

The Story behind the Stone – the families, estates and stories of Kirkmichael, Cullicudden, the Black Isle and beyond

[https://www.kirkmichael.info/William Trent Merchant of Inverness William Trent founder of Trenton New Jersey and Maurice Trent merchant of Leith.html](https://www.kirkmichael.info/William_Trent_Merchant_of_Inverness_William_Trent_founder_of_Trenton_New_Jersey_and_Maurice_Trent_merchant_of_Leith.html)

**The Life and Times of William Trent, Merchant of Inverness,  
and his Family including son William Trent, founder of the City of Trenton, Capital of New  
Jersey,  
and brother Maurice Trent, Merchant of Leith**

*text by Dr Jim Mackay references commencing “HCA/” are within the Highland Council Archives; all other references lie within the National Records of Scotland unless otherwise stated*

my thanks to **The William Trent House Museum** in Trenton, New Jersey, to **Jonathan Wordsworth**, archaeologist and my tour guide to 17<sup>th</sup> century Inverness, and to **Dave Conner** of the Inverness Local History Group



Urquhart Castle on Loch Ness, repaired by William Trent in 1676; photo by Davine Sutherland

William Trent (–1677) was a busy and diverse merchant and entrepreneur based in the port of Inverness in the 1600s, coming to prominence during its occupation by Cromwell’s army. He married Issobell Stewart, daughter of a prominent Inverness baillie and merchant, in 1662 and they had seven children. Two of their daughters married ministers and three of their sons developed a trading conglomerate with William’s Quaker brother Maurice (–1701), who was based in Leith, the port of Edinburgh. The sons moved to America to develop trade there, focusing on the Philadelphia and New Jersey region. Son William Trent (–1724) initiated the settlement called Trent-Town in New Jersey, nowadays Trenton, capital of the state. This story looks at the life and times of merchant William Trent in Inverness and his family.

A few buildings built in or before the 1600s with which William Trent and his family would have been familiar still survive in Inverness, all close to or along Church Street. This, as Kirk Street or “the Kyrk Get”, at the time was the main thoroughfare, running from the Old High Church to the Castle. Emerging from the Black Isle Brewery pub on Church Street, you can visit them all within a few minutes: Abertarff House, townhouse of the Frasers of Lovat, constructed in 1593; the tower of the Old High Church; the Dunbar Hospital (bequeathed to the town as a hospital in 1668) and the Dominican Friary, albeit all that remains there is a single column and a knight effigy mounted in the

wall. The Chapel Yard graveyard was in use then and is likely to be where William Trent is buried. Curiously, we have William Trent's epitaph, but the stone from which it came we cannot locate.



the tower of the Old High Church, as seen in the drawings of Inverness in the 1600s featured later in this story; photo by Jim Mackay



Abertarff House with Kirkmichael volunteers Jonathan Wordsworth and Donald Ross, in a downpour; photo by Jim Mackay



an ancient relic and the knight effigy on the wall of “Greyfriars” graveyard at the Dominican Friary; photo by Jonathan Wordsworth

Inverness Harbour was of course key to William Trent’s trading activity, and he himself was engaged by the Town Council to build a new pier and bulwark there. He was thereby being paid to do something that would benefit the merchants of Inverness, including himself. I am aware of him, in partnership, building at least one ship in Inverness and, again in partnership, owning a frigate, the *Dolphin* of Inverness. He cannily purchased chunks of Cromwell’s vast Inverness fortification, the Citadel or “Sconce”, with the intention of selling them back to the Town for the materials to be used in building projects. He even coordinated the repairs to one of the most iconic buildings in the Highlands, Urquhart Castle on Loch Ness, in 1676.

### **When did William Trent become established in Inverness?**

The first time we meet William Trent he is being enrolled as burges and guild-brother in Inverness in December 1657. Oliver Cromwell is still alive, Scotland is under military rule, the gigantic Citadel built by Cromwell within Inverness is nearing completion, and William Trent is looking for business. In presence of Alexander Cuthbert, the Provost, and several baillies, and having paid the requisite fee of ten pounds Sterling, he is registered as a “burges & gild broyr” of the Burgh of Inverness (HCA/BI/1/7/2). Burgesses at this time were merchants or craftsmen, and they alone could enjoy the privileges of trading or practising a craft in the city through belonging to their guild, or could own companies trading in their guild’s craft. William Trent’s route to establishing himself as a merchant lay through his becoming a burges.

But the next time we see him in Inverness it is 1660, and the whole political and social setting has changed. Cromwell has died in 1658, military rule has gone, the Stuart Dynasty in the form of Charles II has been restored. Actually, when we see him on this occasion, William Trent isn’t physically in Inverness, he is about to return to Inverness following a trip to London. The chatty *Wardlaw Manuscript* (published as *Chronicles of the Frasers*, edited by William Mackay, 1905) by the young James Fraser of Phopachy, later to be Reverend James Fraser of Wardlaw, records how he and William Trent were strolling the streets of London in April 1660.

We ar now to leave London, the Scotch fleet lying at Gravesend waiting for a convoy, ready to set saile. The rode by land for Scotland is now so pesterd with highway men, robbing all travelers, so that there is no safe journaying, and so we make ready for the voyage. **Meantime William Trent and I, comming one day from London Bridge**, we remarked Thomas Fitch, once governour

and colonel to the English regiment at Invernes, whom I saw in grandure and state there. We spy him in a privat lane, most dejected; all alone, but he knew not us. These happy changes hath brought such snakes to skulc up and down the city obscurly and in disguise...

You can tell that Fraser and Trent were not lovers of the Cromwell occupation (although in fact the upsurge of highway robbery Fraser mentions is known to have greatly increased following Cromwell's demise).

### **Oliver Cromwell and Scotland?**

A few words at this point on Oliver Cromwell and Scotland may be judicious, since the Trent family is so closely connected with the Cromwellian period. It is strange that the English occupation of Scotland under Oliver Cromwell is rarely mentioned. And yet, after the defeat of Scottish armies at Dunbar in 1650 and at Worcester in 1651, in the latter of which the Scots were led personally by Charles II, that is what happened. Scotland, previously a separate nation, was forced into a commonwealth with England. Charles II sat in exile. There was a vast military presence in Scotland to keep the peace, and five great Citadels were built, including one at Inverness where William Trent was based and one at Leith where William's brother Maurice Trent was based..



Oliver Cromwell in power, painted by Samuel Cooper in 1656



Charles II in exile, painted by Phillippe de Champaigne in 1653

Cromwell's rule in Scotland was surprisingly liberal, particularly given the massacres for which he was responsible in Ireland. Scholars are divided on whether the social changes he implemented within Scotland were for the long-term benefit or disadvantage of the Scots. His power was in any case short-lived. Cromwell died in 1658, and Charles II was restored in 1660. He returned from France and went to Edinburgh, where he was proclaimed King of both countries.

### **William Trent's merchant life in Inverness**

James Fraser sailed to Inverness from London on board the *Mary*, with William Trent and other merchants among the passengers. The editor of the *Wardlaw Manuscript* says: "Among his companions on board the *Mary* were several Inverness merchants who were returning from the Metropolis, bringing home their annual stock of commodities for their Highland Customers." While there might have been an element of that, I think it more likely that they had been in London brokering deals with agents and other merchants for future trading. These are some of young Fraser's companions who boarded the *Mary* on 28 April 1660:

we went aboard of the *Mary* of Dundee, lying in the rode off Gravesend, and bound for Inverness in Scotland ... We were ten passingers in the ship, besids the crew, viz. Duncan Forbes, **William Trent**, Alexander Clunes, and John M'kfarquhar, marchants in Invernes... Mr. Charles Mckulloch, apothecary chyrurgion in Thain [McCulloch of Plaids, by Tain – see our Story [here](#)], and Mr. James Fraser, student and traveler [i.e. the writer himself].

Trent owned a shop in Inverness and from the evidence of his testament dative (the document prepared following his death in the absence of a will) he sold everything from green ginger to muskets. He seems to have had a substantial store of wine and sack. But Trent was more than a trader, though. He purchased much built land in Inverness, was a landlord, took on major building projects, owned a "kilne in towne" and held a tack of land at Drakies.

His marriage in 1662 with young Issobell Stewart (1645-), daughter of prominent baillie and merchant John Stewart (-1669), was very beneficial to him, as the Stewart family had a network of contacts and markets themselves. John Stewart paid William Trent 1,500 merks as Issobell's dowry (Dott, Dote, Tocher or Tocherguid). It took a lot of searching to find this information. It takes the form of a discharge by William Trent of John Stewart written on 11 July 1663, a year after the marriage

contract, but registered in the Inverness Register of Deeds long afterwards, in 1669. The trigger for registration presumably was the imminent death of John Stewart – he died on 4 April, just a few days after the discharge was registered.

**Higland Council Archives HCA/BI/1/10/2** Burgh of Inverness Register of Deeds 1665–1677

At Invernes the Last Day of March 1669 years In presence of James Cuthbert baillie compeared John McPherson pro[urato]r. for William Trent in the Discharge underwritten ... the tenor followes: I William Trent merchant burges of Invernes grant me to have received ... ane thousand & fyve hundreth merks Scots money and that is thankfully payet be him to me in name of Dott & tocherguid with Issobell Stewart now my spous conforme to the matrimoniall contract made & sub[scrivi]t be us theranent qlk is of date the fyfteent day of March Jaivi& & sextie tuo yeirs ... the said John Stewart as prn[cipa]ll. and James Stewart his eldest lau[fu]ll. for his Cau[tione]r. [written]. at Invernes the elevent day of July Jaivi& and sextie three years Before thir witnesses Robert Rose writer in Invernes And the sd James Cuthbert writer herof Sic Subtr. William Trent Robert Rose witnes Ja Cuthbert witnes

Within a few months, the benefits of having a baillie as his father-in-law can be seen. On 4 August 1662 (HCA/BI/1/1/5) Robert Rose, one of the Council and a former Provost, attempts to have registered in the Council minutes his sasine for three roods of built land in the burgh, on the Kirk Street. He has secured this from one Alexander Paterson because of debts owed by Paterson to him, following a decision by the Lords of Council and Session in Edinburgh. However, William Trent has a *prior* claim, as he had an earlier wadset on the land himself, pledged by Paterson in lieu of repaying a very substantial sum which Trent had loaned him. Step forward father-in-law, John Stewart. The charter was lodged but “under the protestation following lyk as Johne Stewart above named in behalf of the said William Trent wodsetter abovewr[itten]n protests in the hands of ye clerk” setting out the reasons so that the sasine is not absolute, allowing Trent to pursue his case through the courts. Handy to have one of the magistrates looking after your interests!

Trent seems to have been something of an opportunist. The Council every year put up certain of their assets for let, and occasionally, presumably when his canny bid was the highest, he would secure odd pieces to exploit for the year. I have dipped into the Council Minutes (HCA/BI/1/1/5) and spotted that in 1664, for instance, he secured for a year the “fleshe stock & shambles” (this being the outdoor area of Inverness utilised for butchering meat, a profitable area to hold) and in 1675 he secured in a roup for a year the salt measure and weighhouse (housed, according to *Historic Inverness* (A. Gerald Pollitt, 1981) and *Am Baile* on the left hand ground floor of Dunbar’s Hospital). As every merchant

had to use the official town weights, it would be lucrative to hold this tenancy, albeit for a year only. I am sure I would find Trent seizing similar opportunities (if the price was right) in other years as well.



Dunbar's Hospital in 2023. The building has three storeys. The right section of the ground floor housed the Grammar School until 1792. The left section of the ground floor housed the weighhouse held by William Trent in 1675. The panel above the arched doorway bears the year (1668), the Dunbar coat of arms and an inscription. Photo by Jim Mackay

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ST. MICHAEL'S

68



ALEXANDER DUNBAR  
 PROVEST OF INVERNES

THIS WEXHOUS BELO  
 NGS TO TE HOSPIAL  
 OF INVERNES TE RENT  
 TER OF PARISH DE TE

the inscription reads “This Weyhous Belongs to the Hospitail of Invernes The Rent therof payable be the Master of the Weyhouse to the Treasurer of the said Hospitail”. The three tasselled cushions are of the Dunbar family; there is a similar set in Kirkmichael commemorating Florence Dunbar. Photo by Jim Mackay

William Trent was asked to be responsible for the excise of Inverness, but I do not know if he accepted the post. Again, I imagine it would have depended on how much it paid. Nevertheless it indicates that the Town Council had confidence in his integrity and management capability. The Town Council minutes (*Records of Inverness*, volume 2, edited by William Mackay and George Smith Laing, 1924) report for 21 June 1669:

That day the Magistrats and Councell haue nominat and aypoynted Baillies Hepburn and Fouller to speak with Willeam Trent and to try iff he will wndertack for the excyse, and prowyd for assosiats.

Gerald Pollitt in *Historic Inverness* (1981) says “The first postmaster in Inverness, appointed in 1669, was a William Trent according to Mr Appleyard, his 1973 successor.” I haven’t seen the source of Mr Appleyard’s finding. Certainly the date would be correct as in 1669 the Privy Council passed an Act erecting a Foot Post between Edinburgh and Inverness once a week. I wonder if the excise position and the post master position have been conflated by historians – or perhaps there is a source regarding early postmasters which I have not tapped. I shall check the original Privy Council Act when next in the NRS to see if it gives more details (PC1/40 Privy Council: Register of Acta 22 Nov 1667-12 Jun 1673).

William Trent was not a baillie (magistrate) of Inverness nor does he seem to have sought political importance. His focus was on business. But there is clear indication of how he was perceived in Inverness in his appointment in charge of one of the companies of militia set up in the 1660s (HCA/BI/1/1/5, August 1666). One of the down sides of the loss of Cromwell’s military presence was an upsurge in lawlessness through the country, and Inverness felt itself particularly vulnerable to the depredations of Highland chieftains. In consequence, the Magistrates and Council were vigorous in ensuring their contributions to the militia. William Trent and the other captains of companies took turns lasting 24 hours in providing a guard to the area. Both men and officers were liable to fines if they did not do their bit promptly and punctually.

William Trent was closely involved with Captain Phineas Pett, of the ship-building Pett dynasty ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pett\\_dynasty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pett_dynasty)). Pett had become His Majesty’s agent in Scotland for providing masts and timber for the Navy. Details of his work in the Highlands may be found in *History of the Native Woodlands of Scotland 1500–1920* (T. C. Smout, 2007). Phineas Pett struck deals with several land-owners to purchase their tallest, strongest trees and bought part of Cromwell’s Citadel in order to store the timber before shipment. William Trent was involved. I see a sasine registered at Fortrose on 23 November 1666 (RS38/3 folio 125) “pertaining to Phineas Pett and

William Trent efter designed” referring to the “ Citadeal de Invernes”. Trent had part ownership of several other sections of the Citadel himself to which we will come. Pett stored timber in the Citadel, but we know from his testament dative that Trent also stored slate there.

William Trent was out on the Beaulie Firth with Phineas Pett in 1670, a couple of miles west of Inverness, when their boat was driven by the blast against the shore at Phopachy. The Firth can be treacherous in a storm. We pick up the tale from James Fraser’s *Wardlaw Manuscript*:

At this time Captain Phineas Pot [Pett] came down from London by sea to trye all the firr [then used as a term for pine] woods in the North for masts. He had visited the woods of Straboickle, and found few there; went then to Struy and Glenstrapharrar, and that old wood pleased him. He hath alrady loaded a great ship with masts in Kessock rode, and is providing to load another. Himselfe, wife, and famely have lived at Inverness thir two yeares, and is now wearying. He is a very oblidging man, kindly to the clergy, hath brought much mounny to the country; his uncle, Commissioner Pott, overseer of the navall provision at Shattim [Chatham], hath employed and is like to be his heir. Uppon a certain night, comming down the firth and some comarads with him in his painted great cockboat, he was castin with a northerly blast uppon the shoar of Phoppachy, under the kill [hill?]. I happened to be there and some friends with me, and hearing the cry we run out and rescued the boat. **Mr. Trent, Charles Macklean, marchants in Inverness, were with him, and invited him into my house**, very disstressed and wett; got a good fire and provision for them that night. In the morning it calmd and away they went, but to consider a gratfull man he could never sufficiently requit me that nights gvesting; never saw me afterwards at Invernes, but still I was of a booke or two, papers, of mace, nutmug, cinnamon, cloves, ginger. I could aver one way or other that I had 7 libs sterling worth of spiceries from that gentleman; and, going away this summer, gifted a trunk, carpet, and Cambdens great History.



waves on the Beaully Firth being dashed onto the beach between Inverness and Phopachy; image courtesy of Moniack Lodges

Phineas Pett was not always kindly in financial matters, as Smout gives examples of his not honouring bonds and I see from the Exchequer Records (E75/53) that over 1669 and 1670 even the Exchequer had to take him to court for non-payment of a bond to pay the custom duty on the masts and timber he had exported from Inverness to London. But that sort of behaviour seems to have been normal for merchants of the time.

William Trent, along with several others including the Earl of Seaforth and Lord Tarbat, owned a frigate, the *Dolphin* of Inverness under Captain William Geddes. The *Dolphin* seems to have captured a cargo ship, the *Dow of Horn*, along with a diverse cargo of oaken timber, 25 guns, buckskins, goatskins and cow hides. There are two deeds relating to the *Dow of Horn* recorded in the “burrow books” of Inverness (HCA/BI/1/10/2) . I don’t believe these deeds have ever been published but they are absolutely fascinating. By the first of these deeds, the owners of the *Dolphin* purchased the interest of Captain Geddes in the cargo of the *Dow of Horn*, and by the second the owners of the *Dolphin* sold their interest in the ship herself to Captain Geddes. Note the involvement back in 1667 of Captain Phineas Pett. William Trent was signing for his own interests and on behalf of Phineas Pett, so the two were obviously at this time working hand in glove.

