

Extracts from Inch Parish Kirk Session Minutes CH2/637/4/33

These relate to various Blains in the late 18th and early 19th century. I had only a short period of time in which to see the minutes, and focused on this period and on the start of the minutes (1730). I was looking in particular for the accounts involving James Blain and Margaret Beggs, and found the others here transcribed while looking for these.

There may well be other items of interest and I hope to return to explore the Inch Kirk Session Minutes.

(My comments or summaries are shown in italic type.)

Kirk of Inch 1st nov 1795

Compeared Jean McKennan in Culroch who acknowledged that she had brought forth a child in uncleanness, & being seriously exhorted to repentance and to be honest in declaring the true father of her child & [being asked who was the father of her child – scored through] declared that Peter Blain weaver in Stran^r is the father of her child. Therefore considering the matter and finding that it is [a t relapse?] to the woman an that according to the rules fo the Church in such cases she must appear before the Presbytery of Stan^r [~~& be rebuked by the Moderator~~ – scored out] she was summoned [~~her~~] agreed (also?) to appear before said Presbytery on the 4th current. And that Mr Coulter Min^r of Stranraer be informed to cause summon the said Peter Blain to appear before this session the 8th Nov^r.

8th Nov 1795

...

Also compeared Peter Blain in consequence of a summons and the said Jean McKennan's Accusation being read to him, and being asked if ever he was guilty of the sin of uncleanness with Jean McKennan he positively denied all guilt. And being confronted together she continued to accuse and he to deny. And the woman being asked if she had any Presumptions against Peter Blain replied as follows: that on the first Fryday of the Frost in the Month of Dec^r afore last, but cannot say what day of the month, [~~she was in Stran^r~~] and in the evening met Peter Blain in John Blain's Labourer in Stran^r, who desired her to go out with him but that she refused that then he ~~took~~ (something written above) her by the arm and took her out to Thos. Blain Smith in Stran^r, That after staying sometime there and taking some drink they set out with Wm Miller Smith in Stran^r who went along with her and said Peter Blain and further declares that the guilt was committed by Peter Blain near the House in which she lives in Culroch. Declares that W^m. Millar went aside when the guilt was in committing and further sayeth not. Peter Blain being interrogated if he admitted the circumstances set forth in the above Narrative acknowledged that he had gone with Jean McKennan on said night that she was the worse of Liquor & declared that it was he who went aside and that it was W^m. Millar who remained with her and that he saw W^m. Millar and her lying on the ground together and further sayeth not. The Sesⁿ considering that the evidence of W^m. Millar is material, resolved to cause him to be cited before them but finding that he is now at Glasgow they were of Opinion that the Min^r in whose parish he resided should be required to take his deposition and transmit the same to his session. Concluded with prayer.

Kirk of Inch 10th Janr^y 1796.

... the parties both compearing (*and both keeping to their stories*)...
(*The deposition from the minister in Glasgow had been received*)

Glasgow Deposition

William Millar... solemnly swore, depones that sometime in the End of last year, he was in company with Jean McKenna & Peter Blain with some other company in the house of Thomas Blain Smith in Stranraer. And after some time did Jean McKenna & Peter Blain come out of the house, and the deponent followed them on the road to Culroch & afterwards the said Parties went into a Park belonging to Culroch, and the deponent went into another Park to look after them, and by the light of the Moon (for it was near brightest Night) he saw they lying together on the grass, and the deponent thought they were in an unseemly posture and committing uncleanness, tho he cannot be certain whether the guilt was actually committed to, that he the deponent went off and did not join the company But after they came to Culroch he saw Peter Blain that same Evening and charged him with what he had done, which s^d Peter denied.

(signed – William Millar, W^m Taylor Moderator, Glasgow 19th Dec 1795)

Jean McKenna then stated that besides the Evidence contained in the above letter that also the evidence of Jean Blain in Stran^r would be material in the case and requested that the said Jean Blain be summoned which request was granted accordingly & the mod^t was to inform W^m Coulter Min^r of Stran^r to cause said Jean Blain to be summoned to this session against the 24th current to which meeting of session Peter Blain & Jean McKenna were summoned. Agreed ...

