The Pottery at Throsk, Stirlingshire c 1600–c 1800: context, links and survival

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ABSTRACT

Detailed documentary search, generously funded by the Marc Fitch Fund, has extended knowledge of the post-medieval pottery around Throsk, Stirlingshire. This rural industry was established by 1610 but apparently only one family was involved prior to the mid-17th century. The main expansion was in the early 18th century and 15 potters signed an agreement in 1754; thereafter, the industry contracted rapidly but a remnant may have survived until the end of the century. Even in the 17th century, Throsk and its environs were also associated with clearance of peat moss for arable agriculture, commercial sale of peat and an active shipping industry; together these suggest that Throsk was a very unusual area. Links between Throsk and a previously unrecorded pottery at Cathcart in the mid-18th century have been found; the Stirlingshire industry seems to have had a seminal influence on the last phase of early-modern potting in Scotland.

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The post-medieval potters of the Throsk area, on the carselands south of the Forth and east of Stirling, are already the best-documented pre-modern potters in Scotland and their earthenware products have been well described (Caldwell & Dean 1992). However, new documentary sources add several new names to the list of known potters, extend the known period of operation, illuminate their methods of working and distribution and help to put the industry into its local and national context. This paper presents the new information. A particularly important document, the Bond and Agreement between the potters drawn up in 1754, is reproduced as Appendix 1. Appendix 2 gives brief biographical details of the potters.

The Throsk estate was at the core of the industry at all stages. The post-reformation history of the ownership of Throsk is complex (Caldwell & Dean 1992, 4) and that of the adjacent lands of Poppletrees, Cockspow and Bandeath is no less so. All these had belonged to Cambuskenneth Abbey and were feued in or about 1558. It may be significant that, at least from 1642, Throsk was a detached part of the barony of Balgownie, centred on Balgownie, near Culross. The property and superiority of Throsk were generally held by the same people. The lairds of Balgownie also owned the property of Poppletrees but the Erskines of Mar held the superiority. Various Ewings and Forresters held Cockspow of the same superiors until 1749 when it was integrated into the larger estate of Polmaise (Young 1932, 11–25). A similar succession of feuars held Bandeath from Erskine superiors.

In 1678 Erskine of Balgownie granted a tack [lease] of land at Throsk to Robert Mackison who was allowed to cut peats for his own use and also for sale 'at the powes [creeks]'

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(ie for shipping out for sale). He was allowed or even encouraged to recover arable from the moss. Tacks of land at Throsk granted to Robert Scot in 1688 and to James Scobie in 1692 make similar provision for moss clearance and Scobie’s tack specifically mentions the need to protect the ditches cut around the land. In 1696 James Dow granted a tack to William Morrison at Bandeath. He was similarly allowed to sell peats and had liberty ‘of furring the moss foregainst his said land and to make arable land thereof’ and was to ‘cast’
the head and tail sinks of the moss every three years.\textsuperscript{6} It therefore seems that proprietors in the Throsk area had embarked on a systematic programme of moss clearance a century before Lord Kames’s more famous project at Blairdummordon (Caddell 1913, 262–83).

A tack to William Nucall, tenant in Throsk, dated 1745 provided positive incentives to the tenant to clear moss for arable and penalties for failure. The tenant was permitted to sell peats but he was to pay a specified rate for each shipload. The ditches were to be kept clear so that they may ‘have their full due effect either for draining the ways and lands or carrying away the moss by water’. This process of moss clearance and drainage continued into the early 19th century as recorded in a series of tacks granted in 1804 and 1810.\textsuperscript{7}

A tack in Bandeath in 1711 restricted the tenants to selling two barkfuls [shipfuls] of peat yearly.\textsuperscript{8} In 1710 Erskine of Balgownie agreed that the tenants of the adjacent lands of Cowie could import lime at Throsk Pow but refused permission for them to export peats as this would be detrimental to his own tenants.\textsuperscript{9} By 1722 the tenants of Cambuskenneth were being prevented from cutting peats at Bandeath though they had formerly had right to do so.\textsuperscript{10} Taking all these records together it is clear that peat was a serious issue in this area by the early 18th century at least. It was a valuable product, commercially sold and exported by ship. Its removal increased the area of arable land. But the charges tenants had to pay on exports and the restrictions on sales, show that moss clearance was not paramount. There were also arguments in favour of conserving the mosses, which provided grazing and also fuel for the tenants’ own fires and, surely, for the pottery kilns. Exploitation was regulated by the proprietors though the practical work was undertaken by the tenants.

POTTERS AND OTHER TENANTS

The Pollocks (the name is also rendered as Poik, Poig and Pook) are the earliest of the potter families recorded in the area. In 1610 Jonat, daughter of John ‘pottar in Throske’ contracted to marry Patrick Wilson, her brother James being a witness. The father provided a tocher [dowry] of 100 merks Scots\textsuperscript{11} and assigned his tacks to the couple.\textsuperscript{12} In 1611 James Pook, son of John in Throsk, contracted to marry Margaret Buchan daughter of John in Lower Polmaise, Charles Pollock, the groom’s brother, being a witness.\textsuperscript{13} The Pollocks’s sale of bricks for ovens in Stirling Castle is noted by Caldwell & Dean (1992). And Charles Poig ‘pigger’ and James ‘pigmaker’ were involved in paying a debt due by the late Margaret Lindsay to Spittal’s Hospital, Stirling, in 1625–8 (the words ‘pig’ and ‘pigger’ are used interchangeably with ‘pot’ and ‘potter’ in the sources).\textsuperscript{14} This case includes a payment of 12 shillings to ‘ane messinger for tua sundry tymes going to Popill trees to chairg ye piggers’. There is no sign of how the debt was incurred or why the Pollocks were liable for it. Although James Brown, elder and younger, James Scobie and John Christie, all named as tenants of Throsk/Poppletrees in a Rental of 1641 correspond to potters named later, the Pollocks are the only family definitely identified as potters up to this time. The 1641 list mentions William, Charles and James Pollock.\textsuperscript{15} This Rental was surely made as part of the preparation for the sale of the estate by Bruce of Carnock to Erskine of Balgownie and the erection of the barony in the following year. Between 1641 and 1693 two James Browns, James and William Buchan, James and Robert Christie and probably two John Christies, three Thomas Matsons and Alexander Pollock are all identified as potters in at least one source. While several of these names are gleaned from parish records not available for earlier times the Buchans and Matsons appear to be new arrivals in the area as they are absent from the 1641 list. John Christie, an early entrant dead by 1655, was married to Katherine Pollock. Thomas Matson married Margaret Abercrombie before 1667 when their first child was baptized; the
Abercrombies had been proprietors of Throsk/Poppletrees earlier in the century.\footnote{16}