**Mutuall discharge betuixt Earle of Seafort & oysr [others] & William Geddes**

Att Invernes the sevintenth day of October Jaivi& sextie & sevin yeirs [1667]  
It is agreed & finallie endit betuixt ane noble and potent Earle Kenneth Earle  
of Seaforth Sir George McKenzie Knight baronet of Tarbet Alexr Cuthbert late  
Provost of Invernes John Hepburn John Cuthbert pnt baillies of ye sd [the said]  
burgh John Stewart late baillie **William Trent** Alexr Rose James Cowie &  
Alexr Millen owners of ye frigate & man of war .... called the Dolphin of  
Invernes on the ane part And William Geddes captain of the sd frigate on the  
other part ... the fors[ai]d owners hes faithfulie payed to the sd Captain  
certaine sumes of money for granting of the disposition following therfore the  
sd William Geddes for himself his aires & successors sells & dispones to the  
sd owners and ilk [each] ane of ym [them] conforme to yr [their] interest on the  
sd vessell all & haille the reight & interest he hes had or can have on & to the  
oaken timber qch [which] was liberat out of the goodship called the Dow of  
Horn and qlk [whilk] now lyes upon the shore of Invernes near the Dock yrof  
[thereof]... and of the buckskins goatskins & cow hydes that was within the  
samem ship and of all other goods & gear ... the tuentie fyve ... locks or guns  
& tua sling peires now in the sd noble Earle his possession .... w[ritte]n be  
James Cuthbert ... writyr in Invernes ... before thir witnesses Finlay Fraser  
ane of the baillies of Innernes ... Robertson thesaurer & James Cuthbert town  
clerk & Alexr Dunbar provost of Invernes Sic subt.  
Seafort for my selfe & Tarbats part ... Cuthbert Johne Stewart John Hepburn A  
Rose **William Trent for myself and Capt. Pett Phineas Pett**  
A. Dunbar witnes J Cuthbert witnes & writer hereof ...

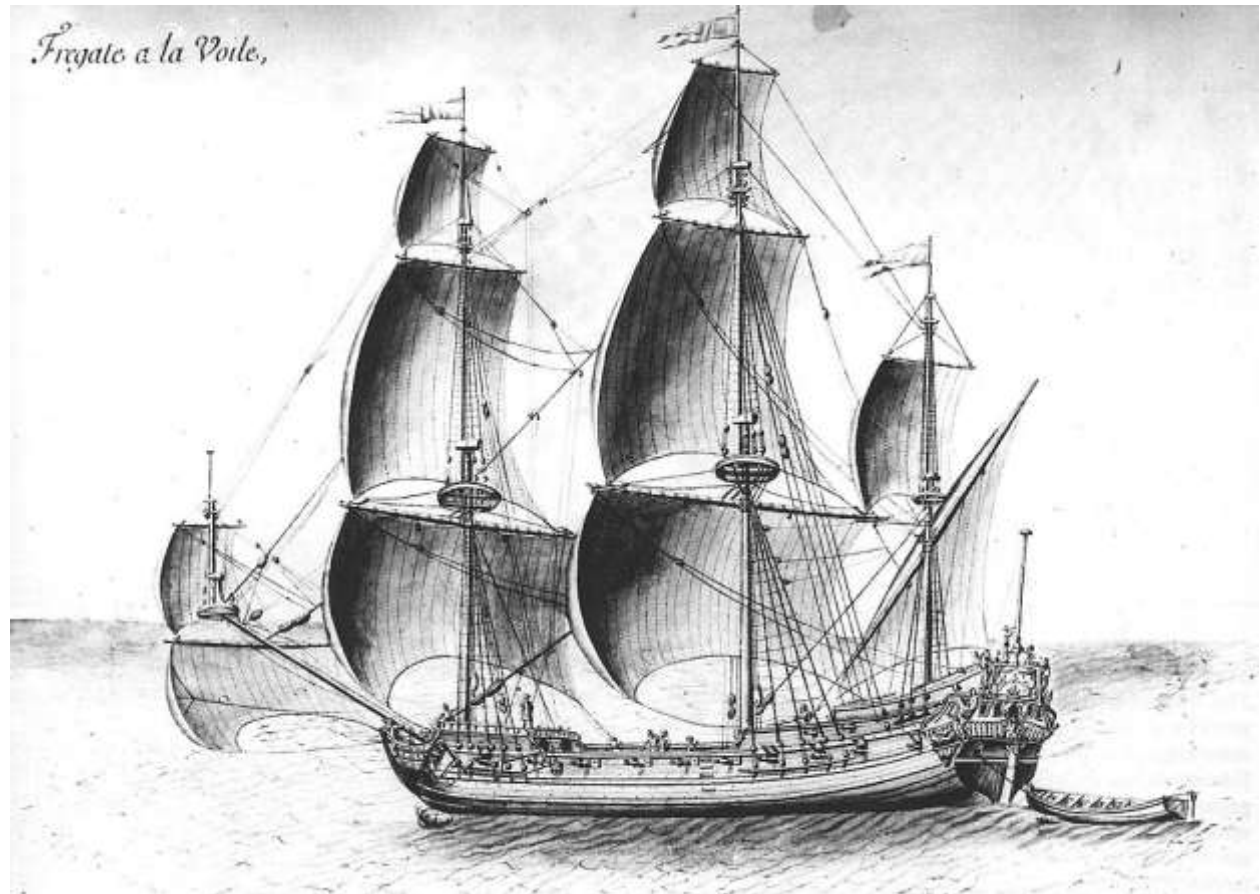
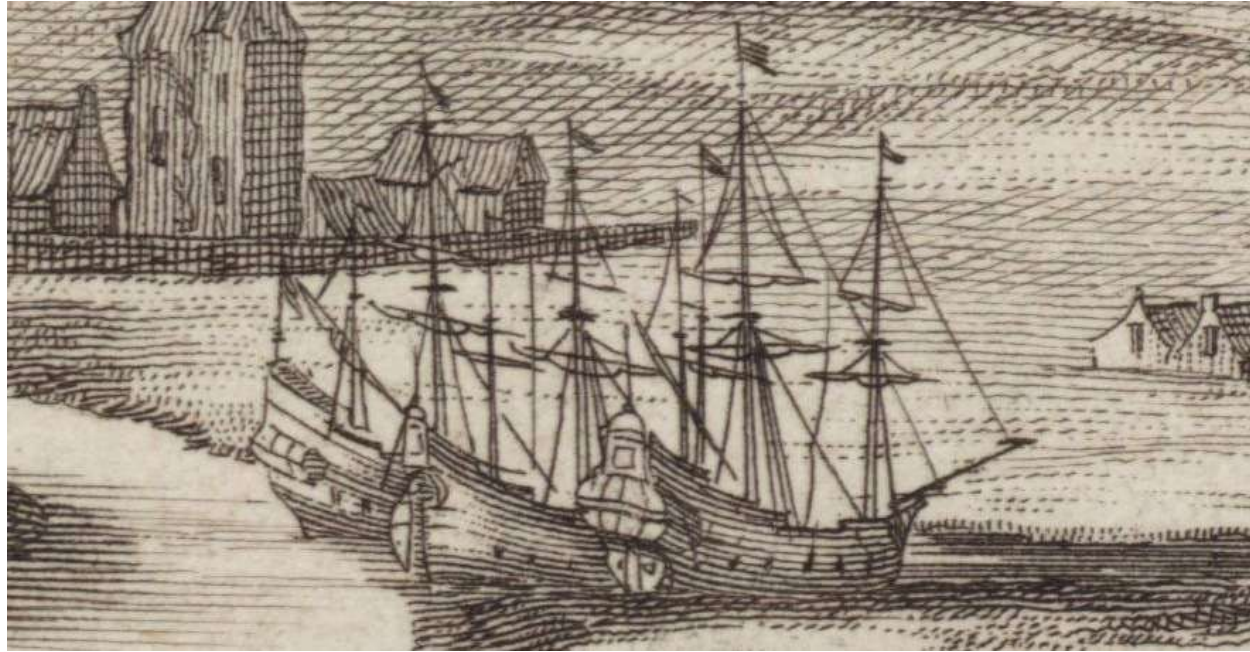


image of a Light Frigate circa 1675 to 1680, from Wikipedia article entitled "Frigate"



ships in Inverness harbour in the 1600s; Modified from the original drawn by John Slezer at <https://maps.nls.uk/view/91169199> by Jim Mackay. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland. CC-BY (NLS)

A frigate in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was a highly manoeuvrable, medium-sized class of warship used to hunt and defend against pirates and privateers. They were three-masted ships with square sails, raised forecastle and quarterdeck, and 24 to 40 mounted guns on two and a half gun decks. Through the centuries various kinds of ship were built in Inverness including the frigate built by Cromwell's men to sail Loch Ness, the *Highland Galley*. I do wonder if the *Dolphin* was, renamed, that very frigate. She had captured the *Dow of Horn*, perhaps a Dutch cargo vessel – Scotland, then a separate nation, entered the war against the Dutch independently from England. The “Scottish-Dutch” wars of 1665–1667 and 1672–1674 are grossly under-researched.

Att Invernes the threttie day of Janry Jaivi & sextie eight ... Be it kend till all men be thir present letters us Kenneth Earle of Seafort George Mckenzie of Tarbet kngt Barronet Alexr Cuthbert late provest of Invernes John... & John Cuthbert pnt baillies John Stuart late baillie Alexr Rose **Phineas Pett Wm Trent** James Cowie & Alexr Millen owners & herell. proprietors of that ship & vessell called the Dow of Horn ... as William Geddes another owner of a part of the sd vessell hes advancit pay[men]t ... we exoner & discharge the sd Wm Geddes yrof for ever ... wit ye us the owners ... to have sold annailzed & dispomed lykeas ... to the sd William Geddes ... ship called the Dow of Horn

with her whole furniture ornaments & pertinents yrto belonging ... In witnes  
qrof wrn be James Cuthbert yor writer in Inverness ... at Invernes the  
sevinteinth day of October Jaivi& sextie sevin years before thir witnesses  
Alexr Dunbar Provest of Invernes Finlay Fraser baillie & James Cuthbert town  
clerk sic subs  
Seafort for my selfe & my ld Taret **William Trent for my selfe & Captain  
Phineas Pet** John Stewart Johne Hepburn A Rose A Millen  
A Dunbar witnes F Fraser witnes J Cuthbert witnes

This was not the only prize ship to come into Inverness, as James Fraser in the *Wardlaw Manuscript* mentions another. In fact, he and William Trent and other friends, when she was re-fitted, went for a voyage on her – admittedly only as far as Cromarty.

There was a great prise, 1666, taken from the Dutch, which lay at Monlochie mouth, a vast hulk of about 500 tun, so bigg that it could not be carried up to Cassack rode [Kessock roads, the deep water off Inverness]. At last the Earl of Crafort, Chancelour, got the gift of this ship from the King, and he substitut Sir Andrew Forrester to come north this June and cause carpenters sight the vessell, who, finding her sound and strong, sent for a crue of seamen south to mannage her, and stayed at Inverness untill they came to him. They considered her burden, and faddoms of water she requird, brought her up to the Road off Cassock, and completed her with all necessaries and provision for a voyage. After this he went aboard of her, and feasted some cammarads in Inverness, and with the usual solemnity baptised this prize under the name of the New Phenix Borealis; and thence Mr. James Sutherland, **Will Trent**, and my selve convoyed my dear Foster down by sea to Cromarty...

### **William Trent – Land, Property and Finance**

There are five sasines in the local Particular Register involving William Trent, merchant Inverness (RS38/3 folios 125, 244, 245, 422 and RS38/4 folio 84) over the late 1660s, all involving land and property in Inverness, usually with William as part of a consortium. Most of these sasines are complemented by entries in the “burrow books” (HCA/BI/1/10/2) of Inverness which contain additional deeds which shed a light on how his deals were funded.

We see, for example, William Trent borrowing:

forty three pounds Sterling from John Semple and Alexander Barrie, masons in Leith, on 1 August 1667 (registered 4 May 1668)  
two thousand merks Scots money from Kenneth Earl of Seaforth on 19 October 1667 (registered 5 May 1668)  
five hundred merks (along with merchant burgess Robert Chapman) from David Cuthbert on 5 November 1671 (registered 13 July 1674) and  
three hundred and twenty pounds Scots money from John Polson, merchant in Inverness, on 8 August 1673 (registered 17 June 1674).

There are plenty of examples in the “burrow books” of this period when he loaned money himself. I see eight, for relatively small amounts, in the period 1663 to 1665, several of them being to merchants in Elgin and Forres, and most of them written by his servitor, William Paterson. They then seem to ease off, as I spotted only two in the late 1660s. But from the evidence of his testament dative he made many more loans which were not formally recorded in the Burgh Register of Deeds, although clearly he kept the “tickets” secure! These were the equivalent of money in the bank, gaining interest all the time.

There are also many deeds recorded in the Register of Deeds in Edinburgh but I have not investigated these in detail. I see William on 21 December 1664 being granted a Bond in Relief with Inverness merchant William Duff (Dal. 12 832), on 10 May 1665 being granted a Bond by Inverness merchant Alexander Taylour (Dal. 13 637), and on 12 January 1666 himself granting a Bond (Mack. 15 164).

I’m sure an inspection of other years would yield similar examples of his borrowing money to finance his deals. This was how funding was approached in those days and is exactly what you would expect.

Many years after his death, the Town Council reviewed the land which was once owned by William Trent. Their minutes of 22 May 1693 usefully set out some of the land previously in his ownership:

That Day the Counsell Considering that the Rood of burrow biggit land with houses etc. in the Castle Street sometym pertaining to William Trent and now to Alexr Duff of Drummuir holding of the Burgh in libero burgages  
And also another particat of Land in the Castle wyn[d] of this burgh som tym belonging to the sd Wm Trent now to the sd Alexr Duff  
And another particat of burgage land lying bewest the water of Ness somtym belonging to Alex Tayler thereafter to Wm Trent & now to the sd Alexr Duff wherof they cannot find ane reddendo in the original rights ...

## Oliver Cromwell's Inverness Citadel

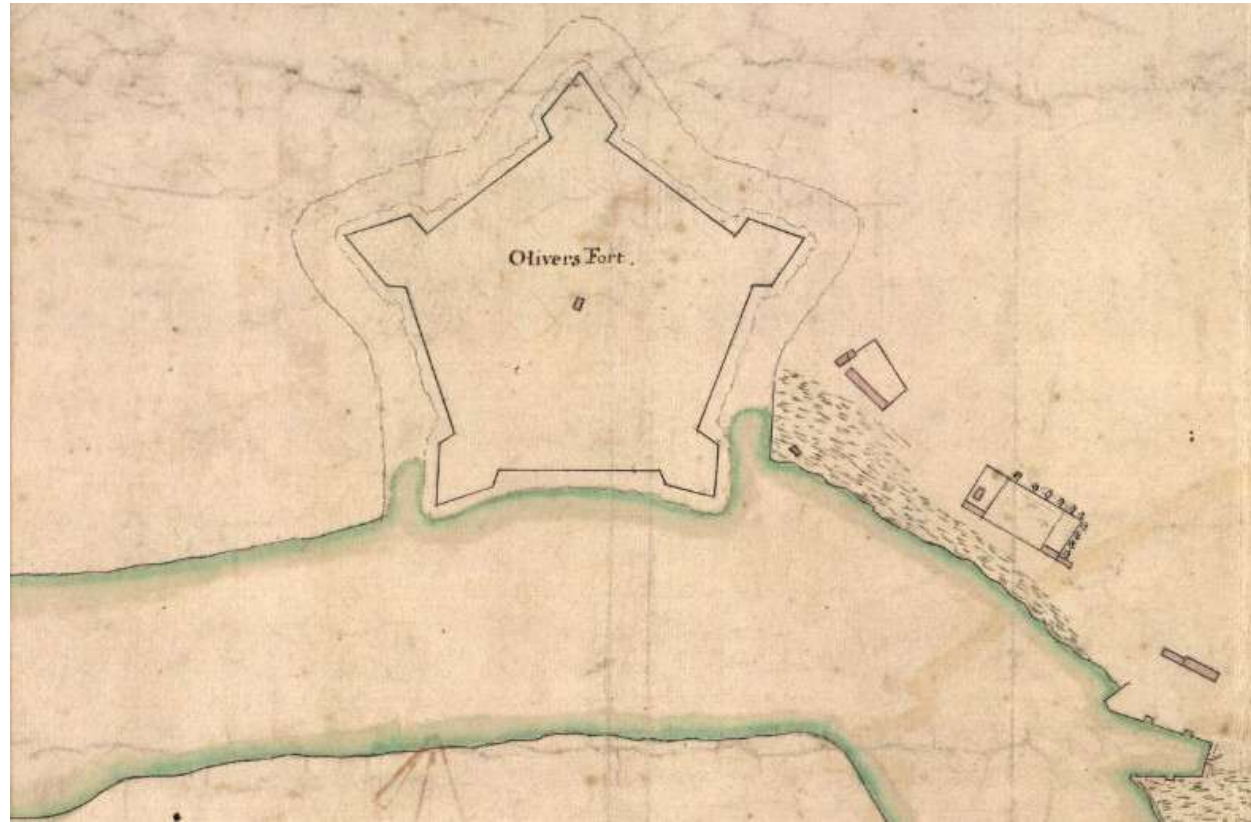
In a sasine registered at Fortrose in September 1667 (RS38/3 folio 244) David Foulger, William Trent and John Super became possessed in the “great house commonlie called the bridgehouse and the bridge thereby belonging called the blewbridge and of all the stanes timber and irone thereof as it stands at the present and of the saids ten yards of lenth of ground on each syde of the said house round about lying as said is to the said David Foulger William Trent and John Super.” By a later sasine (RS38/4 folio 84) Trent was confirmed in his possession of his part of the buildings and land here.



the remains of the abandoned Citadel can be seen top centre of this portion of an engraving by John Slezer published in *Theatrum Scotiae* (1693). Modified from the original at <https://maps.nls.uk/view/91169199> by Jim Mackay. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland. CC-BY (NLS)

This sasine is complemented by the following entry in the Inverness Book of Deeds [registered at Inverness 4 May 1668] (HCA/BI/1/10/2):

Me John Semple measson in Lieth forasmeikle as I have sold & dispoenet to Davd. Fuller ane of the baillies of Invernes William Trent mert. burges yr & John Super burges of Aberdeen the bridge housse and ye blew bridge and all the stanes and Iron yrof as it stands for the presents and Ten yards of lenth of ground on each syde of in the sd housse & round about lying wtin the citadail of Invernes ... ye tuentie ane day of August Jaivi& & sextie seven years



plan of the Citadel c1716 drawn by Lewis Petit. Modified from the original at <https://maps.nls.uk/view/00002950> by Jim Mackay. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland. CC-BY (NLS)

These were big sections of Oliver Cromwell's gigantic Citadel – a military edifice which had cost the extraordinary sum of £80,000, but which on the Stuart Restoration would be demolished just a few years after its erection. Building was started in 1652 and completed in 1658, the year of Cromwell's death. Following the Restoration, the Citadel was gifted away by being erected in 1664 into the burgh of regality of Kingsburgh in favour of the Earl of Rothes and Lord Bellenden. They in turn soon disposed it to John Air, ironsmith, and John Semple and Alexander Barrie, indwellers (or "meassons" as revealed in the Inverness Book of Deeds) in Leith, as compensation to the Scottish masons, carpenters and ironsmiths for the expense of building and furnishing the citadel of Leith (*Registrum magni sigilli regum Scotorum*, xi, no 897).

