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## Edinburgh Portraits

SAMUEL McCLELLAN  
LORD PROVOST OF EDINBURGH, 1706-1708

RICHARD TORRANCE

SAMUEL McCLELLAN was descended from an Old Galloway family, a collateral branch of the family of McLellan of Bombie, created Lord Kirkcudbright in 1633.<sup>1</sup> His father, Patrick McClellan, was minister of Girthon, Kirkcudbrightshire, from 1636.<sup>2</sup> Samuel was born about 1650 and probably spent his early years in the parish of Girthon, but whether he was educated there is not known. He had many cousins who were either landed gentry or prominent merchants in Edinburgh. It may well have been through the good offices of one of these relations that he obtained his education as well as the ability to start trading as a merchant in Edinburgh.

The first mention of McClellan as a merchant is in a bond of caution, dated 20 July 1673, in which Robert Gaw of Ironcraig assigned a bond of 200 merks Scots to his stepson Samuel McClellan, 'merchant in Edinburgh'.<sup>3</sup> In 1677, as heir to his father, he had sasine of an annual rent.<sup>4</sup> In 1676 and 1677 Robert McClellan of Barmagachan, a kinsman, acted as his attorney in relation to two annual rents and a disposition of Nether Drumconchra, in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright.<sup>5</sup> In 1680 Samuel McClellan obtained a sasine of the lands of Barmagachan, which he sold in 1685 to William McClellan of Borness.<sup>6</sup> This may have been a ruse to prevent McClellan of Barmagachan's land being confiscated, as he was an ardent covenanter who had been outlawed and was eventually transported to America.

There is no mention of Samuel McClellan in the apprentice records of Edinburgh. However, when he was admitted burghess and guild-brother of Edinburgh, *gratis*, on 13 August 1679, it was stated that he had been apprenticed to the deceased Robert Douglas, merchant.<sup>7</sup> What line of business Douglas was in is

uncertain but it may have been primarily as a cloth merchant, as McClellan was involved in that trade most of his life.

In 1681 an Act of Parliament authorised the setting up of a cloth manufactory at New Mills, Haddington. This was an attempt by the Scottish merchants to form a company which would rival those already in existence in England, and to improve the economic base of the country. Twenty-four Edinburgh merchants put up £3800 sterling to which sum McClellan contributed £100.<sup>8</sup> He was at the first meeting of the managers, on 27 June 1681. On 4 July he was ordered to price copper kettles for use in the dyeing process, both at home and in Holland. Eleven days later he was instructed to purchase one 60-gallon kettle, another at 30 gallons, and various other dyeing kettles, all from the home market. He was also empowered to purchase various materials to enable work to start at New Mills, and to negotiate with the Duke of Hamilton over the price of cloth.

Initially McClellan was very involved with the day-to-day running of the manufactory, though he appears to have had little to do with the firm between 1683 and 1685. In May 1685 he started to attend meetings regularly and did so until the end of 1686. He undertook various tasks, including ordering of materials and visits to Haddington to check and audit the company's books and also for disciplinary reasons. Although there are a few gaps in the records, McClellan seems only occasionally to have been involved directly with the Company's business after 1686, though usually auditing the accounts. However, he still took his allocation of the cloth produced – and sometimes did not pay as promptly as he might, being pursued for money twice in 1684. On 25 June 1688 the company ordered that if McClellan did not pay before

noon the following day he would have a 10% surcharge added. In 1703 he purchased some surplus cloth from the company: 24¾ ells of red cloth at 9 shillings the ell; 32 ells of yellow cloth at the same price; and 19¾ ells of 'ross' colour, plus 3 ells of scarlet, at 18/9d per ell. Up to the end of 1702 dividends totalling at least 67% had been paid on the original investment.