It seems certain that numbers really were increasing in the later 17th century. Four new names appear in the Hearth Tax return of 1694 and the numbers suggest around eight adult potters at any time by the turn of the century (Caldwell & Dean 1992, 5). James Scobie took over land previously farmed by his mother-in-law at Throsk in 1692. His tack bound him to pay ‘the soume of Ten pound Scots yearly for Clay money whenever he begins to make piggs’.\footnote{17}

Thereafter numbers of potters continue to increase, not least because some families had two generations at work at once. In 1699, Thomas Matson is described as ‘potar in Cowie’ the first record from outside Throsk/Poppletrees; he and his father, Thomas, were both working.\footnote{18} By 1702 Thomas’s brother John was working as a potter jointly with his father at Throsk when he contracted to marry Bessie Aikman.\footnote{19} This important agreement is the only positive record of a ‘workhouse’ and shows that father and son were equal partners in the potting business and that both were also involved in farming. Thomas Matson, elder, signed as cautioner of lawburrows [security to keep the peace] for his two sons (Thomas, younger and William) in 1704; William is never described as a potter.\footnote{20} By 1711 James, another brother, was established as a skipper in Alloa.\footnote{21}

In 1712 John Matson lent Jon Forrester of Cockspow 2000 merks (£1333 Scots or £110 Sterling) and Forrester leased him land at Cockspow for 19 years rent-free apart from payment of the land tax and ‘six water canns yearly when required’, suggesting that he was making pots there.\footnote{22} This John later moved to Elphinstone in the parish of Airth, where his descendants were to be found until the end of the century.\footnote{23} As in the case of James Scobie’s ‘clay money’ this tack indicates that the estates regulated and benefited from the industry while protecting their proprietary rights over the natural resources. The very substantial loan underscores the Matsons’ position as a family with considerable capital.

Through the early 18th century outsiders were being recruited to what now appears as a buoyant industry. In 1708 Thomas Matson employed Gilbert McNuir, potter in Cockspow, who was accused of fathering Matson’s daughter’s child. In 1713, McNuir was witness to a brawl outside Matson’s house.\footnote{24} By 1734 McNuir, married to the widow of Thomas Matson, was described as potter in Larbert. He returned to St Ninians parish in 1742–3.\footnote{25} Henry Abercromby, Archibald Ferguson and Robert Mitchell may also have entered the industry via marriage or as employees. But it is their misdemeanours, their marriages and deaths, rather than their business dealings, which are recorded. It is the Matsons and the Pollocks who have wide and prestigious contacts over an extended period, who lend substantial sums, whose sons follow their fathers in the craft or move to establish new businesses elsewhere, businesses which significantly focus on the river and shipping.

By the time Thomas Matson, elder, died in 1716, he was a wealthy and well-connected man, owning a share in a ship on the river and owed £1413 Scots by figures including the late John Murray of Touchadam, the wealthiest landlord in the immediate locality and John, Lord Elphinstone.\footnote{26} A bond for 400 merks owed to this Thomas Matson by John Rankine was inherited by his son and later secured on house property in Falkirk.\footnote{27} John Matson, potter in Elphinstone, owned property in Stirling in the 1740s which was still in the family in 1792.\footnote{28} In 1743 James Pollock, pigger in Throsk, was seized in a rent from a house in the Craigs of Stirling in security for another debt.\footnote{29}

Potters were only ever a minority of the tenants, even at Throsk. The 1641 list suggests there were then some 32 tenancies in Throsk, including those of the Mains, the mill and the yard or garden. The Hearth Tax of 1691 lists 39 tenants of the Laird of Balgownie’s lands (ie Throsk and Poppletrees). In 1775 there
were around 50 tenancies in Throsk, some occupied by two tenants.\textsuperscript{30}

\textbf{THE BOND AND AGREEMENT}

In 1754 a total of 15 men, all described as potters, signed the Bond and Agreement (Appendix 1). Eleven were ‘in Throsk’, two in Cowie and one each in Bandeath and Elphinstone. They include three Pollocks, two Browns, two Christies and two Matsons, consistent with the pattern of family continuity seen earlier. Five are named in this source and no other and others are named here for the first time. Since the Agreement is clearly a reaction to stiff new competition from industrial potteries in both England and Scotland it is clear that all available support would have been involved. But in forbidding each other ‘or any belonging to us’ to sell pots at less than the agreed rate, the Bond implies that there are others (perhaps wives and daughters, employees or casual workers) who might be involved.

The signatories are actual or potential competitors but they also recognize that they have interests in common. In this, as in some of the specific areas to be regulated, there is a clear comparison with more traditional urban craft incorporations which would have recognized the expressed aims of the agreement, namely, to ‘protect the lieges’ and to ensure the continued welfare of workers and their families. ‘Protecting the lieges’ was a common reason for insisting that apprentices should serve out their full terms and for regulating qualities and quantities in the urban context (see below). On the other hand, the need to regulate these implies pressure for change, perhaps a desire to cut corners and compete more keenly.

