

Research Notes on the Pringle Douglas Squires and Rangers of the Forest

by James Bruce Pringle (brother of Sir Murray Pringle of Stichill, 10th Bt).

I think we should be consistent, the name Hoppringle was never used. It was Hoppringill, then Pringill and finally Pringle. Again, the statement '*the family seat was at Smailholm Tower*' is not correct. Robert, Douglas squire was granted Pilmuir, Blackchester and Smailholm in 1408. Robert died at Vermeil in 1424. His son and heir David was not confirmed in the Smailholm lands until 1452. He was previously known as David Pringill of Pilmuir and only from 1463 was he known as David Pringill of Smailholm, as the matriculation of Whytbank's arms confirm.

George and Alexander Douglas squires from 1425 until 1455 were 'invited' to support the Earl of Angus and George was given the master rangership of the Tweed ward as an inducement. The position was taken from him in 1460-61. His son Thomas lost his Philiphaugh lands, which were granted to John Murray of Falahill. Robert, very likely the son of Alexander, Douglas squire, took over as master ranger. David of Smailholm was ranger to both George and Robert.

Although the Hoppringills generally accepted the changes, George did not, as he continued to support his former master. In the meantime, David moved to Galashiels and it was his mother not his wife that financed the new house in Gala. Finally, it was not the Pringles *per se* that were crippled by debt but Sir James Pringle of Galashiels. George Pringill of Newhall/Craiglatch lost his Forest lands, which the king granted to Sir James in 1597. Sir James' lands were made into a barony, all of which he lost during the next 30 years. The son of Pringill of Newhall/Craiglatch recovered his father's Forest lands in 1606 (following the death of his father). The Forest tower houses were already in existence but the Forest records were poorly kept whilst in the possession of Douglas.

The Borthwick family, favourites of the King, took the opportunity to take several lands north of Stow mainly from Hoppringill of that Ilk. Subsequently Ker of Cessford did a deal with the archbishop of Saint Andrews in which Ker became the senior title holder of the lands that had once been in the possession of the Hoppringills and held from the archbishop directly for generations; leading to Hoppringill of that Ilk (on behalf of all the Pringles) entering into a man-rent agreement with Ker of Cessford.

The fall of Douglas, the death of William of that Ilk, the lengthy dispute between the heiress and Robert Hoppringill diminished significantly the power of the Pringles.

Douglas squires were recruited from younger sons of that Ilk. Robert's father was not a Douglas squire. The Earls of Douglas were a mean bunch and the lands they granted to the Hoppringills were few and far between. It took David (second of Smailholm) 20 years from approaching Douglas on bended knee

at Newark in the presence of George Hoppringill, Douglas squire, before he was confirmed in his father's lands in the east part of the barony of Smailholm.