William Trent, in association with assorted partners, soon purchased parts from Air, Semple and Barrie. In Highland Council Archives HCA/BI/1/10/2 we read:

[registered at Inverness 4 May 1668] Me John Semple measson in Lieth for my self and in name & behalf of John Air smith in Lieth & Alexr Barrie measson yr ... partnery of the Citadaill of Invernes ... I have sold & disponed to William Trent burges of Invernes that great house comonlie called the Marshells House wt ye parts pendicles & pertinents yrof together with the bounds of land round about according to the hight lying w[ith]in the Citadaill of Invernes ... the Third day of August Jaivi& & sextie sex years

This deed is complemented by sasine RS 38/3 folio 422 (registered at Fortrose on 19 August 1669) whereby Trent became possessed in “all and hail the forsaid great house comonlie callit the Mershells house & elements yrof w[ith] ye bounds of land round about”.

The Citadel was pentagonal, built up to the east bank of the River Ness close to the harbour and had access for ships at high tide. The walls were three storeys high, built of shaped stone lined with a brick wall, with watch houses on each of the five corners. On the town side was a ‘sally-port’ or controlled entrance, and on the north side was the main gate with an oak drawbridge. This drawbridge was known as the blue bridge, or “blewbridge” in the sasines whereby Trent gained possession of the land and buildings in this section of the Citadel.



the Clock Tower, the second oldest building in Inverness; photo by Jim Mackay

The only remnants still to be seen of Cromwell's riverside fort are the clock tower (rebuilt allegedly on the original tower base using blocks from the Citadel) and the grassy bank by Lotland Place, part of the earthen bastion and ramparts. But the Citadel was once a dominant feature of Inverness, slowly reducing as materials from it were utilised elsewhere. The street that leads down from town to these features is named Cromwell Road, so you know you are on the right track.



the solitary remnant of Citadel embankment. The oil storage depot, the tanks of which can be seen behind the embankment, stands on the site of the Citadel; photo by Jim Mackay

By sasine registered at Fortrose on 17 September 1667, Trent also became possessed in a building known as the Main Guardhouse: “It is my will and I chuse that incontinenti this my preceptum ye passe to the ground of the said house and ther give ane heritable state and saising corporall actuall and reall possession of all and haill forsaid house called the Mainegaurdhouse and of the sd three eln lenth of ground on the north syde threttie one eln lenth of ground on the south syde and four elns lenth of ground on each end”. This was within the place “vulgo vocatie Cittiedeall de Invernes” i.e. commonly called the Citadel of Inverness. The Scottish Ell had been standardised in 1661 to 37 inches, so just short of a metre. Or a bit more than a yard, depending on preference!

### **The Pier and Bulwark at the Dock of Inverness**

The Town Council minutes record a significant undertaking by William Trent, and how his brother Maurice stepped in to assist with provision of materials for its implementation following William’s death. William was paid a relatively small amount in cash but a great deal through being granted authority to take up anchorage and shore dues for a period of five years.

1675 ... 24 May ... Forsameikill as Willeam Trent, merchant in this burghe, is obleist be obligatione to build and rear up ane pier and bulwark at the dock of Invernes, for doeing qrof the Magistrats & Counsell have granted to him fyve

ziers tack of the anchorage and shore dues, with ane hundreth pounds Scotts Money, qlk was peyed to him in hand at the date herof, qlk is borrowed from the present Provest; qlk soume the towne accepts as a debt in and upon them, and therfor the Magistrats & Counsell appoynts the thesaurer to pey the samen back agayne to the said Alexr. Dunbar, Provest, of the first and readdiest money that comes to his hand; in the meantyme appoynts the said thesaurer to give band for payment of the said money at Michalmes nixt, conteaneing failzie and a[mercia]ment.

Qron act.

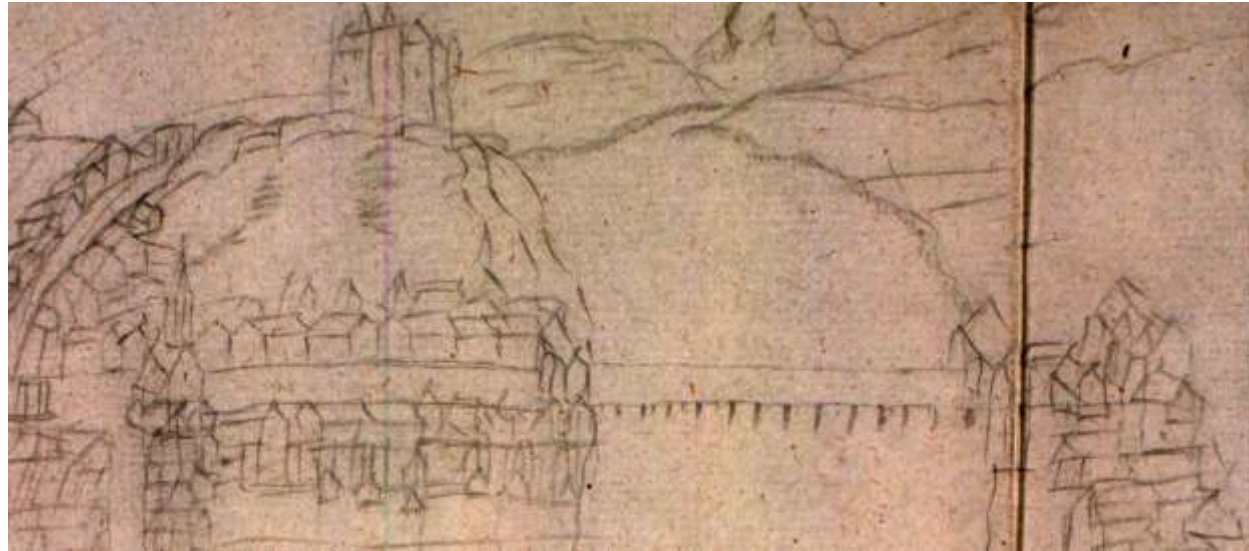
The Magistrats & Counsell have appoynted that the townes men caus lead ane thousand loads of stone from the sconce [the Citadel] to the said dock as a supplie to the said Wm Trent to the said work conforme to ane roll given under the clerks hand be the Magistrats ordor.

When William Trent died early in 1676, the works had not yet been carried out and this caused the Town Council some difficulty. However, by 1678 the complex affairs of William Trent had been resolved to some extent and the Council could negotiate with several of the main creditors, including James Stewart, at times town treasurer and a baillie (magistrate) – and William Trent’s brother-in-law.

*1678 18 Mar.* That day the Magistrats & Counsell being conveyned to treat about the touns effairs, speciallie anent the manadgement and wineing of stons for building & rearing up of quhat is unbuilt as yet of the touns bulwark & peir quhilk suld have beine biggeit be the deceast Willeam Trent, and considdering that they have the consent of the creditors to win & mack use of the stons belonging to the said Wm Trent in the sconce (ther nams ar, the present Provest for his entres [interest], Bailie Duff, James Stewart, and John Barbour), quhoes consent is presentlie had at the penning of this act; the Counsell therfor finding themselves in a capacitie without ther owne prejudice to goe about the wineing of stons for building & outreadding of the said peir, they therfor nominat & appoynt Robert Barbour, bailie, & James McLean, & Alexr Dunbar, Jonstone, to wait on the said work & manadge the samen by causeing winne and lead & imploy the said stons in the said work, and to receiv the money from James Dunbar, elder, qlk wes stented for that effect.  
Qron act.

## **The New Stone Bridge across the River Ness**

The wooden bridge across the River Ness in William Trent's time had deteriorated. In 1664 it was reputedly destroyed, but the destruction could not have been complete as the Town Council were still carrying out repairs in 1679 and 1682 to make it last out. In 1677, it was forbidden to take carts and sleds across it. The long-term aim of the Town Council was to replace it with a new stone bridge.



the wooden bridge in place across the River Ness as sketched by James Gordon of Rothiemay about 1660. I suspect that he was standing on the Citadel when he sketched Inverness, looking south across the town. CC-BY (NLS). Modified from the original at <https://maps.nls.uk/view/00000738> by Jim Mackay. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland

William Trent owned much of the materials that would have gone into the building of the new bridge, but he was now deceased. Brother Maurice, to whom he owed a substantial sum of money, succeeded in becoming William's executor (executor dative qua creditor) and assumed control of his assets. The Town Council therefore entered into discussions with Maurice. The complexities of the ownership become clear, including the interests of Phineas Pett, who had secured part ownership in order to store the timber he was procuring for the Navy. Maurice seems to have then secured the portion owned by Phineas Pett (also now deceased) and passed on everything to the Town Council treasurer. From the Town Council minutes again:

*1681 15 April* The Magistrats & Counsell appoint Bailie Duff to buy from Maurice Trent for the use of the stone bridge the Kirk of the Citadail as it now stands above & under ground with the ground right qron it stands, and that at the easiest rate he possiblie can...

1681 4 Aug. That day the saids Magistrats and Counsell ... considering the great stop & impediment the work of building the stone bridge is lyke to meitt with by the want of stones, qhich is occasioned through Baillie Duff his not purchassing of ane disposition to the church in the Citadell; and considering that the said Baillie Duff hes by ane letter directed to the Provest certified that he hes made ane finall bargain with Maurice Trent, and that the Toun may friely medle with the said Church for the forsaid use notwithstanding the disposition be not sent home, the Magistrats & Counsell upon the considerations foresaid all in one voice agried and think it fit & expedient that the said Church be immediatlie medled with towards the erecting of the said stone bridge; and for the better effectuatn therof they appoint Alexr Tailzeor to oversie the casting down & demolishing of the said Church to the end the stones therof be aplyed to the use abovewritten...



the stone bridge over the River Ness built in 1685 and drawn in 1848 before its destruction by flood waters, looking south over the town; drawn by Alexander Ross, architect, and published in *The Northern Highlands in the Nineteenth Century*, volume 1, by James Barron (1903)

*1681 26 Sept.* The qlk day the saids Magistrats and Counsell being assembled for taking inspection in the Touns affaires, and having required ane accompt of Baillie Barbour annent his recoverie of ane disposition from Maurice Trent in favours of the Brugh of Innernes of the Church in the Citadeall therof, he for report of his diligence presentit in face of Counsell ane Disposition from Joseph Helbie, carver, of Lyme hous in the Paroch of Stepni, alias Stepni heath, administrator and heir apparent unto the deceast Phineas Pett, one of his Majesties builders at Woolwich, sometimes His Majesties Agent for Woods in Scotland, heretable proprietor of the thrie third parts of the kirk in the Citadeall, in favours of the said Maurice Trent, as also another Disposition of Maurice Trent in favours of James Stuart, present Thesaurer, and his successors Thesaurers of the brugh of Innernes of the thrie thirds parts of the said kirk of the Citadeall, with ane order for Charles McLean, merchant, to delyver up to the said James Stuart the Disposition grantit be John Sempill to Phineas Pett and the deceast William Trent of the said kirk of the Citadeall: Quich papers are instantlie delyverit to the said James Stuart, Thesaurer; and the Counsell ordaines the said Baillie Barbour to infest him and his successors Thesaurers of this Brugh in the said kirk this day...



the beautiful bridge created from Citadel stone captured by William Daniell in 1813, looking north across the town to the Beauty Firth

The new seven-arch bridge, built with stone from the Citadel, lasted from the 1680s through to 1849, when it was swept away by floods. The town also suffered badly from the flooding, and the incident featured in the national press. The *Illustrated London News* of 10 February 1849 featured a dramatic picture of the event, drawn by Mr James Hardie, architect of Inverness, and reported that the flood had exposed, at the base of the “Lovatt Arms” next to the stone bridge, “an ancient arched way, which passed under the house, and which, formerly, was the only access into the town of Inverness from the west, by a more ancient wooden bridge than that which has just fallen.”



Recent archaeological investigations have revealed one of the bridge pier bases of the stone bridge, over which the River Ness has been flowing for hundreds of years. These are a few of the thousands of stone blocks which were the subject of negotiations between the Town Council and first William Trent and then Maurice Trent.



**Pier base in River Ness of the first stone bridge in Inverness, built in 1685. Those blocks once formed part of Cromwell's Citadel and were owned by William Trent.**

**Photographed in 2021 by archaeologist and Kirkmichael volunteer**

**Jonathan Wordsworth**

### **Death of William Trent**

It can be seen from his business activities that William Trent was active right up to his death, which must have been rather sudden. We see him as a witness at the baptism of a friend's child on 6 of June 1676, at the baptism of his own child Thomas on 9 October 1676, he had just taken on new projects, he had a large family, some of whom were still very young – and then, quite suddenly it would appear,

he died. He left no will, his affairs were complex and needed close supervision – it must have been a tremendously challenging time for widow Issobell and her family.

When William died, James as the eldest child should have inherited his land and property, but must have been reluctant to do so and went abroad. We'll return to James.

Separate to the inheritance of land and property were the “goods, gear and debts” which with a merchant will always be substantial. William had made no will, but his brother, Maurice Trent in Leith, took action to become his executor dative qua creditor. William had owed him a substantial sum and there were quite a few other creditors as well. Maurice bought several of these out, getting the bonds assigned to him. He became by far the greatest creditor and successfully took over William's goods, gear, debts and money owed as executor dative qua creditor.

The value of William's utensils and domestic trappings, along with “the stons in the close yards” (this will be building blocks stored in the yards off the close his shop or house stood in) and “a quantity of sclate lying in the Sconce” (roofing slate stored in the Citadel) amounted to 350 pounds Scots. But the “merchandese in the shope cellar and planks in the loft with the lighter boll[?] and a remnant of the sack & brandy” came to 1,206 pounds 13 shillings 4 pennies Scots, a considerable sum. One wonders if he had paid import duty on the sack and brandy. All in all, the image conjured up of the cellars of the house and shop stacked with valuable commodities, the lofts filled with planks and the yards about the house piled up with building blocks suggests a business which nowadays would be encouraged to move to an industrial estate!

Having said that, his house was clearly respectable enough to entertain distinguished guests. An entry in the Council minutes reads:

1676 29 Aug. That day also the Counsell appoynts the Magistrats to draw bill on the theserer [treasurer] to pey to Jon Stewart fourtie nyne pundis 8d Scotts money, to Donald McLeane the soume of eichtie eight pundis seven shillings four pennies money forsaid, and to **Willeam Trent the sowme of eleven pundis thrie shillings 4d money forsaid, for bygone accompts restand to tham for treats spent in their houses with noblemen and uthers**, and returne ther severall discharges therof for all bygones preceeding the date of the Bills. Qron act.

Through the compt or counting books that William held and presumably a box of bonds carefully maintained, Maurice carved out an inventory of money owed by and to William. The money owed by William comprised a relatively small number of large bonds. The money owed to William comprised a vast miscellany of small and large debts. The Testament Dative (CC11/1/3) goes on forever.

Several of his creditors attempted to gain preferred status because of the nature of their debt. The most important of these debts was money for Issobell Stewart herself through her contract of marriage, presented by burges James Stewart, her brother. But the other claims shed a light on some of William Trent's commercial activities. The Inverness Excise Collector John Forrester sought payment of a debt of 900 pounds Scots for salt excise payment. Baillie William Duffe was owed 500 pound Scots for the excise of salt. Charles Muray, William Coming and James Ritchy also sought preference for excise money resting to them. Alexander Dumbar, provost, sought hospitall money resting to him by William Trent – this was for Dunbar's Hospital, still standing on Church Street 350 years later.

