NOTES FROM SOME UNPUBLISHED DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE
INSURRECTION IN ORKNEY IN 1614. BY EDWARD PEACOCK, ESQ.,
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The insurrection raised in Orkney in the year 1614 by Robert
Stewart, base son of Robert Earl of Orkney, is noticed but slightly by
Scottish historians. Indeed, but few details of the event have been
preserved. Almost all the original records now extant connected with this
turmoil have, however, been printed in Pitcairn's Criminal Trials, iii.
272, &c., but the following documents are not to be found in that valuable
collection. I was unaware of their existence until my attention was
drawn to them by Thomas Dickson, Esq, the present learned curator of
the Historical Department of the General Register House.

The civil war in Orkney began in July 1614 by Robert Stewart
assembling a body of men, who gained possession of the castle and the
tower of the church at Kirkwall and proceeded to hold them as fortresses
on behalf of the Earl of Orkney, at that time a prisoner in Dumbarton
Castle.

George, fifth Earl of Caithness, was at once despatched to reduce the
rebels to obedience. It is said that he "sued and laboured much to be
employed in that service," and that he took it on the understanding that
he should perform the duties thereof "without great charges to the king."1

In the month of August the expedition which he had fitted out was
ready to depart. Before it sailed the Earl executed the following obliga-
tion, a document which seems to imply that the service in which
he was engaged was considered as much his own business as that of
the crown:--


"Apud Edinburgh, xij Augusti 1614."

"We George Erll of Caithnes lord Sinclair & Lieutenant constitute
be our souerane lord with aduise of the lordis of his maisteis priuie
counsaill for repressing of the present rebelliuon within Orknay and

1 Gordon, Genealog. Hist. of Earldom of Sutherland, 229, 300.
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reduceand of that countrie to his maiestis obedience, be the tennour
heir of grant vs to haif ressauit furth of his maiesties castle of Edinburgh
fra the constable and keeparis thairof, ane grite cannoun callit thrown
mow, markit with the porcapine, and ane battert marked with the
salamander \(^1\) with hail furnitor careage and ornamentis of the said peeceis
according to ane inventar maid and sett down be James Murray master
of his maiestis workes, and that for the better furtherance of his maiestis
service within the said countray of Orknay. And we bind and
obleis ws to haif a speciall cair of the preservatioun of the saidis pceces,
and that we sall send thame bak againe, God willing, in his maiestis
schip frauchte for this service and redelyuir the same vpon the shoir
of Leyt with the first occasioun eftir the accomplisheing of this service.
In witnes quhair of we haif subscribit this presentes with oure hand
at Edinburgh the xij day of August the yere of God MVI\(^c\) and fourtene
zeiris Before this witness. James Prymrois clerk of the counsell.

"Sic sub\(" CAITHNES
"J. PRYMOIS witnes."

The Register of the Secret Council from which the above is transcribed
furnishes a few other details. The ship in which the Earl and his
company sailed was called the “Poise,” and they were accompanied by
“John Skennire chirurgane, who had for his kirst and furnishing of
drogges, meete for chirurgie. . . . ane hundreth pundes.” They were
accompanied by Robert Winrahame, “herauld” Johnne Johnnestoun
“trumpetor,” James Hammiltoun and Johnne Quhyte “wryghtes,” James
Workeman and James Gairdner “cannonaris,” and a smith called
Martine Sheill. The Bishop of Orkney also went with the expedition,
but not very willingly it would seem, for he alleged to the Council that

\(^1\) The salamander in the midst of flames, with the motto “NUTRISCO ET EXTINGUO,”
was the motto of Francis I. of France. It is said to have been invented by Artus
de Gouffier-Boisy, a Poitevin gentleman, who was the king’s literary preceptor, for
the purpose of symbolising the fiery spirit of his pupil. In the chateau of Amboise
panel-work yet exists charged with “the F couronné for François and the C
couronné for Claude” his queen, and mingled with them are his device of the
salamander, with its motto and hers, the ermine passant.—See Feudal Castles of
France, 29, 50.
he "had mony lattes and impedimentis quhilkis might hinder him at this time." (Pp. 97-99.)