One great drawback the company encountered was that it could not produce cloth as cheaply as in England, even though they had brought in English weavers. In 1684 an Act of Parliament was passed prohibiting the importation of foreign cloth, but this seems to have had little effect as one shareholder was also one of the leading importers of English cloth. McClellan, too, was cited to compare before the Privy Council on 3 April 1684 for selling 'a sute of English Cloath of ... elnes to George Ogilvie, Andrew Purdie being taylor'. The outcome is not recorded, but it had little effect on his business enterprises.

In 1690 Samuel McClellan and his partners William Paton, James Row and George Mossman obtained the first of several large orders for military uniforms: 647 sets from Viscount Kenmure; 700 sets for Lord Angus' Regiment in 1691; 165 sets from the Duke of Argyll in 1692, and another contract for 800 white coats.<sup>9</sup> Besides these large contracts, a few records give a glimpse of the other types of goods McClellan was supplying and trading in:

*March 1686.* Samuel McClellan owed John Shewell & William Stonehewer, London, silk merchants, £56.11.0 sterling.<sup>10</sup>

*April 1690.* 'Certaine silk stuff and oyr for wearing cloathes' supplied to John Inglis of Eastsheill.<sup>11</sup>

*January 1694.* An account sent to Lady Broughton of Callie mentions 'muffes and black silk creap'.<sup>12</sup>

The 1694 Edinburgh Poll Tax returns show that Samuel McClellan, his wife, three sons, three daughters, two maids and three apprentices lived in Parliament Close, in one of Thomas Robertson's

lands (Robertson was a speculative builder of the late seventeenth century). McClellan lived in a house of eight fire rooms on the fourth storey of the scale stair, and also had a garret and two cellars. The building was rented at £255.6.8 Scots. The return he made of 16 hearths cannot have been for just one house. McClellan also rented for £18 a garret in the southern half of a seven-storey back tenement on the east side of Kirkheugh.<sup>13</sup> On 4 May 1698 the Town Council granted him a disposition of a ruinous house, waste ground and yard on Castlehill. The tack of the land was for 18 years, at a total of £26 per annum. He sold his interest in the properties to James Berry, gardener, in 1708.<sup>14</sup>

By August 1697 Samuel McClellan had become Stewart and Justiciar for Orkney and Shetland, his authority being a tack from the Lords of Treasury to McClellan, his heirs and assignees of teinds, rents, victual of all sorts and kinds, butter and 'oyl' belonging to his Majesty. McClellan's principal factor was Henry Leggat; and later he made his kinsman, Robert McClellan of Barclay, Stewart Depute.<sup>15</sup>

In 1703 McClellan and several other prominent Edinburgh citizens contracted with HM Treasury for the last two years of the excise duty of 3d on the pint of ale and the excise upon liquors that had been originally set to Archibald Dunbar of Thunderton, for which they agreed to advance the sum of £10,000 sterling.<sup>16</sup>

During the 1690s McClellan became increasingly involved in the public life of the city. In 1696 he contributed £500 sterling to the £400,000 raised for the Darien scheme and on behalf of the City of Edinburgh he was empowered to invest £3000 in the scheme. Another scheme with which he endeavoured to become involved was the African Company. In 1706 he got Sir Patrick Johnstone, Lord Provost of Edinburgh, to subscribe in his favour to be one of the Counsellors of the African Company. This seems to have been a move to protect the city's investment of £6000.<sup>17</sup>

With the passage of time McClellan became

more prominent in the mercantile trade and was in a position to shoulder some of the civic responsibilities. His first nomination was for Treasurer to the Kirk Sessions on 8 January 1690. Mention is made in 1693 of his accounts as kirk treasurer for 1690-91, showing a charge of £20,713.15.2, a discharge of £20,652.5.10 and a balance of £61.9.4. He became a Merchant Councillor in 1692, a Baron Bailie of Leith in 1693, the 'youngest Old Bailie' in 1695 and Town Treasurer in 1696.<sup>18</sup> In 1697 as Treasurer he authorised the purchase of 'calsey stones' from a quarry in the King's Park for the use of the town. The following year he was ordered to enter into a contract for the building of 'ane Bedlam house or hospitall' for the sum of £8000 Scots. In 1698 he also commissioned a set of four bells for St Giles Kirk; an inscription on the largest bell recorded the fact that he was Town Treasurer (fig. 1).<sup>19</sup>