You will note much reference to salt, at this time a highly-taxed key commodity. It was the only bulk food preservative in use, and was both imported and produced locally, all sources being subject to tax. Trade in salted herring and pork was important, and both were produced in Inverness. Herring was so crucial that I see from the Inverness Kirk Session minutes:

**Inverness Kirk Session Minutes 31 July 1722**

The Session considering that the most of the Members of Session will be Employed about the Hareing [herring] Fishing They did appoint their next meeting to be upon the 18th of September next

William Trent's debtors were mostly residents of Inverness or neighbouring parishes, but some were in more distant locations such as Tain, Dornoch, Thurso, Aberdeen, Orkney and Edinburgh. There were several distinguished debtors: "my Lord McDonald ... 175 pounds", "Sir John Monro of Foulles", "John McPherson Pro Fiscall", Colen MacKenzie of Culkouy [Kilcoy]", "Mester John Douglas Dean of Ross for a musket and bandiliers[!]"

The "Item ane accompt of debursements upon the building of the ship in partnership betuixt Kinnaries Auchnagairn & the sd deceast William Trent ammounts to 313 pound 9 shillings 6 pennies" indicates that Trent was involved even in ship-building, a rather specialised industry.

We know from the Duff of Muirtown manuscripts (GD299/12) that William Trent and Andrew Jackson in 1675 had secured a tack of Drakies from Lord Macdonell, but we can tell from the testament dative that Trent had sublet it to paying tenants. "Item be my Lord McDonell tack to the deceast William Trent and Andrew Jackstoune and according to the condiscence past betuixt the tacksmen Rory Mackphiper is to pay 22 bolls Donald McLentack 13 bolls Robert Nicolsone 10 bolls and [blank] Widdow in Drakies for 3 bolls".

And we know from the Town Council minutes that he had been granted the tack of the shore and anchorage dues for five years, and the testament dative identified that much was yet to come in from that source.

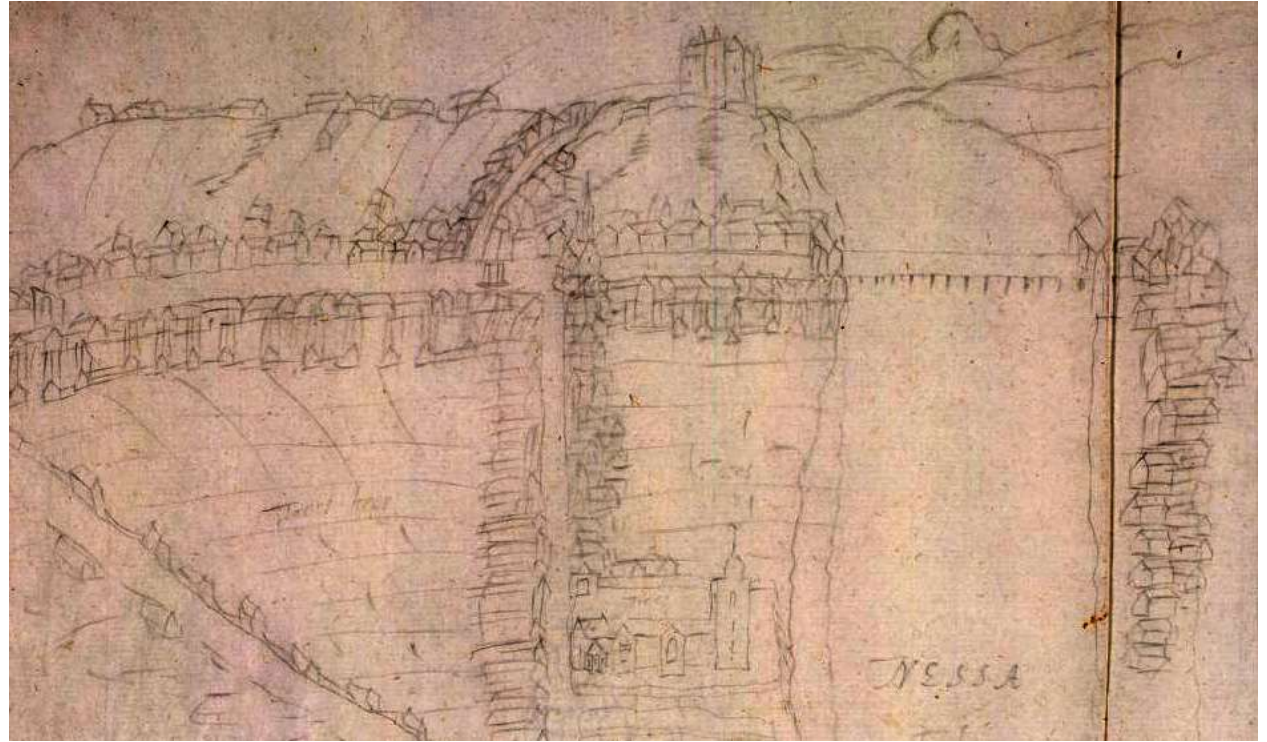
The Laird of Grant, for whom William Trent had repaired Castle Urquhart on Loch Ness still owed him some money: “Item the Laird of Grant restes be accompt 50 pound”.



Castle Urquhart on Loch Ness; photo by Davine Sutherland

The smallest debts from the compt books are not itemised, but one which is identified gives a flavour of the variety of merchandise he sold: “Item resting be Finlay Fraser Dean of Guild be accompt for ane hat and ane pound green ginger eleven pound 8 shilling”. The supermarket is not a modern phenomenon.

I have mentioned that William Trent owned property in Inverness, and his testament dative reveals who was occupying these properties and what they were paying:



several of the buildings sketched here by James Gordon of Rothiemay in 1660 would have been owned by William Trent and he would have been collecting rent on them. Modified from the original at <https://maps.nls.uk/view/00000738> by Jim Mackay. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland. CC-BY (NLS)

- Item resting be Alexr Rosse baillie for a celler in the Sconce 33 pound 6 shilling 8 pennies
- Item Jean Rosse for a half yeares duty at Whitsunday 77 yeares 36 pound
- Item resting be John Cuthbert mert for a halfe yeares rent of his shope 77 yeares 12 pound
- Item resting be Charles Morisone for a year at Whitsunday 77 yeares 15 pound
- Item resting be William Gillespick for a halfe yeares rent of a house 7 pound 10 shilling
- Item resting be Donald Roy in the Kirke gate for a yeares few duety 4 pound
- Item Robert Dallas elder rests for a half yeares rent 77 yeares 20 lib
- Item Thomas Sheves of Moortowne for a yeares rent of his chambers 12 lib
- Item Donald McKillican for a yeares rent at Whitsunday 77 yeares 20 lib
- Item James Stewart seaman for a yeares rent 77 yeares rests 6 lib 13s 4d
- Item Alexr Forbes for a yeares rent 77 yeares rests 4 lib
- Item Wm McBean younger for a yeares rent of a Shope eight lib

A good portfolio!

One of the debts identified in the testament dative rested on the magistrates and town council of Inverness for expenses incurred by William Trent in entertaining the Commissioners appointed to meet in Inverness to resolve differences between the Magistrates, Council, Guild and Trades. By their minute of 21 March 1680 the Town Council agreed to accept the debt, so that Maurice would be paid. But it wasn't all positive: Maurice and one Alexander Paul had to take out letters of horning against the Magistrates, as reported on 30 May 1681 in the Town Council minutes; a committee was organised to speak to Charles McLean who was acting as local trustee for Maurice. This was in relation to the tangled issue of decreets of adjudication to obtain the lands formerly owned by Willim Trent in order to satisfy his debts.

### **William Trent's burial place and Epitaph**

Most unusually, we have William Trent's epitaph, but we do not know where William Trent is buried. There are a few burials from the late 1600s in the Old High Church Burial Ground and the tiny Greyfriars Cemetery, but the main burial area at that time was Chapel Yard and is by far the most likely final resting place of William Trent.



paired wall panels in Chapel Yard commemorating George and James Anderson, periwig makers and burgeses, and contemporaries of William Trent; photo by Jim Mackay

Chapel Yard has been recorded by the Highland Family History Society (*Monumental Inscriptions Chapel Yard Cemetery Inverness*, 1999) but numerous slabs and wall plaques were recorded as now being too eroded to distinguish the original inscription. A limited survey of Chapel Yard was carried out in 1911 (Notes on the Chapel Yard, Inverness, and some of its old monuments; with a notice of heraldic devices on tombstones at Kilmun, F.T. Macleod, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries Scotland*, 1911) which included many inscriptions and descriptions, only a few of which still survive. It even provided photographs of some of the most interesting stones. Several of these old monuments commemorate contemporaries of William Trent who come up in this story: William Duff, Provost of Inverness, Thomas Watson Burgess of Inverness and Collector of the shire, and the spouse of James Ritchie Burgess of Inverness. The author remarked, back in 1911, on how many of the memorials were no longer readable.



blossoms in Chapel Yard; many old slabs lie beneath the turf; photo by Jim Mackay

But they were readable back in 1834, when an even earlier publication (*Collection of Epitaphs and monumental inscriptions, chiefly in Scotland,...* 1834) recorded epitaphs found around Scotland, including 15 in Inverness. One of those 15 inscriptions is “William Trent his Monument.” It doesn’t say in which graveyard it was located, but it most likely was Chapel Yard. And it doesn’t give any more of the inscription than the admonition to live a good life as death is just around the corner. We should be delighted that this at least has survived. I have broken the lines to emphasise the rhyme:

**William Trent his Monument.**

While time doth run,  
    from sin depart,  
For none can shun  
    death’s piercing dart.

**Issobell Stewart (1645–), the wife of William Trent**

Issobell was baptised in 1645 as recorded in the Register of Baptisms (from the rather indistinct copy on ScotlandsPeople):

**Inverness Register of Baptisms**

Sunday ye 7 of December 1645

The whilk day Johnne Stewart burges of Invernes presented a bairne of his to Mr Johne Anand Minister at Innernes to be baptized called Issobell witnesses R Mr William Campbell clerk to ye kirk sessione of the Regiment at Inns. Colline Campbell ... .. Alexr Stewart & Capitan Buchanan and Alexr Barbour

William Trent and Issobell Stewart married in 1662, when Issobell was just 17 years old. Without wishing to sound unromantic, the marriage between William Trent, merchant, and Issobell Stewart was a very rewarding one for Trent. Issobell was the daughter of a merchant burges, later baillie (magistrate) of Inverness, and in his last years Dean of Guild burges of Inverness. The marriage would have facilitated for Trent a network in the town. Issobell's siblings included James, her eldest brother, merchant, baillie and town treasurer, Charles, merchant burges of Inverness, and eldest sister Janet, whose first husband Donald Fuller or Foulter was a merchant as well.

It took some digging to find out who Issobell Stewart's mother was. However, Issobell's brother James Stewart had taken responsibility for the tocher relating to sister Janet when she married Donald Fuller, and Fuller's subsequent discharge of James is registered in the burrow books on 31 March 1669 (Highland Council Archives HCA/BI/1/10/2). From the detail within the discharge, the name of John Stewart's first wife emerges as **Janet Cuthbert**. The Cuthberts were a highly influential Inverness family, so Issobell was well connected through both her parents, John Stewart and Janet Cuthbert. After Janet Cuthbert's death, John Stewart re-married in 1659 one Janet Chapman, daughter of Inverness merchant Robert Chapman (HCA/BI/1/10/2 once again, registered 28 October 1668) and they had four more daughters before Janet Cuthbert died in 1666 (CC11/1/2, Inverness Commissary Court).

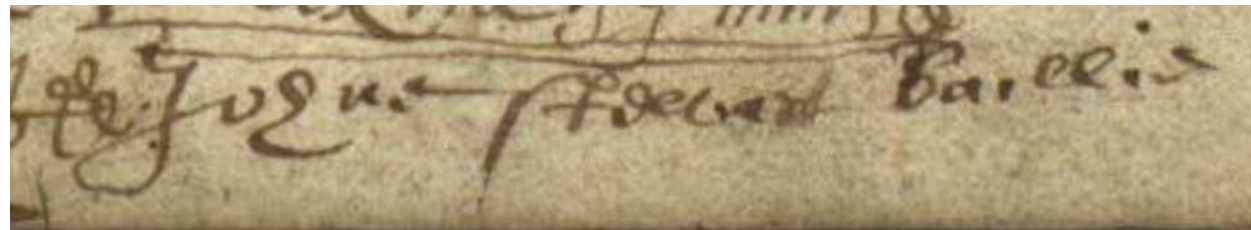
William Trent had financial dealings with all of them, the Stewarts, the Cuthberts, Donald Foulter and Robert Chapman, and even loaned barley and money to Janet Chapman, his mother-in-law.

We have solid evidence of seven children to Issobell Stewart and William Trent. Their youngest child, Thomas, was baptised on 8 October 1676, just a few months short of when William Trent died. But their second oldest son, Maurice, is described on 3 January 1683 as "Maurice Trent Student in Invernes", and knowing this, we can estimate that he would have been born in the mid-1660s.

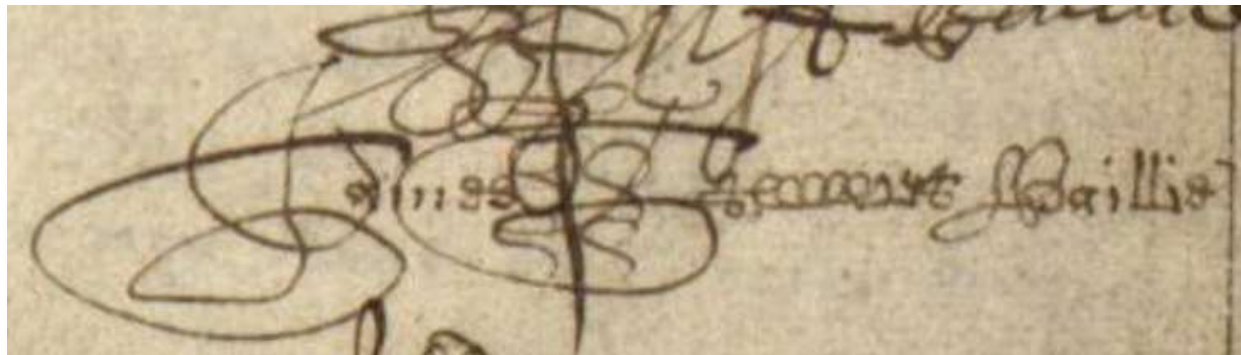
When Maurice Trent of Leith became brother William's executor, the man who represented Issobell's position as a privileged person due to her contract of marriage was James Stewart, her brother. This is from CC11/1/3 Inverness Commissary Court:

as also compeired James Stewart burges of Invernes in behalf of the defunctes reliqui who produced her contract of marriage with the said defunct and protested that the Reliqui might come in prior to all creditoures in regard she is a person priviledged in law for her Joyntour & for hir debursments mad be her upon phisitian servantes fies and the defunctes funiralls

James Stewart (c1643–1716), eldest son of Baillie John Stewart who died on 7 April 1669 (CC11/1/2 Inverness Commissary Court), acted as the Treasurer (Thesaurer) for the Town Council twice. He served as a Baillie (Magistrate) for a period. He had children baptised in 1675 (Jean), 1678 (Janet), 1680 (Marjorie), 1682 (Elizabeth) and 1684 (Jon), and at least two more children in James and William. He appears as a witness and godfather at the baptism of Maurice Neilson, son of Robert Neilson and Elizabeth Trent (daughter of William Trent and Issobell Stewart). Even before I found confirmation, it was a foregone conclusion that he was Issobell's brother.

A close-up photograph of a handwritten signature in dark ink on aged, yellowish paper. The signature is written in a cursive style and appears to read "John Stewart Baillie".

the signature of John Stewart, the father, in the Hospital accounts, 1 December 1663

A close-up photograph of a handwritten signature in dark ink on aged, yellowish paper. The signature is written in a cursive style and appears to read "James Stewart Baillie". There are some scribbles and overlapping lines above the signature.

the signature of James Stewart his son in the Hospital accounts, 7 August 1688

Another brother was Charles Stewart (–1689) about whom I know very little as he died quite young. He became a burges in 1676 (“That day Charles Stuart la[wf]ull son to the deceast John Stuart some tyme baillie of the said burgh ... admitted ... burges & gildbrother of the sd burgh of Invernes”; HCA/BI/1/7/2 Burgh of Inverness Court Book). He married a Margaret Cowie or Cowy who went on after the early demise of Charles to marry another Stewart, David, Collector of the Excise for Inverness, and after he died married a third and final time vintner John McLean. I think David must have defaulted on his marriage contract as there is much litigation within the National Records of Scotland between David’s son John and his stepmother. I have not researched this in detail, but this other line of Stewarts or Stuarts or Steuarts includes the merchant whose edited letter-book *The Letter-book of Bailie John Steuart* (editor William Mackay, 1915) is one of the most important historical records of the Highlands of the 1700s. But that, as they say, is another story.

Issobell’s father John was an important, influential merchant and magistrate in the town. Her brother James was similarly a powerful merchant and magistrate. The two of them keep cropping up in Inverness Deeds, Town Council records, even in Kirk Session and Hospital records – they were pillars of the community in Inverness.



The very hospital, Dunbar's Hospital donated to the town by Provost Alexander Dunbar, and the accounts for which were being signed off by John Stewart and later by his son James Stewart; photo by Jim Mackay



One of the pediments from the 1600s on Dunbar's Hospital

Another man closely connected with the family was Reverend William Stuart (c1675–1729), minister of Inverness on two occasions, and minister of Kiltearn in Ross-shire in between. He was the officiating minister at just about all the Trent marriages and baptisms recorded, even coming over from Kiltearn to do so. He wrote for Robert Wodrow a glowing letter about Reverend Æneas or Angus McBean (c1656-1689), later published in Wodrow's *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* volume 4. Reverend McBean was, of course, the first husband of Janet Trent, another daughter of William Trent and Issobell Stewart. The editor of Wodrow's *History* describes Reverend William Stuart as “his [i.e. Reverend Angus McBean's] son in law”. No, he wasn't the son-in-law of Angus McBean – he was the cousin-in-law.