Kirk of Inch 24th Janr^y 1796

[*Peter and Jean again compeared, and again kept to their stories*]

... Then Jean Blain Daughter to John Blain sen^r Stran^r the witness named to in last minute Compeared aged twenty years & upward & being purged of malice & partial Councils depones that on the 26th Dec^r 1794 the said Jean McKenna was in her Father's House when Peter Blain came in and asked the said Jean McKenna once or twice to go out with him to Thomas Blain's Smith in Stran^r Brother to the deponent to speak to a man which Jean McKenna refused unless the Deponent wen along with her and further deponed that Peter Blain the defender took the s^d Jean McKenna by the arm and went with her to Thomas Blain's when after the deponent followed them in a little time where they drank some few Gills in Company with W^m Millar and some others and that she saw the parties & William Millar go out together and further sayeth not and this is truth Causa recentia patet. W. Peter Ferguson Mod^r.

The session considering the whole cause were unanimously of opinion that Peter Blain ought to be laid under the Scandal. They therefore did & surely do lay Peter Blain under the scandal, against which interest the said Peter Blain protested & appealed to the Presbytery of Stranraer to meet there the first (absent?) day of Feb^y next & took Instruments in the Clerk's hands & craved extracts. Concluded with prayer.

[*The next entry is on 12th July 1796, when an Agnes McKenna at Culhorn accused a W^m McKie, merchant in Stranraer, of being father of her child...*]

Moving on to 1797. This one is a bit different.
Kirk of Inch, 12th March 1797

Voluntarily compeared Margaret Beggs at Cairn who acknowledged herself with child in Uncleanness and being exhorted to repentance and to be ingenuous in declaring the true father of her child declared that James Blain late School-master at the Cairns but now aboard James Hamilton's Cutter is the true Father of her child. The Session resolve to wait sometime until they know of Blain coming to Lochryan or Margaret Begg if she could speak with him.

Kirk of Inch April 28th 1797

Mr Ferguson produced a letter directed to him the tenor whereof follows.
Rev^d Sirs. I understand that Margaret Beggs, a young woman in the Cairn of Lochryan is with child, and fathers it upon me. I will not deny being guilty with her, and I am very grieved for what I have done by offending my Maker with such a crime, but I hope that through his mercy I may obtain forgiveness for it, and I am resolved by his strength and assistance to do so no more. I am willing to take on the child, if she clears herself before you, and other witnesses, of other men, during 10 ½ months that the child is, or might be in her company, otherwise I will not, for I am very suspicious of an other man who, I think was guilty of her as well as me.

Sir, as am at a distance from you, and our sailing from Place to Place, uncertain, you will be pleased to excuse me of reproof before the Congregation. And with the help of God I will satisfy you otherwise, when time permits you and me to meet, which I hope will not be long to.

Dear Sir I remain your truly Hum. Servt.
James Blain
Prince W^m Henry Cutter
Greenock Road at 22 March 1797

The Session considering the above letter do hold the said James Blain as confessed.

1810
Kirk of Inch 2nd Dec 1810

Sarah Queen being called compeared confessing herself with child in uncleanness & being exhorted to repentance & to be honest in declaring the true father of her child & interrogated declared that W^m Blain servant to Jas. Blain at Doss is the true father of her child.

[William Blain was called to appear on 9th Dec.]

9th dec 1810
W^m Blain called compeared & the above account being read to him he being interrogated if ever he had been guilty of the sin of uncleanness with Sarah Queen he frankly acknowledged the guilt, the session then did & hereby do lay them under the scandal accordingly.

W^m Blain & Sarah Queen appeared before the congregation & were absolved.

[Note that in 1813 Sarah Queen reappears – on 10th Oct – compeared – accused John Boyd jnr. in Borland. Sarah is described there as servant to Mr Wilson at Culhorn. Boyd denies the accusation and the issue goes on for a couple of pages.]

Note – in addition to the statistical accounts, see ‘Inch through time’ at http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/gaztext_page.jsp?u_id=10167930 for some description.