McClellan was Treasurer for two years. His successor had to pursue him for an outstanding balance of £5865.10.8 Scots plus interest. In 1700 this figure was revised to £9418.16.0 and on 14 June the Council instructed that a process should be raised against him before the Bailies' Court for the balance 'which he severall tymes promised payment and now after severall communings with him thereanent refuses to pay ...' By way of punishment a tack for the collection of ale duty was given to Alexander Wood in place of McClellan. By 16 August 1700 the Town Treasurer was able to report that McClellan had paid to him £5306.17.0 'and for the remainder had advocat the cause'.<sup>20</sup>

In 1702 McClellan was elected Old Dean of Guild and two years later, as Bailie, he became one of the Magistrates. By 1705 he was Dean of Guild and had been honoured with a knighthood. Shortly after becoming Dean of Guild McClellan and the other members of the Council were provided with new gowns which were made from black velvet, black 'furiden', broad silk 'furiden' and rich black flowered



Fig. 1. One of a set of four bells cast for St Giles' in 1698, with the city office-bearers commemorated in the inscription. (Courtesy of Huntly House Museum, Edinburgh.)

silk, all made up 'with loops and furnishings' by Gilbert Somerville, Deacon of the Tailors, at a total cost of £781.4.0 Scots.<sup>21</sup>

It would appear that McClellan was strongly in favour of the Union of the two kingdoms, as he saw great advantages of trade accruing, not least on a personal level. He had already been found guilty of importing English cloth and, no doubt, had imported much more that had gone undetected. With his prominent position in the affairs of the capital city, he would have been able to influence many people to his way of thinking. However, he did not long survive the Union, and was unable to reap the perceived benefits or experience its limitations.

On 1 October 1706, Sir Samuel McClellan became Lord Provost of Edinburgh (fig. 2).<sup>22</sup> In this capacity he was one of the Town Commissioners to the General



Fig. 2. Coat of arms of Sir Samuel McClellan, Lord Provost of Edinburgh. (From plate 18 in Vol. 1 of Alexander Nisbet's *System of Heraldry*, Edinburgh 1722.)

Assembly in 1707 and 1708. He also continued as one of the Commissioners for the Convention of the Royal Burghs, which he first attended in an official capacity in December 1705.<sup>23</sup> He served as *preses* (chairman) for the first time in July 1706 and continued to do so regularly for the next two years. Much of the Convention's time was taken up in addressing problems that arose with the trading relationship with the Staple at Vere.

Another of the momentous matters considered by the Convention was that of the Union. An address signed by Sir Samuel was sent to the negotiating parties stating that the Convention was in favour of the Union as long as Scottish religion, law and trading rights were respected and English taxes would not be imposed on the Scottish population, which could not afford them. More detail was later set down in relation

to trade, especially with respect to fishing, the cloth industry and the export of oats.

At the Convention of the Royal Burghs in May 1708 consideration was given to the question of who was to represent them at the new Parliament in England. The Royal Burghs had to find fifteen suitable people, who would protect the trading interests of Scotland. It was decided that they should 'make choise of honnest knowing trading merchants, burgesses, or magistrates and counsellors of any Burgh in Scotland ... as being a necessary qualificatione'. Sir Samuel McClellan was chosen on 26 May 1708 to represent the Burgh of Edinburgh as its first Member of the Parliament of Great Britain.