Despite his spelling his name Stuart instead of Stewart, he was in fact the son of Baillie James Stewart, and nephew of Issobell Stewart.

The relationship is revealed within the unlikely source of the Town Council minutes. In 1686 there is recorded a list of Inverness residents who were to become burgesses, including:

**Inverness Town Council minutes**

1686 ... 20 Sept. That day ... James Stewart & **Mr Wm Stewart**, eldest & **second lawll sones to James Stewart**, p[rese]nt Baillie there, ... now created & admitted burgesses & gild brethren of this brugh and were all solemnly sworne in the comon form used at admission of Burgesses. Qrupon act.

There was an early association between Reverend William Stuart and the Andersons of Udol. In the Register of Inverness Baptisms there is a rather curious entry:

8 Nov. ... 1692 The said day Mr. William Stewart expectant [a Divinity student preparing for a licence to preach] & his spouse Bessie Fearn hade a childe baptised by Mr. Hugh Andersone minr. at Cromartie named [blank, but presumably daughter Christian]

I imagine that the strong Presbyterian credentials of Reverend Hugh Anderson must have been the attraction. This was just two years after Anderson was restored to his former position after a long period deposed due to his non-Episcopalian beliefs.

The following year William Stuart was transported to help out the very depleted Presbytery of Ross-shire and Sutherland, where Hugh Anderson was Moderator. He was settled in the parish of Kiltearn, but was required to supply at many churches across the north (including in his old parish of Inverness) until the number of ministers had increased. He worked closely with Hugh Anderson the elder, and with Hugh Anderson the younger when Hugh began his ministry in the area, also supplying vacant churches until being settled in Rosemarkie. Reverend William Stuart therefore is the first link I see between the Andersons and the Trent family, William's uncle, as we have already noted, being William Trent himself. For more on this, see our complementary Udale story.

The *Fasti* biography of Reverend William Stuart is woefully inadequate, not naming parents or wife, but mentioning that daughter Christian married [in 1715] Daniel M'Killican, minister of Alness, son of another mistreated minister. However, I can reveal that Reverend William Stewart's wife was Elizabeth or Bessie Fearn, daughter of Andrew Fearn of Nigg and Pitcalzean, and sister of Mr David Fearn, writer (later advocate) in Edinburgh.

There was a connection with the Anderson of Udol family through David Fearne as well, as Lachlan McIntosh of Torcastle borrowed £30 from Fearne in 1693, which was assigned by Fearne to Mr Hugh Anderson (son of Reverend Alexander Anderson and Elizabeth Trent) in 1728 and Anderson obtained full payment of the debt and interest in 1735.

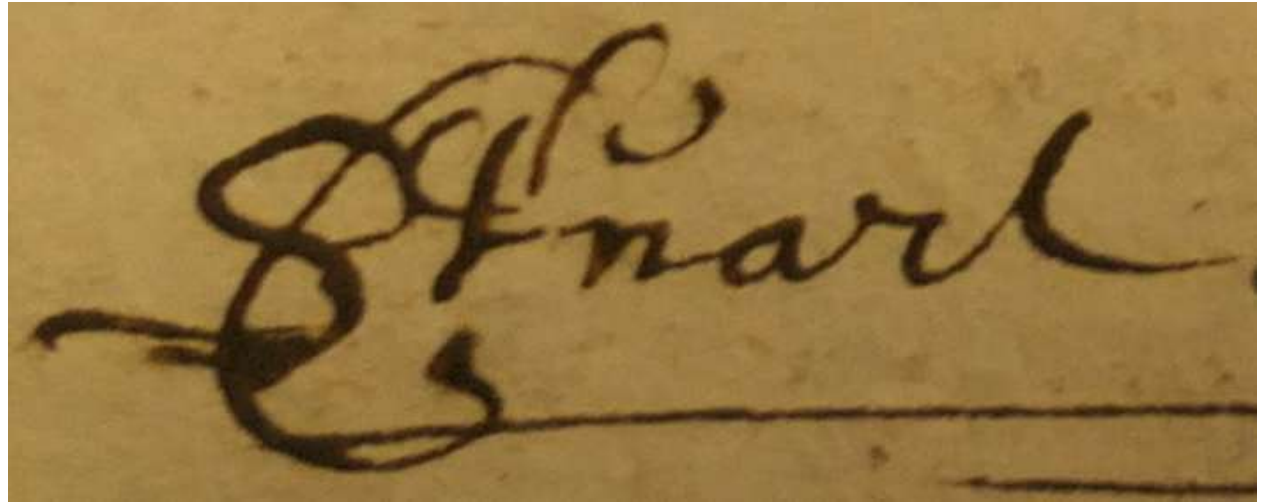
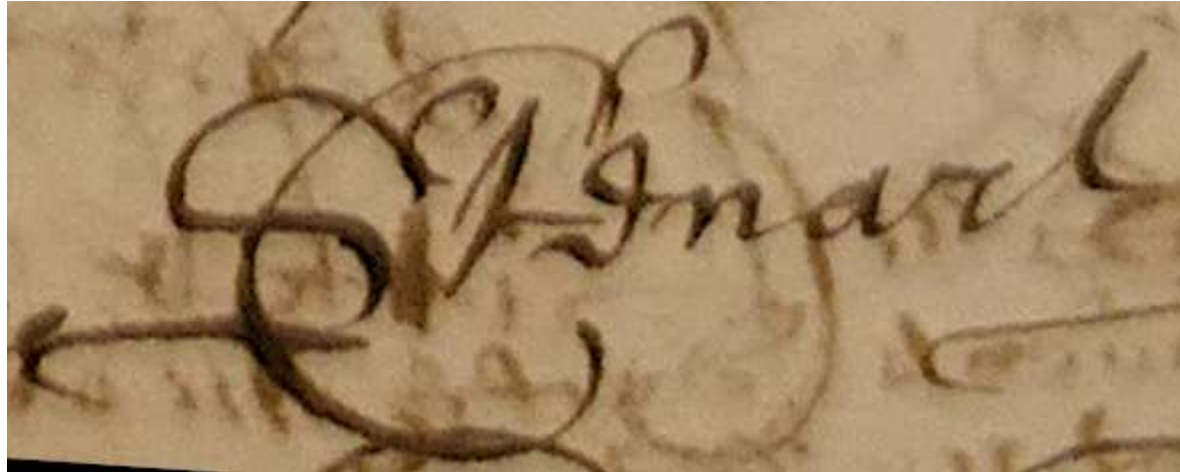
With all these Stewart connections in Inverness, Issobell should therefore have had much support following the early demise of William Trent, although you can never be sure when families are concerned. Certainly brother James was looking out for her interests as evidenced by his role in the testamentary proceedings. And brother Charles was writing discharges for her so he was giving a helping hand as well. Discharges?

Her brother-in-law, Maurice Trent in Leith, had sufficient trust in her to ask her to work as his factor (“factrix”) in the matter of recovering rent for the kilne previously belonging to William Trent. There are five half-yearly discharges or receipts to James McIntoshe, merchant in Inverness, over the period 1682 to 1685 (GD23/5/71). There must be others, but they have not been retained in the McIntosh papers. These receipts were written by Inverness merchant Charles Stewart, brother of Issobell, and signed by him and Issobell, with witnesses identified including sons Maurice Trent “Student at Inverness” and William Trent “Student at Inverness” as in the example given below.

As McIntosh wanted maximum security given the complex financial Trent situation, some of the associated documents state that they were to be copied into official books. The factory apparently is in the court books of Inverness. At least one of the discharges was to be registered “in the books of Counsell & Session Comsrs. Toune Court books of Invernes” so there will be more information waiting there. A transcript of one of these receipts is set out below, written on 16 July 1683:

I Issobell Stewart factrix constitute be Maurice Trent merct at Leith exr. credr confirmed to the deceast William Trent sometime merct at Invernes qch factorie of deat at Edr the [blank] day of [blank] jaivi& eightie [blank] years & regratt in the court books of Invernes the [blank] day of [blank] jaivi& & [blank] years grants me to have received from James McIntoshe merct heir the Just soume of fourtie pounds Scots money & that for the half years rent of the kilne possessed be him to witt from mertimes 82 to whitsonday 83 years together with all other dues resting for that effect in the foresaid warand of qch aforsaid soume I grant the reall receipt & discharges him thereof for now & ever and obleidges me to warrand the same to him & his or any in his name for now & ever at all hands & against all mortall as wites my hand at Invernes the sexteent day of July jaivi& & eightie three years before thir witnesses **William Trent Student at Invernes** & Charles Stuart wreater hearof / C Stuart wites / Issobell Stewart

An interesting point about how the Stewarts signed their name, by the way – depending on time and context, it varied from Stewart, to Steuart to Stuart. Here are two examples of the idiosyncratic signature of Charles Stewart where he signs two of the three variants, the first in 1683 and the next in 1685.

A close-up photograph of a handwritten signature in dark ink on aged, yellowish paper. The signature is written in a highly stylized cursive script. It begins with a large, ornate initial 'C' that loops back under the 'S'. The 'S' is also large and loops back under the 'T'. The rest of the name 'tewart' is written in a more fluid, cursive hand. A horizontal line is drawn across the page below the signature.A close-up photograph of a handwritten signature in dark ink on aged, yellowish paper. The signature is written in a highly stylized cursive script, similar to the one above. It begins with a large, ornate initial 'C' that loops back under the 'S'. The 'S' is also large and loops back under the 'T'. The rest of the name 'tewart' is written in a more fluid, cursive hand. The paper shows some faint, ghostly impressions of other text or signatures.

When did Issobell Stewart die? There is an entry in the old Inverness Death Register which simply states “1689 ... 25 Febry. Departed Isobell Stewart” and some family historians have assumed this is the correct Issobell Stewart. However, if this was the right Issobell then she would have been only 45 years old on her demise. I am pleased to say that she was alive and well for much longer. There is a discharge registered 19 February 1697 (Highland Council Archives HCA/BI/1/10/5 ) whereby Robert

Neilson discharges her, she having paid him the tocher. This in terms of the contract matrimonial “past betwixt me on the ane part and Elizabeth Trent lawll. daughter to the deceast William Trent Sometyne merchant in the said burgh with the speciall consent of Issobell Stuart her mother relict of the said umqll William Trent on the other part of the date at Invernes the fourth day of Junii Jaivi& nynie fyve years“. It goes on to say “And now seeing the said Issobell Stewart hes made full payment ... I hereby ... discharge the said Issobell Stuart and James Stuart ... att Invernes the eighteenth day of January Jaivi& nynie seaven years before thir witnesses William Neilson merchant in Invernes my brother german”. So in 1697 Issobell Stewart was alive and financially solvent. I have found nothing about her following this date. In her later years, she may even have moved from Inverness to reside with one of her married daughters.

### **The children of William Trent, merchant of Inverness, and Issobell Stewart**

Inverness in the 1600s was proud of its Grammar School, with the Magistrates and Council finding funds for school and schoolmaster by stent, i.e. by a locally imposed tax. The children of William Trent and Issobell Stewart would have received their education there, although it might well have been supplemented by private tutors. The Council never seems to have been happy with the condition or location of the buildings used as a Grammar School in those days, but they went to some lengths to ensure the quality of its schoolmaster.

#### **1. James Trent (–1697), eldest son, officer in the Swedish Navy and merchant**

By 1686, James Trent was abroad. John Stuart (not a close relation), merchant and burgess of Inverness, was pursuing him in the Court of Session (CS98/2856 Decreet Stewart v Trent 1687) to take up his inheritance as heir to his father, as he would then be liable for heritable debts.

John Stewart was seeking feu duties for an area of built land west of the River Ness in Inverness (CS98/2856). The duties stretched away back to 1655, which I presume was when father William Trent had purchased this land. The annual sum was relatively small but it had built up considerably over the years. As James was abroad by now, John Stuart was obliged to have James proclaimed at the standard locations for somebody overseas, at the mercat cross of Edinburgh and the pier and shore of Leith:

upon ye fiftain day of Sepr. Jaivi& eightie sex yairs I George Lumsden messenger ... adjudication raist at ye instance of Jon Stewart mert. burges of Invernes past too ye marcat croce of Edr pair & shore of Leith respective ... and charged ye within designed **James Trent eldest laull. son to ye deceast Wm Trent mercet burges of Inverness upon three scor dayes warning he being for present furth of this realm** to compair befor ye Lords of Counsell & Session

The documents within CS98/2856 indicate that John Stewart merchant burges of Inverness had first obtained decret before the Lords of Council and Session on 29 March 1684 against:

**James Trent eldest lauffull sone and air served and retoured to the deceast William Trent merc[han]t burges of our s[ai]d burgh** and as other wayes representing him upon ane or another of the passive titles yrin [therein] ment[ioned]. and Allexr Dunbar late provest of our said burgh Allexr Paull mercet in Elgine and Maurice Trent mercet in Leith for yr entress [their interest] and all others haveing or pretending to have interest in the sd matter for the causes yrin specifit Decerning and ordaineing the sd James Trent nominibus passivis quibus supra and the remanent persones @named [abovenamed] for yr entress to make payment satisfaction and delyverance to the sd Complr. of the soume of Eight merkes money of this our Realme as the yearly feu dewtie yearlie to be uplifted out of that particat of borrow bigged [built] land

The term “borrow land” simply means land or houses belonging to, or situated within, a borough. For those wishing to track down where this was located, the decret continues:

with the houses biggings to be built yrupon and yeard yrof lyand within our sd burgh of Invernes bewest the water yrof Bounded with John Baillie Allexanders sone [i.e. John Baillie the son of Alexander Baillie] his lands at the **north** and **west** pts re[spect]ive. the Lands or kilne of John Hapburne at the **south** and the water passing the water syde of Nesse to the bridge at the **east** and that from the terme of mertimes jaivi& and fiftie fyve years [Martinmas 1655] to the sd terme of mertimes jaivi& eightie three [Martinmas 1683] yeares and yearlie and termly in tyme comeing Extending the sd yearly feu dewty of eight merks since the sd term of mertimes jaivi& and fiftie fyve years to the sd terme of mertimes jaivi& and eightie three years to the soume of Ane hundred fourtie nyne pounds sex shilling eight pennies money forsd

John Stewart seems to have had no particular interest in other aspects of William Trent's finances. All he wanted was to "lauffully charge the sd James Trent to enter air in speciall to his sd deceast fayr in all and hail the sd particat of borrow bigged land yeard" and for James Trent to pay him the money owed. With James Trent now abroad he couldn't pursue him any further but he could take over the land himself: "the sd James Trent as if he wer entered air and in feft in maner forsd ought and should be decerned be decreet forsaid to enter the sd Complainer to the peaceable possessione of the saids lands particat abovespecifit at least such ane prt yrof as shall be adjudged to him in maner forsd and to the intromissione with the maills fermes profets and deutes of the samen in satisfaction of his @rents".

So where was James Trent while all this was going on? We don't know his earlier history – it has been suggested that he may have been to America - but in 1689 he was a quartermaster for the Swedish army in Wismar, now part of Germany, but at that time the administrative centre of all Sweden's German possessions. He then moved to the Swedish navy, becoming midshipman in 1689, "overstyrman" in 1691, sublieutenant in 1694 and "kofferdt" in 1696. This is from information extracted from the Swedish *Biografiska Anteckningar om Officerare vid Orlogsflottan 1600–1699* page 391 and published on an online database by the University of St Andrews Institute of Scottish Historical Research (<https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/history/ssne/item.php?id=4187>). I have not seen the original officers' biography which may yield more information; it is an unpublished manuscript by Hjalmar Börjeson written in 1935 and held in the Krigsarkivet (War Archives) in Stockholm.

Whilst James was away in Sweden, more legal processes were going on in his absence. In GD23/2/27 we read of a charter (dated 15 December 1691) by Hugh Robertson, provost of the burgh of Inverness, and William Duff, senior, James McLean and John Barbour, bailies thereof, with consent of the members of council, to Alexander Duff of Drummuir, merchant of the said burgh. The charter was of two roods of burgh-built land, with houses, buildings, kilns and yard, lying on the west side of the Church Street of the said burgh, and other subjects, all lying within the territory thereof; which subjects formerly pertained heritably to deceased William Trent, merchant of the said burgh, and were **adjudged to the said Alexander Duff by decree of sale, by the lords of Council and Session, on 28th July 1691, against James Trent, son of the said William, and his tutors, and against Alexander Dunbar, former provost of the said burgh, and others, in satisfaction for the sum of £4366 13s 4d Scots, to be paid to the creditors of the said William Trent; and sasine to the said Alexander Duff of the said subjects by the hands of James McLean, one of the bailies of the said burgh.**

Having served in the Swedish forces, James Trent moved into the private sector, becoming a ship's captain and merchant. In James' second will, written in 1697, David Amya of Gottenburgh in the Kingdom of Sweedland Merchant is mentioned in a context implying the two of them were trading together, so James had established trade contacts in Sweden whilst he was there. The David Amya or

Amija referred to was a merchant, alderman and member of parliament. His entry in the Swedish Biographical Dictionary may be read [here](#). There was a strong Swedish presence in Pennsylvania in this period, particularly along the Delaware Valley so James may well have picked up some Sweden-Pennsylvania trade. Brother Maurice actually settled in Chester County in Pennsylvania, formerly the Swedish colony of Upland within “New Sweden”.

In Pennsylvania tax rolls of 1693, both William and James Trent are listed as residents of Philadelphia. Although James Trent might have been so listed, as a sea-faring captain it is unlikely that he was spending long periods residing anywhere. The evidence is that he was constantly on the move, crossing the oceans regularly.