Apprenticeships were important for traditional craft industries. They were a source of ‘new blood’, of cheap labour and also of occasional substantial prentice fees, which must have been a valuable windfall for the employers. Urban guilds and craft incorporations tried to regulate the terms closely. The Weavers of Stirling had forbidden employers to ease fees or the terms to be served by apprentices in the early 18th century, at a time when the local industry was expanding and there was a shortage of recruits.\textsuperscript{31} Both the Weavers and Potters are seeking to remove apprenticeships from the area of competition. But the Weavers still allowed the employers to keep the fees. The potters go much further. While the apprenticeship indenture was to remain a matter between master and servant, they agree that all apprentice fees are to go into a fund for the general good. This would be a substantial sacrifice and, if the Agreement had worked, the fees would have been by far the greatest part of the fund.

Four of the clauses in the Bond deal with the size and counting of the product, variously described as earthenware, mutchkins, chopins and cannns of various sizes up to six pints (see below).\textsuperscript{32} All were sold in nominal ‘dozens’. But a dozen of the large, three-pint cannns was to consist of eight cannns with a variable number of mutchkins to make up the ‘computed’ dozen. Chopin cannns and generalized ‘earthenware’ was to be sold in ‘dozens’ of 13. Where the bargain was for five dozen or more the size of a ‘dozen’ was a matter for negotiation but the price per ‘dozen’ was to be fixed.

Merchants were not to be allowed to incur debts to one potter until debts to others had been cleared; this is again paralleled by a ruling of the Stirling Weavers in 1696 and implies a closed world of limited contacts.\textsuperscript{33} Control of the purchase of lead suggests that this was still an important cost and that the Throsk potters had not adopted new glazes in the face of the new competition. Nowhere in the document is there any hint of adapting to new circumstances; indeed, anyone who broke ranks would be fined.

\textbf{THE POTS AND OTHER PRODUCE}

The Agreement just discussed mentions four types or sizes of pots. Mutchkins ($\frac{1}{4}$ of a Scots
pint; about 0.42 litres] are the smallest in the range and six-pint cans are the largest. The larger vessels were to be made somewhat ‘over size’, the three pint cans to contain 3.5 pints and the large ones 6.5 pints or around 11.05 litres. Caldwell & Dean, on the basis of the samples they collected (1992, 13) felt unable to suggest which types of product were com-
monest. A reasonable inference from the Agreement would be that ‘chopins’ [1 a Scots pint; about 0.84 litres] were common enough to be a ‘standard’ price and that there was a range of ‘earthenware’ of roughly ‘chopin’ size and potentially very varied design. The small ‘mutchkins’ are makeweights while larger ves-
sels are the least common. The large cans would probably correspond to the larger ‘jugs’ described by Caldwell & Dean (1992).

Seventeenth-century testaments which list household goods such as plates show that lame [earthenware] was comparable in price with timber and much cheaper than pewter. The following examples are all from Stirling around 1700. Robert Gibb, who died in 1689, had six lame trenchers worth 9 shillings Scots, five lame trenchers worth 7s 6d and four pewter plates worth £7, two lame cans worth 10s, a dozen pewter trenchers worth £6, nine lame trenchers £1 1s, seven pewter plates, £8 4s 8d. John McCulloch also died in 1689 and had a dozen pewter trenchers worth £6 and 10 timber trenchers worth 16s. James Russell, who died in 1692, had 18 pewter plates at £46, 36 pewter trenchers at £48, 20 lame trenchers at £1, two lame plates at 10s, a lame basin at 6s and 22 wooden trenchers at £1 16s. Chamber pots are amongst the few items apart from plates which are commonly said to be lame or earthenware but most records are of non-specific ‘vessels’ etc. In a case in 1671 a woman used two ‘cans’ to put the cows’ milk in and was annoyed when her brother took them to store the honey from two skeps. However, she seems to have been able to replace them without difficulty. ‘Stoups’ and ‘bikers’ and other coopered drinking vessels, rather then earthenware pots, figure frequently as weapons in 17th-century tavern brawls. There are occasional records of pottery of other types such as Thomas Nairn’s three white lame plates (10 shillings) and white lame bottle (6 shillings) and John McCulloch’s three ‘printed pigs for flours’. But it is puzzling that plates and trenchers, the most commonly recorded lame or earthenware item in local 17th-century listings, are not mentioned in the Agreement nor are they listed amongst the pottery types found by Caldwell & Dean in the field.

The copious 17th- and 18th-century records of the town of Stirling and its charit-
able institutions produced only a single series of purchases of earthenware, items bought in the mid 1740s for the new Soldiers’ Hospital. For that they are likely to have used the cheapest and most expendable option. These include (1745–6):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For two cans and two earthen dishes to the Hospital</td>
<td>8s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An earthen dish and 4 porringer to the Hospital</td>
<td>4s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A dozen spoons, 8 earthen dishes and 2 cans</td>
<td>10s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 chamber pots 3s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 large water cans £1 2s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 pots and 3 other dishes 6s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 earthen dishes £1 2s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 dozen spoons and 6 earthen dishes 19s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six chamber pots and 6 dishes 18s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And in 1746–7:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 cans and 7 dishes to the soldiers’ hospital 9s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And in 1747–8:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>for pitchers and earthen dishes to the hospital 12s 6d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 timber trenchers and 2 large plates £1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>earthen pigs and dishes to the sick of the regiment in the hospital 13s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apart from the ‘tyles’ supplied by the Pollocks in the early 17th century, the earliest record of bricks being used in Stirling is from
1721 when John Matson supplied 600 bricks for building a chimney in Stirling.\textsuperscript{39} By 1746 Andrew Wood was taking clay from the clay holes beside Stirling for making bricks and there are two records of bricks supplied in the town in 1746 and 1747, one lot specifically supplied by Wood. Around 1742 John Matson, potter in Throsk, had bought a house in Stirling from Andrew Wood, providing a direct connection between them (Renwick 1889, 283).\textsuperscript{40} A red-tiled house is recorded in Stirling in 1739 but there is no record of its age nor the source of the tiles (Renwick 1889, 248, July 1739). By 1804 William Deas, who had occupied the mansion house of Throsk since 1799, leased a brick and tile works at Throsk from Cunningham of Balgownie. That was clearly a fully-industrialized concern and later records suggest that it also made pots.\textsuperscript{41}