The Fellows of this Society have no little reason to be thankful that his Lorship did consent to join the array. Had it not been for his good offices, the cathedral of Kirkwall would have shared the same unhappy fate as that which has befallen so many of the noblest ecclesiastical structures that were once the glory of Scotland. Gordon, in his account of these transactions, tells us that "the steiple of the church of Kirkway was first besieged, which after a little time was yielded. Then the Earl of Cattaynes went about to demolish and throw down the church; but he was with great difficultie hindered and stayed by the bishop of Orknay, who wold not suffer him to throw it down." (P. 300.)


"Inventrie maid at leyth the xvj of August 1614 off the ordnance and mvnitioun with vther provisionis delyuuerit to my lord Erll of Caithnes his maiestis Lieutennent direct to orknay be his maiestis direction in his hienes seruice for repressing of ane rebellioun committit thair aganis his maiestie quhairof tho said Erll grantis the ressett as followis vnder his Lp handwreat

"Item ane cannoun called throwne mouth marked with the porkau-pyne with hir stok and quheillis all garnished with yron work with hir ladillis sponge and worme.

"Item thriescoir of bullettis for the said cannoun

"Item tua hailling towis of the said cannoun

"Item ane battart marked with the solamander, flowre de luce, and ef1 with hir stok and quheillis all garnisched with yron work with hir ladillis spounge and worme with thriescoir bullettis and tua hailling towis

"Item auchtene swesis and hand spobis and sex weidgeis

"Item ane pair of feises with hir balk and soall

"Item of pouldar fourscoir tua stane sex pund wey'

"Item of Lwnt fyve stane four pund weyght

1 This piece of ordnance may probably have belonged at one time to Queen Mary's first husband.
"Item four oxe hydis and twelf scheip skynns
"Item ane barrill of butter containing ane stane weight
"Item threttie ane stane ten pund four vnce weight of leid
"Item fyve dusone of schoillis and sex spaidis and twelf mattokis
"Item fyve gevillokis weyand nyne stane and tua pund wey
"Item tua querrell mellis and sex wedgeis
"Item four crawyronis.
"Item sex hammeris for wrichtis
"Item ane pair of smythis belleis with ane studie weyand stane wey with tua foir hammeris ane hand hammer and ane paire of tayngis with the brandering and kowe yron of the belleis, cleif yron and studie stok
"Item aucht stane wey of naillis grite and small in ane barrell.
"Item ane little barrell full of grite garroun naillis
"Item tua barrell with cuttit yron for hailshott
"Item fourtie fyve of skullis and creillis
"Item an hundreth daillis
"Item fyve dusone of double rooff sparris
"Item twa hundreth wicker sparris
"Item tua thousand girth stingis quhairof ane thousand clowin
"Item tua hundreth double rungis for letheris
"Item some grite wyer
"Item sex grite Jestis of threttie futis of lenth
"Item ane vther Jest cutt in ten peeceis for blokis
"Item fourscoir and six fadome of grite takill weyand tuenty ane stane and ellevin pund wey
"Item threttie fadome of small tow weyand fyiftene pund and ane half
"Item ane schellop and ane yron bolt
"Item sex plankis threttie tua fute of lenth
"Item auchtene naillis for schoune
"Item sex pair wendbandis
"Item an trest
"Item tua rowaris.
"Item an grite kist with lockis and bandis
"Item tua grite yron ladillis"
"Item ane grite cart with wheillis tramis axtric with virrallis busheis and doublbandis.
"Item mair sex grite double blokis garnisht with thair scheafis and strapis
"Item ane hand chanyie to the cannoun of the kingis cullournis
"Sic sub tur Caithnes"

(Kirkwall.)

"The compt of the haill furnishing to the bark deburset in Orknay May 1613.
"Item to thrie men that cailfit the outw buird and inw buird and the schip boit xiiij iij" ; the man xxiiij dayis : in all xlviij
"Item for pik and tar to Jo Sinclair merchant xvj iiij" vj
"Item to James Layng smy, for boutis, carvall naillis, ringis and vther iron work xxiiij
"Item to Wa Guid, blok makir, for thrie dussoun of grit and small blokis at iiij the dussun, in all xij
"Item for calfting to calfat the schip v
"Item for plait led to naill on the schip l iij"
"Item to Wa Coventrie for plens' naillis ij x
"Item for ane Iron trans to the foir top mast xxxvij
"Item for towing the schip out of oyse q scho wes dres (?) xl
"Item for ballasting of hir ij x
"Item to Ro Ormistoun in Westray for four stane of taikle x
"xiiij iij
"Item for pomp leder j iiiij
"Item for thrie compassis and ane night glas iiiij x
"Item Airthure Sinclair for ij stane of taikle viii vj viij
"Item for sex eln of hardin to mend the main bonet ij viij
"Item for four airis to the schip boit iiij
"Item for ane led and ane led lyne ij x
"Item for thrie pund of twyne j" x
"Item for ten eln of hardin to mend the foir top sail iiij
"Item for four pund of tallon to the tostis xiiij iij"
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"Item for sex pece of cruikit tymer to the boit ij"
"Item for the companyis wages xxx"
"Item of malt iij"1 iij"2
"Item four dusson of fisch xlviiij fisch
"Item of meill viij"3
"Item for ane six and hammer and a spyssing, I bocht in Zetland xlviiij"
"Item for pump naill xvij"
"Item for auld takle, I bocht fra Dutchmen in Zetland vij xi"
"Item for bakneill x"
"Item for roset I bocht in Zetland l"