On 3 September 1708 the Edinburgh Council approved of £300 sterling being given to McClellan, for defraying his charges in London and residence there as the Town's Commissioner to Parliament. On 29 November the Council gave a set of eight instructions to their new MP.<sup>24</sup> Briefly, Sir Samuel was to pursue:

1. Necessary supplies to prosecute the war with France;
2. Good discipline in the Navy;
3. A double jury in matters of crime or forfeiture;
4. The rights of Scottish JPs;
5. A victualling office for the Port of Leith;
6. The erecting of a dock at Leith;
7. The possibility of the Queen's gift of the 'prysadge' wine in favour of the city of Edinburgh (similar to that of London);
8. Equality in the collection of customs.

It is hard to assess how successful Sir Samuel was with the above brief, or indeed how long he was in London or how many visits he made. On 16 September 1709 he was given £106.7.2 sterling disbursed by him in London on the City's account. This immediately drew the criticism of John Dunbar, Deacon of the Skinners, who said that Sir Samuel should account for the £300 given him the previous year before a further

sum was awarded.<sup>25</sup> This matter did not trouble McClellan for very long, as he died six days later on 22 September 1709. The following day the Town Council met and decided that: 'As Sir Samuel McClellan, late Lord Provost, is to be buried next Sabbath day in Greyfriars Churchyard the Council

appointed the said funerals to be attended by the magistrats and Council in their formalities with the meace and an gown in mourning, the Incorporations of Merchants and Trads, the ministers and the faculty of the Colledge to attend in distinct bodies, and the City bells to be tolled.'<sup>26</sup>

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Sir James Balfour Paul, *The Scots Peerage*, 9 vols (Edinburgh 1904-14), V, p. 256.
- 2 Hew Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, 9 vols (Edinburgh 1915-61), II, p. 409.
- 3 Scottish Record Office (SRO), Register of Deeds (RD), RD 2/36. Robert Gaw of Ironcraig married Jean Primrose, Samuel's mother, after the death of her first husband, Samuel's father, Patrick McClellan of Girthon.
- 4 SRO, Broughton and Cally Muniments, GD10/258/1676; Dumfries Particular Register of Sasines (DS), RS23/2/216.
- 5 DS, RS23/2 ff. 94, 214.
- 6 DS, RS23/3 f. 45; and RS23/4 f. 7.
- 7 Charles B. Boog Watson, *Roll of Edinburgh Burgesses and Guild Brethren*, 3 vols (Scottish Record Society, Edinburgh 1929-33).
- 8 W. R. Scott, *The Records of the Cloth Manufactory at New Mills, Haddingtonshire, 1681-1703* (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh 1905). Also SRO, RH15/102/1, 2 and 3, papers, minute book and shareholders book of the New Mills Cloth Manufactory.
- 9 SRO, RD2/73 ff. 169, 171; RD2/74 ff. 734, 737, 739, 741. See also D. R. Torrance, 'Seventeenth Century Military Uniform Contracts', *Scottish Genealogist*, 39 (1992), p. 20.
- 10 SRO, RD3/64 f. 318.
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- 16 Edinburgh City Archives (ECA), Moses Bundle 258, no. 7931.
- 17 Armet, *Records of Edinburgh, 1701-1718* (Edinburgh 1967), p. 117.
- 18 Armet, *Records of Edinburgh, 1689-1701* (Edinburgh 1962), pp. 24, 103, 119, 135, 184, 206.
- 19 *Ibid.* pp. 211, 232. The dated bells are at Huntly House Museum, Edinburgh.
- 20 *Ibid.*, pp. 260, 264, 265, 267.
- 21 Armet, *Records of Edinburgh, 1701-1718*, pp. 27, 91, 122.
- 22 *Ibid.* pp. 127, 132, 148.
- 23 J. D. Marwick, *Extracts from the Records of the Convention of the Royal Burghs of Scotland, 1677-1711* (Edinburgh 1890).
- 24 John Reid, *New Lights on Old Edinburgh* (Edinburgh 1894), p. 14. 'Prisage' - a customs duty levied until 1809 upon wine imported into England.
- 25 Armet, *Records of Edinburgh, 1701-1718*, p. 175.
- 26 *Ibid.*