**DISTRIBUTION AND SALE**

New documents support the view of Caldwell & Dean (1992) that the River Forth played a key role in distribution. Several vessels plied out of Throsk Pow and Bandeath. Recorded cargoes included grain, peat, lime and coal.\textsuperscript{42} In 1701 James Matson breached the Sabbath by sailing from Garden Pow to Throsk and in 1682 James and Charles Pollock and others were accused of using illegal fishing nets (Caldwell & Dean 1992, 30).\textsuperscript{43} James Row, shipmaster in Throsk, incurred a debt to James Scobie in 1736. Thomas Matson and James Scobie both owned shares in vessels and James Matson, a potter’s son, became a skipper with his own vessel, sailing out of Alloa.\textsuperscript{44} Robert Robertson, shipmaster in Throsk, was married to Christian Abercrombie, a grand-daughter of Thomas Brown, potter in Throsk.\textsuperscript{45} William Nucall, as he cleared the moss in terms of his 1745 lease at Throsk, was to load the peats onto a barque where the landlord could measure them.\textsuperscript{46}

The Bond and Agreement implies that the potters had regular links to a series of merchants though it is not clear how far these specialized in pottery or where they were. When James Pollock died in 1714 he was owed £80 Scots for pots by two men in Fisharrows, 13km east of Edinburgh (Caldwell & Dean 1992, 31). At 1754 prices this would have represented 80 ‘dozen’ which, with discounts, would certainly have been over 1000 pots.

Two early records of ‘pigmen’ or pottery merchants in Stirling have been found. In 1605 James Chapman, described as ‘ane sellar of pigis’ and ‘pig sellar’ was accused of fornication. Twice in the early 1630s, Alexander Lorne, pigman, acted as cautioner or security for others, a role which implies an established and respectable social position.\textsuperscript{47} But no further records of specialized pottery sellers have been found and retailing may have been taken over by huxters – who were often women and who sold a range of inexpensive items at markets and fairs.\textsuperscript{48}

**AFTER 1754 AND WIDER CONNECTIONS**

There was some movement of potters within the core area (above). Gilbert McNuir spent some years as a potter in Larbert, returning to St Ninians about 1742.\textsuperscript{49} John Matson seems to have moved from Throsk to Cockspow around 1712 but by 1732 he was in Airth parish and in 1742 was described as ‘potte r in Elphinstone of Airth’. In 1752 the name Potterfield of Airth is mentioned as part of lands belonging to Mr Club of Westfield, a small estate in the barony of Elphinstone. This probably corresponds to the pottery noted at Elphinstone in 1743.\textsuperscript{50}

Andrew Woods, the Stirling brick maker, was a contact via his sale of a house to Matson. Robert Christie, ‘potter in Tarniebaugh, County Londonderry’ had his son baptized in St Ninians and must have been a connection of the potting Christies. There was a disagreement between the Matsons between 1744 and 1751 when Thomas Matson is described as ‘late tenant in Forest of Clackmannan and now potter in Cathcart’ where, he asserted, he had
had his ‘constant residence’ for some time and where he owned heritable property. As his dispute was with the widow of David Matson in Airth, where descendants of the potting Matsons had been established for some time, there seems no doubt that he was of the same family.51

Records become very rare after 1754 and their character changes. Thomas Brown, described as ‘pigger in Throsk’ and ‘potter in Throsk’ had his right to a family lair and gravestone ratified in 1761 but sold the rights to Robert Watt in 1765.52 In 1742, Thomas Neilson had borrowed around £320 Scots from Thomas Maxwell. Only around 1762 and after registration and various legal moves by Maxwell did he make a substantial payment towards the outstanding debt. A revised agreement between them is registered as late as June 1773 when Neilson is described as ‘sometime in Baquegreen of Powhouse and now potter in Throsk’ and Maxwell as ‘sometime potter in Muirhouse of Parkhead, now potter in Westfield of Cathcart’.53 Regrettably it is impossible to disentangle from the extant documents just when each man moved – though Neilson is amongst the signatories of the Agreement of 1754.

There is no indication whether the late records refer to a persistence of the traditional industry or whether more modern methods were introduced. Only with the creation of the Brick and Tile Works at Throsk, prior to 1804, do we have unequivocal evidence of a fully industrialized and capitalized concern.54 That lasted for over a century and Fleming (1923, 203) suggests that it continued to produce ‘the usual domestic jars, tubs, bowls and milk pans’.

