his spouse Lilius Murray of Blackbarony had issue: (1) Alexander, born 1666; (2) Robert; (3) John; (4) —; and three daughters, Margaret, Mary, and Violet. After the sale of Woodhead John Pringle may have removed to his estate of Whitburgh and Blackhouse.

Now as to Fountainhall House. The reason why Sir John Lauder changed the name is evident. It would never have done for an advocate to be designed of Woodhead, or a Lord of Session to be called Lord Woodhead; the titles were too suggestive! It is believed that a strong spring near the house suggested the new name Fountainhall. As to the eastern wing, with its large upper room, the so-called "Lord Fountainhall's Reception-Room," it is evident that it was there long before his day. It was built by Mr John Pringle, and commemorates, according to an old custom, his marriage with Margaret Dickson, as the date 1638 and the monogram, consisting of their initials I. P. and M. D., above the dormer window show. This date with what seems to read "July 21st" occurs also on the south-east corner of the wing, and may indicate the day of the marriage. It also appears on two corresponding stones at the upper ends of the eastern wall, with the initials R. P., indicating Robert Pringle, Mr John's father. Whether the large upper room was also a garner room like the one at Stevenson, or not, it was certainly used in the same way in the next generation by John Pringle for holding conventicles.

#### SOUTRA.

A word as to Soutra and John Pringill, second son of William in Milton, and brother of Robert of Woodhead, W.S. In September 1635 he had sasine of the lands of Soutra, Soutrahill, Soutrabarns, and Redhall, on a charter granted to him and his heirs by the Provost, Bailies, and Deacons of Edinburgh; also, in March 1644, along with his second son Robert, of the town and lands of Blackshiels, on a charter granted by Earl Marischal, Lord Keith, irredeemably. John died in December 1650. By his spouse Agnes Henderson he had issue: (1) William, of Soutra; (2) Robert, of Blackshiels; (3) John, in Milton; (4) George; born respec-

tively in 1623, 1627, 1629, and 1632. In October 1652 William, as heir of his father, and of age, is granted sasine of the lands of Soutra, by deliverance of earth and stone thereof, on a precept from the Provost and Bailies of Edinburgh, "reserving to us the orchard of Soutra for holding our Courts," paying a yearly duty of £35. William was succeeded within a few years by his brother Robert of Blackshiels.

Nor was Robert a long liver. He died before Whitsuntide 1669, leaving the lands of Soutra and Blackshiels to his three daughters as heirs portioners: (1) Agnes, who married her second cousin David Pringle, brother of John of Woodhead; (2) Margaret, who married Lieut. Joseph Douglas of H.M.'s Lifeguards (Foot)—she died before March 1675, as also their son James Douglas, to whom his father became heir; (3) Catherine.

David Pringle and his spouse Agnes Pringle both died in 1686. They left an only child, Margaret, to whom, in the same year, James Pringle, as nearest of kin on the father's side, was retoured Tutor.

David and his relict Agnes were buried on their own lands in Soutra Aisle, that fragment of the famous monastery that once overlooked the Lothians; and on the lintel of the door in the north end can still be seen their initials and the date cut in bold characters, thus:—

#### 16 D. P. A. P. 86

Visitors, as is usual at such shrines, have been busy scratching their initials in the soft sandstone, and one of them by an added stroke has altered the second P. on the lintel into an R.

In the opposite end of the Aisle is a slab, inserted in 1827, commemorating a "John Pringle of Beatman's Acre who died in 1777," who is credited in Carrick's *Newbattle Abbey* and Hunter's *Fala and Soutra* as a descendant, not of the Pringles of Soutra—as one would expect—but of a John Pringle, a shepherd, who had the good fortune to entertain, and regale with roast chicken for supper, the benighted king, James V., who next morning, by way of thanks, granted him the piece of land called Beadman's Acre—a myth given currency to in a late ballad beginning:—

"Hae ye no heard o' the guid auld times,  
When Pringle was sae luckie  
To get a lump o' Soutra hill  
Just for a roasted chuckie?"

Indeed the two above-mentioned historians of the district seem to have known nothing of the Pringles, lairds of Soutra and Fala for half a century.

That Soutra Aisle should have escaped the hands of the despoiler during all these years, is no doubt due to its conversion into a burial-place.