We next pick James Trent up in London on 26 November 1695. He must have been contemplating a particularly hazardous voyage as on that day he wrote his first will, something many mariners did before sailing. He nominated as executor “Mr Thomas Coats” merchant. This was Thomas Coutts (1667–) of the well known Aberdeenshire Coutts family, who had moved to London as a merchant, and crops up in James’ second will as well. He was closely associated with the enterprises of Maurice Trent in Leith and the Inverness Trent brothers. (Thomas Coutts was also a promoter of the Darien enterprise which became the Darien financial disaster that triggered Scotland’s union with England, but that is another story).

The first will confirms the Swedish element:

I Capt. James Trent lately residing in Sweden but at present in the City of London being in good health of body and of sound and disposing mind and memory (thanks be to God for the same) considering natures frailty and deaths certainty do make and appoint my last will

He left everything to his mother, with Thomas Coutts as Executor:

I give leave and bequeath all and the whole thereof reall and personall whatsoever and wheresoever to my dear Mother Isabella Stuart living at Inverness in the Kingdom of Scotland and revoking all former Wills by me made either verbal or in writing do will that these presents only (of which I nominate Mr. Thomas Coats of London Merchant full and sole Executor in trust for my said Mother) be held reputed and taken as and for my last Will

On 6 April 1698 Thomas Coutts became administrator of the executry – the probate states “et creditor dicit defunct” which suggests that James may have owed him money – but the will would later be

revoked by brother William Trent who had been made executor and beneficiary of a later will by James Trent.

James wrote his will on 26 November 1695 and voyaged to Inverness thereafter. On 8 April 1696 as “James Trent laull. son to the Deceast William Trent merchant of Inverness” he acted as witness at the baptism of and became godfather to James Neilson, his sister Elizabeth’s son. It must have been quite a reunion in Inverness. He would have been exchanging news with his Stewart relatives, meeting up with younger brothers Maurice and William and his married sisters and their husbands, paying respects to his mother Issobell Stewart.

Thereafter he sailed for America again and was in Pennsylvania contemplating yet another sea voyage when he wrote a second will, which he signed and sealed on 30 October 1697 (PROB 11 448 92):

I James Trent of the Town of Invernes in the Shire of Murry in the Kingdom of Scotland Merchant at present in the Province of Pensilvania in America being in perfect health but intending a Voyage to Sea do make this my last Will and Testament in manner and form following vizt. Imprimis I comitt my Soul to God And as for my worldly Estate of what nature and quality soever ... **I give and bequeath the same and every part thereof unto my loving Brother William Trent of Philadelphia in the said province of Pensilvania Merchant** And more particularly one eighth part of the Ship Charles and her Appurtences with the eighth part of the Cargo and Servants and the proceeds thereof (whereof Edward Burwash is Comander) As also what Sume or Sumes of money goods or merchandize that are now, or may hereafter come into the hands of Thomas Coutts of London Merchant or Patrick Foutte of Edinburgh in the Kingdome of Scotland Merchant or David Amya of Gottenburgh in the Kingdom of Sweedland Merchant ... And lastly I do make nominate and appoint my said brother William Trent full and sole Executor of this my Will Revoking all former and other Wills heretofore made and declaring this to be my last Will and Testatment and none other or otherwise

Note the locations of his business partners: Gothenburg (Sweden), London (England) and Edinburgh (Scotland); with brother William based in Philadelphia. These were some of the key points of his trading interests. We do not know when exactly he died but probate of his first will was completed by Thomas Coutts on 6 April 1698. This will was revoked later, but given the length of time that passing through probate takes, that date does indicate that James must have died not long after he signed his second will, perhaps on the very sea voyage he was taking precautions against.

Why did he alter his will, leaving everything to brother William rather than to his mother? The most likely reasons are that his mother had died or re-married. The actual revocation of the first will would be interesting to read. I understand from the National Archives in Kew that the revocation is likely to be within the Probate Act Book under PROB 8/92 so if anyone is in the National Archives at some point, please locate and photograph this section for me!

One of his voyages in his last year was an engagement in the indentured servants trade. This was completely legal – but only if the servants were indentured; unfortunately the servants were not always indentured and included children taken from the street. His ship was heavily armed, carried 150 Scots to be servants, was too early to obtain a return shipment of tobacco, was next heading for Barbados but would be in Maryland in the fall (*Archives of Maryland: Proceedings of the Council of Maryland 1696/7–1698*, edited by William Hand Browne, 1903, No. 163).

July the 15th 1697 ... While I was up at Philadelphia one **Capt James Trent** came up who had left his Ship mounted with 36: Guns below the Town of New Castle and brought in above 150 Scotts Servants but little Goods, he did search for me understanding I did live in Maryland, and asked me whether I could give him incouragemt to Come to Maryland he wanted a Loading Tobacco to wch made Answer that none or little was to be gott before the New Crop, upon wch I do believe he doth intend to make a voyage to Barbadoes, and so in the fall to Come there, I doe suppose he doth serve in the same imploy with Mr James Coutts: this being the Substance of what I doe know of the matter, have thought my Duty in Ordr to his Exncys Comands to acquaint you with and Subscribe, / Yor humble Servt / Matt: V: Heyden

Captain James Trent was clearly constantly on the move, always seeking profitable cargoes. Scotland – Philadelphia – Barbados, thousands of miles being travelled in a few months, all under well-armed sailing power.

## **2. Maurice Trent (–1697), second oldest son**

Named after his uncle Maurice, we know that young Maurice was the second born son from the baptism record of his nephew, Maurice Neilson, in Inverness on 9 April 1696. He acts as a witness to the baptism and is recorded as “Maurice Trent Second Laull. son to the said William Trent merct.” It may be that he had travelled back to Inverness with brother James, who we know was in London just a few months earlier.

He had been a student in 1683. His mother worked with brother-in-law Maurice on the executry of her late husband, and there is a set of discharges or receipts (GD23/5/71) granted to James McIntoshe, merchant in Inverness over the period 1682 to 1685. One of the witnesses to her discharge of 3 January 1683 is “Maurice Trent Student in Invernes”. In this period “student” was usually applied to an undergraduate at one of the universities (but students could be much younger then than they are nowadays).

There is some confusion in the literature regarding a letter from Patrick Falconer dated 28 October 1684, published in *The Model of the Government of the Province of East New Jersey in America* (Edinburgh; 1685). Some writers have it that it is addressed to Maurice Trent, Elizabethtown, East New Jersey. However, it is in reality from the fact-finding Patrick Falconer who had just been in Philadelphia and had just arrived in Elizabethtown, East New Jersey. The Maurice Trent he was writing to will be none other than Maurice Trent of Leith, who had a keen interest in the land and trade in the area, and I imagine Patrick Falconer would have been an in-law of Maurice as Maurice’s daughter Elizabeth had married a Falconer, Sir James Falconer of Phesdo.

Nevertheless Maurice from Inverness did indeed go out to settle in Philadelphia, and a few years later his uncle Maurice gave young Maurice the right of attorney to sell land for him. Here are some extracts from Gloucester County Deeds Volume 3 to provide the context, transcribed laboriously by me from copies of the originals kindly provided to me by New Jersey State Archive. Note that young Maurice describes himself (as he does in his marriage record) “marriner” so clearly he, like brother James, had been plying the seas in trade. And note Edward Bylling of London – he and Maurice Trent of Leith had been associated for many years – Maurice acted as cautioner for “Edward Byllings, Englishman” in a high profile case involving Lady Bairfoot way back in 1663 and in 1680 the Duke of York gave “Confirmation of the soil and grant of the Government of West New Jersey in America to Edward Byllinge, his heirs and assigns”. He would later donate much land to Quaker families.

First of all, here is Maurice Trent in Leith securing the land:

**Gloucester County Deeds Volume 3 page 77**

This Indenture made ye second day of July Ano Dom One thousand six hundred and eighty one and in ye three and thirtieth year of ye Reigne of King Charles ye second over England &c. Between **Edward Bylling of London, Gent** Gawen Lawrie of London merch. and Nicholas Lucas of Hertford in ye County of Hertord maulster of ye one part and **Maurice Trent of Leith in ye Kingdom of Scotland merch. and Hector Allen of Preston-pans in ye sd Kingdom of Scotland mariner of ye other part** whereas by virtue of ane Indenture Quinque partite dated ye first day of July ano Dom 1676 and made between Sr. George Carteret of Saltram in ye County of Devon Knight and

Baront. of ye first part William Penn late of Rickmansworth in ye County of Hartford Esqr. of ye second part, ye said Gawen Laurie of ye third part ye sd Nicholas Lucas of ye fourth and ye said Edward Byllyng of ye fifth part They ye sd William Pen Gawen Laurie and Nicholas Lucas became siezed in fee subject to several Trusts of and in all that great part and portion of Land on ye parts of America by ye said Indenture quinqu partite agreed to be called West New Jersey with all and every ye appurtnces whereunto belonging in ye said Indenture mentioned ... ye said Edward Bylling Nicholas Lucas and Gawen Laurie in hand **paid by ye said Maurice Trent & Hector Allen ... doth Bargain and sell by these presents unto ye sd Maurice Trent & Hector Allen their Executrs. adminstrs. and assigns one full equall & undivided ninetyeth part of ye said ninety full equall & undivided hundred parts of all and singular ye sd premises Called West New Jersey** and ... ye sd lands and Islands mines mineralls woods fishings hawkings huntings fowlings and all other Royalties franchises marshes lakes loughs proffitts commoddities and Hereditaments whatsoever unto ye same belonging to have and to hold unto ye said Maurice Trent and Hector Allen...

And here is Maurice Trent providing nephew Maurice Trent with powers to act as his attorney. Note he describes young Maurice as “my truly and wellbeloved friend and nephew” – friend was a word of great significance to Maurice Trent, he being a devoted member of the Society of Friends, the Quakers.

**Gloucester County Deeds Volume 3 page 89** (January 1695)

... Be it known to all men by these presents me Maurice Trent of Leith in ye Kingdom of Scotland Merchant forsomuchas Edward Bylling of London Gentleman Gawen Laurie of London Merchant Nicholas Lucas of Hertford in ye County of Herford maultster by one Indenture between them of ye one part and ye said Maurice Trent and Hector Allen of Preston Pans in ye sd Kingdome of Scotland Mariner of ye other part bairing date ye third day of July ano Dom. one thousand six hundred and eighty one they ye said Edward Bylling Gawen Laurie and Nicholas Lucas for and upon ye Consideration therein mentioned and each and every of them did grant bargain sell allien release enfeoffe & confirm unto ye sd Maurice Trent and Hector Allen and to thier hiers and assigns for ever One full equall and individed nineteth part ... Tract of Land now Called West New Jersey belonging and apertaining as by ye aforesaid Indenture Tripartite ... **And I ye said Maurice Trent being now willing and desirous to sell and dispose upon my part** being ye half of ye said ninetyeth part so granted and conformed to me and ye sd Hector Allan

Therefore I have appointed ordained and made and in my stead and place by these presents put & **constitute my truly and wellbeloved friend and nephew Maurice Trent mercht. in ye province of pensilvania to be my true & lawful attorney for me** in my name and for my use and behoof to sell and dispose upon my equall halfe of ye sd undivided nyntieth part granted and sold to us ye sd Maurice Trent & Hector Allen

And Maurice Trent did sell on behalf of his uncle the land concerned:

**Gloucester County Deeds Volume 3 page 372**

This Indenture made ye nineteenth day of January year of our Lord one thousand six hundred & ninety five **Between Maurice Trent of ye province of Pensilvania Marriner & attorney to & for his unkle Maurice Trent of Leith in ye kingdom of Scotland merct. of ye one pt.** & John Ladd & John Reading of ye County of Glocester in ye province of West Jersey ...

We have seen how James Trent had developed strong Swedish connections. Brother Maurice actually married a lady of Swedish descent, in Pennsylvania. In an article looking at Upland in New Sweden (nowadays Chester County, Pennsylvania), entitled “The Descendants of Jöran Kyn, the Founder of Upland” (Gregory B. Keen, *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1879)), we read:

Mary Sandelands, daughter of James and Ann (Keen) Sandelands, was born at Upland, **and married in 1693-4 Maurice Trent, "of the Province of Pennsylvania, mariner," who died by October 7, 1697, when letters of administration on his estate were granted to his widow.** ... By her first husband, Maurice Trent, Mary Sandelands had two children: Isabella, m. Ephraim Augustine Herman. Eleanor, m. John Hore.

There are many records of Maurice’s activities in Pennsylvania between 1693 and 1697, sadly in relation to the scandalous importation of indentured (or non-indentured) child servants. This is not the place to go into detail on this, but I refer you to the excellent MPhil Thesis by Angela Austin from Glasgow University entitled *Forgotten Children: Scotland’s Colonial Child Servants, 1680 – 1760* (2017), now available to download: <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/8562/> . Here is a chilling section:

To this can be added the fact that the Trents were clearly actively employed in the selling of child servants shipped from Scotland without indentures. October 3, 1693, **Maurice Trent** appeared in Chester County Court of Quarter Sessions in Chester County, Pennsylvania with Scottish boys Alexander Ross, Daniel

MacDaniel, James Hercules, George Leacy, Alex Mecany, Magnis Simson, James Canide, and James Driver in order to have their ages and terms of indenture determined, since they lacked proper documentation. The boys ranged in age from 8 to 14. In September 1695, **Maurice Trent** brought Andrew Fraser, James Johnson, Henry Nichols, Robert Flatt, John MacEllfray, and John Robinson before the Chester County court for that same purpose, these boys ranging in age from 7 to 16. Robert Flatt and John MacEllfray were indentured to **Maurice Trent** himself. October 10, 1695, **Maurice** again appeared in court with a Scottish boy lacking indentures, John Robinson, whose age is not recorded. On 14 July, 1697, 30 children transported by **Maurice** were brought before the court, included four girls, one of whom was Mary Royle. Mary's son Joshua Brown later reported that according to his mother, she was forcibly taken that year from Dumfries, Scotland when she was around 12 years old, along with many other children, and put on board a ship for Philadelphia. On 21 July, 1697, **James Trent** sold Scottish boys Daniel Cameron, George Douglas, George Slater, John Young and James Hadyard, ages 8 to 14, to men of Burlington County, New Jersey, where the boys were taken before the Burlington Court by their masters. December 14, 1697, **Maurice Trent** brought 13 more children before the Chester County Court, with their indenture terms being reckoned from July of that year, the date of their arrival and sale. At that same court, Alexander McKener, previously sold by **Trent**, had his term of indenture extended because he had run away from his master and tried to kill himself, and Alexander MacLean, another 'scotch lad', was reassigned to a master in Newcastle, Delaware.

It may give more insight if I include the Court transcript of a few of these cases, introducing paragraph breaks for readability. These are from *Records of the Courts of Chester County, Pennsylvania 1681–1697*, volume 1 (edited by Dorothy B. Lapp, 1910) but there are similar cases elsewhere.

Att A Court of Common Pleas held the third day of october 1693 the Justices as Abovesaid there present ... The boyes that Mauris Trent Brought In to this Country were called to be Judged by Court  
Caleb Pusyes boy Alexander Ross AJudged by the Court to be Eleven years of Age and to serve tell the Age of one and Twenty and to have the Custom of the Country and be Discharged from his servitude by the said Caleb Pusye,  
Richard buffintons boy Deniell MacDeniell was AJudged by the Court to be Fourteen years of Age and to serve tell he is twenty one years of Age and the said Richard Buffinton is ordered to pay him the Custom of the Country and A Discharge from his servitude.

...

Att A Court held Att Chester for the County of Chester the first day of the eight month 1695 ... The boys brought In by Maurice Trent was brought to the Court to be AJudged what time they should serve having no Indentures:  
Andrew Fraisor sarvant To Francis Baldwin AJudged to serve five years...  
Robert Flatt AJudged To serve his master Maurice Trent Eight years.  
John Mackell fray AJudged to sarve his master Maurie Trent five years.

Austin concludes:

Between 1693 and 1697, Maurice Trent appeared in the courts of Pennsylvania counties Chester and Buck with at least 112 Scottish child servants without indentures, both male and female. In some records, Trent is listed as the transporter of the children, in others as the owner. At least four boys do appear to have been indentured to Mr. Trent personally, though in other cases they were indentured to other masters, therefore we can assume the term 'owner' in reference to Maurice Trent is used in place of 'transporter' or 'seller'. Meanwhile, his brother James appeared with several other children in New Jersey. A more thorough search of colonial records could potentially reveal a much larger ongoing operation in the selling of children. The family was clearly active in colonial trade and the transportation of servants for a generation before this, as well as the one after.

But Maurice Trent would have been trading in anything that made a good profit. On the trip back back across the Atlantic the most valuable cargo would have been tobacco. We have evidence of his ship having arrived with tobacco at Inverness in October 1692 from the Town Council Minutes (HCA/BI/1/8) – so much tobacco clearly was too great a temptation for one n'er-do-well:

At Invernes Monday the fyft day of December Jaivi& nynie tuo years ... The Counsell takeing to their consideration that John Fraser son to John Fraser Comissar officer was imprisoned be order of the magistrats in October **last upon a complaint made against him be Maureis Trent merchant for alleadged stealling of tobacco furth of his Ship at the peer** the sd tyme, And made his escap furth of the sd prison and brake warr[an]d contrair to law ... ordaines the said John Fraser to be banished from this town in all tyme comeing never to rest or dwell yrin heirafter under the payn of Death

### 3. William Trent (–1724), third oldest son, merchant and judge, and founder of Trenton

William Trent is the most famous of the Trents, and survived the longest. He is not to be confused with William Trent (1666–1706) the son of Maurice Trent of Leith. The son of Maurice of Leith became William Trent of Pitcullo, Maurice having purchased that estate for him. Despite this being well-documented, several sources continue to confuse the pair of William Trents.