DISCUSSION

New data push the known date of operation of the Throsk potters back from 1617 to 1610. But as John Pollock, potter in Throsk, saw two of his children married in 1610 and 1611 it is likely that he had been there for some time prior to this. Indeed, records for day-to-day activities in the Stirling area are so rare prior to c 1600 that even a substantial industry could be unrecorded. The end of the period of operation is similarly doubtful. The Bond and Agreement shows that, surprisingly, there were still at least 15 potters in the wider locality in 1754 and a trickle of later records could mean some sort of work continuing for 20 years or so thereafter, if not longer. But it is very unlikely that substantial numbers of potters would have escaped notice in the records at this period. It is also very unlikely that any substantial concentration of pottery workers within the Stirlingshire/Clackmannanshire/ Dunblane area between c 1600 and c 1800 would have escaped notice in the documentary search undertaken, covering the Stirling and Dunblane Commissary Registers of Deeds and the Stirlingshire, Clackmannanshire and Dunblane Sheriff Court Registers of Deeds, apart from very substantial numbers of testaments and other records.

The records also reveal two independent connections between Throsk and a previously unrecorded pottery at Cathcart, south of Glasgow, established by 1742. Records of connections between distant non-urban areas are rare and these links further underscore the rather unusual nature of the pottery industry. The Cathcart industry is likely to have generated other records.

Over the entire period there are records of potters in Throsk, Poppletrees, Bandeath, Cockspow and Cowie, with Larbert and Elphinstone as outliers. References to potters in Airth should probably be understood to refer to Elphinstone, rather than to the nucleated settlement. Throsk and Poppletrees were clearly the core area. Proprietors regulated the industry to some degree but the charges levied on the potters were so modest that they cannot have yielded a significant income for the proprietors nor have been a serious deterrent to potential potters; they are best understood as an assertion of the landowner’s proprietary rights over the natural resources. The Bond
and Agreement shows the potters as a self-regulating community. As such they would have been able to control entry to the trade by regulating apprenticeships and other methods of access.

The Throsk area was superficially similar to much of the Forth littoral. But the proprietors, via their tenants, managed it in several very distinctive ways from an early date. The commercial exploitation of peat and the conscious clearance of moss to create arable would be remarkable in themselves. Shipping is another distinctive feature of the Throsk records though small harbours along the river were commoner than is generally realized. But taken together with the pottery industry they make the Throsk locality into something quite exceptional in early modern Scotland.

The Pollocks dominate the early records (to c 1650 at least) other names creep in only gradually; some potting families (Abercromby, Brown, Buchan, Christie and others) are common names locally. But the Matsons are not locally recorded before Thomas Matson married Margaret Abercrombie in 1667 and all the other Matsons appear to be descendants of this couple. The more successful potting families were involved in the business for several generations and employed others. These families had wide contacts – in Stirling, Falkirk, Airth, Alloa, Fisherrow and Edinburgh. Potters left the Throsk area and were involved in potteries at Larbert, Cathcart, Elphinstone and as far afield as County Londonderry. These records suggest that Throsk had a seminal role within Scotland and even further afield.

John Matson had diversified into bricks by 1721 but would have faced competition from Andrew Wood for the Stirling market after 1746. Numbers of workers involved appear to have continued to rise through the first half of the 18th century. Does that rise perhaps represent an increase in demand for their traditional product driven by factors which also stimulated the more modern industry which was so soon to displace them? The Bond and Agreement shows that their reaction to the challenge of the new industrial potteries was not to diversify further, adopt new technologies nor new trading methods. But following the pattern of urban craft guilds, they tried to maintain the status quo. It was a doomed strategy. But the potters of Throsk were in a very unusual position from the outset. Their industry called for capital, technical skills, sophisticated distribution systems and they probably had to cope with very uneven demand. The highly unusual site had been well chosen and the potters and their landlords were adaptable enough to sustain the industry for around 150 years.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX 1: Bond and Agreement

Stirling Sheriff Court Register of Deeds, SC67/49/20, 152–4. Bond & agreement amongst the Pottars of Throsk, Cowie and Elphinstoun.

Wee, Charles Pollock elder, James Brown, Thomas Brown, William Matson, James Christie, Henry Abercromby, Charles Pollock, younger, Archibald Ferguson, James Pollock and Thomas Matson, all Pottars in Throsk, John Miller, Pottar in Elphinstone, Alexander Christie and Thomas Neilson, Pottars in Cowie, Robert Mitchell, pottar in Bandeath and John Mcaulay, Potter in Throsk:

Considering that to prevent imposition upon the Leidges and that we might carry on our employment as pottars with the more facility and exactness, and that our widows and Children after our Deaths or
any of our Selves that may happen to fall Back in our Circumstances may in Some measure be subsisted out of funds of our own, we find it necessary that Certain Rules and Regulations Relative thereto should be agreed unto and entered into by us. Do therefore Bind and oblige our Selves and each of us our heirs and executors and successors to stand by, observe, obtemper and fullfill the following Rules and Regulations, vizt:

That Each of us shall pay in yearly to the managers after-mentioned the sum of forty shillings Scots money, Item that none of us shall take or Accept of ane Apprentice or apprentices for Less than four full years, to be bound and not under one Hundred pound Scots of Apprentice fie each, which sum of one Hundred pounds is also to be payed into the said Mannagers all for the use and purposes after-mentioned.

Item, that we shall in each year Leave off working at our said employment for the Space of Six weeks at whatever time each of us for our Selves shall judge proper.

Item, Each computed Dozen of Earthen ware to be made by us shall be sold at Twenty Shilling Scots and to Consist of thirteen in number for the Dozen and no otherways and that none of [us] by our Selves or any Belonging to us shall do otherways under the penalty aftermentioned and that Chopin Cans shall be sold and come under this Article.

Item That no three pint canns be given but eight in each Dozen and that by and attour Mutskines to each Dozen. That all the Canns that goes off in five Dozens and upwards at once be sold as the Merchant and Seller can agree only they are to be Sold at the neat pryce of Twenty Shillings Scots each Computed Dozen.

Item that the three pint cans be made to containe as near as possible seven chopines and the big Canns as near as possible Six pints and one Chopen in measure.

