



Setting the Record Straight - The (Boring) Confessions of an Inaccurate Historian.

In the panel on Broad Street which outlines the exciting and turbulent events surrounding the Jacobite rising in 1715, we referred to Captain James Park as the son-in-law of the Baron Bailie, Thomas Arbuthnot. Captain Park was a prominent Peterhead merchant and the apparently unwitting host of one James Francis Stuart, (known to his supporters as King James VIII), who turned up unexpectedly just before Christmas and needed a bed for the night.

The story (which we honestly believed to be true at the time) was that the Baron Bailie put the King up in his son in law's home while Captain Park was absent from the town. The uprising was not going well, so this would give them both some deniability if the revolt failed and the Hanoverian government took issue with him for providing hospitality to the deposed King.

So far, so good. Then, in preparation for a trail tour, one of our researchers got curious. After some mixed success digging around to see what could be uncovered about the ladies of the Town Guard, and with a few credits left for www.scotlandspople.co.uk (the downfall of many nosey genealogists), the question popped to mind – what about the Baron Bailie's family background? And which of his daughters was married to Captain Park? This thought was prompted by a conversation a few days earlier where it was pointed out that Thomas Arbuthnot was in his early thirties in 1715. If true, that would cast doubt on the relationship to James Park.

A short delve into the Old Parish Records solved the mystery. We were wrong.

Thomas Arbuthnot was born in Longside in 1681. He married Christian Young, the daughter of a Peterhead merchant, around 1705 and their first child, Jean, was born in December 1706. This makes it impossible for him to be James Park's father-in-law. A short tour of the marriage register for Longside showed that James Park married Janet Arbuthnot (a widow with 7 young children) in June 1714. Janet was a sister of the Baron Baillie, so James and Thomas were brothers-in-law.

Then another story came to light. According to the gravestone of one of his grandsons, Captain Park was reputed to have carried the King to shore on his





back, wading through shallow water to help the ailing monarch from the rowing boat that brought him to land. If this is true (and not just a tall tale Captain Park told to amuse his grandchildren which grew into family legend) why did the story get about that he was away from home at the time? It is likely that Captain Park and his family decamped for the night, or at least led people to believe that they had.

Sometimes, new information throws up more questions than answers. Who wouldn't like to have liked to be a fly on the wall when big brother Thomas turned up at Janet Arbuthnot's door with his surprise Royal visitor? Did she give him a piece of her mind (backed up with strategic use of her rolling pin) for throwing her domestic routine into disarray? Was it something she cast up to Thomas at every family gathering for the rest of their lives? Or did she rise to the occasion, curtsey serenely, then make the seasick Pretender feel at home?

And why did Thomas not find room in his own household? That question is perhaps easy to answer. Just a few months before, Thomas and Christian had welcomed the arrival of a new baby. Little Anna Arbuthnot was probably not old enough to sleep through the night, and may have been teething. She also had five siblings, all under the age of ten. Janet's children may have been older than their cousins. Did Captain Park's home offer a quieter refuge, where a weary King could get a good night's rest without crying babies disturbing his beauty sleep?

Then there is the whole thorny question of the Town Guard. James Stuart and his supporters arrived at Port Henry at night, in a town that was on high alert for attack. We are told they were not expected – the King was to have landed at Montrose, but was thwarted when traitors tipped off the nearest Hanoverian garrison. So how did a group of what appeared to be scruffy sailors get ashore unchallenged? A whole new seam of speculation which should keep us all out of mischief for some time to come.

In the mean time – sorry, Thomas, James and Janet. We will try not to let it happen again.