We do not know when the Inverness/Trenton William Trent was born, but I would suggest from all the evidence available that it would have been in the late 1660s. His parents married in 1662 and he was the third son.

In the discharges or receipts signed at Inverness by his mother, Issobell Stewart (within GD23/5/71), one dated 16 July 1683 has a witness “William Trent Student at Invernes” and another dated 20 December 1683 has a witness “William Trent Student their”. These receipts confirm that William was born later than is generally thought, probably in the late 1660s. He proved to be an early achiever.

It is stated in various publications that William Trent settled in Philadelphia in 1682, the original source of this appearing to be *History of Trenton, New Jersey. The Record of its Early Settlement and Corporate Progress*. (Francis Bazley Lee, 1895). Given that William was a student in Inverness in 1683 I find it unlikely that he settled in Philadelphia in 1682, although he must certainly have gone out in the next few years as both William and James are listed as residents of Philadelphia on Pennsylvania tax rolls in 1693. I include the first section of the book on William Trent as, despite that dubious date of 1682, it is most informative and crucially includes information drawn from the great-great-granddaughter of William Trent.

William Trent, for whom the city of Trenton was named, was of an ancient Scotch family. Emigrating from Inverness, young in life, with his brother James, he settled in Philadelphia about 1682. Here he identified himself in business with the Quakers. As a man of intelligence, industry, thrift and integrity he soon became a large wholesale and retail merchant, being a shipowner in partnership with William Penn and his partner, James Logan. Although not a lawyer, William Trent, from 1703 to 1721, continued a member of the Pennsylvania Provincial Council. In 1706 he was one of the persons selected to systematize the courts, and was later one of the five Supreme Court Justices. This is all the more remarkable in that he was a Church of England man, whilst the government of Pennsylvania was in the control of the Society of Friends [the Quakers]. In 1710, 1715, 1719 he was a member of Assembly and in 1717–18 was Speaker of the House.

In Philadelphia, as in Trenton, William Trent was a large landowner. His residence in that city was the famous “Slate Roof House,” on Second street, which had been William Penn’s mansion – the most elegant in the city. ... The honor of being Chief Justice of New Jersey was soon conferred upon him, but he did not long hold the office, as he suddenly died on Christmas day, 1724. He was buried in the Friends’ lot in the old portion of Riverview Cemetery. ... the last living representative of Justice Trent is Miss Anna Rossell, of the old Burlington county family. She is his great-great-granddaughter, and to her acknowledgement must be made for the facts of this article.

Another History of Trenton was written several decades later, and repeats some of this material but adds some further information. This is from *A History of Trenton 1679 to 1929* (Edwin Robert Walker *et al* (1929)).

William Trent came to Philadelphia soon after it was settled in 1682, from Inverness, Scotland, where he had been born. He was a merchant and man of considerable wealth. He became a member of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania in 1703, and member of the Assembly there in 1710, 1715, 1719, and was speaker in 1718-19. He, with another, fitted out in 1709 a sloop of war for service in the war of England against France, and with others owned a sloop at Burlington. In 1714 he purchased from Mahlon Stacy, the younger, eight hundred acres of land, which had passed to him under his father’s will; it lay on both sides of the Assunpink Creek at the Falls of the Delaware, and afterwards he bought still additional land from others in 1718-21. He removed to his new purchase in 1721, and had a township laid out which he called Trent’s Town. He was commissioned by Governor Burnet of New Jersey to be Colonel of the Hunterdon County Militia, and represented Burlington County in the Assembly in 1722, becoming speaker in 1723. He was made judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Hunterdon County in 1719, and was appointed chief justice of New Jersey in 1723; he died in 1724. He was twice married; first, to Mary Burge, by whom he had three sons, James, John and Morris, and one daughter, Mary; second, to Mary Coddington, by whom he had two sons, Thomas and William. The first died in infancy, but William became known as Major Trent.

Judge William Trent died on Christmas Day 1724, with the *American Weekly Mercury* of Pennsylvania reporting on 29 December 1724:

On Friday, 25th of this instant, William Trent, Esquire, Chief judge of the Province of New Jersey, departed this life, being seized with a fit of apoplexy in Trent-town.

In 1738, three slaves were hung for poisoning various people in Jersey, and they said that Judge William Trent had been one of their victims (*Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, in the Olden Time*, volume 1, John F. Watson, 1938) . However, whether or not William Trent was truly poisoned is not something that can be established.

In later publications it is stated that it is not known where William Trent is buried, but clearly the family tradition which was published in the first extract above was that it was in the Quakers burial ground. That family tradition you will note also says that though not a Quaker himself he associated himself in business with the Quakers; he was elected a Supreme Court Judge despite being a Church of England man and the government of Pennsylvania being in the control of the Quakers at the time. I think we see here some of the influence of his mighty uncle Maurice Trent of Leith, who definitely was a Quaker and had been involved in the development of the region.

The splendid house which is nowadays the 1719 William Trent House Museum, in which William Trent spent his final years, is owned and maintained by the City of Trenton and managed and operated by the Trent House Association. The House is a designated National Historic Landmark and is listed in both the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

William Trent achieved extraordinary success in his relatively short life and it is very fitting that his striking home should be maintained as a record of that period in American history.



William Trent House after its restoration in 2018; photo courtesy of the website of the William Trent House Museum <https://www.williamtrenthouse.org/>

#### **4. Thomas Trent (1676–), youngest son**

There was a relatively common and quaint feature of seventeenth century baptisms whereby relatives and friends bearing the same Christian name as the child to be baptised were invited to be witnesses or godparents to the child. It works easily if you are naming your child John or Alexander but there can be challenges with less common names such as Maurice! William Trent clearly enjoyed participating in this custom when Thomas was baptised:

##### **Inverness Baptism Register**

9 of October 1676 ...

The said day William Trent merct haid a child baptized named Thomas,  
Thomas Grant of Balmacanne Thomas Shivize of Mourtoune Thomas Watsone  
Mr Thomas Fraser witnesses

We hear no more of Thomas Trent and it may be that he died in childhood as so many did. But he may have survived to adulthood and perhaps assisted his brothers out in Philadelphia for all we know, just slipping under the radar of documentary records.

## 5. Elizabeth Trent

One would not even be aware of Elizabeth Trent's existence were it not for the following baptism record, just after she had given birth to triplets.

### **Inverness Baptism Register**

8th & 9th Apprile 1696

**Robert Neilson mert. of Inverness and his spouse Elizabeth Trent** had three male children born to them [changed to him] (the last of qch. dyed in the birth) the first was baptised be Master William Innes minister at Karnoch and named (**James**) the second which was baptised one the fryday thereafter be Master William Stewart minister off Kiltearn was named (**Maurice**) Wittnesses to the first James McLean mrct. Baillie James Stewart Late Baillie **James Trent laull. son to the Deceast William Trent merchant of Inverness & James Thomson mert. in the said burgh)** god fathers, to the second **Maurice Trent Second Laull. son to the said William Trent merct.** John Barbour Late baillie & David Stewart mert.

I was delighted to find this record as I had suspected there was an Elizabeth in the family. Why? Well some time very roughly about 1702 Reverend Alexander Anderson of Duffus in Moray (of the Udol Andersons, a separate research project) had married an Elizabeth Trent. Now, Trents in the north are as rare as hens teeth. And there would be a later Anderson of Udol connection, as the son of Reverend Alexander Anderson and Elizabeth Trent married Elizabeth Falconer, grand-daughter of Sir James Falconer, Lord Phesdo, and **Dame Elizabeth Trent** – the daughter of Maurice Trent of Leith. I had therefore thought it very likely that the Elizabeth Trent who married Reverend Alexander Anderson would be the daughter of the nearby Trent of Inverness family.

It seems very likely that Robert Neilson died soon after the above baptism (there are no more children recorded to the couple) and the widowed Elizabeth Trent remarried Reverend Alexander Anderson, who from the Kirk Session minutes of Duffus was often in Inverness. I have not proven this link yet, but there is much circumstantial evidence.

Watch this space!

Having found that Elizabeth Trent had married merchant Robert Neilson I investigated their marriage a little further through Inverness Burgh deeds. I did not find their marriage contract, but again I found the discharge of the contract, indicating that they had married in June 1695 (so those triplets had arrived fairly promptly), brother James Stewart had stood cautioner to Issobell Stewart, and the tocher had amounted to 1000 pounds (Scots).

**Highland Council Archives HCA/BI/1/10/5 Burgh of Inverness Register of Deeds 1688, 1694–1706**

Att Invernes the nynteenth day of February Jaivi& & nyntie seven years .... Be it known to all men be thir present letters me Robert Neilson merchant burges of Invernes forasmuch as be Contract Matrimoniall past betwixt me on the ane part and **Elizabeth Trent lawll. daughter to the deceast William Trent Sometye merchant in the said burgh with the speciall consent of Issobell Stuart her mother relict of the said umqll William Trent on the other part of the date at Invernes the fourth day of Junii Jaivi& nyntie fyve years** wherby annent the marriage then contracted and thereafter solemnized betwixt me and the said Elizabeth Trent my present spouse the said Issobell Stewart as principall and **James Stewart late baillie of Invernes as Cautioner** Bound and obleidged them ... to have payed and delyvered to me the said Robert Neilson ... the soume of one thousand pounds att and against the first day of August being the terme of Lambes in the year Jaivi& & nyntie sex... And now seeing the said Issobell Stewart hes made full payment ... I hereby ... discharge the said Issobell Stuart and James Stuart ... att Invernes the eighteenth day of January Jaivi& nyntie seaven years before thir witnesses William Neilson merchant in Invernes my brother german...

Robert Neilson had previously been married to Anna Cuthbert, and only one child, Barbara, had survived to adulthood. He set up various deeds in 1697 (HCA/BI/1/10/5) so that his brother William would provide for her should he himself die. Many further deeds involving him were registered in 1698, the last I note being registered by him on 17 June 1698. He clearly felt that death was not far away. When he actually died I do not know for sure, but Barbara, who had married coppersmith Robert Miller, formally declared in June 1704 that she would not become heir to her father lest it prejudice her interests. A creditor had been trying to force her to do this, and she had been served notice on 27 June 1704. We can therefore place Robert Neilson's death between June 1698 and June 1704. Elizabeth Trent would have then gone on to marry Reverend Alexander Anderson after the customary period of grieving for one year and a day. You can follow Elizabeth thereafter in our story of the Andersons of Udol or Udale [here](#).

## 6. Janet Trent (–1734)

Daughter Janet Trent (–1734) is well documented, marrying not one but two distinguished ministers of the church. As far as we can tell, she was by some distance the longest surviving Trent sibling.

Her first husband, Angus or Æneas McBean (1656–1689), was the last Presbyterian minister deposed under Episcopacy and his wiki entry may be read [here](#). He died a young man, his health ruined by his incarceration in the Tolbooth in Edinburgh for his religious beliefs. He is commemorated by a memorial laid in the Old High churchyard, Inverness, by his granddaughter Grizel Fraser.



1750  
MABEL McILAN  
1770 Daughter of  
the Grand AENEAS McILAN  
of Edinburgh  
aged 57 having full  
interment in the  
family tomb

Reverend Angus McBean and Janet Trent had two children:

- **Alexander** (c1684–1762), who became Reverend Alexander McBean “the John Knox of the North”. He was minister first at Avoch and then for over forty years a minister at Inverness.
- **Isobel** (–1770), who married Reverend Alexander Fraser, also a minister at Inverness. It was their daughter Grizel who had the above memorial laid in the Old High churchyard. It reads:

This Stone placed here by Grizel Fraser in Memory of her Father the reverend Alexander Fraser Minister of Inverness, Who died 1750 aged 76; and of her Mother Isabel McBean, Who died 1770 Daughter of the Reverend ÆNEAS McBEAN Minister of Inverness, Who died at Edinburgh 1689 aged 33, having suffered Persecution in those Troublesome times.

It is difficult to know when Janet Trent married Reverend Angus McBean. He was from Inverness originally, but ministered away in Aberdeenshire and Ayrshire where surely the opportunities to develop his acquaintance with Janet would have been limited. He was ordained and installed on 29 December 1683 at Strichen in Aberdeenshire. Growing ever more uncomfortable with Episcopacy, he preached a sermon on 23 October 1687 recanting his former opinions and demitting his charge. Now a committed Presbyterian, he conducted services in private houses and in the open air and returning to Inverness gathered round him a large congregation. This most likely would have been the period when he and Janet would have married. The problem is that he was then in and out of prison and died in 1689, but there would be just enough opportunity there to fit in a marriage and two children.

It was to be another ten years after her first husband’s death before Janet Trent married for the second time. Again, it was to a minister, but he very definitely kept in with the church of the time. I think like McBean he would have been of an Inverness family, although the *Fasti* suggests he was related to the Baillie family of Lamington. Certainly he was ordained minister of Lamington, just outside Edinburgh, in 1693. However, when you read the Minutes of the Kirk Session of Inverness you will find that he very often preached at Inverness in the 1690s. The *Fasti* says “ he had a knowledge of Gaelic” but in fact when the Kirk Session was considering whether or not to invite him to translate to Inverness, the only major obstacle was considered to be his complete lack of Gaelic.

It must have been during those guest sermons at Inverness in the 1690s that he met the widowed Janet Trent. He was particularly active there in 1698. He and Janet married in Edinburgh in 1699.

### **Edinburgh Marriages 1699**

Mr Robert Baillie Minister of Lamington & **Jennet Trent daughter to ye  
deceist William Trent merct in Invernes** married on Tewsday 25 Aprill 1699

He continued to preach fairly regularly in Inverness and finally, with some resistance from Lamington, he transferred to Inverness in 1702. He was to be supplied with a colleague or assistant with Gaelic as Mr Baillie “hath nothing of the Irish Language”.

Reverend Robert Baillie became a very popular minister in Inverness as well; his congregation had to see off several attempts by other congregations to have him translated over the 23 years he served there.

Robert Baillie and Janet Trent had two children whilst at Lamington, Henreta in 1700 (died in Inverness in 1709) and Elizabeth in 1702 (died before 1726). They had a further five children after they moved to Inverness, William in 1704, Marie in 1707 (died in 1713), Robert in 1708 (died in 1710), Jannet in 1710 (died later that year) and Katharin in 1711 (died in 1713), all five baptised by Janet Trent’s cousin, Reverend William Stuart.

It is sad to see just how many of the children are known to have died so young. The *Fasti* says that Reverend Robert Baillie himself died of consumption 11 February 1726 and that “He had few equals in the ministry, and his death was greatly deplored”. Janet passed away quite a number of years later:

### **Parish of Inverness Deaths**

1734 ... 5th November Janet Trent relict of the Deceast Mr Robert Baillie  
Minister of the Ghospel in this Burgh

The one son recorded as having survived to adulthood was William Baillie, who became, what else, a minister in Inverness: he was to be minister of the Third Charge in the town.

You might think the story of Janet Trent ends there, but there is more to come and there is a Philadelphia connection. Janet’s second husband Robert Baillie made a will (CC11/1/4 Inverness Commissary Court) which he signed on 10 February 1726 before witnesses ministers Mr William Stuart and Mr Alexr. McBean. By this he bequeathed the liferent of various bonds resting to him to his wife Janet Trent, two thousand pounds Scots to Jean Baillie his only (living) daughter (and an unrecorded one at that), and all the remainder of his wordly means to Mr William Baillie his only (living) son. He nominated his wife as his executrix.

Janet as the executrix gave in an inventory of the goods and gear of her husband and listed the debts owing to him. Most of these are not relevant to this story but they included (and I have expanded abbreviations for readability):

Resting by [i.e. owed by] the **deceast William Trent designed in the Contract of Marriage underwritten merchant in London the Executrixs brother thereafter merchant in Philadelphia** The sum of Two Thousand merks Scots money of principall four hundred merks money foresaid of Liquidat Expences together with the due and ordinary annualrent of the said principall from Whitsunday 1700 to the time foresaid of the Defunct's Decease so Contained in the Contract of Marriage past betwixt the said Defunct on the one part and the said Executrix with the speciall advice and Consent of the said Deceast William Traint her Brother on the other part, Dated at Edinburgh 28th March Jaivi& & Ninety nine years amounting to the sd principall sum and annualrents, besides the penalty, to the sum of Three thousand two hundred pounds Scots money

This confirms that William Trent (he who died in Trenton in 1724, and often referred to as “Judge Trent” to avoid confusion with relatives) was for some time in 1699 at least operating as a merchant in London before he returned to Philadelphia. Why had William Trent made himself liable for sister Janet’s dowry, or tocher as it was called in Scotland? I think it must have been because by now father William and elder brothers James and Maurice were all dead, and Judge William was the eldest of the Trent family still alive. It suggests that mother Issobell, too, by March 1699 had also passed away, as the previous tocher (for daughter Elizabeth Trent’s marriage) in fact had been paid by Issobell herself with her brother James Stewart as cautioner.

By the time of Robert Baillie’s death in 1726, Judge William Trent himself had passed away, which is why he is termed in Robert Baillie’s 1726 will as “the deceast William Trent”. But he had never paid the dowry, and the interest on it had kept accumulating.

And why did William Trent never pay his sister’s dowry? Had he fallen out with Robert Baillie or did he think that a minister could get along on his stipend quite happily without looking for a dowry?

The story does not end there as a Testament Dative was lodged as late as 1757 (CC11/1/5 Inverness Commissary Court) by Reverend Robert Baillie’s grandson, also named Robert Baillie, a merchant in Inverness. By this he was seeking from the heirs of Judge William Trent the money due his grandfather!