Item that none of us shall sell our goods to one another’s merchant, till once he accompt and Clear with those of use to whom he stand formerly indebted.

Item to prevent frauds and the Bad practices of our Carriers we agree to use no Lead at our work But such as shall come from Leith.

Item, that our own children who incline may earn and take up our Business at any time without being Lyable to any apprentice fie, only that none of us shall be found to entertain or allowing any other neutrall person whatever to Learn the trade either Directly or Indirectly without being Lyable for the sum of one Hundred pound as if said person were ane apprentice.

Item that we shall yearly chose out of our number four persons By Plurality of voices who are to be our managers and to whom the apprentice fees and yearly payments are to be made & payed for the use of our poor as aforesaid and to whom and their successors in office securities are to be given for the said use and who shall Judge and Determine how far the above Rules and Regulations are observed or not and shall have the power of giving out of our funds such supply to our poor widows and Children as the funds shall admit of and their necessity call for.

And we all of on Consent Bind and oblige us and our foresaids to obtemper and fullfill the above Rules and Regulations in terms And that for each time wee or any of us Shall transgress the Same we shall pay into the Managers foresaid the sum of two pound Scots toties quoties attour performance Consenting to the Registration hereof in the Books of Councill & Session or others Competent that execution on Six days pass thereon wee Constitute the foresaid John McGibbon Notary our Procurator.

In witness whereof we have Subscribed thir presents written upon stampt paper by John McGibbon writer in Stirling Att Bankhall the twentyth day of February Im vic and fifty four years Before Robert Eason wright in Bankhead Robert Aikman there, John Stiven brewer in Throsk and John Shearer servant to Charles Pollock there Signed Charles Pollock James Pollock Charles Pollock elder James Brown Henry Abercromby Alexander Christie William Matson John Mcalla Thomas Neilson Robert Mitchell Thomas Matson Thomas Brown James Christie Archibald Ferguson William Matson Robert [illegible; should be John Shearer, witness] Robert Eason witness Robert Aikman witness.

APPENDIX 2: Biographies

This list is to supplement the one provided by Caldwell and Dean. It summarizes their information even when there are no new data about a potter. Several of the names occur repeatedly and Caldwell and Dean rightly point to the impossibility of being certain about identities. They distinguished two James Pollocks as James (1) and James (2). I retain the same number for the same person and
cope with the extra one by calling him James (1a). On the other hand, I suggest that their Thomas Matson (2) and Thomas Matson (3) are the same person but that Thomas Matson (4) is a new one. Some dates refer to baptismal records or to dates by which a person was dead; they should not be taken to mean that the person was an active potter at the named site for the entire period.


BROWN, THOMAS (2), potter in Throsk, not in Caldwell & Dean (1992). Bond and agreement, 1754. 1761, St Ninians session ratifies to Thomas Brown, pigger in Throsk, 2 lairs and headstone which belonged to late J B, pigger there, his father (CH2/337/8, 179).


FERGUSON, ARCHIBALD. 1737, AF, potter in Cockspow, Caldwell & Dean (1992). 1749, AF, tenant in Throsk, new portioner St Ninians Mortcloth (CH2/337/7, 1 June 1749). Bond and agreement, 1754.


McNUIR, GILBERT. 1708–43, Caldwell & Dean (1992), 1713, SC67/1/17 f36r–37v, 24 June 1713; Thomas Matson elder denies that he struck Paterson nor struck him nor called him rascal or dog. Margaret Crumbie, spouse of said Thomas, conform to her husband and he neither scandalized nor beat Paterson. G McN says that on 18 June last he heard his wife cry murder and ran and found Paterson above his wife and James Forrester the servant beat Paterson with the tongs several times. 1742–3, G McN and spouse return from Larbert to St Ninians parish; given testificate (St Ninians Session Minutes CH2/337/7, 24, 46).


MATSON, JOHN (2), potter in Throsk, later in Cockspow and later in Elphinstone/Airth. Son Thomas (3). 1710–21, Caldwell & Dean (1992). 1702, B66/16/23, f240r–241v, marriage contract dated 6 June 1702, between John Matson, potter in Throsk, with consent of Thomas, potter there and Bessie Aikman, daughter of Alexander Aikman. Thomas Matson assigns to them half the right he has in a tack by Erskine of Balgonie and agrees to build there ‘ane sufficient dwelling house upon the ground of the said land to them’ at his own expense, they paying the burdens for their occupation and
are to stay in James’s house meanwhile. John is to secure them jointly in all his heritable bonds; Aikman disposes to them a house in Stirling. And John Matson is to have ‘the equal benefit and privilege of the work house and heall clay and pottar work with the work that shall be made wherein he bears the equal half of the expences with his father.’ 1712, JM, potter in Throsk, leases Over Malines from Forrester of Cocksopp, in return for a loan of 2000 merks. Matson is to pay six water cans when required. TM, elder, potter in Throsk, is witness (Stirling Sheriff Deeds, SC67/49/10, f34). Bond dated 1714 to parents assigned to Thomas 1721 and secured on property in Falkirk (1728). (SC67/49/19, 297 & Stirling Sasine Register, RS59/1S1, 22 Jan 1728). 1732, John Matson, sometime in Cocksopp, now in Airth, CC21/13/11, f29. Stirling Sheriff Deeds, SC67/49/40, f301–12, heritable bond between John Matson, Potter in Elphinstone and Andrew Neilson, tenant in Carnock, dated at Airth 27 Feb 1742. Matson has borrowed at Martinmas last, the sum of 550 merks Scots to be repaid at Martinmas next with 110 merks penalty with annualrents etc. And for his further security he disposes to Neilson, under reversion, an annualrent of £18 6s 8d less or more according to interest rates, from his tenement of land, high and low, with stables and chamber above the same and the yards, sometime pertaining to David, Commandator of Dryburgh, prior of Inchmahome and which were purchased by Matson from Andrew Wood, maltman in Stirling and which lies on the Castle Wynd of Stirling etc. Registration is on 11 Jan 1792. B66/223, 301–3, 2 Jan 1792, rasine for Alexander Matson, wright in Airth, as heir of his brother, John, eldest son late William, sailor in Airth, of the annualrent from the house which sometime pertained to David, Commandator of Dryburgh and thereafter to John Matson, potter in Elphinstone. MATSON, JOHN (3). 1710–21, Caldwell & Dean (1992).