"My debursment in August in Leyth"
"Item for twa shod schuillis xxiiij"
"Item for ane boit to sek the ankir we tynt in Leyth Raid iij"
"Item for the men in Kinghorne denner that weyit the ankir xxiiij"
"Item twa stane of candell vij viiiiv"
"Item for twa hundreth dowble naill j xij"
"Item for twa sparis vij"
"Item for auld daillis to dres the cwe iiiij"
"Item for lok and bandes to the cwe dur j"
"Item for missan mast iij"
"Item for twa pund of twine j"
"Item for thrie stringis to be welding to the schroudis j xvij"
"Item for the schipis ankerage in Bruntland xiiij iiiij"
"Item for the schipis ankerage in Leyth and shoir siluer xxiiij iv"
"Item to Gabriell Rankine for ane cable and yther takle conteinning threscoir stanne at l the stane, in all j 1"

"My debursment in October in Orknay"
"Item for two dussun and ane half of harden to beit the mainsail x"
"Item for ane chenyie that wes maid vp on the sey viij"

"My debursment in January 1614"
"Item for ane boit to tow the schip into the harbrie the first nicht scho come in iij iii"
"Item for ane daill of coillis and ane halff iij vij"

1 Merk. 2 Seteen.
"My debursment in February 1614.

"Item for ane cable fra Gabriell Rankyne of xxxij stane wecht at 1 per the stane, in all lxxxij" x'

"Item for xxv dussoun of canues to be cors and bonet of ane main saill and cors and bonet of a foir saill at iiij" ilk dussun qlk is in all lxxv"

"Item for fyve stane wecht of taikle to be boutraipis and ane bwrvp xij" x'

"Item for tailylie stringis to be vlyeitis and keis iiij"x

"Item for aucht punde of twyne to sew ye saillis iiij"x

"Item for making of the saillis x"x

"Item for my awin charges from the begynniug of Maij to the first March at xx" in ye moneth for ten monethis 200"x

\[\text{The haill compt in siluer is 1045}\,8\,4\,d\]

\[\text{The haill malt to the schip is 33}\,2\,s\,5\]

\[\text{The meill is in all 13}\,iiij\,s\text{tiles}\]

\[\text{The hail fish is 20 dussoun}\]

\[\text{The beff is of } \text{xx}\,v\,s\text{ animals}\]

\[\text{(In dorso.)}\]

"Copy of the compt gevin in be Sir James Stewart anent the Bark and his servandis expenssis in Orknay."

\[\text{(Account of Damage done by the Rebels, two sheets.)}\]

\[\text{Intromettet with furt of the barnyard of Birsay xviiij}^{\text{th}}\text{ thrasis of beir whilk being reknit at twa thresis the boll extendis in beir to ix}^{\text{th}}\text{ bol beir}\]

\[\text{xx}^{\text{xx}}\text{ thraises aitis estimat at ij thraises the boll, extendis in aitis to x}^{\text{xx}}\text{ bol aitis}\]

\[\text{teynd fische and salt of the Doger bottis, extendis to lxx bolis the teynd of ilk bott being rekint to xxij}^{\text{th}}\text{ and the salt at iiij}^{\text{th}}\text{ ilk barrell extendis in the haill in moneye to the summe of}\]

\[\text{fra James Spens twa ky, twa hors estimat to the sume of x}^{\text{th}}\]

\[\text{xvj Lespund of woll at liij}^{\text{th}}\text{ the pund.}\]

Only the first of the foregoing inventories is given in extenso. From the two latter only such passages have been culled as seemed noteworthy.