The said Executor gives up in Inventory and to be Confirmed as in bonis of the Defunct the time of his decease the sum of Two thousand merks Scots money of princell. and annualrents thereof from the term of Whitsunday 1700 years as Contained in and due by a **Contract of Marriage Entered into betwixt the said deceast Mr. Robert Baillie and the also deceast Janet Trent Relict of the deceast Mr. Æneas McBean sometime Minister of the Gospell at Inverness sister to the also deceast Mr. William Trent merchant at London with Consent of the said William Trent and he as burden taker for payment of the said Tocher** with four hundred merks money foresaid of Liquidate penalty in case of failzie. The which **Contract of Marriage bears date the Eight day of March 1699** years

William Trent House Museum in Trenton kindly checked to see if there was any mention of this debt in the records they hold, but to no avail. Did Janet Trent's grandson ever get his hands on the tocher due to his grandfather? I suspect not.

### **7. Anna Trent (1675–), youngest daughter**

The page of the Baptism Register which bears the entry for the final child baptised to William Trent and Issobell Stewart is poorly photographed, and I'm sure that inspection of the original Register would reveal the missing words obscured by darkness in the image digitally available. As these words are not crucial, I have placed in square brackets what they must be given other nearby entries.

#### **Inverness Baptism Register**

July 29 1675

William Trent merct burges off Invernes had a [childe] baptized called Anna (being born the 13 day) [Wm.] Baillie Comr. deput Alexr. Chisholme Shereff deput [John] Hepburn lait baillie & John Forrester coller. to [His] Majesties Customes witnesses

Like young Thomas, we hear no more of Anna Trent. She may have died in childhood, but it would be good to think that she grew up and has descendants of her own.

### **Appendix: Maurice Trent (–1701), Merchant of Leith**

The life and times of the Trent family of Inverness would be incomplete without some evaluation of William's brother Maurice, the influential merchant Quaker of Leith. This is not the place for a detailed biography of Maurice, although that would be a fascinating project for someone to undertake. But here are a few facts.

The first reference I see to Maurice is on 26 January 1653 when he acts as a witness in South Leith at the baptism of Robert, the son to his friend Robert Bruce. There are records of Maurice and his wife, Margaret Young, themselves having seven children baptised, all as given in the South Leith baptism register: Marie (1653), Elizabeth (1655), Johne (1656), Samuel (1658), Maurice (1659–1660) who died, according to the South Leith burial register, the following year, Margt. (1660) and William (1666–1706).

We do not know anything yet of the family of Margaret Young, his spouse. I imagine they married in 1652, and there will be a marriage contract out there awaiting discovery.

Like William Trent, who became a burghess and guild-brother of Inverness in 1657, "Mawries Trent" merchant became burges and guild-brother of Edinburgh by act of Council on 22 November 1665 (*Roll of Edinburgh Burgesses and Guild-brethren, 1406-1700*, edited by Charles Brodie Boog Watson, published by the Scottish Record Society 1929). One of the requirements was to move from Leith into Edinburgh itself, something that clearly Maurice was reluctant to do, as there is a follow-up in the same volume:

On 30 January 1667 "compeared Maurice Trent, mt., indweller in Leith, who hes been convened before the Dean of Gild and his council and accused for the breach of his engadgement and the council's ordinance in not coming to reside in Edinburgh at Witsundaylast, and for his residing at Leith ever syne, qlk he confessed. Therefor the said Maurice Trent acts and uppliges himself that he sall come to Edinburgh and reside at Witsunday nixt under the peine of forfardure of his burghesship and friedome. (Signed) Maurice Trent."

Did he ever comply? Knowing Maurice, I suspect not!

Maurice did become connected with Inverness, laising directly with the Town Council there following brother William's death. But he had formalised his connection before that time. In order to facilitate trade in other Burghs, merchants and entrepreneurs would seek enrolment as burghesses there. Maurice and a slew of Falconer relatives including Lord Phesdo were enrolled as burghesses and guild-brethren at Inverness on 11 September 1675 (HCA/BI/1/7/2). His daughter Elizabeth had married Phesdo only a couple of years earlier but Maurice was now facilitating them to assist in his trading business.

## The Trent Family and the Society of Friends or Quakers

Maurice Trent, merchant in South Leith, became a Quaker before 1681. Inspection of the minutes of the Edinburgh Quakers held in the NRS would presumably provide more information as to when he adopted the religion, but there is already some evidence available.

Certainly he wasn't a Quaker when he subscribed to the list of inhabitants of South Leith who petitioned the Cromwellian administrator of Scotland in 1655 or 1656 to restore to them the use of the Parish Church. A transcription of the petition is given by David Laing in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* Volume 1 pages 158-168 (1852) and "Maurice Trent" is fifth on the list (along with several others who appear as witnesses at the baptisms of his children). Quakers held no special respect for churches, or steeplehouses as they called them, so it is unlikely that Maurice would have signed this list if he had been a Friend at this time. However, the movement then was in its earliest development and made significant progress in Edinburgh thereafter amidst the infighting going on within the Established Church, with both Cromwellian soldiers and local inhabitants joining the Quakers.



from the summit of Pendle Hill, Lancashire; photo by son Gavin Mackay

It would have been a surprise to find that Maurice had become a Friend at this time. These were early days in Quaker history. It had been just a few years before this, in May 1652, that George Fox, founder of the Quakers, felt called to climb Pendle Hill in Lancashire and experienced a vision of a great people to be gathered. He came to Scotland in 1657, and his tour included a meeting in Leith. By

1665 large numbers met at the house of James Brown, a tanner, in the West Port, the area around the west gateway into the city of Edinburgh.



the roads to other cities branching away from the West Port, Edinburgh; photo by Kim Traynor, from Wikipedia CC BY-SA 3.0

In the 1660s, Quakers were persecuted and if Maurice Trent had been attending their meetings he would have been at risk of being incarcerated. This of course did not deter the Quakers, who instituted Edinburgh Monthly Meetings and Edinburgh Quarterly Meetings at the end of the decade. Some of the minutes of these meetings amazingly still exist and are currently held in the NRS.

His children were regularly baptised in the Parish Church over the period 1653 to 1666, and again this is not what you would expect from a Quaker.

James Brown, the tanner in West Port, had become a dedicated Quaker. He was appointed in 1669 by the Quakers to be treasurer for the establishment of a new Edinburgh burial ground for Quakers, nowadays part of the Edinburgh University Pleasance complex.



note the headstones lining the wall of the Quaker burial ground, Edinburgh

James Brown died in 1681, leaving the Quakers much money (CH10/3/58), and the Quakers continued to use his house in the West Port for meetings. At a meeting at his house on “Eleventh Month, 1681” there is a crucial minute (“Notes on Edinburgh Meeting Houses” by William F. Miller in *The Journal of the Friends’ Historical Society*, vol 6, no. 1, pages 27-33, 1909):

Freinds doe hereby impower **Maurice trent** & David falconar to speak & agree wt ane honnest Mason to bwild a good Large meeting howse on the end of the bwriall ground towards the street, & Likewayes to consider how money may be raised from the 2 howses upon qch freinds money Lyes for the accomplishing of the same ; & to give Accot to every monthly meeting of their diligence & procedour in that matter.

So by 1681 Maurice had become a respected Quaker, entrusted with the important task of establishing the Quakers’ Edinburgh meeting house. He appears to have taken the Quaker disdain of established church services to heart, as I do not see him among the many witnesses to the baptisms of the ten children born to his own daughter, Elizabeth Trent, wife of Sir James Falconer, Lord Phesdo.

Despite Maurice becoming a Quaker, I have seen no evidence that his son, William Trent of Pitcullo, or his daughter, Dame Elizabeth, followed their father in this respect.

Maurice's brother William in Inverness had died in early 1677. Again I have seen no evidence that he had become a Quaker. His daughters Janet and Elizabeth married ministers of the Established Church. His sons James, William and Maurice, particularly William, developed trading and merchant businesses in America, including in Philadelphia and New Jersey, initiated by their uncle Maurice in Leith. There was Quaker involvement in many of these deals, but this was most likely to have developed through the influence of their uncle Maurice.

### Were the Trents English in origin?

There is a single record that calls Maurice Trent an "Inglishman". A transcript may be found in *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*. Third Series, Volume 2, A.D. 1665-1669, edited & abridged by P. Hume Brown (1909). It is in the form of an order by the Privy Council of Scotland in February 1662 and is of wider Trent interest so I include most of it:

p 119 ... Ordered that a letter be wrytten to the Secretary in favours of Jon Tayleour, whereof the tennour followes:– My Lord, their being application made to us by John Tayleour, master of a ship in Leith, representing his sad condition and suffering by reason of an arreistment of his ship in Junij last, which did necessitat him to find bail for 600 lib. sterling incase he should be found lyable for the said soume, as having caryed by sea from Leith ten cask of Barbadoes suggar which did belong to **Moreis Trent, Inglishman, merchand in Leith**, and Captain Steventoun, merchand at London; and seing it is conceaved that he, not having brought the suggar from Barbadoes bot only did transport the same from Leith to London, having a transire from the customers for his warrant, and that he was ignorant of any act made to the contrar, he ought not to be lyable to any such penalty...

It would be useful to check the original document to confirm this is a correct reading: I think it may be found in the NRS at PC1/39 Privy Council: Register of Acta 13 Jul 1661-21 Nov 1667, on page 119. But it indicates that Maurice Leith was involved in trade with Barbados earlier than June 1661. The immense scale of the bail quoted seems dubious (£600 sterling) but if true does indicate the importance attributed to the sugar Maurice was trading in and the penalties if he was caught breaking the rules. And he certainly regularly broke the rules.

The Privy Council record suggests that Maurice Trent and brother William in Inverness were indeed English in origin. There had been several Trent families near or in Edinburgh from long before Maurice's time, but it may be that he and William did indeed move into Scotland at the time of the Cromwellian occupation.

The earliest record I have seen of Maurice himself in Leith is on the baptism of the son of his friend Robert Bruce, when he acted as a witness on 26 January 1653. As this is a key period, I set out the first three baptisms to Maurice and Margaret Young, and another two where Maurice acted as a witness at the baptisms of children of friend Robert Bruce. Another friend and witness, Anthony Rosewell, was rather distinguished – he was the second or perhaps third husband of Anna Douglas, Lady Boghall, for whom Maurice would act as factor. A later witness is James Brown, possibly advocate James Brown, Rosewell's son-in-law.

#### **Leith South Baptism Register**

1653 Robert Bruce sone to Robert Bruce and Helin Bruce was bapt. the 26 of Ja[nuar]y wit. Robert Younger **Mores Trent** Thomas Band & Mr David Aldinstowne

1653 Marie Trent do: to **Mores Trent** and Margt. Young was bapt: the 20 of Octor. 1653 wit: Anthonie Rosuald [Rosewell] Leiuetenent Jacksone and Robert Bruce

1654 Mores Bruce sone to Robert Bruce and Helin Jopline was bapt. the 9 of Febr 1654 wit **Mores Trent** Georg Armour Leuetenent Jacksone

1655 Elizabeth Trent do: to **Mourise Trent** and Margaret Young was bapt: the 7 of Jay. 1655 wit: Anthonie Rosuald and Robert Bruce

1656 Johne Trent So: to **Maurece Trent** and Margt. Young was bapt. the 17 of Ap: 1656 witt: Anthonie Rosewell and Robert Bruce



The church of South Leith within which the children of Maurice Leith and Margaret Young were baptised in the 1650s. It was closed to the congregation for several years of the Cromwell administration and Maurice Trent was one of those who petitioned successfully for its re-opening. Photo by Kim Traynor, CC BY-SA 3.0 , via Wikimedia Commons

From the evidence of the Register of Deeds for years 1663, 1664, 1665 and 1666 (i.e. those published by the Scottish Record Office), Maurice can be seen to be very active financially, granting or being granted several deeds annually. There is even one setting him up to act, as mentioned above, as factor for Anna Douglas, Lady Boghall, wife of his friend Anthony Rosewell. There are several deeds involving both Maurice and Rosewell, so they were closely involved with each other. I see from a Court of Session case (15 June 1669 Astharst, Englishman, *against* Anna Douglas, Lady Boghall) that Maurice Trent acted as cautioner for a bond Roswall made, and later satisfied the debt, Roswall having disposed some lands to Maurice in compensation.

It has been suggested that Maurice Trent arrived in Leith in association with the Cromwellian forces but I have seen no evidence for that. Nevertheless, Leith and Inverness hosted two of the five great citadels built by Cromwell to cow rebellious Scots, and perhaps it is no coincidence that the two Trent brothers based themselves at Leith and Inverness. And the Lieutenant Jackson who acted as a witness at the baptism of Marie Trent could perhaps have been from Cromwell's army of occupation.

But the impression one gets is that Maurice had been establishing himself in trade for some time before the Cromwellian forces arrived in Edinburgh. Cromwell swept into Leith following the disastrous (to the Scots) Battle of Dunbar of 3 September 1650. In October 1653, Maurice and wife Margaret Young were having their daughter Marie baptised, with two prominent Leith merchants amongst the witnesses. Maurice himself acted as a witness in January of that year. It is possible that he became established very quickly, of course, but it just seems unlikely.

### **Maurice Trent's sales pitch**

I shall leave Maurice Trent's extensive trading career and land purchases in both Scotland and America for others to relate. He was quite the tycoon, but never seems to have left Edinburgh, deputising the travelling and trading to partners and nephews. He knew how to manipulate those in power. I'll give one example as it is of great relevance to the activities of the Inverness Trent brothers.

The petition of "Moreis Trent" to the Privy Council in 1673 was a masterclass in persuasion, and may be found in *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland: 1673–1676* pages 83-84 (1911).

The *Hercules*, it was represented, was about to sail for Virginia and "diverse persons are of intention to transport themselves to that plantation." But the vessel has accommodation for a larger number of passengers, and "forasmuch as there are great multitudes of vagabonds, idle and sturdie beggars, and louse and masterles men and women who have no visible way of livliehood, bot by stouth and robbery, to the great oppression and trowble of the countrey, and that it may much contribut to the peace and quyet therof and the good of the persons themselves if they were sent to work for their lyvliehood abroad in the plantations, humbly therfor supplicating that order and warrand might be granted to the effect underwrytten."

Well, who couldn't resist the pitch of such a win-win situation. And so "the Lords of his Majesties Privy Councill, having heard and considered the forsaid petition, doe hereby grant warrand to sherriffs of shreffdomes, stewarts of stewartries, lords and baylies of regalities or royalties, justices of peace and magistratts of burghes, to apprehend such vagabonds and sturdie and idle beggars, and other masterles men and women having no visible means of subsistence, as they shall find within their boundes, and being found be such persons by their sentence, to delyver them to the petitioners".

I mentioned earlier that Maurice Trent did not play by the rules. Here is a marvellous section in "Scottish Trade with the Plantations before 1707" by Theodora Keith (in *The Scottish Historical Review*, vol. 6, pages 32–48, 1909). The original may be found in Treasury Papers, xxvi. 53, 1694

“Copy of Tho. Meech, his remonstrance against diverse Scotch merchants and others trading to Virginia.” A paper so endorsed, consisting of copies of four papers relating to the trade carried on directly between Scotland and Ireland, and Virginia and Pennsylvania, contrary to the Act of Parliament.

The Government in England of course asserted that the Acts were binding in America, but although this came to be generally recognised, the amount of illicit trade did not seem to decrease. ... It was also suggested that several small boats should be chartered, to cruise about and discover those ships which unloaded and loaded in secluded bays and creeks. In accordance with this advice one or two small boats were sent out. One of these was put in command of a certain Thomas Much, referred to in 1692 as ‘an old offender’... A year later he managed to catch a fellow ‘old offender,’ whose story is typical of many others. Morris Trent had lodged false certificates for ‘5000 ells of Scotch cloth and Ticken and 30 dozen of Scotch House’; and had on board ‘about 30 Tun of Sea Coales,’ for which he had no certificates. The year before he had landed his tobacco in Scotland ‘under pretence of ye Vessell being disabled which upon strict examination of ye men I find to be false and a trick put upon ... ye Commissioners.’ The vessel was seized and brought to New Jersey. The Governor, Hamilton, who was a Scotchman, told Much that it was not in his power to seize there and ‘Cleared ye seizure from Mee and ordered her to be seized by one of his Creatures there, and then not being brought to Tryall according to Law was cleared under collour of giving bond.’

The irrepressible Maurice Trent died in January 1701, according to his testament dative (CC8/8/81 Edinburgh Commissary Court). He left no will. The testament dative was put forward by his son-in-law “Sir James Falconer of Phesdo, one of the Senators of the Colledge of Justice, on behalf of Dam Elizabeth Trent, his Lady only lawful daughter [then living] to the sd defunct and ex[ecutri]x dative decerned neirest of kin”. The list of people who owed him substantial sums of money is impressively long. One of his debtors was nephew William, by this time well established in Pennsylvania: “Item be Wm Trent son to Wm Trent merct in Invernes by bond daitit the 6 of May 1699...”.

Maurice Trent and the Coutts family together established a great trading network, within which the Inverness Trent sons, James, Maurice and William, became important elements. Judge William Trent lived long enough to become a significant figure in the development of New Jersey and Philadelphia, but his brothers died as young men. Further research into the origins of the Trent family would perhaps reveal how Maurice in Leith and William in Inverness appear to have suddenly emerged as entrepreneurs in their respective towns.



Inverness as it was in the time of the Trent family, drawn by John Slezer in the late 1600s, from *Theatrum Scotiae* (1693). Modified from the original at <https://maps.nls.uk/view/91169199> by Jim Mackay. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.  
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