MATSON, THOMAS (1). 1667–1712, Caldwell & Dean (1992). 1704, TM, elder, pigger in Throsk, cautioner for Thomas and William, in Throsk, his sons (6 Oct 1704, SC67/1/14, Matsons v Graham). 1712, TM, elder, witness to tack granted to TM, younger, of land in Cocksopp (SC67/49/10, f34). 1713, SC67/1/17 f36r–37v, 24 June 1713; Thomas Matson elder denies that he struck Paterson nor struck him nor called him rascal or dog. Margaret Crumbie, spouse of said Thomas, conform to her husband and he neither scandalized nor beat Paterson. 1716, letter will of Thomas Matson, husband of Margaret Abercrombie. They have daughters Margaret, Janet, Isobel and Bethia and sons, John, Thomas and James (skipper in Alloa, father of Thomas, David, James and William). TM is owed bonds and bills worth 2100 merks including 400 merks by Rankine of Rottenstocks by bond dated 1714.

MATSON, THOMAS (2) [appears to be the same person as TM (3)]. 1670–1741, Caldwell & Dean (1992).

MATSON, THOMAS (3) [appears to be the same person as TM (2)]. Father of John (3). 1670–1726, Caldwell & Dean (1992). 1699. Complains of attack on John Watt, his father’s servant (1699, SC67/7/25, loose papers). 1702, B66/16/23, f240r–241v, marriage contract dated 6 June 1702, between John Matson, potter in Throsk, son of Thomas, potter there – see John Matson (1) above.


MATSON, THOMAS (5) potter in Cathcart. 1744–51, Thomas Matson ‘late tenant in Forest of Clackmannan, now potter in Cathcart’ pursues case against William Wright, shoemaker in Airth and Margaret Dick, widow David Matson there; by 1750 Matson has had his ‘constant residence’ in Cathcart for some time and owns heritable property there (CS239/M12/16).

MATSON, WILLIAM, potter in Throsk. 1742–51, Caldwell & Dean (1992). Bond and agreement, 1754. Son of Thomas (3) Stirling Sheriff Deeds, SC67/49/19, 300–4, registered 14 April 1752, dated at Airth 25 Feb 1740. Disposition and assignation by John Matson, potter in Throsk, James and John Rankine in Rottenstocks owe John Matson £384 and interest and penalties by bond dated 11 Jan 1728. In security they have disposed to Matson an annualrent of £19 per year from a house in Falkirk, with rasine etc thereon, 20 Jan 1728 in the Stirling Sasine Register. For the love he bears to William Matson, his youngest son and for the years of service he has given him and good offices done, he now dispenses this annual-rent to William, retaining his own lifetime use.

MAXWELL, THOMAS, ‘sometime potter in Muirhouse of Parkhead, now potter in Westfield of Cathcart’. 1742, Thomas Neilson, sometime in Baquegreen of Powhouse, now potter in Throsk,
had borrowed £400 merks from Thomas Maxwell in 1742; in 1762 the terms of debt now varied. Maxwell still alive in 1773 and the documents describe him as ‘sometime potter in Muirhouse of Parkhead, now potter in Westfield of Cathcart’ (Stirling Sheriff Deeds, SC67/49/28, f428 and voucher, Voucher, SC67/50/32, bundle 1773).

HARRISON, THE POTTERY AT THROSK


POLLOCK, CHARLES (3) elder potter in Throsk, not in Caldwell & Dean (1992). Bond and agreement, 1754.


POLLOCK, JAMES (1a) pig maker. 1610, James, son of John P, potter in Throsk, witnesses marriage contract (CC21/13/2, f142r–v). 1611, James, son of John, potter in Throsk and of Jonet Ray his spouse, contracts to marry Margaret Buchan, d John in Wester Polmaise (CC21/13/3). 1626–7, pays debt to Spittall’s Hospital, Stirling, for late Margaret Lindsay SB6/3/1a, charge 1626–7. This James is unlikely to be the one who entered as burgess of Stirling in 1648 (Caldwell & Dean (1992)).


POLLOCK, JAMES (3), potter in Throsk, not in Caldwell & Dean (1992). 1731, JP, potter in Throsk owed £12 by James Gillespie, maltman in Stirling (CC21/13/12, f61). 1743, in 1736 had lent £15 Sterling to John Heggie and spouse, now secured on property in Stirling (Stirling Burgh Register of Sasines, B66/2/12, 20–2). 1750 James Pollock, tenant in Throsk (m. Isobel Heugh) lends 100 merks to Erskine; he dead by 1768 (Cunningham mss bundle 11, inventory of bonds etc). Bond and agreement, 1754.

POLLOCK, JOHN (1), potter in Throsk. 1610, JP, potter in Throsk, agrees to pay 100 merks tocher for daughter Jonat on marriage to Patrick Wilson. James Poik, son of said John, is a witness. Stirling Commissary Court, Register of Deeds, CC21/12/2 f142. 1611, marriage contract between James Pook, son of John in Throsk and Margaret Buchan, daughter of John in Lower Polmaise; JP and Jonet Ray (or Hay) spouses, assign half their free geir to them and Charles, their son, is a witness (CC21/13/3, f192r–v). 1617, Caldwell & Dean (1992).


SCOBIE, JAMES, potter in Throsk. 1694–1741, Caldwell & Dean (1992). 1692, leases land at Throsk, last occupied by his mother-in-law, Janet Stein and agrees to pay clay money when he begins to make pigs (Stirling Sheriff Deeds, SC67/49/3 f136 ff). 1740, leaves testament testamentor showing substantial assets including one sixteenth part of a bark, only son Robert, daughters Janet and Christian who are to have 200 merks each on his death and £100 each on death of his widow (Stirling Sheriff Deeds, SC67/49/18, 133–4).


NOTES

1 DL Cunningham of Balgownie mss bundle 5, Memorandum of St Ninians Locality, Inventory of writs etc; NAS C22/77, 161v–162r, Service of Robert Cunningham.
2 DL Cunningham of Balgownie mss bundle 8.
3 The Account Books of John Forrester of Cockspow (NAS RH15) do not mention potters or pot making; SCA GD189/3/79.
4 NAS SC67/49/3, 120v.
5 NAS SC67/49/3, 133–6.
6 NAS, SC67/49/6, 61r.
8 NAS SC67/49/7, 261.
9 SCA GD189/2/8.
10 SCA SB5/1/1, 9 Jan 1722 & 3 April 1729.
11 a £ Scots was equivalent to 1/12 of a £ Sterling; one merk was 2/3 of a £ Scots.
12 NAS CC21/3/2, 142.
13 NAS CC21/3/3, 192.
14 SCA SB6/3/1a, 44v, 48v, 49v, 52r.
15 DL Cunningham of Balgownie mss, bundle 30, item 11.
17 NAS SC67/49/3, 136.
18 NAS SC67/7/25, loose papers, Supplication of Thomas Matson, potar in Cowie, 1699.
20 NAS SC67/1/14, 6 Oct 1704, Matsons v Graham.
21 NAS CC21/3/8, 3 May 1712.
22 NAS SC67/49/10, 34.
23 NAS CC21/3/11 29r, Protest dated 16 Oct 1732 by John Matson, late in Cockspow, now in Airth.
24 NAS SC67/1/17, 36–7.
26 NAS SC67/49/9, 305.
27 NAS SC67/49/9, 305; NAS RS59/151, 22 Jan 1728.
28 SCA B66/2/12, 310–13.
29 SCA B66/2/12, 20–2.
30 DL Cunningham of Balgownie mss, Bundle 30, Rental of Throsk in 1641; NAS E69/22/1 20v; DL, Cunningham of Balgownie mss, un-numbered bundle marked Writs of Throsk, Dispositions of Throsk, 1775, to Moir & Moncrieff.
31 SCA PD7/11/4, 1 Feb 1701, 1 May 1703, 7 Oct 1706.
32 see Zupko 1985 for definitions and modern equivalents of 18th-century Scots measures.
33 SCA PD7/11/3, 28 Nov 1696.
35 NAS, SC67/7/11 bundle 1671, confession of David, Robert & Agnes Muirheads.
38 SCA, B66/23/3, 1747–8, Discharge, 14, 15.
41 NAS SC67/49/49, 286–95.
42 NAS CC21/3/4 76–77; NAS SC67/49/3 120 for peat; SCA GD189/3/79 for lime etc.
43 NAS SC67/1/10, 10 Oct 1682.
44 NAS SC67/49/9, 305 r; NAS CC21/6/22, Testament Thomas Matson; NAS SC67/49/18, 133–4; NAS CC21/3/8, 13 May 1712.
45 NAS SC67/49/18, 380.
46 NAS, SC67/49/19, 371.
47 SCA CH2/1026/1, 5 Dec 1605 & 9 Jan 1606; SCA, B66/16/7, 19 June 1630 & 6 July 1632.
48 SCA B66/16/27, 16 June 1719.
49 SCA CH2/337/7, 24, 46.
50 NAS CC21/3/11, 29 for John Matson, late in Cockspow, now in Airth; NAS SC67/49/40, 301–312 for John Matson, potter in Elphinstone; NAS SC67/49/28, 368 for Potterfield, part of Mr Club’s lands of Westfield, barony of Elphinstone, parish of Airth. Westfield is at NS882877 and Club’s Tomb at NS881874 (see RCAHMS, 1963, 142); Caldwell & Dean (1992, 7) for Elphinstone pottery in 1743.
51 NAS CS239/M12/16.
52 SCA CH2/337/8, 179, 259.
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Cunningham of Balgownie mss

**National Archives of Scotland (NAS)**

C22 Services of Heirs
CC21/5 Stirling Commissary Court, Register of Testaments
CC21/13 Stirling Commissary Court, Register of Deeds
CS239 Court of Session Processes
E69/22/1 Hearth Tax Return, Stirlingshire, 1694
RH15/18 Account Books of John Forrester in London, Cockspow and Stirling
RS59 Stirlingshire Register of Sasines
SC67/1 Stirling Sheriff Court, Court Books
SC67/7 Stirling Sheriff Court, Processes
SC67/49 Stirling Sheriff Court, Register of Deeds
SC67/50 Stirling Sheriff Court, Vouchers of Deeds

**Stirling Council Archives (SCA)**

B66/2 Stirling Burgh Register of Sasines
B66/16 Stirling Burgh Court, Court Books
B66/23 Stirling Burgh Treasurers’ Accounts
CH2/337 St Ninians Kirk Session Minutes
CH2/1026 Stirling Holy Rude Kirk Session Minutes
GD188 Murray of Polmaise Papers
PD7/11 Stirling Incorporation of Weavers Papers
SB5/1 Cowane’s Hospital Papers